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CHINESE ENCHANTMENT: REINVENTING PU SONGLING'S CLASSICAL TALES IN
THE REALM OF WORLD LITERATURE, 1880-1920

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ABSTRACT

As the crowning achievement of the Chinese classical tale collection, Pu Songling (1640-1715)'s *Liaozhai zhiyi* has enjoyed a prolific literary afterlife in the centuries following its completion around 1705. It has not only spawned a huge number of imitations, translations, adaptations, and sequels, but also lent inspiration to world-renowned writers such as Franz Kafka, Lafcadio Hearn, Jorge Luis Borges, and Mo Yan. Focusing on the period between 1880 and 1920, this dissertation examines some of the earliest responses to Pu Songling's classical tales in the realm of world literature, arguing that they are simultaneously mediums of both "enchantment" and "disenchantment of the world" (borrowing Max Weber's notion). Through a discussion of how these literary responses reinterpret Pu Songling's classical tales in relation to Post-Enlightenment views of reality, this dissertation reflects on how the issue of enchantment is intertwined with the discursive construction of notions of Chinese culture at the turn of the twentieth century.

The dissertation consists of three interrelated chapters, ordered chronologically. In Chapter One, I examine Herbert A. Giles's 1880 *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio* as a polemical translation and a critical study of Chinese culture, exemplifying what Carlo Ginzburg calls the "conjectural paradigm." Contextualizing Giles' translation among treaty-port translations of the *Liaozhai*, the Victorian translation of Oriental texts, and the emergence of the human sciences in nineteenth-century Britain, this chapter discusses how the renowned British sinologist scrutinized the *Liaozhai* tales for clues about Chinese religious beliefs, and made supposedly "scientific" inferences about Chinese culture using techniques he learned from contributors to the Victorian science of religion. Giles' contention with the contemporary

discourse about a superstitious China in the *Strange Stories*, I argue, reflects his conviction that the *Liaozhai* is not only an ethnographic record reflecting mainly Confucian ethics but also a multi-layered palimpsest, in which a stratum of primitive animism survives and recurs in the more sophisticated cultural imaginations that have overlaid the original material.

Chapter Two examines Wang Tao's experiment with the serialization of classical tales during the golden age of Chinese lithography. Restoring his *Songyin tushuo* series (also known as *Hou Liaozhai*) from "text" to "work", this chapter challenges some of the widespread views regarding its classification and examines important interactions between his installments and contemporary lithographically-printed collections of classical tales, including illustrated editions of the *Liaozhai*. Examining Wang Tao's tales as part of the literary supplement section of the *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, this chapter further discusses the lithographic medium's impact on Wang Tao's construction of a particular recurring motif that conveys mediated visions of enchantment.

Chapter Three discusses the imitation and transformation of the *Liaozhai* tales in two *Fan Liaozhai* series, written after 1900, in the form of counter-narratives. Contextualizing the two series within the "new fiction" (*xin xiaoshuo*) movement and the anti-superstition campaign at the turn of the twentieth century, this chapter examines the resurfacing of the strange elements from the *Liaozhai* within the confines of the series' transitory supernatural plots, while characterizing their rational re-interpretation at the end of each tale as an obligatory but perfunctory attempt to obliterate enchantment. I argue that although the two series use modern literary devices such as individualized perception and figural consciousness to reconcile strange elements from the *Liaozhai* collection with Post-Enlightenment rationality, they deviate significantly from the anti-supernatural rhetoric they ostensibly adopt and do not ultimately fulfill a disenchantment agenda.

INTRODUCTION

“Where are those who truly know me? Are they only to be found in the so-called ‘green maple grove’, and at the ‘dark frontier passes’ (知我者，其在青林黑塞間乎)?”¹ With this soul-stirring *cri de cœur*, Pu Songling 蒲松齡 (1640-1715) concludes the preface to his *Liaozhai zhiyi* 聊齋誌異 (Records of the Strange from the Liao Study, hereafter referred to as *Liaozhai*), a seventeenth-century Chinese collection of nearly five hundred classical tales about ghosts, demons, fox-spirits, monsters, and many other remarkable characters.² The preface, entitled “*Liaozhai zizhi*” 聊齋自誌 (*Liaozhai*’s Own Record), was composed in 1679. At that time, Pu Songling, an obscure tutor in Shandong province, could not have foreseen that three centuries later his collection would be remembered as the culmination of the Chinese classical tale. Readers nowadays are tempted to interpret Pu Songling’s prefatory cry as words of frustration because they strongly echo certain despairing utterances attributed to Confucius, whose own teachings met with scorn and derision during his lifetime.³ Yet these words also articulate a

¹ The phrase “the green maple grove” and “dark frontier passes” alludes to the following lines from Du Fu (712-70)’s poem sequence “Dreaming of Li Bai” (夢李白): “when your soul came, the maple grove was still green/ when your soul returned, the frontier passes were dark” (魂來楓林青，魂返關塞黑). I have translated the term *qing* here as green, though it can also refer to the color black.

² Unless indicated otherwise, all translations of Pu Songling’s *Liaozhai* are mine. When preparing the translation, I used the Ren Duxing 任篤行 edition of the *Liaozhai zhiyi: quanjiao huizhu jiping* 全校會註集評聊齋誌異 (3 vols. Ji’nan: Qilu shushe, 2000) as the primary text. I have also consulted the translations in Judith T. Zeitlin’s *Historian of the Strange: Pu Songling and the Chinese Classical Tales* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), Herbert Allen Giles’ and John Minford’s *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* (New York: Penguin, 2006).

³ As Judith T. Zeitlin observes, the syntax here echoes words attributed to Confucius in *The Analects* (14.35) and *Mencius* (3B.9). It is, moreover, generically inscribed within the traditional identity of the Chinese historian, as I shall show below. Zeitlin discusses the intertextual connections in her book *Historian of the Strange: Pu Songling and the Chinese Classical Tale*, 51.

major concern of Pu Songling's, namely, whether his tales will be read and admired by readers of posterity; or, perhaps his work will simply be buried by time and dust, just like its author-collector is doomed to be. If so, will then only those inhabitants of the shadowy world of the dead—the “green maple grove and dark frontier passes”—show a genuine interest in his records of the strange?

Pu Songling evoked the notion of the afterlife at the end of his preface without knowing that his collection would have a prolific literary afterlife of its own in the centuries to come. The *Liaozhai* has spawned a plethora of imitations in the late imperial period.⁴ No other collection had exerted a greater influence on the development of the Chinese classical tale after the seventeenth century. Pu Songling's tales have also been adapted into numerous vernacular fictions, dramas, short stories, and films, all of which testify to its lasting popularity among readers of different times. Moreover, since the mid-nineteenth century the *Liaozhai* tales have been rendered into nearly twenty different languages, and new renditions continue to appear

⁴ A number of Chinese classical tale collections have been recognized as literary heirs of Pu Songling's *Liaozhai*. The list varies between different scholars. The commonly-mentioned collections include Shen Qifeng 沈起鳳 (b.1741)'s 1791 *Xieduo* 諧鐸 (*Words of Humor from an Ancient Bell*), Xu Kun 徐昆 (b.1715)'s *Liuya waibian* 柳崖外編 (*Unauthorized Compilation of the Willow Cliff*, prefaced 1791). He Ban'e 和邦額 (b.1748)'s 1791 *Yetan suilu* 夜談隨錄 (*Occasional Records of Conversations at Night*). Zeng Yandong 曾衍東's 1796 *Xiao dou peng* 小豆棚 (*The Small Bean-Trellis*), Changbai Haogezi 長白浩歌子's *Yingchuang yi cao* 螢窗異草 (*Strange Grasses of the Firefly Window*, published during the Guangxu reign), Xuan Ding 宣鼎 (1833-1880)'s *Yeyu qiudeng lu* 夜雨秋燈錄 (*Records of the Autumn Lamp and Night Rain*), Wang Tao 王韜 (1828-1897)'s 1875 *Dunku lanyan* 遁窟謠言 (*Wild Talks of the Grotto for the Escaped Hermit*), *Songyin manlu* 淞隱漫錄 (*Random Records of the Recluse of Wusong*, serialized in the *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, from 1884 to 1887) and *Songyinxulu* 淞隱續錄 (*A Sequel to the Songyin Manlu*, serialized in 1887). For discussions of *Liaozhai*'s influences on later Chinese classical tale, see: Chen Bingxi, "Lun Liaozhai zhiyi dui qingdai wenyanwen xiaoshuo de yingxiang 論聊齋志異對清代文言文小說的影響," *Pu Songling yanjiu* 4 (1998); "Lun Liaozhai zhiyi dui qingdai wenyan wen xiaoshuo De Yingxiang Xu 論聊齋志異對清代文言文小說的影響續," *Pu Songling yanjiu* 2 (2007); Wang Haiyang, *Qingdai Fang Liaozhai Zhiyi Zhi Chuanqi Xiaoshuo Yanjiu* 清代仿聊齋志異之小說研究 (Hefei: Anhui renmin 2009); Cui Rongmei and Hu Limin, "Liaozhai Zhiyi fangshu zazhan liubian yanjiu 聊齋志異仿書流變研究," *ibid.*1; Rania Huntington, *Alien Kind: Foxes and Late Imperial Chinese Narrative* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003); Tak-hung Leo Chan, *The Discourse on Foxes and Ghosts: Ji Yun and Eighteenth-Century Literati Storytelling* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1998).

through to today.⁵ The imitations, adaptations, translation, and many other ways of rewriting the *Liaozhai* constitute an inter-medial network that connects Pu Songling's classical tales to new readers, many of whom would be beyond the scope of the literatus author-collector's wildest imaginations. If the "Historian of the Strange" (*yishi shi* 異史氏), as Pu Songling calls himself, knew that many famous writers—Franz Kafka, Lafcadio Hearn, Jorge Luis Borges, Mo Yan, among many others—all owed him a debt of literary inspirations, he would be no less as dumbfounded as the scholars in his tales who awaken in the morning, finding themselves lying next to a deserted tomb where an illuminated mansion had stood in the night before.

The literary afterlife of Pu Songling's *Liaozhai* has formed the subject of many excellent studies, in which two issues have so far attracted the most critical attention. One issue concerns the influence the *Liaozhai* exerted on subsequent collections of classical tales, while the other involves the *Liaozhai*'s circulation outside of China. Existing discussions of these two issues clearly bear the mark of the disciplinary divisions prevalent within academia: the first issue is mainly explored by scholars working on Chinese literature and culture in the late-imperial and early-Republican period, whereas the second mainly interests scholars whose work is dedicated to comparative literature and translation studies. Cross-pollinations between the studies of the two issues are rare, mainly because for both groups, the object of interest is the interaction between the original text and its derivatives, contextualized within a history of the *longue durée*. The exclusive reliance on the diachronic approach has, as a result, led to the neglect of certain issues that can be only adequately investigated in a comparative and interdisciplinary manner.

⁵ Wang Lina, "Lütan Liaozhai Zhiyi De Waiwen Yiben Ji Minzu Yuwen Banben 略談聊齋志異的外文譯本及民族語文版本," *Pu Songling yanjiu jikan*, no. 2 (1981).

“Chinese Enchantment” is an attempt to unite the two separate fields of scholarship on Pu Songling’s legacy in a synchronic study of texts that transcend national, linguistic, and cultural borders. It focuses on the literary afterlife of the *Liaozhai* in what I call “tales of enchantment,” which, I argue, are integral to the infinite and fractal network of world literature. I derive the term “enchantment” from Max Weber’s famous notion of the “disenchantment of the world”, which refers to a slowly evolving process of “intellectualist rationalization, created by science and by scientifically-oriented technology” that culminates in the triumphant exorcism of all “mysterious incalculable forces” in the post-Enlightenment era.⁶ But Weber’s secularization thesis has been continuously challenged. As many scholars argue, enchantment remained prevalent even in the age of rapid scientific and technological development—wherever the “intellectualist rationalization” expels ghosts, demons, deities and witchcraft from the world, illusionists, occultists, seances, and writers of fantasy fiction recreate and re-popularize these mysterious forces and supernatural agents.⁷ Similarly to fairy-tales, imaginary voyages, apparition narratives, the “New Romance,” and many other *fin-de-siècle* literary genres that detract from realism in Western fiction, the tales of enchantment I explore in this dissertation, while overtly subverting the project of disenchantment, ultimately acknowledge the validity of

⁶ Weber’s “Science as a Vocation” [Wissenschaft als Beruf] was originally a speech he gave at Munich University in 1918. It was published a year later by Dunker and Humboldt in Munich. For a full English translation, see Max Weber, “Science as a Vocation,” in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, ed. Hans Heinrich Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Routledge, 1991), 129-56. My usage of “enchantment” is different from Wai-yee Li’s, who applies the same notion to her analysis of Pu Songling’s tales. Defining enchantment as “the process of being drawn into another world that promises sensual and spiritual fulfillment,” Li argues that the strange in the *Liaozhai* is mainly associated with the “enchanted realms” that Pu Songling delights in creating but feels obliged to reappropriate into the moral order of “this world.” She calls this dynamic the “taming of the strange” and argues that it is meant to reconcile the conflicts between desire and order. See Waiyee Li, *Enchantment and Disenchantment: Love and Illusion in Chinese Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 89-151.

⁷Alex Owen provides an excellent account of the recent revisions of Weber’s thesis in her book *The Place of Enchantment: British Occultism and the Culture of the Modern* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

scientific skepticism while incorporating elements of rational inquiry into their storytelling. In this sense, they are simultaneously instruments of both disenchantment and enchantment, reflecting what critics have called the “ambiguities of the modern.”⁸

“Chinese Enchantment” examines the key translations, supplements, adaptations, imitations, and transformations that contributed to the continuous reinvention of the *Liaozhai* at the turn of the twentieth century. By “reinvention” I mean the creative endeavor by which Pu Songling’s classical tales were turned from finished products back into raw materials with which new texts could be produced and then named after the *Liaozhai*. These endeavors, I argue, subtly transformed the *Liaozhai* from a private collection of tales mostly set in Shandong province into the literary embodiment of a putatively “authentic” Chinese discourse of enchantment, one that is constructed through its otherness in relation to the scientific discourse of the West. By rewriting and overwriting Pu Songling’s *Liaozhai* in the realm of world literature, these creative endeavors not only imposed onto classical tales about ghosts and fox-spirits new meanings that reflected the impact of scientific discourse, but also made the reading and writing of such tales pertinent to transnational cultural comparisons between China and the West. As such, these tales articulated visions of enchantment that carry distinct connotations of Chinese culture, and made important intermediary connections that anticipate our contemporary reading of the *Liaozhai* as a collection of classical tales reflecting the late-imperial Chinese discourse on the strange.

The chief questions I address in this dissertation are: how do re-inventors of the *Liaozhai* define their relations with Pu Songling and respond to the Historian of the Strange’s question about “the one who truly knows me”? How do tales of enchantment artfully conceal their own

⁸ Ibid., 238. See also Simon During, *Modern Enchantments: The Cultural Power of Secular Magic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).

dissimilarities to Pu Songling's classical tales and create a semblance of literary lineage where the real connection is tenuous? What roles did Western literature and European ideas play in creative interpretation (including misinterpretation) of the *Liaozhai* at the turn of the twentieth century? How did modern print media contribute to the continuation of the *Liaozhai*'s literary afterlife and popularize its classical style? What are the major differences between tales of enchantment and late-imperial classical tales like the *Liaozhai*, and what is the cost of ignoring these differences? How did tales of enchantment incorporate elements of disenchantment into the process of reinventing the *Liaozhai*?

In answering these questions, this dissertation draws on existing scholarship on the Chinese classical tale, theories of translation, studies of enchantment, textual criticism, research on Chinese print capitalism and visual culture at the turn of the twentieth century. For readers accustomed to juxtaposing the Chinese concepts of the strange with Western notions of the supernatural, the uncanny, the fantastic, and so on, this dissertation offers a critical reflection on the comparative approach and examines some of its earliest instances. For readers interested in Sinology and the European translation of Chinese texts, this dissertation highlights the impact of the transnational flow of texts and ideas on the discursive construction of China as an object of knowledge. For readers concerned with the reception history of *Liaozhai*, this dissertation provides nuanced readings of certain texts that have previously been dismissed as bad imitations or studied without adequate attention to their material form. Last but not least, for revisionists of Weber's secularization thesis, this dissertation contributes some new thoughts on China's relevance to the question of enchantment at the turn of the twentieth century.

Pu Songling's *Liaozhai Zhiyi*

Composed over a roughly thirty-year period between 1675 and 1705 CE, Pu Songling's *Liaozhai* tales were written exclusively in literary Chinese, as distinct from the vernacular language. Modern scholars hail the *Liaozhai* as a masterpiece of the so-called *wenyan xiaoshuo* 文言小說 (classical tale), which stands as a counterpart to vernacular fiction.⁹ The general consensus among scholars is that the *Liaozhai*, following the success of the influential Ming dynasty *Lamplight* collections by Qu You 瞿佑 (1341-1472), played a critical role in the late-imperial revival of the Chinese classical tale. But differently from his predecessors, Pu Songling agglomerated and refashioned two main strands of the Chinese classical tale, namely the *zhiguai* 志怪 (records of the strange) and the *chuanqi* 傳奇 (transmitting accounts of the marvelous). In this regard, the *Liaozhai* also changed the direction of the development of the Chinese classical tale.

It was Lu Xun 魯迅 (1881-1936) who established the standard usage of *zhiguai* and *chuanqi* to designate subdivision of the genre *wenyan xiaoshuo*. In his *Zhongguo xiaoshuo shilue* 中國小說史略 (*A Brief History of Chinese Fiction*, 1924), Lu describes the *Liaozhai* tales as “*zhiguai* narratives written with storytelling techniques typical in *chuanqi*” (用傳奇法而以志怪), a mixture that accounts for the collection's unprecedented level of sophistication.¹⁰ For Lu and his adherents, the *zhiguai* tradition consists of short anecdotal narratives, exemplified by

⁹ The classical tale is not a vernacular story merely written in a different register. As Rania Huntington observes, the *wenyan xiaoshuo* is a “liminal” genre, “crossing boundaries between fiction and nonfiction, folklore and literary invention, oral and written, and popular and elite.” See Rania Huntington, *Alien Kind: Foxes and Late Imperial Chinese Narrative* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 5. The *Liaozhai*, as Zeitlin argues, is “not just the culmination of classical tale in style, complexity, and range; it is no exaggeration to say that this collection has come to define our very notion of the genre.” See Zeitlin, *Historian of the Strange: Pu Songling and the Chinese Classical Tale*, 4.

¹⁰ Lu Xun, *Zhongguo xiaoshuo shilue* 中國小說史略 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 2006), 135.

medieval anomaly accounts written in the tradition of unofficial histories, like Gan Bao 干寶 (fl. 320 CE)'s *Soushen ji* 搜神記 (*In Search of Spirits*). The *chuanqi* tradition, on the other hand, encompasses longer narratives with intricate plots and characterization, represented by an array of Tang-dynasty stories that the tenth-century collectanea *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記 (*Extensive Records of the Grand Tranquility Reign*) placed in the category of *zazhuan* 雜傳 (miscellaneous biographies/chronicles). Nonetheless, both the terms *zhiguai* and *chuanqi* can be found in anthology titles and in various forms of literary discourse before the twentieth century. As early as the late sixteenth century, the literatus scholar Hu Yinglin 胡應麟 (1551-1602) had already used the two terms to contrast generic subdivisions of the classical tale.¹¹ However, Hu's categories exerted little influence on the literary discourse of the late-imperial period; thus, it was not until Lu Xun that the modern usage of *zhiguai* and *chuanqi* became widespread.

The view of the *Liaozhai* as a hybrid collection combining two different types of narrative was also not Lu Xun's own. The eighteenth-century critic Ji Yun 紀昀 (1724-1805) had used similar means to illustrate what he saw as Pu Songling's breach of literary decorum, criticizing the *Liaozhai* for including "two forms in a single collection" (一書而兼二體).¹²

¹¹ In *Shaoshi shanfang bicong* 少室山房筆叢 (*Collected Notes by the Retreat of Mount Shaoshi*), Hu Yinglin divides xiaoshuo into six categories, arguing that most *zhiguai* accounts were based on hearsay, anecdotes, and unverified reports, whereas *chuanqi* are conscious creations with an intent to fictionalize. However, Hu sees these stylistic forms as two ends of a continuum rather than mutually exclusive categories. For further discussion on Hu Yinglin's taxonomy and xiaoshuo criticism, see Laura Hua Wu, "From Xiaoshuo to Fiction: Hu Yinglin's Genre Study of Xiaoshuo," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 55, no. 2 (1995).

¹² According to his student Sheng Shiyuan, Ji Yun once said: "Now the [*Liaozhai*] includes two forms in a single collection; this I have found quite confusing" (今一書而兼二體，未所解也). For a translation and discussion of Ji Yun's response to the *Liaozhai*, see Tak-hung Leo Chan, *The discourse on foxes and ghosts: Ji Yun and eighteenth-century literati storytelling* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1998), 159-67. Also see Leo Tak-Hung Chan, "Narrative as Argument: The Yuewei caotang biji and the Late Eighteenth-Century Elite Discourse on The Supernatural," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 53, no. 1 (1993); Judith T. Zeitlin, *Historian of the strange: Pu Songling and the Chinese classical tale* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 39-41; Sing-chen Lydia

Though he designates the two forms he differentiates as *xiaoshuo* 小說 (petty talks) and *zhuanji* 傳記 (biographies), the two groups of literary works he cites to illustrate the differences between the genres actually correspond to what modern scholars designate as the *zhiguai* and *chuanqi* traditions.

It is important to note that the distinction between *zhiguai* and *chuanqi* tales in the *Liaozhai zhiyi* lies more in the reader's response to the text than in the text itself, so that any attempt at drawing a clear-cut boundary between the two types of prose would only prove futile. That being said, certain theoretical generalizations are useful in defining the major differences between the two forms. Rania Hungtington proposes that the relation between *zhiguai* and *chuanqi* is analogous to that between *Märchen* and *Kunstmärchen*, with the former focusing on narrating the strange events and the latter focusing on depicting marvelous characters.¹³ She thus mainly distinguishes the *zhiguai* and *chuanqi* tales in the *Liaozhai* from a thematic and narratological point of view. By contrast, Allan Barr, more interested in Pu Songling's composition process, proposes that there is an additional chronological difference between the two co-existing forms. He argues that Pu Songling's mixture of two forms of prose testifies to the significant schematic changes that the *Liaozhai* underwent during the three decades of its composition, and that the original form that Pu Songling envisioned was closer to the *zhiguai* tradition.¹⁴ In his article "A Comparative Study of Early and Late Tales in *Liaozhai zhiyi*," Barr

Chiang, *Collecting the self: body and identity in strange tale collections of late imperial China* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 209-43.

¹³ Huntington, *Alien Kind: Foxes and Late Imperial Chinese Narrative*, 14-23.

¹⁴ An important piece of evidence for this point is that, in his preface to the *Liaozhai*, Pu Songling compares himself with Gan Bao and describes his collection as an effort to emulate Liu Yiqing (403-444)'s *Youming lu* 幽明錄 (*Records of the Hidden and Visible Realms*). Both Gan Bao's *Soushenji* and Liu Yiqing's *Youming lu* are nowadays considered examples of the *zhiguai* tradition.

remarks that “[i]t would be natural for a writer such as Pu Songling, experimenting with his first creative efforts in fiction, to borrow familiar plots from the anecdotal tradition, and only later, with some experience behind him, would he enlarge his horizons to take in much more ambitious projects.”¹⁵ For him, this transition from the anecdotal tradition (*zhiguai*) to the ambitious project (*chuanqi*) accounts for the uneven but discernible progression from spine-chilling ghost stories to exuberant scholar-fox love romances in the *Liaozhai* collection, and it is the latter group of tales that exemplify Pu Songling’s skillful plot manipulation, structural design, and characterization.

Although Barr characterizes the *zhiguai* tales as Pu Songling’s “first creative efforts in fiction,” he does not mean to imply an anachronistic categorization of the *Liaozhai* as a purely fictional work. Barr would certainly agree that even Pu Songling’s *chuanqi* tales are veiled in the guise of history. Indeed, in paratextual spaces where he can exercise authorial control over the reader, Pu Songling appears interested in assimilating himself to historians. The most obvious example of this is found in the authorial comments appended to many of the *Liaozhai* tales, where Pu assumes the title of “Historian of the Strange” and offers personal opinions about the tales. Both the device of the end comment and the choice of literary name connect Pu Songling to the famous Han dynasty historian Sima Qian (ca. 145-86 BCE), whose monumental 130-chapter *Shiji* (*Record of the Grand Historian*) served as the most important model for a succession of imperial historiographies in later dynasties. In many of the *Shiji* chapters, especially those in the “Arrayed Traditions” (列傳) section, a brief judgment, clearly marked off by the phrase “the Grand Historian remarks” (太史公曰) concludes the impersonal account of

¹⁵ Allan H. Barr, "A Comparative-Study of Early and Late Tales in '*Liaozhai Zhiyi*,'" *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 45, no. 1 (1985).

historical events and proceeds to offer highly opinionated praise or condemnation of the main actors' deeds.¹⁶ The end comments in the *Liaozhai* are clearly modeled on these appraisals in historiographies, though they do not strictly adhere to the moralizing function of their prototypes. On a number of occasions, the "Historian of the Strange" turns his attention to genres outside historical writing, linking his stories to classical tales, vernacular novels, and drama that have either provided the source material or display similar plots. Therefore, despite their important role in assimilating the *Liaozhai* into the tradition of historiography, the end comments also serve to create intertextual connections among the *Liaozhai* and works that demonstrate a high degree of fictionality.

In his preface to the *Liaozhai*, Pu Songling provides the reader another occasion to contemplate the influence of Sima Qian on his work.¹⁷ Lydia Sing-Chen Chiang observes that this preface "foregrounds the construction and expression of the authorial selfhood as the central concern of his collection."¹⁸ This concern is palpable in Pu Songling's characterization of the *Liaozhai* as a vehicle for expressing his frustrations, as he writes: "I drained my cup and put brush to paper to write this collection of lonely anguish and frustration. To use these tales as the vehicle of my thoughts and feeling: is this not lamentable enough" (浮白載筆，僅成孤憤之書

¹⁶ Despite the intrusion of a personified voice in these judgements, we should not mistake the Grand Historian's statements for Sima Qian's personal opinions. As Grant Hardy points out, "the form of these personal comments is equivocal, for the term [the Grand Historian] can refer to both Sima Qian and his father, Sima Tan, who also had some, rather unclear, role in the creation of the *Shiji*." Grant Hardy, *Worlds of Bronze and Bamboo: Sima Qian's Conquest of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), xiv.

¹⁷ Again, this influence does not undermine Barr's argument about Pu's gradual transition from history to fiction, since the preface was written in the early phase of the composition of *Liaozhai*.

¹⁸ 1 Chiang, 32.

。寄托如此，亦足悲矣！嗟乎！¹⁹ The phrase “lonely anguish” was originally coined by the Warring States period philosopher Han Fei 韓非 (d. 233 BCE) as a chapter title. Sima Qian adopted this phrase in his autobiographical postface to the *Shiji* to situate his historiography in a genealogy of authors writing “as the outpouring of suffering and indignation.”²⁰ Overtly, this formulation seems to be at odds with the Grand Historian’s claim that he is merely “transmitting ancient affairs and arranging and ordering the traditions passed down through generations.”²¹ The implication is that he adhered to the guiding principle Confucius used in compiling the *Chunqiu* 春秋 (*Spring and Autumn Annals*), that is, “transmission” (*shu* 述) rather than “creation” (*zuo* 作). But as Michael Puett reminds us, “while Sima Qian mimics Confucius’ claim to be only transmitting, he elsewhere states that he is a creator, implying that he, like Confucius, is an unrecognized sage.”²² In other words, transmission *is* sagely creation in the *Shiji*. The humble stance he adopts allows Sima Qian not only to claim the historian’s authority but also to present suffering, which he sees in a succession of frustrated men of virtue, as the quintessence of the transmitted histories he drew from a wide variety of traditions. In this way, he imparts a human voice to the historical narrative; indeed, the *Shiji*, as he sees it, is meant to “complete the words of a single school/family”(成一家之言).²³

¹⁹ I use Giles’ translation of the “Liaozhai’s Own Record” with slight modification.

²⁰ See Zhang Youhe, ed. *Liaozhai zhiyi xuan* (Renmin wenxue, 1978), 4. note 36.

²¹ Michael Puett, *The Ambivalence of Creation: Debates Concerning Innovation and Artifice in Early China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), 178.

²² *Ibid.*, 179.

²³ In his “Letter to Ren An,” Sima Qian explains that his goal as a historian is to “exhaust the interchanges between Heaven and man, completely trace the changes from ancient times to the present, and thus complete the words of a single school/family.” For an excellent discussion of Sima Qian’s three goals, see William H. Jr

Pu Songling's subsequent evocation of Sima Qian's formulation may well serve a similar practical purpose of imposing unity upon an otherwise heterogeneous collection. In his preface, Pu describes the sources of the *Liaozhai* as follows:

I get people to commit what they tell me to writing, and subsequently I dress it up in the form of a tale; after some time, like-minded men from all four directions had sent me stories by post. Because things accrue to those who love them, what I have collected has grown into a vast pile (聞則命筆，遂以成編。久之，四方同人，又以郵筒相寄，因而物以好聚，所積益夥).²⁴

Pu transcends the disparity of the texts by claiming to have fused them with “lonely anguish,” which culminates in the poignant words of despair at the end of the “*Liaozhai's Own Record*.” In fact, the image of the frustrated Historian of the strange has left such a strong impression on readers of later generations that the notion of “lonely anguish” is frequently echoed in the historical interpretations of Pu Songling's aim in writing the collection. The best example to illustrate this point is a 1715 memorial address written by Pu Songling's son Pu Ruo 蒲箬, in which he describes the *Liaozhai* as follows: “[the tales are] mostly [outbursts of] congested anguish and destitution. They carry [my father's] intention to encourage virtue and censure the depraved. It is not true that they are merely humorous talks to entertain the reader” (大抵皆憤抑無聊，借以抒勸善懲惡之心，非僅為談諧調笑已也).²⁵ The son sought to defend the father's reputation here by simultaneously setting the *Liaozhai* apart from stories of entertainment and characterizing Pu Songling as an unrecognized, frustrated historian who used brush and ink to

Nienhauser, "Sima Qian and the Shiji," in *The Oxford History of Historical writing*, ed. D. R. Woolf, Andrew Feldherr, and Grant Hardy (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

²⁴ Ren Duxing, ed. *Quanjiao huizhu jiping Liaozhai zhiyi* 全校會註集評聊齋志異, 3 vols., vol. 1 (Jinan: Qilu shushe, 2000), 29.

²⁵ Zhu Yixuan, *Liaozhai zhiyi ziliao huibian* 聊齋誌異資料匯編 (Zhengzhou: Zhongzhou guji, 1985), 338.

leave his mark for later generations. However, if this defense strategy is effective, then it is so only because it builds on Pu Songling's impressive self-fashioning in the autobiographical preface.

By characterizing his *Liaozhai* as the work of a frustrated historian who “continually gives vent to [his] thoughts and feelings,” Pu Songling was able not only to bring the heterogeneity of his text under authorial control but also to accomplish the goal Sima Qian had set for subsequent historians. Indeed, the Qing-dynasty biography of Pu in the *Zichuan Gazetteer* linked his artistic achievement to his personal distress as follows: “while fully committing himself to writing in the ancient styles, [the historian of the strange] was overwhelmed with frustration and laments. He thus ‘created the words of a single school’”(一肆力于古文，悲愤感慨，自成一家之言).²⁶

We can also say that Pu Songling created “the words of a single school” in a different sense, given the fact that the *Liaozhai* is often credited as one of the important sources (if not the most important) for the study of the late-imperial Chinese discourse on the strange, conventionally summarized in the common phrase *tanhu shuogui* 談狐說鬼 (talking of fox spirits and speaking of ghosts).²⁷ According to Zhao Qigao, the original title of Pu Songling's collection is *Guihu zhuan* 鬼狐傳 (*Accounts of Ghosts and Fox-Spirits*). This putative title coincides with the centrality of the two largest group of characters in the collection. Indeed, ghosts and fox spirits not only surpass other character-types in number but also represent the

²⁶ Quoted in Hu Haiyi, "Pu Songling de baguwen yanjiu," in *Pu Songling yanjiu*, no. 3 (2012): 8.

²⁷ As Leo Tak-hung Chan points out, the tradition of conversing on the strange was extremely popular among elite members of Chinese society during the late imperial period, and the “Chinese expression for this sort of activity is ‘discourse on fox-spirits and ghosts’ (*tanhu shuogui* 談狐說鬼)” Chan. *ibid.*, 28. Chan alludes to this phrase in the title of his book on Ji Yun and eighteenth-century literati storytelling.

most finely-portrayed literary figures in the *Liaozhai*. Pu Songling's successful portrayal of these characters in the *chuanqi* tales helped redefine what the strange connoted in late-imperial China, and subsequently became an important criterion for identifying and evaluating strange tales written in a similar vein.²⁸

Herbert Allen Giles (1845-1935), the eminent British Sinologist who played a major role in introducing the *Liaozhai* to European readers in the late nineteenth century, remarks in the preface to his 1880 English translation of the *Liaozhai* that Pu Songling “the reject candidate succeeded in founding a *school of his own* [my italics], in which he was followed by hosts of imitators of more or less success.”²⁹ Working separately, Lu Xun comes to a similar conclusion. In his *Brief History of Chinese Fiction*, based on lectures he gave at Peking University in 1920, Lu characterizes Pu as the creator of a form that has become the object of admiration and emulation. He then lists a multitude of works that have been influenced by the *Liaozhai*. This is the first time a scholarly attempt was made to delineate a family of *Liaozhai*-inspired strange tales from the point of view of genre. Following in Lu Xun's steps, a number of Chinese scholars have sought to reconstruct a comprehensive history of strange tales of the Qianlong and later periods that were influenced by the *Liaozhai*. Generally speaking, they differentiate these works from those grouped together with Ji Yun's *Yuwei caotang biji* 閱微草堂筆記 (*Jottings from the*

²⁸ In his 1819 essay entitled “Du Liaozhai zashuo 讀聊齋雜說” (Random Remarks on Reading the *Liaozhai*), the Qing-dynasty commentator Feng Zhenluan 馮鎮巒 (1760-1830) points out that the imitators of the *Liaozhai* are “as countless as the hairs of an ox” (多如牛毛), and all of them “discuss ghosts and speak of fox-spirits” (說鬼說狐). See Zhu Yixuan, *Liaozhai zhiyi ziliao huibian* 聊齋誌異資料匯編 (Zhengzhou: Zhongzhou guji, 1985), 582. Also, when discussing Wang Tao's failure to imitate Pu Songling, Lu Xun comments, in *A Brief History of Chinese Fiction*, that the records of the fox-spirits and ghosts in Wang's tales “had already become scarce, whereas stories about courtesans abounded” (然所記載，則已狐鬼漸稀，而煙花粉黛之事盛矣). Translation mine.

²⁹ Herbert A. Giles, *Strange stories from a Chinese studio*, 2 vols., vol. 1 (London: T. De la Rue & co., 1880), xxx.

Grass Hut for Scrutinizing Minutae), which is seen as a revolt against the *Liaozhai* and a return to the *zhiguai* narrative written in the vein of unofficial histories. However, by using the success or failure of imitation as a yardstick to evaluate the artistic achievements of these works, these studies are prone to the problems of what Linda Hutcheon calls “fidelity criticism.”³⁰ In this dissertation, I will re-examine some of the works that have been grouped into the *Liaozhai* school and argue that they should instead be understood as tales of enchantment.

The Chinese Discourse on the Strange

Scholars on the *Liaozhai* and similar collections of classical tales are interested in the historical and cultural specificity of a Chinese discourse on the strange, whose main elements, they believe, afford interesting comparisons with Western ideas of the fantastic, the supernatural, the alien, the uncanny, the grotesque, and so on. In the past three decades, a number of excellent studies have significantly enriched our understanding of the close relations between the Chinese classical tale and the late-imperial literati culture. In her book, *Historian of the Strange: Pu Songling and the Chinese Classical Tale*, Judith T. Zeitlin discusses the fundamental differences between the Chinese discourse of the strange and Tzvetan Todorov’s concept of the fantastic. Echoing Waiyee Li’s argument about the continuum between desire and order in the *Liaozhai*, Zeitlin explores three recurring themes in Pu Songling’s collection to illustrate the blurry distinction between the strange and the normal order of things in the late-imperial Chinese imagination, which stands in marked contrast to the separation of reality and fiction in Western

³⁰ As Linda Hutcheon notes, the abiding interest in how closely an adaptation follows the parent work precludes the consideration that “an adaptation is a derivation that is not a derivative—a work that is second is not necessarily secondary. It is its own palimpsestic thing.” See Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 9.

supernatural fiction.³¹ Through an examination of these themes, Zeitlin argues that Pu Songling continually renewed the category of the strange by manipulating boundaries like those between the subject and the object, male and female, life and death, dream and reality. Following in Zeitlin's steps, Huntington focuses on a narrower discourse of the strange in her studies of late-imperial Chinese narratives about shape-changing fox-spirits. By examining how this "most ubiquitous and ambiguous" category of the alien is constructed in the Chinese literati culture from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, Huntington has shown how such narratives "establish the boundaries around the human and the ordinary" and enable the surfacing of cultural anxieties in narratives about the transgressions of these boundaries.³² Lydia Sing-Chen Chiang and Sarah Louise Dodd further explore the question of anxiety and locate it in the gendered subjectivity of the male literatus author-collector of strange tales. Their respective arguments, to a certain extent, resemble Karl S. Y. Kao's thesis that the "*Liaozhai* may be understood in one sense as a kind of fantasy [...] that betrays particularly the desires of Chinese males," except that for Chiang and Dodd, the male fantasy also betrays a suppressed patriarchal fear.³³ Drawing on Western ideas of the uncanny, Chiang investigates the male literatus writer's attempt to reconstruct cosmic order and gain control over anomalous others through compiling strange tale collections. Similarly, Sarah Louise Dodd draws on Jeffrey Jerome Cohen's notion of the monster as a "cultural body" to examine the *Liaozhai* as a repository of the fears, anxieties

³¹ Li, *Enchantment and Disenchantment: Love and Illusion in Chinese Literature*.

³² Huntington, 4.

³³ Karl S. Y. Kao, "Projection, Displacement, Introjection: the Strangeness of *Liaozhai zhiyi*," in *Paradoxes of Traditional Chinese literature*, ed. Eva Huang and Joseph S. M. Lau (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1994), 210.

and desires of Qing culture.³⁴ While earlier studies explore particular motifs within the strange tale collections, both Chiang and Dodd treat the collections as a whole that is analogous to the male body where the normative self is located.

I cite the above-mentioned scholarly works not to provide a comprehensive survey of secondary literature on the Chinese discourse on the strange, but to highlight the frequent employment of the comparative approach in existing studies on the Chinese classical tale, whose object of focus developed, however, in complete isolation from its reference for comparison. Envisioning the Chinese discourse on the strange as essentially an autochthonous discourse, scholars rarely extend the scope of their research beyond the late nineteenth century, as this is the latest point at which the educated elite in China, who are the main collectors and authors of these tales, remained free of the influence of Western discourses on the supernatural and fantastic.

However, it is my belief that that the above-mentioned comparison could be enriched by studies in which the Chinese discourse on the strange is a product of cross-cultural contacts and exchanges. “Chinese enchantment” thus complements the existing studies on the Chinese classical tale by historicizing the comparative approach and examining instances in which the Chinese discourse is a heteroglossia of both Chinese and non-Chinese utterances. As I will show, tales of enchantment predate the efforts of the above-mentioned scholars who canonize the classical tale as the embodiment of an authentic Chinese experience affording distinct contrasts to Western ideas of the supernatural and fantastic. In addition, tales of enchantment articulate a new discourse of the strange, which is constructed in response to the Post-Enlightenment view of reality. Whereas the *Liaozhai* capitalizes on the blurry distinction between fiction and history,

³⁴ Sarah Louise Dodd, "Monsters and Monstrosity in the *Liaozhai zhiyi*." (Ph.D. Thesis, University of Leeds, 2013).

dream and reality to explore the “complementary bipolarity” between the strange and the natural order,³⁵ its reinventions in tales of enchantment not only posit a schism between reality and fiction but also acknowledge an empirical model of reality as the dominant epistemological paradigm. An exploration of these tales of enchantment can thus shed light on the impact that comparisons between notions of the strange in China and the West has had on the interpretation of both the *Liaozhai* and of the literary output inspired by it.

Scope of Research

This dissertation examines the following tales of enchantment: 1) Herbert A. Giles’ influential 1880 English translation of the *Liaozhai*, entitled *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*; 2) Wang Tao 王韜’s *Songyin tushuo* 淞隱圖說 (*A Pictorial Discussion by the Recluse of Wusong*), originally serialized in *Dianshizhai Huabao* 點石齋畫報 (*Pictorial of the Touching Stone Studio*) between 1884 and 1888 and later re-printed as *Hou Liaozhai* 後聊齋 in both bootlegged and authorized versions; 3) Po Mi 破迷’s 1905 *zhiguai*-style classical tale collection entitled *Counter-Liaozhai or the Demon-revealing Mirror* 反聊齋，又名照妖鏡 (hereinafter *Mirror*), serialized in the *Xin xiaoshuo* 新小說 (*New Fiction*) magazine edited by Liang Qichao; 4) Wu Qiyuan’s *chuanqi*-style classical tales also entitled *Fan Liaozhai* 反聊齋, serialized in the *Xiaoshuo congbao* 小說叢刊 literary magazine between 1915 and 1916 and reprinted in book form in 1918.

³⁵ I borrow the term “complementary bipolarity” from Andre Plaks, who sees the confrontations of similar yet separate conceptual pairs, like yin and yang, as a recurring pattern in Chinese thought. The pairs of these opposites, according to Plaks, do not exist as absolute states of binary opposition, but reflect the “apprehension of experience [...] realized in terms of the relative presence or absence of opposites.” Andrew H. Plaks, *Archetype and Allegory in the Dream of the Red Chamber* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 45.

All the primary texts I examine were produced during the period between 1880 and 1920. My choice to focus on this particular period is based on three considerations. First, this is the period when the *Liaozhai* entered a global network of economic and symbolic exchange; prior to this time, its circulation was confined to educated readers in East Asia. In his influential book, *What is World Literature?*, David Damrosch calls this network the “world of world literature” and cites Fritz Strich to highlight its parallel to the global expansion of capitalism: it is “an intellectual barter, a traffic in ideas between peoples, a literary world market to which nations bring their spiritual treasures for exchanges.”³⁶ Although Chinese texts had entered this network of exchange as early as 1592, it was not until 1880 that Western readers saw the first substantial translation of the *Liaozhai* in Herbert A. Giles’ *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio*. A boom of avid translation ensued, and by the beginning of the twentieth century, Pu Songling’s collection had been rendered into all the major European languages.³⁷

For the *Liaozhai*, the entrance into the sphere of world literature meant more than just circulation in “a broader world beyond its linguistic and cultural point of origin.” In this particular sphere of exchange, the *Liaozhai* underwent important transformation from a literatus’ personal collection of mostly Shandong local strange tales into an exemplar of so-called

³⁶ David Damrosch, *What is World Literature?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 6.

³⁷ Besides Herbert Giles’s 1880 *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio*, other major translations of the *Liaozhai* at the turn of the twentieth century include Chen Jitong (Tscheng Ki-tong)’s *Les Chinois peints par eux-mêmes*, 3rd ed. (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1889), Martin Buber’s *Chinesische Geister- Und Liebesgeschichten* (Frankfurt a. M: Rütten & Loening, 1911), Georges Soulié de Morant’s *Strange Stories from the Lodge of Leisures* (London: Constable & Co., 1913). For a fuller account of major renditions of the *Liaozhai* into European languages, see Wang Lina, “Luetan *Liaozhai zhiyi* de waiwen yiben ji minzu yuwen banben 略談聊齋志異的外文譯本及民族語文版本,” *Pu Songling yanjiu jikan* 2 (1981). André Levy lists all the major French translations of the *Liaozhai* in the following article: André Levy, “The *Liaozhai Zhiyi* and Honglou Meng in French Translation,” in *One into Many: Translation and the Dissemination of Classical Chinese Literature*, ed. Tak-hung Leo Chan (Amsterdam & New York: Rodopi, 2003). Cheung Yu-kit examines important English translations of the *Liaozhai* in, “When Classical Chinese Works Matter: A Critical Study of Pu Songling’s *Liaozhai zhiyi* and its English Translations” (The University of Hong Kong, 2014).

“Chinese literature,” itself a byproduct of the same transnational circulation of texts and ideas that led to the emergence of world literature. This transformation is a dual process that involves reading the *Liaozhai*, first, as a literary text, and second, as a manifestation of certain attributes of Chinese culture. Though the eighteenth century had already seen interpretations of the *Liaozhai* as fiction rather than history, such readings did not presume a fundamental difference between fiction and history in a way that would define literature as the mimesis of the plausible. A conscious, fully articulated interpretation of the *Liaozhai* as a literary collection is therefore first found in European translations on the world literary market. In addition, it is in the sphere of world literature that the *Liaozhai* was read for the first time as the embodiment of a cultural discourse of enchantment. For example, Jan Jakob Maria de Groot drew heavily on Pu Songling’s tales to illustrate Chinese beliefs about the dead in his monumental six-volume study of Chinese religion, *The Religious System of China* (1892-1910), which represents the first scholarly attempt to study Chinese religion “as a whole and as it was lived.”³⁸ His approach, which was novel in his time, bears many similarities to, say, Huntington’s studies of fox spirits in the Chinese imagination, except de Groot’s interest is mainly anthropological, whereas Huntington’s is mainly literary.

The second consideration behind my choice of historical focus is that the decades spanning from 1880 to 1920 represent a crucial period when new discourses about magic and the supernatural emerged alongside the dissemination of scientific discourse.³⁹ Several scholars have

³⁸ J. J. M. de Groot, *The Religious System of China: its Ancient forms, Evolution, History and Present Aspect, Manners, Customs and Social Institutions Connected Therewith* 6vols. (Leyden: E.J. Brill, 1892-1910), vii.

³⁹ As Alex Owen argues, in the crucial hinge years from 1880 up to the First World War, the reference to “the modern” and “we moderns” took on a new and urgent meaning in Western European societies, where “a revised mode of an earlier European magical tradition and ‘Eastern’ spirituality operat[ed] [...] in the grip of change, and in

discussed the magical dimension of this period vis-à-vis the dominant rational order and pointed out that enchantment is an integral part of the modern experience in both the West and the East. As one scholar puts it, “technology is magical, yet technology is also anti-magic. This dual relation between technology and magic is even more entangled in modern times, in which nature is constantly violated by technology, and magic becomes quasi-scientific.”⁴⁰ The texts I examine reflect the magical dimension of modern culture, which paradoxically exhibits a rationality similar to scientific texts. As I will show, all these texts display an inquisitive outlook that demonstrates familiarity with scientific knowledge while neither affirming nor dismissing the possibility of the supernatural. As a result, the enchantment tales are often ambiguous concerning disenchanted views of the world.

Finally, the third consideration is that modern commercial printing, which used new technology to mass-produce texts, expanded at a rapid pace across the globe during the period in question, resulting in an unprecedented expansion of the network of world literature and in fundamental changes to reading cultures worldwide. Closer to the concerns of this dissertation, the modern press not only significantly changed the material form of the *Liaozhai* but also created new publishing venues for its literary afterlife. The main texts I examine were all products of the modern press; typical readers would read them alongside detective stories, science fictions/fantasies, travelogues, translated foreign novels, news reports about events in other countries, and so on, all mass-produced using the latest technology. Such a reader, unlike the late-imperial literatus, displayed a heightened global consciousness and engaged in frequent

dialogue with an interrogative mind-set that not only distinguished between magic and religion but increasingly consigned both to the realm of the irrational.” Owen, 7.

⁴⁰ Laikwan Pang, *The Distorting Mirror: Visual Modernity in China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), 184.

comparison of Eastern and Western mentalities. Readers of this sort were the first to compare the *Liaozhai* with Western examples of the strange and the fantastic, and their interpretations and misinterpretations continue to influence our readings of the *Liaozhai* today.

Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation consists of three interrelated chapters and follows a chronological organization. In Chapter One, I examine Gile's 1880 *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio* as a polemical translation and a critical study of Chinese culture, exemplifying what Carlo Ginzburg calls the "conjectural paradigm." Contextualizing Giles' translation among treaty-port translations of the *Liaozhai*, the Victorian translation of Oriental texts, and the emergence of the human sciences in nineteenth-century Britain, this chapter discusses how the renowned British sinologist scrutinized the *Liaozhai* tales for clues about Chinese religious beliefs, and made supposedly "scientific" inferences about Chinese culture using techniques he learned from contributors to the Victorian science of religion. Giles' contention with the contemporary discourse about a superstitious China in the *Strange Stories*, I argue, reflects his conviction that the *Liaozhai* is not only an ethnographic record reflecting mainly Confucian ethics but also a multi-layered palimpsest, in which a stratum of primitive animism survives and recurs in the more sophisticated cultural imaginations that have overlaid the original material.

Chapter Two examines Wang Tao's experiment with the serialization of classical tales during the golden age of Chinese lithography. Restoring his *Songyin tushuo* series (also known as *Hou Liaozhai*, first published in installments between 1884 and 1887) from "text" to "work," this chapter challenges some of the widespread views regarding its classification and examines important interactions between his installments and contemporary lithographically-printed

collections of classical tales, including illustrated editions of the *Liaozhai*.⁴¹ Examining Wang Tao's tales as part of the literary supplement section of the *Dianshizhai* Pictorial, this chapter further discusses the lithographic medium's impact on Wang Tao's construction of a particular recurring motif that conveys mediated visions of enchantment.

Chapter Three discusses the imitation and transformation of the *Liaozhai* tales in two *Fan Liaozhai* series written after 1900, in the form of counter-narratives. Contextualizing the two series within the "new fiction" (*xin xiaoshuo*) movement and the anti-superstition campaign at the turn of the twentieth century, this chapter examines the resurfacing of the strange elements from the *Liaozhai* within the confines of the series' transitory supernatural plots, while characterizing their rational re-interpretation at the end of each tale as an obligatory but perfunctory attempt to obliterate enchantment. I argue that although the two series use modern literary devices such as individualized perception and figural consciousness to reconcile strange elements from the *Liaozhai* collection with Post-Enlightenment rationality, they deviate significantly from the anti-supernatural rhetoric they ostensibly adopt and do not ultimately fulfill a disenchantment agenda.

⁴¹ In his essay "From Work to Text," Roland Barthes distinguishes between "text" and "work," arguing that the former is a "methodological field" that is "held in language" whereas the latter is "a fragment of substance" that is "held in hand." See Roland Barthes, "From Work to Text," in *The Rustle of Language* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1986). Barthes privileges text over work, as he believes that works are designed to be read whereas texts are to be written. I would argue, however, that reapproaching literary texts as material objects rather than a network of signifiers is central to the task of interpretation.

CHAPTER ONE

In Search of Clues: Herbert Allen Giles' *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio* and the Victorian Science of Religion

The interest in China and in her certainly four thousand years of civilization [...] will no doubt quicken some day in the future; but I, who would have loved above all things to witness its growth and expansion, shall by that time be a dweller with P'u Sung-ling "in the bosky grove, wrapped in an impenetrable gloom" 其在青林黑塞间乎.

Herbert Allen Giles, *Memoirs*, 86.⁴²

Introduction: The Indian (Chinese) Rope Trick

In a combative pamphlet entitled *The Fraud of Modern "Theosophy" Exposed and the Miraculous Rope-trick of Indian Jugglers Explained* (1912), John Nevil Maskelyne (1839-1917), a prominent British stage illusionist and high-profile exposé of frauds, denounces the leading Victorian occultist Madame Blavatsky (Helena P. Blavatsky) as “the greatest impostor in history” and sets out to debunk her false Theosophical doctrines.⁴³ The cover of Maskelyne’s pamphlet contains the sketch of an Indian boy climbing up a magically self-suspended rope, corresponding to a spectacle Madame Blavatsky claimed to have witnessed in Upper Egypt (figure 1.1).⁴⁴ Maskelyne takes Madame Blavatsky’s account of this so-called “Indian Rope Trick” with suspicion, indicating by his pamphlet’s title that the supposed wonders of Theosophy can be pin-pricked simply through rational explanation of Indian Jugglers’ tricks (figure 1.2).

⁴² Quoted in Charles Aylmer, "The Memoirs of H. A. Giles," *East Asian History*, no. 13/14 (1997): 86.

⁴³ John Nevil Maskelyne, *The Fraud of Modern "Theosophy" Exposed and the Miraculous Rope-Trick of Jugglers Explained* (London: G. Routledge & Sons, 1912).

⁴⁴ Maskelyne’s book contains a full account of Madame Blavatsky’s description of the Indian Rope Trick. See *ibid.*, 19-21.

The “Indian Rope Trick” was a popular phenomenon in the West at the turn of the twentieth century, even gaining notoriety as the “world’s most famous illusion” in the 1930s.⁴⁵ Yet as historian Peter Lamont explains in his book *The Rise of the Indian Rope Trick*, this long-lived myth had originally derived from a newspaper hoax that American journalist named John Elbert Wilkie (1860-1934) had published in the *Chicago Tribune* on August 8, 1890.⁴⁶ In this article, Wilkie writes in the voice of a fictitious ’86 Yale graduate named Fred S. Ellmore (i.e. “sell more”), who claims to have witnessed, together with a New Yorker named George Lessing, two miracles performed by a “queer-looking” Indian juggler in Goya, India. During the purportedly stunning performance, the juggler first grew a two-foot tall mango tree from a seed within a few minutes, and then instructed a coil of rope to ascend skyward by itself. Later a boy climbed up the rope and disappeared about thirty or forty feet above the ground. Though Wilkie quickly issued a retraction to apologize for deluding the public with a little story “written for the purpose of presenting a theory in an entertaining form,” the story about the Indian Rope Trick had already gone viral, so to speak.⁴⁷ As historians have noted, the legend was quickly picked up by newspapers across the Atlantic, translated into nearly every European language, and eventually brought back to India. In the following decades, hundreds of people claimed to have witnessed the Indian Rope Trick.

⁴⁵ Jeffery N. Dupee, *Travelling India*, 70

⁴⁶ Peter Lamont, *The Rise of the Indian Rope Trick: How a Spectacular Hoax Became History* (New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 2005). For John E. Wilkie (Fred S. Ellmore)’s original article, see Fred S. Ellmore, "It Is Only Hyptonism," *Chicago Tribune* 1890.

⁴⁷ For Wilkie’s retraction, see Elaine Hatfield and Richard L. Rapson, *Flimflam Artists: True Tales of Cults, Crackpots, Cranks, Creeps, Con Artists, and Charlatans* (Bloomington, IN: Xlibris 2011), 78.

Several scholars have commented on how Wilkie's hoax directly responds to the orientalist image of India as a far-off place of enchantment that fills a void in the rationalized Western imagination.⁴⁸ But no one, to my knowledge, has discussed the elements of disenchantment prevalent in the Chicago Tribune article. The fictional Fred S. Ellmore actually confesses to the reader that he "had been impressed by a theory that the explanation of all [Indian jugglers'] alleged supernatural performances would be found in hypnotism", and their attendance at the performance is intended to "put [this] theory to test."⁴⁹ The verification of the hypnosis theory, as it turns out, is solely contingent on the fact that both the mango tree and the boy climbing skyward rope are absent in the pictures Ellmore took with his Kodak camera, which contradict Lessing's sketches of the spectacle. As Ellmore bases his conclusion on the objectiveness of his Kodak—which he claims to be impervious to the juggler's irresistible hypnosis, he appears to anticipate Max Weber's claim that science and technology are instruments of disenchantment that denude the world of its remaining mysteries and magic and leave no place for the supernatural.

As a hoax that fanned a widespread fantasy about the magic powers of Indian jugglers despite being written in the form of a scientific inquiry, Wilkie's article demonstrates the complex intertwining and interdependence of enchantment and disenchantment in modern culture. This is what historian Michael Saler has described as an "antinomial" dynamic that

⁴⁸ Lamont also observes that the "seemingly inexplicable feats" of levitation in the Indian Rope Trick "fed the Victorian imagination and helped create the image of the mystic East." See Lamont, *The Rise of the Indian Rope Trick: How a Spectacular Hoax Became History*, 26.

⁴⁹ Ellmore, "It Is Only Hypnotism," 9.

simultaneously embraces “seeming contraries” that do not cancel each other out.⁵⁰ Moreover, the many locations associated with the story itself or its reproduction—India, United States, Britain, Egypt—remind us that this fantasy about Indian magic is set against the backdrop of global travel and encounters between vastly different cultures in the aftermath of colonialism.

Unexpectedly, the Indian Rope Trick is connected to Pu Songling’s *Liaozhai* in various ways. As several historians have noted, before the nineteenth century, there are three records of a miraculous spectacle that strongly resembles Wilkie’s classic account of the Indian Rope Trick.⁵¹ One of these three is a *Liaozhai* tale entitled “Stealing a Peach” (*Toutao* 偷桃), in which Pu Songling recalls a street entertainment he saw as a boy in Jinan during the spring festival. Lamont has discussed the parallels between the earlier records and Wilkie’s account, but I would go so far as to suggest that Pu Songling’s collection might well be an indirect source for the Chicago Tribune article.⁵² This is not only because there is the least variation between Pu’s “Stealing a Peach” and Wilkie’s account, but also because another tale in the *Liaozhai*, entitled “Planting a Pear Tree”, shows too many parallels with the mango tree trick described in the 1890 article to be dismissed

⁵⁰ Michael Saler, "Modernity and Enchantment: A Historiographic Review," *The American Historical Review* 111, no. 3 (2006): 709.

⁵¹ The three pre-nineteenth-century accounts are from Ibn Battuta in the fourteenth century, the Mogul Emperor Jahangir in the seventeenth century, and Pu Songling, also in the seventeenth century. All three claim to have witnessed a performance that resembles the Indian Rope Trick, and, in the first and the third accounts, the performance took place in China. For discussions of the historical precedents for the classic Indian Rope Trick, see Lamont, *The Rise of the Indian Rope Trick: How a Spectacular Hoax Became History*. Also see Lee Siegel, *Net of Magic: Wonders and Deceptions in India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 193-222.

⁵² Lamont speculates that the direct source of Wilkie’s article is American magician Harry Kellar’s travelogue entitled *A Magician’s Tour up and Down and Round About the Earth: Being the Life and Adventures of the American Nostradamus, Harry Kellar* (Chicago: R. R. Donnelley & Sons, 1886). Kellar’s account contains both the rope trick and the mango tree trick. But Kellar believes that the spectators of the rope trick “must have had their brains steeped in harsheesh”(ibid., 116). This explanation differs significantly from Wilkie’s idea of collective hypnosis.

as coincidence.⁵³ The mango trick, however, is not to be found in the other two pre-nineteenth century accounts, namely, Ibn Battuta's travelogue and Emperor Jahanguir's memoir.

If the *Liaozhai* is indeed the indirect source of the tricks mentioned in Wilkie's article, then it is quite plausible that the two tales by Pu Songling found their way into the Chicago Tribune article by way of Herbert Allen Giles' (1845-1935) English translation of the *Liaozhai*, entitled *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio* (1880, hereafter *Strange Stories*), the main text I examine in this chapter. As it is, "Stealing a Peach" and "Planting a Pear Tree" had already been translated before Giles' *Strange Stories*; but these earlier translations were done by different writers and published separately in venues not targeted at the general public in the United States. It is unlikely that Wilkie (or his source-reader, possibly Harry Kellar) would cull the two *Liaozhai* tales from a wide range of sources published decades apart in different places.⁵⁴

Giles was the only Westerner to have rendered both tales into English before 1890. His *Strange Stories*, containing tales that mirror both tricks Wilkie mentioned, had a wider circulation than any other *Liaozhai* translation and is the likely one to have been read by Wilkie or Kellar. Moreover, Giles was the only translator to make historical and scientific inquiries into the *Liaozhai* tale, contemplating, like the character Ellmore does in the Tribune article,

⁵³ In Battuta's version, the juggler follows a boy in ascending a long strip with one end tied to a wooden sphere. In Jahangir's version, the juggler uses a "chain of fifty cubits" to send a dog, a hog, a panther, a lion, and a tiger up to the sky, with all vanishing in midair. See *Memoirs of the Emperor Jahangueir* (London: J. Murray, 1829), 102. In Pu Songling's "Stealing a Peach," the performer makes a coil of rope rise and orders a boy to climb up the rope; this plot is identical to that of Wilkie's story.

⁵⁴ The earliest English translation of "Planting the Pear Tree" appears in the American missionary Samuel Well Williams (1812-1884)'s 1842 language primer *Easy Lessons in Chinese: Or Progressive Exercises to Facilitate the Study of That Language, Especially Adapted to the Canton Dialect* (Macao: Chinese Repository). It is again included in the same author's 1848 ethnographic work *The Middle Kingdom: A Survey of the Geography, Government, Education, Social Life, Arts Religions etc., of the Chinese Empire and its Inhabitants* (Chapter XII, Volume 1, 1848, 561-562). British diplomat Clement Francis Romilly Allen (1844-1920) first rendered the tale "The Peach Theft" into English and published it in the *China Review, or Notes and Queries on the Far East* in (1874-1875, 205-219).

alternative explanations that would reduce an otherwise miraculous spectacle into a deceptive trick. In the following footnote to “Stealing a Peach,” Giles quotes a passage from an 1878 article entitled “Oriental Juggery,” written by none other than the very Maskelyne who had cited Wilkie’s hoax to expose the fraud of Madame Blavatsky in *The Fraud of Modern Theosophy*:

Apropos of which passage, Mr. Maskelyne, the prince of all black-artists, ancient or modern, says: “These apparent effects were, doubtless, due to the aid of concave mirrors, the use of which was known to the ancients, especially in the East, but they could not have been produced in the open air.”⁵⁵

Thus, it appears that in 1912 Maskelyne was merely debunking a widespread fin-de-siècle fraud, which might not have come into existence had he not drawn public attention to the rope trick through his demystifying 1878 explanation in the first place.

Maskelyne—Giles—Wilkie—Madame Blavatsky—Maskelyne. The uncanny connections of these seemingly unrelated historical figures allow us to catch a glimpse of the emergence of an expanding network of world literature that enabled a literary work to depart from its point of origination, travel across linguistic and national borders, and interact with local texts. Giles’ *Strange Stories* loom large in the transnational flow of texts, in an instance of self-enclosed circulation that reverts to where it began: a rewriting of the *Liaozhai* itself, it was further overwritten by Wilkie, Madame Blavatsky, and the hundreds of “eyewitnesses” who perpetuated the myth of oriental magic. In this proliferation of new stories, the trick’s original locality was erased and replaced with India, Egypt, and many other places in the world.

The critical link formed by Giles’ *Strange Stories* in this chain cannot be underestimated. Looking at Giles’ citation of Maskelyne in “Stealing a Peach” and the tale’s transformation in

⁵⁵ John Nevil Maskelyne, “Oriental Juggery,” *Leisure Hour* 7 (1878): 250-3; 98-301. The quoted passage is Maskelyne’s interpretation of Ibn Battuta’s account of the rope trick, but the description of the trick Maskelyne quotes in “Oriental Juggery” comes from the memoir of Emperor Jahangir.

the Chicago Tribune article, we see that Giles' translation ultimately connected Pu Songling's *Liaozhai* with the ongoing debates about oriental enchantment in the networks of world literature. Regrettably, however, these connections have so far received little critical attention; in existing scholarship, Giles' *Strange Stories* is mostly studied as part of the *Liaozhai*'s translation history, with a diachronic approach and a focus on the issue of "fidelity" that have led to continual neglect of the interaction between Giles' rendering and its historical context.⁵⁶

This chapter seeks to fill in this critical lacuna through an exploration of the close connections that Giles' *Strange Stories* had with a distinct field of discourse that arose against the backdrop of the waning authority of traditional Anglicanism, the proliferation of modern spiritualisms, and the emergence of human sciences in late-Victorian Britain. While this field is often defined as the "science of religion" or the "science of comparative religion," it should be noted that "religion" here is synonymous with any system of values or beliefs. As Marjorie Wheeler-Barclay argues, the science of religion was ultimately an attempt to "create a coherent field of study that would treat religion purely as an element in human cultures"; as a scholarly enterprise, it not only "drew on a common matrix of social thought" but also "shared a common intellectual history" with anthropology.⁵⁷ Situating Giles' translation within the wide array of discourses that constitute the Victorian science of religion, I show that in *Strange Stories*, Giles was dedicated to the goal of applying scientific methods to the interpretation of Pu Songling's

⁵⁶ For studies on Giles' *Strange Stories*, see John Minford and Tong Man, "Whose Strange Stories? P'u Sun-Ling (1640-1715), Herbert Giles (1845-1935), and the *Liao-Chai Chih-I*," *East Asian History* 17/18 (1999); Man Tong, "Whose *Strange Stories*? A Study of Herbert Giles' (1845-1935) Translation of P'u Sung-Ling's (1640-1715) *Liao-Chai Chih-I*" (The Hong Kong Polytechnic University 2001). For examples of diachronic studies of the history of *Liaozhai* translations, see Tak-hung Leo Chan, *One into Many: Translation and the Dissemination of Classical Chinese Literature* (Amsterdam & New York: Rodopi, 2003). and Sing-chen Lydia Chiang, *Collecting the Self: Body and Identity in Strange Tale Collections of Late Imperial China* (Leiden: Brill, 2005).

⁵⁷ Marjorie Wheeler-Barclay, *The Science of Religion in Britain, 1860-1915* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2010), 2,18.

tales, and this approach resulted in his characterization of the *Liaozhai* as a repository of valuable insights into both Chinese culture and primitive beliefs shared by all human beings. However, as much as *Strange Stories* appears overtly to promote disenchantment, it is not without its own undercurrent of enchantment.

This chapter is divided into four parts. In the first, I examine Giles' disputes with translators of the *Liaozhai* before him and discuss his reading of the *Liaozhai* as a source of information on Chinese culture, with Confucianism as its dominant ideology. I explore the ethnographical dimension of *Strange Stories* further in the next section, and show that Giles constructs the strange as a relative concept in his translation, so that the relative strangeness problematizes any conception of the differences between "us" and "them" in cultural terms. I then examine the annotations and appendices accompanying Giles' translation and show that Giles envisions *Strange Stories* as essentially a scientific study of primitive religious thoughts surviving in the *Liaozhai*. In the final section, I point out that Giles' project of disenchantment in *Strange Stories* nonetheless avails itself of the same methodological approach he uses to reveal its near-opposite, namely the manifestation of transcendence in the human world.

I. *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio* as a Polemical Translation

Giles's *Strange Stories* is a two-volume book-length English translation containing 164 tales selected from among the approximately 500 tales in the 1842 Dan Minglun edition (collated with the 1766 Qingke pavilion edition). It is the first substantial translation of the *Liaozhai* into any European language.⁵⁸ The abiding influence of *Strange Stories* can be seen from the fact that

⁵⁸ In her book *Collecting the Self*, Sing-chen Lydia Chiang asserts that "Giles selected 164 stories from among the 455 entries contained in the 1766 edition," Chiang, *Collecting the Self: Body and Identity in Strange Tale Collections of Late Imperial China*, 71-72. This is obviously incorrect, since Giles himself states that the base text

it was drawn upon by many important later editions; for instance, both Franz Kafka's and Hermann Hesse's first encounter with Pu Songling, was through Martin Buber's *Chinesische Geister-und Liebegeschichten* (1911), itself mainly a translation of Giles' *Strange Stories* into German.⁵⁹ But besides its important role in launching the *Liaozhai* into the realm of world literature, Giles's translation had the added effect of generating interest among scholars of the time in Chinese religion and folklore, as evinced by Jan Jacob Maria de Groot's monumental anthropological work *The Religious Systems of China*, published between 1892-1910, which uses Giles's translation extensively to discuss Chinese beliefs associated with the disposal of the dead.⁶⁰

1.1 Tales from the Peripheries: Treaty Port Translations of the *Liaozhai* from and the Victorian Translation of Oriental "Folklore"

In an 1846 letter to the *Athenaeum* magazine, the English antiquarian William John Thoms (1803-1885) coined the neologism "folklore" to describe "the manners, customs, observances, superstitions, ballads, proverbs, etc., of the olden time", which in his day were

for his translation was Dan Minglun's deluxe edition, collated with the 1766 edition. Herbert A. Giles, *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio*, 2 vols., vol. 1 (London: T. De la Rue & co., 1880), xxiv-xxv.

⁵⁹ On January 16, 1913 Kafka wrote, Buber "published *Chinese Ghost and Love Stories*, which, as much as I know about them, are marvelous." Four days later, he noted, "It is really strange that you have bought the book by Buber! [...] I only know of it from a detailed review with various quotations," Adrian Hsia, *Kafka and China*, Euro-Sinica. Bd. 7 (Bern ; New York: P. Lang, 1996), 121. Hermann Hesse praised the *Ghost and Love Stories* as poetically valuable, adding that, thanks to Buber, one of the most beautiful literary works had become available, "Chinesische Geistergeschichten," *Neue Züricher Zeitung*, 25 March 1912, JNUL, Arc. Ms. Var. 350/46, 13.

⁶⁰ J. J. M. de Groot, *The Religious System of China: Its Ancient Forms, Evolution, History and Present Aspect, Manners, Customs and Social Institutions Connected Therewith* 6vols. (Leyden: E.J. Brill, 1892-1910). Other examples include G. Willoughby-Meade, *Chinese Ghouls and Goblins* (London: Constable & co. ltd., 1928); James Livingstone Stewart, *Chinese Culture and Christianity. A Review of China's Religions and Related Systems from the Christian Standpoint* (Chicago,: F.H. Revell Co., 1926).

usually designated as “popular antiquities” or “popular literature.”⁶¹ He urges the readers of the magazine to go out and collect folklore for the magazine until some British Grimm “shall arise who do for the Mythology of the British Isles the good service which that profound antiquary and philologist has accomplished for the Mythology of Germany.”⁶² The inception of the concept of folklore is deeply intertwined with the emergence of the Victorian science of religion, which is not so much an autonomous academic discipline as an interdisciplinary enterprise spilling over into other human sciences in the nineteenth century. As Wheeler-Barclay observes, contributors to this distinctive field of discourse drew “materials and insights from folklore, ethnology, history, archaeology, sociology, Oriental studies, and classics.”⁶³ Through their study of folklore, anthropologists, antiquarians, psychologists, and other Victorian elites transformed folk beliefs for scientific ends, demonstrating that paganism and Christian beliefs nestled together in the countryside, and that the purported barbarism of exotic lands was not entirely different from their own traditions.

In the nineteenth century, many of the published folk tales were imported from outside Britain because it was “conventional wisdom that England had lost its folk literature as a result

⁶¹ In a letter to *Athenaeum*, the British journal for arts and sciences, Thoms writes under the pseudonym Ambrose Merton: “[Y]our pages have so often given evidence of the interest which you take in what we in England designate as ‘Popular Antiquities’ or ‘Popular Literature’ (though by-the-by it is more a Lore than a Literature, and would most aptly be described in a good Saxon compound, Folklore—the lore of the people [...]) No one who has made the manners, customs, observances, superstitions, ballads, proverbs, etc., of the olden time his study, but must have arrived at two conclusions: the first, how much that is curious and interesting in these matters is now entirely lost, and second, how much may yet be rescued by timely exertion,” William John Thoms, “Folk-Lore,” *Athenaeum* 982 (1846): 862-63. Thoms’ letter makes it clear that he is inspired by *Deutsche Mythologie*.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 863.

⁶³ Wheeler-Barclay, *The Science of Religion in Britain, 1860-1915*, 7.

of the Puritan dislike of fantasy and of industrialization before the advent of folklorists.”⁶⁴ These “transnationalized” reading materials emerged as important literary “contact nebula” between the domestic and foreign, and they enabled Victorian readers to escape from the period’s profusion of literary realism and venture into a new world of fantasy.⁶⁵

The rise of interest in folklore and the boom of imported folk literature had a direct bearing on the translation history of the *Liaozhai* from 1842 to 1880. During this period, piecemeal translations of individual *Liaozhai* tales appeared in journals, language textbooks, and monographs on Chinese studies, and these translations, albeit mainly read by Westerners living in the treaty ports, were not completely divorced from the English boom in folklore publishing.

The earliest extant *Liaozhai* translations had been done independently by two missionaries in 1842; this was approximately 250 years after the first recorded instance of a Chinese text translated into a Western language.⁶⁶ In this year, Karl F. A. Gützlaff, a German Protestant, published his translation of nine *Liaozhai* tales in an article about Chinese literature, in which he derided the *Liaozhai* as “superstitious fables” with a Daoist bent. Gützlaff’s article appeared in the journal *Chinese Repository*, edited by Samuel Williams, who was himself familiar with the *Liaozhai*. Williams translated seven *Liaozhai* tales and included them in

⁶⁴ For an excellent study of the importation of fantastical tales into Victorian England, see Jennifer Schacker, *National Dreams: The Remaking of Fairy Tales in Nineteenth-Century England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003).

⁶⁵ As Jason Marc Harris asserts, the proliferation of literature referred to as “folklore” and “fantasy” “stoked the British attention not merely to the motifs that fantasy writers used and the structural aspects of their narratives but also influenced the metaphysical and moral discourses of both realism and the gothic,” Jason Marc Harris, *Folklore and the Fantastic in Nineteenth-Century British Fiction* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008), 1.

⁶⁶ The first Chinese text translated into a Western language is the *Mingxin baojian* (Precious Mirror for Enlightening the Mind) rendered into Spanish by Juan Cobo. See Hing-ho Chan, “The First Translation of a Chinese Text into a Western Language: The 1592 Spanish Translation of *Precious Mirror for Enlightening the Mind*,” in *One into Many: Translation and the Dissemination of Classical Chinese Literature*, ed. Tak-hung Leo Chan (New York: Rodopi, 2003), 67.

language textbook entitled *Easy lessons in Chinese or Progressive Exercises to Facilitate the Study of that Language*, which was published in the same year as Gützlaff's article.⁶⁷

In the footsteps of Gützlaff and Williams followed three British diplomat-scholars, all of whom published in treaty-port journals: in 1867, William Meyers translated the “Boon Companion”, which he accompanied with a discussion about the *Liaozhai*; from 1873 through 1876, Clement F. R. Allen published his translation of a total of 18 *Liaozhai* tales in the *China Review*; finally, Herbert Giles joined in the piecemeal translation process of the *Liaozhai*, when, in 1877—the year he set out to translate Pu's collection in its entirety—two tales translated by him appeared in *Celestial Empire*.⁶⁸

Falling across a broad spectrum in terms of accuracy and literary quality, a common feature of all the renditions predating Giles' contribution is a tendency towards simplification, reduction, and distortion—partly due to the early translators' limited knowledge of classical Chinese, but more importantly due to the obvious influence exerted on them by preconceived notions of folklore. Indeed, the early translators often demonstrated, in their introductory

⁶⁷ Karl F. A. Gützlaff, "Liau Chai I Chi, or Extraordinary Legends from Liau Chai," *The Chinese Repository* 11, no. 4 (1842): 202-10; Williams, *Easy Lessons in Chinese: Or Progressive Exercises to Facilitate the Study of That Language, Especially Adapted to the Canton Dialect*. Williams also included two tales in his *The Middle Kingdom*. The other literary works in Williams' primer include Lukchau's *Female Instructor*, *Miscellany of the Eastern Garden*, *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*.

⁶⁸ W. F. Meyers, "The Record of Marvels or Tales of the Genii," *Notes and Queries on China and Japan* (1867). Clement Allen published "The Apotheosis of Sung Chow" (考城隍) and "The Fox's Marriage" (狐嫁女) in 1874 (See "Tales from the Liao Chai Chih Yi," *China Review, or Notes and Queries on the Far East*, no.2, 364-69); "The Fortunes of Kung Hsueh Li (嬌娜), "Hsi Liu" (细柳), "The Pious Tiger of Chaocheng" (赵城虎), "The metempsychosis of the Priest" (長清僧), "The Frog God" (蛙神), "The Taoist Priest of Lao Shan" (嶗山道士), "The An Family" (云蘿公主), "The Theft of the Peaches" (偷桃), "The Fairy Kung" (恐仙), "The Lord of the West Lake" (西湖主), "The Country of the Sea Demons" (夜叉國), "The Sturdy Begger" (丐僧), "Kung Ming Pi" (宮夢弼), "Painting Skins" (畫皮) in 1875 ("Tales from the Liao Chai Chih Yi," *China Review, or Notes and Queries on the Far East*, no.3: 18-23, 99-107, 42-45, 205-19, 83-93); "Ch'in Ta Niang" (仇大娘), "The Brothers" (張誠) in 1876 ("Tales from the Liao Chai Chih Yi," *China Review, or Notes and Queries on the Far East*, no.4, 26-37). Giles translated "Luocha haishi" 羅刹海市 and "Xu huangliang" 續黃梁. See Herbert Giles, "The Lo-Ch'a Country and the Sea Market," *The Celestial Empire* (1877): 370-73; "Dr. Tseng's Dream," *The Celestial Empire* (1877): 425-27.

remarks on the *Liaozhai* excerpts, a familiarity with *Grimm Brothers' Tales*, *Arabian Nights*, and legends of India, all of which would be categorized by Victorians as foreign folklore.⁶⁹ This familiarity suggests that the Western interest in the *Liaozhai* tales is in fact one of the ramifications of the proliferation of folk literature in Victorian England.

As the early translators read the *Liaozhai* through the lens of folklore, they often misinterpreted it as an example of popular literature representing the superstitions and beliefs of the lower classes. This bias, however, had already existed even before the invention of the term folklore. In 1834, the French sinologist Stanislas Julien, who was one of the first Europeans to mention the *Liaozhai*, described it as “a curious collection of fairy tales [*Contes de Fees*]”, saying it represented a narrative tradition “designed for use mainly by the lower classes [...] based on popular belief” and “intended for propagation or maintenance by hitting a wonderful narratives’ own imagination.”⁷⁰ Similarly to Julien, many early translators regarded the *Liaozhai* as a collection of fairy tales reflecting the folk beliefs of Daoism and Buddhism. Gützlaff, for example, comments that the *Liaozhai* tales “refer primarily to the doctrines of the Tau sect.”⁷¹ This belief may in fact have led him to recast the protagonist in “Zhu Weng” as a Daoist priest, while in the original tale the character is merely a deceased villager come back to life. By the same token, most *Liaozhai* tales translated between 1842 and 1880 feature a Daoist magician or a

⁶⁹ “It is hoped that some of these stories may not be without interest to the readers of the *China Review*, if taken as specimens of Chinese folklore to be compared with the legends of India collected by Miss Frerer in “Old Deccan Days,” and by Captain Burton in “Vikram and the Vampire.” Allen, “Tales from the *Liao Chai Chih Yi*,” 364.

⁷⁰ Stanislas Julien, *Blanche Et Bleue, Ou, Les Deux Couleuvres-Fées Roman Chinois* (Paris: Libr. de C. Gosselin, 1834). The translation of the quotation is from Legge’s review of *Strange Stories*. James Legge, “Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio,” *The Academy* 18, no. 436 (1880): 185.

⁷¹ Gützlaff, “Liau Chai I Chi, or Extraordinary Legends from Liau Chai,” 203.

Buddhist monk as their main character. None of the translators, including Giles, associates the *Liaozhai* tales with Confucian moral values.

Besides characterizing the *Liaozhai* as a repository of Buddhist and Daoist beliefs, the translators also shared Julien's assumption that the *Liaozhai* was written for the uneducated. Williams, for example, argued that the *Liaozhai* was one of the books that "form the common mental aliment for the lower classes, being read by those who are able, and talked about by all, and consequently exert a great influence."⁷² Similarly, Meyers made the observation that "the porter at his gate, the boatman at this midday rest, the chair-coolie at this stand, no less than the man of letters among his books, may be seen poring with delight over the elegantly-narrated marvels of the *Liao-Chai*."⁷³ Their argument contradicted the fact that that Pu Songling's collection circulated primarily among literati readers.

A logical extension of the assumption about the *Liaozhai*'s readership is the view that its narrative style is simple and close to the speech. This is perhaps why Williams not only selected certain *Liaozhai* tales as translation exercises in his language primer, but also placed them in beginning lessons as preparation for subsequent more advanced exercises, which (to our surprise nowadays) involve translating extracts from vernacular novels. Similarly, Allen remarked that the *Liaozhai* is "by no means a difficult work for the foreign student to translate with the aid of a teacher able to explain the numberless allusions which crop up in every page."⁷⁴ In keeping with

⁷² Samuel Wells Williams, *The Middle Kingdom; a Survey of the Geography, Government, Education, Social Life, Arts, Religion, Etc., of the Chinese Empire and Its Inhabitants*, 2 vols., vol. 1 (New York & London 1848), 561.

⁷³ Meyers, "The Record of Marvels or Tales of the Genii," 186.

⁷⁴ Allen, "Tales from the Liao Chai Chih Yi," 364.

this misconception about the *Liaozhai*'s simplicity, several translators simplified both the original language and the plots of the stories.

In addition to this misguided notion of the *Liaozhai* as a work of popular literature, an examination of the translated excerpts also reveals a strong antipathy towards the *chuanqi* tales featuring romantic love between male scholars and female revenants or vixens, which constitute the most significant cluster of tales in the *Liaozhai* collection. We find no phantom heroine in the excerpted translations, and only three out of the forty-odd translated excerpts feature fox spirits as characters. Of these three, Allen's "The Fortunes of K'ung Hsüeh Li" (Jiao Na) is the only tale that contains a vixen character; in the other two translations, namely Meyer's "Boon Companion" ("Jiuyou") and Allen's "The Fox's Marriage" ("Hu Jia Nü"), the protagonists exclusively interact with male fox spirits.

The Victorian concern with decorum was certainly to blame for the almost total exclusion of Pu Songling's many ghost and fox tales written in the vein of *chuanqi*. But the predominance in the translations of the *zhiguai* tales, disproportionate to their relative marginality in the *Liaozhai*, sheds its own light on the mediating effect that a pre-existing notion of Eastern enchantment may have had. Featuring tricks, transformations, monsters, and Daoist/Buddhist magicians, the translated *zhiguai* tales easily struck a chord with readers familiar with the jinns, giants, fakirs, yogis, jugglers, and other miracle-mongers in Victorian Britain's dictionary of orientalist folklore. Indeed, many of the translators appear to have regarded the *Liaozhai* as the Chinese *Arabian Nights*.⁷⁵ Gützlaff and Meyers, for example, borrowed a repertoire of terms

⁷⁵ For example, Stanislas Julien comments that writers on Chinese literature "have never said a word about the romances in which the marvelous and the elfish are mingled, and that are very numerous in China. I possess several of them of a very recent date, which, if we have regard to the pompous eulogies of their editors, should be read in China with as much avidity and interest as *The Thousand and One Night* are read among ourselves. But the two of them of principal value are so voluminous that to translate the one or the other would have required an

from the *Arabian Nights* (“genii, elves, fairies, ghouls”) in their discussion of the *Liaozhai*. Since in the *Arabian Nights* the genii are predominantly male, it is not surprising that they deliberately neglected supernatural female characters.

1.2. Giles’ Approach as Translator in *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio*

First published by Thos. de la Rue and Company in London, Giles’s *Strange Stories* is the first *Liaozhai* translation to be printed and reprinted in major publishing centers on both sides of the Atlantic, with the general reading public in the West as its target audience.⁷⁶ In an excellent study of *Strange Stories*, Tong Man has systematically examined the approach Giles adopted in his *Liaozhai* translation.⁷⁷ However, Tong’s analysis is mainly devoted to a discussion of Giles’ fidelity as a translator. My discussion of Giles’ approach here, by contrast, is oriented towards an examination of Giles’ contention with early translators of the *Liaozhai*. I argue that Giles conceived his *Strange Stories* as a polemic against the many distorted views of the *Liaozhai* and China, and it is this polemic nature, and not merely its book-length, that has set *Strange Stories* apart from the preceding translations.

amount of time against such employment of which my labors of a higher order cried out.” See Legge, “Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio,” 185. One of the principle works Julien referred to is Pu Songling’s *Liaozhai*.

⁷⁶ The advertisement at the end of Thos. de La Rue edition of *Strange Stories* announces that Giles’ translation is “sold by all booksellers.” An additional twenty-odd titles also published by Thos. De la Rue & Company are listed in the same advertisement. Some of these titles, such as *Jungle Life in India* or *Journal of a Tour*, are accounts of travels abroad, but there also essays, collected correspondences, diaries, memoirs, treatises on games, laws, holiday cards, pocket calendars, etc. *Strange Stories* is one of the two translations mentioned in the advertisement, with the other being S. Baring-Gould’s English translation of a German novel entitled *Ernestine*. The titles in the advertisement suggest that the publications of Thos. De La Rue catered to the diverse interests of domestic readers. Giles’ translation was reprinted in New York by Paragon Book gallery in 1908, in Shanghai by Kelly and Welsh in 1908 and 1926, and in London by T.W. Laurie in 1926.

⁷⁷ Tong, “Whose *Strange Stories*? A Study of Herbert Giles’ (1845-1935) Translation of P’u Sung-Ling’s (1640-1715) *Liao-Chai Chih-I*.”

Audience and Style

In *Collecting the Self: Body and Identity in Strange Tale Collections of Late Imperial China*, Lydia Sing-Chen Chiang comments that Giles “deleted all overt references to sex and violence [in the *Liaozhai*], and dedicated the [1880 *Strange Stories*] to his wife and four children. The revised second edition in 1908 was dedicated to his seven grandchildren. Not surprisingly, horror stories [...] were absent from both editions.”⁷⁸ Here Chiang implies that Giles excised improper passages from the translation for the sake of a less educated audience represented by his wife, children, and grandchildren. But this view overlooks the presence of a number of tales in Giles’ translation that actually deal with horror (for example, “Dr. Tseng’s Dream,” as Giles himself remarked, is a tale that involves themes reminiscent of the Chamber of Horrors in Chinese temples).⁷⁹ In addition, Chiang may have overlooked the fact that Giles was trying to match the difficult style of the *Liaozhai* in his translation, and that, instead of simplifying the narrative for the reader, Giles actually took pains to preserve Pu Songling’s style in English without compromise. Therefore, no evidence suggests that Giles’ *Strange Stories* was intended for female or juvenile readers.

Giles is unequivocal about the fact that the *Liaozhai* is a “difficult book” intended only for readers who are well-versed in classical Chinese literature.⁸⁰ This claim takes issue, for the first time, with the aforementioned misunderstanding of the *Liaozhai* that had become engrained in the prior reception of the collection. Giles was very conscious of the peculiarities of Chinese

⁷⁸ Chiang, *Collecting the Self: Body and Identity in Strange Tale Collections of Late Imperial China*, 71-72.

⁷⁹ This point will be further discussed in section III of this chapter.

⁸⁰ Giles, *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio*, 1, xiii.

classical narrative, and his authority on the matter is moreover undergirded by his firm grasp of literary Chinese, as well as his understanding of the terse but “marvelously beautiful” style that has canonized the *Liaozhai* as the culmination of the Chinese classical tale, to which no previous translator had given serious attention.⁸¹ In the preface, he observes that in the *Liaozhai*, “[t]erseness is pushed to its extreme limits; each particle that can be safely dispensed with is scrupulously eliminated.”⁸² But for him, the “abstruse” yet “marvelous” style of the *Liaozhai* tales derives from not only the “book language” (i.e. Classical Chinese) but also the author’s ingenuity:

[...] every here and there some new and original combination invests perhaps a single word with a force it could never have possessed except under the hands of a perfect master of his art. Add to the above, copious allusions and adaptations from a course of reading, which would seem to have been co-extensive with the whole range of Chinese literature, a wealth of metaphor and an artistic use of figures generally to which only the *chef-d’oeuvres* of Carlyle form an adequate parallel; and the result is a work which for purity and beauty of style is universally accepted in China as the best and most perfect model. Sometimes the story runs along plainly and smoothly enough; but the next moment we may be plunged into pages of abstruse text, the meaning of which is so involved in quotations from and allusions to the poetry or history of the past three thousand years as to be recoverable only after diligent perusal of the commentary and much searching in other works of reference.⁸³

From our contemporary perspective, the comparison of the style of the *Liaozhai* to that of the “*chef d’œuvres*” of Thomas Carlyle is no doubt a stretch. However, one possible explanation is that Giles categorized *Strange Stories* as Chinese folklore, and the *Liaozhai* may have reminded him of the literary fairy tales by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe that Carlyle had translated from

⁸¹ The only other to do this was A. F. Allen, and it is not surprising that the former’s translation had the most obvious influence on Giles.

⁸² Giles, *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio*, 1, xxx.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

German into English.⁸⁴ On the surface of course, Giles' folkloristic reading of the *Liaozhai* makes him appear no different from earlier *Liaozhai* translators. However, there is a crucial difference: Giles' usage of folklore connotes *Kunstmärchen* or *Buchmärchen*, literary or written fairytales that may draw on oral and folk traditions while retaining their status as literature.⁸⁵ By contrast, the folklore that early translators had in mind are clearly *Volksmärchen*, which are usually told in simple, straightforward manner.

It was Giles's ambition to match Pu Songling's intricate style in his translation, and *Strange Stories* bears the distinctive mark of a superior translator, whose own skilled prose truly does parallel the unconstrained spirit and witty phraseology in the original text.⁸⁶ An excellent example of Giles' determined endeavor to preserve the literariness of Pu Songling's writing style is found in the following excerpt from his translation of the "strange historian's" own "Self-Preface:"

Clad in wisteria, girdled with ivy; thus sang San-Lü in his *Dissipation of Grief*. Of ox-headed devils and serpent Gods, he of the long-nails never wearied to tell. Each interprets in his own way the music of heaven, and whether it be discord or not, depends upon antecedent causes. As for me, I cannot, with my poor autumn fire-fly's light, match myself against the hobgoblins of the age. I am but the dust in the sun beam, a fit laughing-stock for devils.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Thomas Carlyle, *The Fairy Tale of the Green Snake and the Beautiful Lily* (Edinburgh: Floris Books, 1832). Another possible explanation is that Carlyle writes highly rhetorical and allusive prose.

⁸⁵ There is an interesting connection between Oriental fairy tales and *Kunstmärchen*. Nina Berman observes that in Germany, the "Oriental fairy tale was part of the larger corpus of *Kunstmärchen* (literary fairy tale). From Wieland and Goethe to Wackenroder and later Hofmannsthal, German writers were inspired by the Oriental tales, such as those included in the collection *One Thousand and One Nights*, and by, among others, British and French translations, adaptations, and new creations in this genre," Nina Berman, *German Literature on the Middle East: Discourses and Practices, 1000-1989* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2011), 170. In an introductory note published on the *Celestial Empire* in 1877, Giles describes the *Liaozhai* as "a book of fairy-stories, wanting the delicately-pointed morals which have immortalized a similar volume by the late Hans Andersen." See Giles, "The Lo-Ch'a Country and the Sea Market," 370.

⁸⁶ Giles' translation is so remarkable that John Minford, who produced the best available English translation of the *Liaozhai*, feels obliged to acknowledge his debt to Giles, not only because his first encounter with Pu Songling was, in fact, through Giles' translation, but also for the "occasional felicitous phrase" that he has "not hesitated to borrow," Minford, *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*.

⁸⁷ Giles, *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio*, 1, xvii.

No other translator of Giles' generation took such pains to preserve the figurative aspect of the *Liaozhai*'s language, nor the multiple culturally-determined references. The entire passage cited here is annotated in minute detail, with nothing left unexplained.⁸⁸ Running throughout *Strange Stories*, these annotations not only mark, in and of themselves, another significant advance over earlier translations; they also contribute to the impression of a serious scholarly study with its many footnotes, glossaries, and appendices.

Interestingly, the highly-wrought diction of the translation and accompanying scholarly commentary are absent from another publication of Giles'—a contrast that, if anything, provides further proof that *Strange Stories* was *not* intended for a low- or even middle-brow readership. In 1911, Giles published a collection of Chinese folklore entitled *Chinese Fairy Tales*.⁸⁹ Issued as part of a series called *Gowan's International Library*, this collection included eight *Liaozhai* tales and was intended, according to the series editor A. L. G., “as a companion to the Japanese fairy tales published in the same series.”⁹⁰ In the case of these translations, both language and plot are simplified to the degree that they can be read aloud to an uneducated reader, and a marked sense of orality arises, reinforced by the subtitle “told in English by Prof. Herbert A.

⁸⁸ It is also worth noting that Thos. De la Rue and Company advertised Giles' translation as an “annotated” translation.

⁸⁹ Herbert Allen Giles, *Chinese Fairy Tales: Told in English by Prof. H.A. Giles* (London: Gowan & Gray, 1911).

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 2. The included *Liaozhai* tales are: “Stealing Peaches” (偷桃), “Painted Skin” (畫皮), “The Wonderful Pear Tree” (種梨), “Learning Magic” (嶗山道士), “Theft of a Duck” (罵鴨), “Football on a Lake” (汪士秀), “The Flower Faeries” (香玉), “The Talking Bird” (雌鴿 not translated in the *Strange Stories*). In addition to the *Liaozhai* tales, there are also four stories from other sources. A catalog of the *Gowan International Library* titles in the series is appended to the back of the book.

Giles, Cambridge”, in a move that completely bypasses Pu Songling’s authorship.⁹¹ In terms of selection, the *Chinese Fairy Tales* resembles the many piecemeal translations that preceded the publication of *Strange Stories* in the aspect that it excludes the romances between male scholars and female fox spirits.

“Strict English equivalents of all Chinese terms”: Giles’ “Fluency Strategy”

Strange Stories did not read like a text with a strong foreign tone to the Victorians. While keeping the lofty style of the *Liaozhai* narrative in the translation, Giles took pains to make the syntax, manner of speaking, diction, and so on, as idiomatic as possible for an English audience. A review in *China Review* by James Dyer Ball (1847-1919), which comments on Giles’s gift as a translator, summarizes how a contemporary reader responded to Giles’s translation:

There are translations and translations of Chinese book into English. The wooden style for example, heavy and uninteresting, and confirming the reader in his prejudice against an excursion into what has been styled the wilderness of Chinese literature and the desert of Chinese books [...] Dr. Giles discovers many a garden in the erstwhile wilderness and oft an oasis in the supposed dreary desert [...] Steeping himself in the sense of the original, he ‘Englishes’ it, eschewing uncouth renderings [...] that wring all beauty and sense out of it, leaving a jejune, lifeless semblance to the original, out of which all grace, freshness and vigor has gone [...] We have not here in these translations a Chinese tricked out in Western garb, looking foreign and ill at ease; but the spirit, the life of the Celestial has been, by a touch of genius—by a species of metempsychosis—by the turn of a mental wheel of transmigration of the spirit of literature,—transferred into the body of a European style, robed with well-fitting language and grace of manner.⁹²

In a footnote to the story “Examination for the Post of Guardian Angel,” (Kao Chenghuang 考城隍), Giles provides us a glimpse of what Ball refers to as the anglicizing approach, declaring that

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Minford and Man, “Whose Strange Stories? P’u Sun-Ling (1640-1715), Herbert Giles (1845-1935), and the *Liao-Chai Chih-I*,” 11.

he would “not hesitate to use strictly English equivalents for all kinds of Chinese terms.”⁹³

Examples abound of such “domestications” of terms specific to the Chinese culture: *chenghuang* 城隍 is translated as the “guardian angel”; Guangong 關公, the God of War, or Chinese Mars; all the examination degrees are anglicized, thus the *xiucai* 秀才 is Bachelor’s degree, *juren* 舉人 is Master’s degree, and *jinsshi* 進士 is Doctor’s degree. Yet Giles did not simply anglicize the terms; he sometimes resorts to loanwords from other European languages to translate Chinese concepts. For example, *ji* 髻 (hair bun) is translated as “maidenly *coiffure*”, *huashen* 花神 (flower goddess) is translated as “nymph”. In general, Giles tends to leave no Chinese concept unmatched with a European equivalent.

By finding such equivalents, Giles seems to reenact in *Strange Stories* what Lawrence Venuti calls the “fluent strategy”, defined as “a discursive sleight of hand by which the translator domesticates the foreign text, causing its difference to vanish by making it intelligible in an English-language culture that values easy readability, transparent discourse, the illusion of authorial presence.”⁹⁴ Nonetheless, I would like to point out that there are varying degrees to the fluent strategy. The liberties Giles took do not go so far as fitting his *Liaozhai* translation into the narrative conventions of European novels, whereas some of the translators who came after him, such as Georges Soulié de Morant and Lafcadio Hearn, actually retold the *Liaozhai* stories

⁹³ Giles, *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio*, 1, 1.

⁹⁴ Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2008).

completely in the guise of European narratives;⁹⁵ Giles was comparatively respectful of Pu Songling's manner of storytelling.

Another ideal Giles pursues in his translation coincides with what Venuti criticizes as a major symptom of the “fluent” translation, namely, the invisibility of the translator.⁹⁶ In the introduction he wrote to *Strange Stories*, Giles claims that his translation enables the “Chinese [...] to speak for themselves.”⁹⁷ He plays down his role as translator by calling attention to his editorship instead—as he indicates in the preface, his minimal intervention can be seen from the fact that he only adds notes to “make the [stories] more suggestive and more acceptable to the European eye,” and he claims for himself “only so much authority as is due to the opinion of one qualified observer who can have no possible motive in deviating ever so slightly from what his own personal experience has taught him to regard as the truth.”⁹⁸ What Giles strives to present to the English reader, then, is an “unmediated” translation, identical to the original stories in all but one regard, namely that it is in a different language. As Ball observes in the passage cited above, Giles “transferred [the Chinese text] into the body of a European style, robed with well-fitting language and grace of manner.” Ball's invocation of a sartorial simile à la Carlyle seems here to turn the adage “traduttore, traditore” on its head; the suggestion is that the translator's

⁹⁵ George Soulié de Morant, *Strange Stories from the Lodge of Leisures* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1913); Lafcadio Hearn, *Some Chinese Ghosts* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1887).

⁹⁶ From Venuti's point of view, the “fluent strategy”, with its deceptively transparent translation, is merely one of the devices of domestication, which “exemplif[y] in an extreme and particularly troubling form the ethnocentric and imperialist movements that necessarily figure in every act of translation.” See *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*, 127. Venuti favors instead what he calls, in opposition to domestication, “foreignization”, which he sees as “a strategic cultural intervention [...] pitched against the hegemonic English-language nations and the unequal cultural exchanges in which they engage their global others” (ibid, 20).

⁹⁷ Giles, *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio*, 1, xv.

⁹⁸ *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio*, 1, xv-xvi.

interference is negligible because it does not violate the spirit of the text.⁹⁹ Interestingly, Martin Buber, who claimed that his translation was more faithful to the original language than Giles's, actually left many of the figurative devices in the original text untranslated.¹⁰⁰

Giles's "fluency strategy" in *Strange Stories* was strongly criticized by James Legge (1815-1897), the foremost Sinologist of nineteenth-century Europe and a major contributor to the Victorian science of religion.¹⁰¹ In his 1880 review of *Strange Stories*, Legge argued that Chinese terms are not commensurable with the English ones because of their specific cultural connotations:

We should have preferred [...] a less frequent employment of 'strictly English equivalents for all kinds of Chinese terms' [...] terms belonging to a civilization or a society so different as those of England and China seldom possess more than an analogy, nearer or more remote, as each case really be [...] To translate the Chinese title by an English name conveying to the mind a different idea, and then to explain the Chinese significance of the name in a note, is certainly a confused and unsatisfactory procedure.¹⁰²

Legge's own approach to translation is very similar to what Venuti calls the "foreignization" method. Legge believes that a faithful translation should be free of any extended paraphrase, even if it useful to the reader's comprehension. In his preface to the 1892 revision of Volume I, he confesses that he was tempted to change some of his translations to make them flow more gracefully, but decided against it because English eloquence is not a criterion for faithful

⁹⁹ This provides another possible explanation of why Giles makes the assimilation between Pu Songling and Thomas Carlyle.

¹⁰⁰ Martin Buber, *Chinesische Geister-Und Liebesgeschichten* (Frankfurt a. M: Rütten & Loening, 1911).

¹⁰¹ Legge's reputation as the most important Victorian translator of Chinese texts rests primarily on his five-volume *The Chinese Classics*, published from 1861 to 1872, and on the four-volume *The Sacred Books of China* he contributed to Max Müller's monumental *The Sacred Books of the East* from 1879 to 1885.

¹⁰² Legge, "Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio," 185.

translation.¹⁰³ Legge's translation reflects what he calls a faithfulness "to the original Chinese rather than the grace of composition," which he equates with the "correctness of interpretation."¹⁰⁴ As Wang Hui points out, Legge "weigh[ed] every character in the source text carefully and showed a conscious effort not just to be precise but also to preserve the original syntax and rhetoric as long as it makes sense to do so."¹⁰⁵ Perhaps it is because of Legge's promotion of close translation as the polar opposite of paraphrase that Lin Yutang mocked Legge's translation for its "fetish of literalness, as if a certain air of foreign remoteness, rather than clarity, were the mark of fidelity."¹⁰⁶

But aside from the reservations he expresses, Legge values Gile's contribution to the reader's knowledge of Chinese language, culture, and society. *Strange Stories*, as Legge puts it, "displays a fine acquaintance with the structure of Chinese composition, and as what Mr. Giles specially claims for himself, 'an extensive insight into the manners, customs, superstitions, and general social life of the Chinese.'"¹⁰⁷ By underscoring the ethnographical value of *Strange Stories* and its contribution to the "knowledge of the language and literature of the empire and ways of thinking prevalent among the people," Legge implies that *Strange Stories* fulfills the same goal as his translation of the Chinese classics: both enable readers in the West to become familiar with the Chinese way of thinking.

¹⁰³ Quoted in Marilyn Laura Bowman, *James Legge and the Chinese Classics*, 564.

¹⁰⁴ Preface, Chinese Classics, volume 1, 1893. Quoted in Wang Hui, *Translating Chinese Classics in a Colonial Context: James Legge and His Two Versions of the Zhongyong* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008), 48.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 51.

¹⁰⁶ Lin Yutang, *From Pagan to Christian*, [1st ed. (Cleveland,: World Pub. Co., 1959), 51.

¹⁰⁷ Legge, "Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio," 185.

Giles' Moralistic Reading of the Liaozhai

Legge's recognition of *Strange Stories* as a valuable source of ethnographic information should be viewed in connection with Giles' depiction of the *Liaozhai* as a work reflecting Chinese ethical values, especially those of Confucianism. In the preface to *Strange Stories*, Giles argues that many of the *Liaozhai* tales "contain, in addition to the advantages of style and plot, a very excellent moral."¹⁰⁸ Elsewhere in the preface, he insists that "[m]uch of what the Chinese do actually believe and practise in their religious and social life" can be found in the *Liaozhai* collection.¹⁰⁹

Giles' moralistic interpretation of the *Liaozhai* betrays the influence of the seventeenth-century Chinese commentator Tang Menglai (1627-1698), who sought to legitimate Pu Songling's writing of strange tales redefining "an interest in the strange in morally and intellectually acceptable terms with the aid of precedents from the Confucian classics."¹¹⁰ In his introduction, Giles quotes Tang Menglai's 1682 preface to the *Liaozhai* in full and argues that the intention of most of the *Liaozhai* tales is to "glorify virtue and censure vice."¹¹¹ By arguing that most of the *Liaozhai* stories have a strong moral tenor, Giles further distinguishes himself from his predecessors, who had either disparaged the *Liaozhai* tales as "superstitious fables" reflecting blind Buddhist and/or Daoist beliefs or reduced them to accessible entertainment for members of the lower strata of Chinese society.

¹⁰⁸ Giles, *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio*, 1, xxxii.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, xv.

¹¹⁰ For a discussion of Tang Menglai's commentary on Pu Songling's tales, see Zeitlin, *Historian of the Strange: Pu Songling and the Chinese Classical Tale*, 17-33.

¹¹¹ Giles, *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio*, 1, xxxii.

Instead, Giles associates the *Liaozhai* with Confucianism, not only to elevate the collection's literary status, but also to justify his characterization of the *Liaozhai* as a key text for deciphering the Chinese mentality. In situating the locus of mainstream Chinese moral codes and religious beliefs in Confucianism, Giles displays views similar to Legge's, whose comparative religion is, after all, predicated on the assumption that Western and Chinese moralities are best represented by Christianity and Confucianism respectively. For Legge, Buddhism and Daoism are not so much systems of ethical beliefs as blind superstitions, with an irrational fear of false idols. In an essay on the scholar-poet Han Yu of the Tang dynasty, Legge vocalized his position by avowing to "dislodge powerful Chinese attractions to 'superstitious' traditions such as Buddhism and Daoism" from Chinese culture proper.¹¹² Similarly to him, Giles also regarded Buddhism and Daoism as inferior to Confucianism. "As to religion in China," Giles once wrote, "it is only of the ethics of Confucius that the state takes any cognizance [...] His maximums are entirely devoid of superstitious elements."¹¹³

The association of the *Liaozhai* allows Giles to attribute folkloristic and ethnographic values to Pu Songling's tales. The *Liaozhai*, as he argues, provides the reader "an aperçu of the manners, customs, and social life of that vast Empire."¹¹⁴ This ethnographical approach to the reading of the *Liaozhai* tales was novel both to translations of the *Liaozhai* as well as to the traditional criticism that Pu's tales had spawned among the Chinese literary elite of successive

¹¹² Norman J. Girardot, *The Victorian Translation of China: James Legge's Oriental Pilgrimage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 12.

¹¹³ Herbert A. Giles, *Historic China and Other Sketches* (London: Thos. de la Rue & Co., 1882), 96.

¹¹⁴ *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio*, 1, xxxii.

periods, which Giles certainly knew.¹¹⁵ However, as much as this approach enabled Giles to present the *Liaozhai* as an important cultural text no less worthy of critical attention than the Confucian classics Legge had translated, it also requires reading against the grain—the emphasis on *Liaozhai*'s ethnographic value creates the obvious paradox of using stories about ghosts and fox-spirits as a reliable source of information on Chinese culture. That said, Giles did not invent this paradoxical method of reading; the Victorian translation of Oriental “folklore” had already provided him with antecedents for imposing a factual reading onto highly-fictionalized narratives.

1.3 Edward Lane's *Thousand and One Nights* as an Antecedent for Cultural Translation of Oriental Fantasy Narrative

Within the Victorian vogue for transcribing, translating, and transnationalizing Oriental tales, Edward William Lane (1801-1876)'s *The Thousand and One Nights* is undoubtedly the best-known example. Between 1839 and 1841, Lane published a new translation of the *Alf layla wa layla*, entitled *The Thousand and One Nights, commonly called in England, The Arabian Nights' Entertainment*.¹¹⁶ First appearing in a journal and then in a two-volume book-form, this

¹¹⁵ For a thorough study of commentaries, see Zeitlin, *Historian of the Strange: Pu Songling and the Chinese Classical Tale*, 15-42.

¹¹⁶ Lane's translation was commissioned by the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge and published by Charles Knight, first in thirty-two periodic installments from 1838 to 1840, and then in three extensively annotated and illustrated volumes from 1839 to 1841. The illustrations, designed by William Harvey, frequently present detailed depictions of architecture and costume. In volume 3, Lane acknowledges that Mr. Harvey's "admirable designs have procured for [the] version a much more extensive circulation than it would otherwise have obtained." *The Thousand and One Nights, Commonly Called, in England, the Arabian Nights' Entertainments. A New Translation from the Arabic, with Copious Notes*, 3 vols., vol. 3 (London: C. Knight, 1841), 747.

annotated edition quickly gained popularity and soon became “the standard English version for general reading.”¹¹⁷ Giles was familiar with Lane’s translation and specifically quoted his version of the *Arabian Nights* in his discussion of the parallels between the “Painted Skin” and Lane’s “Fisherman’s Tale” in his book *Chinese Civilization*, as well as his annotation of “boy” as a common term in China for a servant in his *Glossary of References on Subjects Connected with the Far East*. Though Giles did not openly acknowledge any influence from Lane, his views on the qualifications of a good translator and the cultural values of Oriental folklore strongly resemble Lane’s.

Translating directly from Arabic, Lane saw his rendering of the *Alf layla wa layla* as a corrective to the many erroneous English translations of Antoine Galland’s French translation of the *Arabian Nights*. In his opinion, Galland “has excessively perverted the work. His acquaintance with Arab manners and customs was insufficient to preserve him always from errors of the grossest description, and by the style of his version he has given to the whole a false character.”¹¹⁸ The objection to Galland here is based on Lane’s conviction that a faithful translator has to be guided, first of all, not merely by proficiency in the original language, but by adequate knowledge of the manners and customs of the source culture. As Jennifer Schacker points out, “when Lane addresses the possibility of faulty translation, it is not textual or linguistic precision that he takes as his yardstick but a form of cultural accuracy.”¹¹⁹ In the “Translator’s Preface” to *The Thousand and One Nights*, Lane declares “I consider myself possessed of the

¹¹⁷ Stanley Lane-Poole, ed. *Stories from the Thousand and One Nights (the Arabian Nights' Entertainments)* (New York: Collier, 1909), 4.

¹¹⁸ Edward William Lane and William Harvey, *The Thousand and One Nights, Commonly Called, in England, the Arabian Nights' Entertainments. A New Translation from the Arabic, with Copious Notes*, 3 vols., vol. 1 (London: C. Knight, 1839), viii.

¹¹⁹ Schacker, *National Dreams: The Remaking of Fairy Tales in Nineteenth-Century England*, 91.

chief qualifications for the proper accomplishment of my present undertaking, from my having lived several years in Cairo, associating almost exclusively with Arabs, speaking their language, conforming to their general habits with the most scrupulous exactitude, and [having been] received into their society on terms of perfect equality.”¹²⁰ As the passage demonstrates, Lane proclaims that he is capable of providing the kind of close translation and sufficiently explanatory annotation previously unavailable to English readers, precisely because he has experienced Egypt as an Egyptian.

In actuality, the connection Lane draws between cultural knowledge and truthful translation also allows him to promote *The Thousand and One Nights* as a document of Arabic culture, which he sees as crystallized in an “allochronic” Cairo, where the past and the present are conflated.¹²¹ A number of paratextual additions, including annotations of linguistic and cultural terms, and illustrations depicting the architecture and customs of the Arabic world, are intended to augment the reader’s knowledge of Arabic culture.¹²² This annotated and illustrated format follows that of Lane’s earlier ethnographical work, entitled *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (first published in 1836, hereafter *Manners and Customs*).¹²³ In fact, Lane himself saw *The Thousand and One Nights* as a logical continuation of his endeavor in *Manners and Customs* to explain the nuances of Egyptian culture. In his prefatory comments to *Manners and Customs*, Lane wrote:

¹²⁰ Lane and Harvey, *The Thousand and One Nights, Commonly Called, in England, the Arabian Nights' Entertainments. A New Translation from the Arabic, with Copious Notes*, 1, ix.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² “The original work being solely for the entertainment of the Arabs, I add copious notes to the translation, to render it more intelligible and agreeable to the reader,” (xviii).

¹²³ Edward William Lane, *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*, 2 vols. (London: C. Knight and co., 1836).

There is a work, however, which presents most admirable pictures of the manners and customs of the Arabs, and particularly of those of the Egyptians; it is ‘The Thousand and One Nights; or Arabian Night’ Entertainments’: if the English reader had possessed a close translation of it with sufficient illustrative notes, I might almost have spared myself the labor of the present undertaking.¹²⁴

He repeated a similar assertion in the *Thousand and One Nights*, arguing that his translation was “illustrative of the national character, domestic habits, and general manners and customs, of a remarkable people.”¹²⁵ This emphasis on the ethnographical value of *The Thousand and One Nights* illustrates an important contention Lane had with Galland, who had presented the *Arabian Nights* simply as entertainment.

Lane’s *Thousand and One Nights* provides an important antecedent for Giles to consider the *Liaozhai* both ethnographically valuable and appropriate for a wide range of English readers. Although the idea that cultural and textual appropriation go hand-in-hand was already firmly established by the time *The Thousand and One Nights* was published, it is, as Schacker has pointed out, Lane’s translation that first popularized “rhetorical and editorial strategies” that informed later interpretations of supernatural and fantastical tales as cultural indices.¹²⁶ In a manner strongly resembling Lane’s rhetoric, Giles wrote in the preface to *Strange Stories* that his two “requisite qualifications” as a translator include “an accurate knowledge of the grammatical structure of the language, and an extensive insight into the manners, customs, superstitions, and

¹²⁴ *Manners and Customs*, xiv, n.2.

¹²⁵ Lane and Harvey, *The Thousand and One Nights, Commonly Called, in England, the Arabian Nights' Entertainments. A New Translation from the Arabic, with Copious Notes*, 1, v.

¹²⁶ Schacker, *National Dreams: The Remaking of Fairy Tales in Nineteenth-Century England*, 79,91.

general social life of the Chinese.”¹²⁷ Furthermore, like the translator-ethnographer Lane who “kept a tight rein upon Lane the story-teller, and only permitted himself occasional excursions into the ridiculous,” Giles also believes a good translator should act like an observer who effaces himself from the narrative.¹²⁸ This is in fact why he adopted the annotated format in *Strange Stories*; to create the illusion of the translator’s invisibility. *Strange Stories*, as Giles suggests, is translation “in which information [about the Chinese culture] is conveyed at first hand; in other words, in which the Chinese are allowed to speak for themselves.”¹²⁹

In one aspect, however, the ethnographical orientation of Giles’s *Strange Stories* takes a form entirely different from that of Lane’s *Thousand and One Nights*. Lane’s main purpose is to distinguish the Arabs from nations of both the West and the East. “The true ‘value’ of the *Arabian Nights*,” Lane proclaimed, resided in its “minute accuracy with respect to those peculiarities which distinguish the Arabs from every other nation, not only of the West, but also of the East.”¹³⁰ Thus he deliberately retained Arabic words in his translation and used pictorial illustrations to emphasize the otherness of Arabic culture.¹³¹ By contrast, Giles problematizes the conceptualization of any fundamental differences between “us” and “them” in cultural terms. This difference has much to do with the fact that Giles, translating the *Liaozhai* forty years after the publication of Lane’s *Thousand and One Nights*, was deeply affected by the emerging field of Victorian comparative ethnography, which viewed itself as a scientific discipline devoted to

¹²⁷ Giles, *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio*, 1, xiv.

¹²⁸ Arthur J. Arberry, *Oriental Essays: Portraits of Seven Scholars* (New York: Macmillan, 1960), 97.

¹²⁹ Giles, *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio*, 1, xv.

¹³⁰ “The Translator’s Preface”, viii

¹³¹ For more discussion, see Schacker’s chapter on Lane’s translation in Schacker, *National Dreams: The Remaking of Fairy Tales in Nineteenth-Century England*, 78-116.

demonstrating the unity of the human psyche through comparisons of deeper-level similarities between geographically-isolated cultures. The next section discusses some of the influences of Victorian comparative ethnography on Giles' translation of the Chinese strange narrative.

II. The Marvelous that “Might be Explained Rationally”: Ethnographic Encounters in *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio* and The Records of Strange Nations

Strange Stories is not the only instance in which Giles tackled Chinese strange narrative. The Herbert A. Giles Archive at the Cambridge University Library preserves an unpublished manuscript entitled *Records of the Strange Nations* (hereinafter *Strange Nations*), which is his annotated translation of the Ming dynasty illustrated book *Yiyu tuzhi* 異域圖志 (figure 1.3).¹³² Drawing on a tapestry of source materials ranging from official historiographies to anomaly narratives, this miscellaneous work boasts an extensive survey of the geography, inhabitants, fauna, and flora that make up the “realm of difference” (*yiyu*) in the Chinese cosmography, many of which are depicted in the accompanying one hundred and eighty-six woodblock illustrations. This unpublished translation shed important light on the conception of the strange in Giles' *Strange Stories*.

¹³² Herbert. A Giles, "Record of Strange Nations: From the Chinese of 1392 A.D. / Translated and Annotated by Herbert A. Giles & Masa U. Hachisuka with a Foreword by Alfred C. Haddon," (London: Percy Lund Humphreies & Co. Ltd, 192?). The translation was completed with the help of Japanese explorer and ornithologist Masa U. Hachisuka (1903-1953). Giles believes that this manuscript was published in the fourteenth century, but many scholars suspect that the single surviving edition preserved at the Cambridge University Library is probably a re-engraving from the late Ming, especially since the multivolume illustrated text shares a number of ethnographic portraits with the late Ming encyclopedia *Pictorial Compendium of Heaven, Earth, and Man* (*Sancai tuhui*), and there is no clear evidence that the latter borrowed the images from the former. According to Charles Aylmer, the translation was never published due to the withdrawal from the project of Hachisuka Masauji; Aylmer, "The Memoirs of H. A. Giles," 56.

2.1. From Cosmography to Ethnography: Giles' *The Records of Strange Nations*

Inspired by the *Shanhai jing* 山海经 (Classic of Mountain and Sea), the *Yiyu tuzhi* is an illustrative example of what Robert F. Campany calls “locative cosmography,” that is, a written account of the world that functions to “emplac[e] the anomaly and domesticat[e] the other.”¹³³ Like the *Shanhai jing*, the *Yiyu tuzhi* constitutes a “systematic attempt to spatialize all the categories of the ‘otherness’.”¹³⁴ Temporality in the *Yiyu tuzhi* is essentially supra-linear and subordinate to the same “repetitive rhythms of natural processes, myth, and ritual” Richard E. Strassberg observes in the *Shanhai jing*.¹³⁵ By distributing a diverse population of strange creatures throughout exotic places where they dwell in ritualized mythological time, the *Yiyu tuzhi* sets up a perennial contrast between a civilized center and uncivilized peripheries.

Unlike the *Shanhai jing*, which was not illustrated until centuries later, the *Yiyu tuzhi* does not have a pre-existing textual tradition independent from an iconographic canon. Its illustrations constitute, from the book's inception, the chief medium through which otherness is presented.¹³⁶ The descriptive texts are merely supplements to the illustrations, not vice versa. As Arthur Christopher Moule comments, the value of *Yiyu tuzhi* “lies chiefly in the illustrations.

¹³³ Robert Ford Campany, *Strange Writing: Anomaly Accounts in Early Medieval China* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 14.

¹³⁴ Richard E. Strassberg, *A Chinese Bestiary: Strange Creatures from the Guideways through Mountains and Seas* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 9.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Richard Strassberg observes that the style of the illustrations in the *Yiyu tuzhi* is “almost identical to those selected for a late Ming encyclopedia, the *Collected Illustration of Heaven, Earth, and Man* (*Sancai tuihui*, c.1609).” The *Sancai tuihui* borrowed some of its 130 or so images from the *Yiyu tuzhi*, as did yet another encyclopedia of this time, the *Complete Handbook of a Myriad Treasures* (*Wanbao quanshu*, late Ming).

The descriptions add, it is said, little or nothing to our historical or geographical knowledge and are somewhat marred by the use of vulgar forms and by several misprints.”¹³⁷

In his translation, Giles reverses the hierarchical order between image and text, making the latter the primary object of interest. In a different book, he calls the illustrations “woodcuts which *accompany* [my italics] each notice.”¹³⁸ By taking the captions out of their original context and transforming them into entries of a written record, Giles basically creates a new book that no longer has the effect of constructing peripheries. As the title of his translation implies, Giles re-envisioned the *yiyu*—the homogenized realm of difference—as a plethora of strange nations. The emphasis here is placed on the diversity of the various strange places, not their collective identity as a spatialized otherness.

The translation of *yiyu* into “Strange Nations” betrays Giles’ view that the *Yiyi tuzhi* records China’s contact with foreigners before the fourteenth century and therefore possesses great ethnographical value. In a lecture about the Wade collection of Chinese books, Giles notes that the *Yiyu tuzhi* is catalogued under Geographies and Topographies. He further describes its contents as a series of “short notices of about 150 nationalities known more or less to the Chinese.”¹³⁹ In particular, he notices that

Among the rest we find Koreans, Japanese, Hsing-nu (the forefathers of the Huns), Kitan Tartars, tribes of Central Asia, Arabs, Persians, and even Portuguese, Jean de Montecorvino, who had been appointed archbishop of Peking in 1308, having died there in 1330. Of course there are a few pictures of legendary peoples, such as the Long-armed Nation, the One-eyed Nation, the Dog-headed Nation, the Anthropophagi,
“and men whose heads

¹³⁷ Arthur C. Moule, "An Introduction to the I Yü T'u Chih: Or "Pictures and Descriptions of Strange Nations" in the Wade Collection at Cambridge," *T'oung Pao* 27, no. 2/3 (1930): 181.

¹³⁸ Herbert Allen Giles, *China and the Chinese* (New York,: The Columbia University Press, 1902), 58.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

Do grow beneath their shoulders.”

There is also an account of Fusang, the country where grew the famous plant which some have tried to identify with the Mexican aloe, thus securing the discovery of America for the Chinese. The existence of many of these nations is duly recorded by Pliny in his *Natural History*, in words curiously identical with those we find in the Chinese records.

Some birds and animals are given at the end of this book, the most interesting of all being an accurate picture of the zebra, here called the *Fu-lu*, which means “Deer of Happiness,” but which is undoubtedly a rough attempt at *fara*, an old Arabic term for the wild ass. Now, the zebra being quite unknown in Asia, the puzzle is, how the Chinese came to be so well acquainted with it at the early date.¹⁴⁰

Years later, Giles also recalls in his memoirs that when negotiating the publication of *Strange Nations* in 1916, he was backed by the “powerful advocacy of ethnological and archaeological experts such as, among others, Dr Haddon, Sir William Ridgway, and Dr Peter Giles, Master of Emmanuel.”¹⁴¹ This anecdote provides us an important indication of the strong enthusiasm that *Strange Nations* aroused among a coterie of Cambridge scholars in anthropology-related disciplines, who represented the immediate readership of Giles’ translation.

Among the three friends Giles listed above, Alfred Cort Haddon, a prominent anthropologist, wrote the foreword to the *Strange Nations* and prepared some of the notes. In the introductory preface, which recommends a particular reading approach, Haddon argues that many of the strange nations can be identified with certainty, or at least through inference, as real places visited by Chinese mariners; he even raises the possibility that the Chinese had been to America. All these points are apparently identical with those Giles articulates in the passage

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 58-59. Years later, when mentioning the *Yiyu tuzhi* in his memoirs, Giles describes it as a book “on Strange Nations, including Koreans, Huns, Persians, Arabs, and many Central Asian tribes, with brief notes on their costumes, customs, etc., followed by sixteen pictures of rare birds and animals, among the latter of which is given an excellent picture of a zebra.” Aylmer, “The Memoirs of H. A. Giles,” 56.

¹⁴¹ “The Memoirs of H. A. Giles,” 56. Haddon (1855-1940) was lecturer and reader in Anthropology at Cambridge University from 1900 through 1926. Ridgway (1855-1926) was Disney Professor of Archaeology at Cambridge University. Peter Giles (1860-1935) was a comparative philologist.

from *China and the Chinese* I quoted earlier, revealing an active exchange of ideas between Giles the translator and Haddon the anthropologist.

Haddon's ethnographical reading of the *Strange Nations* is pivoted on his theory about the origin of the marvelous. In the preface, he argues that the marvelous arises from those moments of cross-cultural encounters, during which miscommunication and misunderstanding often occur:

As might be expected, there is a naive mixture of the matter-of-fact and the marvelous [...] The occurrence of one does not discredit the other, and even many instances of the marvelous might be explained rationally if further information were available; doubtless in some cases these may be attributed to difficulties in hearing the sounds of words in alien tongues and of recording them in Chinese script, even assuming that errors in later transcriptions have not arisen.¹⁴²

Haddon's whole point can be summarized as this: someone at some point made a mistake concerning foreigners and other cultures; and then the errors gave rise to fanciful imaginings of strange creatures. The marvelous content is therefore merely the side-effect of a fantasy or misunderstanding that had a basis in actual experience. In two aspects, Haddon's theory about the marvelous in *Strange Nations* establishes a continuum between the strange and the ordinary. First, he locates the marvelous in the mind of the recorders of the strange nations. In other words, conceptions of the strange are relative; what appears to be strange to one culture might be ordinary to another. Secondly, he argues that the strange can be normalized through reason. As he wrote, "instances of the marvelous might be explained rationally if further information were available." Through careful investigation and rigorous study, one can uplift the veil of strange accounts and unlock *in toto* the original truth.

¹⁴² Giles, "Record of Strange Nations: From the Chinese of 1392 A.D. / Translated and Annotated by Herbert A. Giles & Masa U. Hachisuka with a Foreword by Alfred C. Haddon," 4.

From Haddon's point of view, there is nothing strange about those nations—they are merely foreign. In fact, his usage of the 'strange' in "strange nations" accidentally harks back to the etymological root of the word: the English word "strange" stems from the old French word *estranger* (meaning "external, foreign, alien"), which in turn is a derivative of the Latin word *extraneus* (meaning "without, external, who comes from outside," and is often used as an antonym to *domesticus* and *romanus*). Indeed, for Victorian anthropologists like Haddon, the concept of the strange and the encounter with the alien are closely intertwined.

The anthropological approach that both Giles and Haddon adopted in their respective readings of *Strange Nations* is therefore highly relevant to our discussion of Giles' interpretation of the *Liaozhai*'s ethnographical values. The issue of ethnographic encounters certainly occupied Giles' mind when he set out to translate the *Liaozhai* in its entirety in 1877.¹⁴³ Of the two *Liaozhai* tales he translated before the publication of *Strange Stories*, namely, "Luocha haishi" 罗刹海市 and "Xu Huangliang" 续黄粱, the first is actually one of the few *Liaozhai* tales about overseas travel. Giles translated the title as "The Lo-Ch'a Country and the Sea Market" and interpreted the tale as a telling a story about the mystery of the Other.

2.2. The "Foreign Devil" in the "Land of Opposites": Contrasting Perspectives in Giles' 1877

"The Lo-Ch'a Country and the Sea Market"

¹⁴³ Giles later abandoned the original idea and decided to publish only an abridged translation. In the preface, he writes that he "had originally determined to publish a full and complete translation of the whole of these sixteen volume; but on a closer acquaintance many of the stories turned out to be quite unsuitable for the age in which we live, forcibly recalling the coarseness of our own writers of fiction in the last century." Giles, *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio*, 1, xxix.

The “Lo-Ch’a Country” is a composite tale revolving around the voyage of its protagonist Ma Ji, a scholar-merchant known for his extraordinary handsomeness.¹⁴⁴ As the Qing dynasty commentator Feng Zhenluan notes, Pu Songling divides the tale’s plot into two disconnected episodes (兩截做法). In the first episode, Ma is blown ashore to the Lo-Ch’a Country after a shipwreck, where a race of monstrous inhabitants consider his physical appearance both weird and appalling. In the second episode, he is involved in a romance with a dragon princess that ends in Ma’s return home and their eternal separation.

The first episode is significantly shorter than the second, and is reminiscent of the many *zhiguai*-style short narratives in the *Strange Nations*. Interestingly, Giles praises the “novel character of the first half” and prefers it over the second, *chuanqi*-style episode, even though he is aware of the fact that the second episode is “far more highly prized by the Chinese themselves.”¹⁴⁵ Giles further argues that the first half of “The Lo-Ch’a Country and Sea Market” is “a clever amplification of Robert Burns’s famous lines ‘O wad some power the giftie tie us/ To sees ousels as others see us! /It wad frae movie a blunder free us, /An’ foolish notion’, and sufficiently curious as emanating from Chinese sources to be laid before a circle of indulgent readers.”¹⁴⁶

The lines Giles quoted come from Burns’ 1786 poem “To a Lousie.” This is a poem in which the poet imagines seeing the world through the eyes of a flea.¹⁴⁷ He quotes these lines to

¹⁴⁴ The protagonist’s name is Ma Jun in the 1766 edition.

¹⁴⁵ Giles, “The Lo-Ch’a Country and the Sea Market,” 370.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 184.

¹⁴⁷ Robert Burns, Robert Crawford, and C. J. M. MacLachlan, *The Best Laid Schemes: Selected Poetry and Prose of Robert Burns* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 207. “To a Lousie” is a direct response to Adam Smith’s concern with moral impartiality as the impetus for Enlightenment—a view Smith propagated in his

suggest that the concepts of the strange and the normal, beauty and ugly, good and bad, are all relative to perspective. In the introductory notes, he writes as follows:

From our point of view the Chinese straight line takes the form of an ordinary cork-screw, their zig-zag that of a cloth-yard shaft. Everything Chinese is either backwards or upside-down; their social center of gravity is altogether displaced. Confucius was a fool; Mencius a charlatan; and so the tarring-brush goes round. Meanwhile, the Chinese pore daily and nightly over such books as the *Liao Chai*, and regard with contemptuous pity the whole herd of outside barbarians whose intellectual pendulum oscillates, as far as they know, only between tea and silk.¹⁴⁸

It is worth noting that in this comment, Giles describes the *Liaozhai* as a book that feeds into the Chinese readers' misconceptions about the "whole herd of outside barbarians" in ways similar to the *Strange Nations*. This is obviously an exaggeration of the scope of representations of foreign lands in Pu Songling's collection, as the majority of the *Liaozhai* tales are set in the Historian of the Strange's native Shandong province.

However, Giles does not intend to privilege one point of view over another. As he implies, neither the Chinese nor the British perspective is an absolute truth. The point he is trying to make concerns the relativity of the strange—the straight-line in the eyes of one culture is a zig-zag for another. For Giles, this discrepancy is particularly true in the case of China and Britain. As he remarks in *China and the Chinese* (1902), China is in the English imagination "a Land of Opposites, i.e. dramatically opposed to us in every imaginable direction."¹⁴⁹ In the *Liaozhai* tale, Giles finds an analogous pair of topsy-turvy lands: everything in the Raksha (Lo-Ch'a) Country is the polar opposite of its equivalent in China. What is hideously ugly to the

1759 *Theory of Moral Sentiments*: "If we saw ourselves in the light in which others see us, or in which they would see us if they knew all, a reformation would generally be unavoidable. We could not otherwise endure the sight."

¹⁴⁸ Giles, "The Lo-Ch'a Country and the Sea Market," 184.

¹⁴⁹ Giles, *China and the Chinese*, 109.

protagonist is admired as a great beauty among the Raksha people. It is said that when Ma first arrives in the Raksha country, the people are so terrified by his appearance that they take him as a yao 妖¹⁵⁰ (Giles chooses the word “devil” to render the term *yao* into English, though it would be more appropriate to use the terms troll or goblin to emphasize the Rakshas’ ugliness).¹⁵¹

Giles’s word choice calls to mind the notion of “foreign devil,” which corresponds to the unwelcomed appellation *yangguizi* 洋鬼子 (or *guilao* 鬼佬 in Cantonese) that the Chinese used to refer to Westerners in the nineteenth century. This concept-unit “devil/*gui* 鬼” is an instance of what Lydia H. Liu defines as a “supersign”—the “hetero-cultural signifying chain that crisscrosses the semantic fields of two or more languages simultaneously” while camouflaging its foreignness “by adopting the unchanging face of an indigenous word” (in fact, Giles also evokes the supersign barbarian/*yi* 夷 in the introduction to the “Lo-Ch’a Country and the Sea Market” I quoted earlier).¹⁵² Giles was aware of the frequent appearance of this linguistic aberration during encounters between the Chinese and the Europeans. In his 1911 book entitled *The Civilization of China*, Giles brings up the issue of “foreign devil”:

The Chinaman may love you, but you are a devil all the same. It is most natural that he should think so. For generation upon generation China was almost completely isolated from the rest of the world. The people of her vast empire grew up under influences unchanged by contact with other peoples. Their ideals became stereotyped from want of other ideals to compare with, and

¹⁵⁰ Original passage in the Liaozhai is “人皆奇丑，见马至，以为妖，群哗而走。”

¹⁵¹ Giles’ translation of the passage: “When [the Raksha] people saw Ma they thought he was a devil and all ran screeching away.” Giles, “The Lo-Ch’a Country and the Sea Market,” 370.

¹⁵² The example Lydia Liu uses is the supersign barbarian/*yi* 夷. Liu argues that the supersign “makes an impact on the meaning of recognizable units, whether they be indigenous words, loanwords, or any other discrete verbal phenomena that linguists can identify within particular languages or among them.” See Lydia H. Liu, *The Clash of Empires: The Invention of China in Modern World Making* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 13. In “*Fan sheng*” (“Foreign Priest”), Giles decides to intervene with the supersign barbarian/*fan* 番, pointing out that *fan* means “barbarian,” but adopting “foreign” to neutralize its negative connotation.

possibly modify, their own. Dignity of deportment and impassivity of demeanour were especially cultivated by the ruling classes. Then the foreign devil burst upon the scene -- a being as antagonistic to themselves in every way as it is possible to conceive. We can easily see, from pictures, not intended to be caricatures, what were the chief features of the foreigner as viewed by the Chinaman. Red hair and blue eyes, almost without exception; short and extremely tight clothes; a quick walk and a mobility of body, involving ungraceful positions either sitting or standing; and with an additional feature which the artist could not portray -- an unintelligible language resembling the twittering of birds. Small wonder that little children are terrified at these strange beings, and rush shrieking into their cottages as the foreigner passes by.¹⁵³

Giles' description of stereotypical Chinese perceptions of Europeans strongly echoes the many seemingly nonsensical views held by the Rakshas that the protagonist encounters in the *Liaozhai* tale. By evoking the supersign "devil/gui 鬼" in his translation of "Luocha haishi", Giles draws a strong parallel between Ma's confrontation with the Raksha people and ethnographic encounters that the British had in the Far East. The conflation of an imagined geography with foreign cultures is consistent with Giles and Haddon's interpretation of the *Yiyu tuzhi* as an account of actual places visited by the Chinese. This similarity reveals the anthropological interest that partly motivated Giles' translation of the *Liaozhai*.

As I have argued thus far, the strange in the Giles' *Strange Nations* and his earliest translation of the *Liaozhai* is conceptualized as a relative notion and a subject of scientific inquiry. It is therefore impossible to understand fully the discourse of the strange in Giles's translations without recourse to an understanding of the dialectic of the self and its ethnographical other, primitive and civilized, rational and magical—all issues central to Victorian comparative anthropology.

However, the conceptualization of a relative and explainable strange in Giles' readings of the *Yiyu tuzhi* and the "Luocha haishi" also has its roots in the central premise of Victorian comparative anthropology that folklore and myth, as George William Cox (1827-1902) puts it,

¹⁵³ Herbert Allen Giles, *The Civilization of China* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1911), 155.

“embody the whole thought of primitive man on the vast range of physical phenomena.”¹⁵⁴ For these anthropologists, all human societies evolved from mythic thinking into a more rational state. The scientific and comparative study of different cultures, then, would reveal not only the universal evolution of the human mind, but also the fact that civilized societies and primitive cultures are essentially on the same continuum.¹⁵⁵ Haddon, for example, studied biological evolution in his early career as a scientist and then became interested in the study of folklore, which he believes provides “a psychic probe into the past.”¹⁵⁶ Similarly to Haddon, Giles subscribed to this view about the unity of the human psyche, and the influence of Victorian comparative anthropology is palpable in his *Strange Stories*. In the next section, I further explore the connection between Giles’ *Strange Stories* and the Victorian science of religion through a discussion of Giles’ search for clues about primitive animism in the *Liaozhai* and the speculative method he used to identify them.

III. Survival of *Pensée Sauvage* in the *Liaozhai*: Animism and the Conjectural Paradigm

¹⁵⁴ George W. Cox, *An Introduction to the Science of Comparative Mythology and Folklore* (New York: H. Holt and Company, 1881). George William Cox is a disciple of the prominent German philologist Friedrich Max Müller, who is generally regarded as one of the founders of the discipline of comparative religion.

¹⁵⁵ The point is illustrated by the popular universalist worldview among Victorian anthropologists. Edward Tylor, for example, asserts that “all the world is one country” and “mankind [is] homogeneous in nature, though placed in different grades of civilization.” As Derrida points out “ethnology could only have been born as a science at a time when a decentralization could be effected; at a moment when European culture—and consequently the history of metaphysics and its concepts—was dislocated, expelled from its rank, and thus ceased to be considered as a cultural reference.” See Bob Scholte, “Anthropological Traditions: Their Definition,” in *Anthropology: Ancestors and Heirs*, ed. Stanley Diamond (New York: Moulton Publishers, 1980), 69.

¹⁵⁶ Haddon, 1898 a2 xxi. As James Urry notes, “Haddon like many other of his contemporaries believed that tales of fairy-folk indicated an earlier race of people who had been superseded by new invasions in the distant past.” James Urry, *Before Social Anthropology: Essays on the History of British Anthropology* (Philadelphia: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1993).

Ernest Burnett Tylor (1832-1917), who held the first Professorship of Anthropology at Oxford University, is widely known as the “father of comparative anthropology” and one of the founders of the Victorian science of religion.¹⁵⁷ In his influential two-volume book *Primitive Cultures* Tylor pursues an eclectic approach to the study of religion and mythology and advances a progression theory to address the question of universality.¹⁵⁸ In the second volume of the book, *Religion in Primitive Culture*, Tylor mainly discusses the notion of “animism,” which he defines as the “belief in Supernatural beings” of all categories and the “essential source” of all religions.¹⁵⁹ Tylor’s notion of animism is built upon the developmental thesis that a progressive evolution of human rationality characterizes the development of culture from primeval to modern times. Nevertheless, Tylor is also of the opinion that even “savage religion” is a “consistent doctrine” whose principals “are proved to be essentially rational, though working in a mental condition of intense and inveterate ignorance.”¹⁶⁰ As reflected in his witty adage “[t]heologians all to expose,—‘Tis the mission of Primitive Man,” Tylor believes that animism is primarily a

¹⁵⁷ See Laura Ammon, *Work Useful to Religion and the Humanities: The Comparative Method from Las Casas to Tylor* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2012), 113; Vijay S. Upadhyay and Gaya Pandey, *History of Anthropological Thought* (New Delhi: Concept Pub. Co., 1993), 42.

¹⁵⁸ For a summary of Tylor’s main arguments, see Ivan Strenski, *Understanding Theories of Religion: An Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 45-54.

¹⁵⁹ According to Tylor, animism is the generative source of religion, and its fullest form can be summarized as “the belief in souls and in a future state, in controlling deities and subordinate spirits,” Edward Burnett Tylor, *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art and Custom*, 2 vols., vol. 1 (Boston: Estes & Lauriat, 1874), 285. Julian Doorgan points out that Tylor “used the term *animus* to refer to the vitalizing element that was thought to inhabit physical bodies by those who practiced the most ‘primitive’ forms of religion, whom he termed animists. The attribution of life and understanding to inanimate things, plants, or animals was for Tylor and many of the Victorian anthropologists who followed the defining attribute of a primitive culture.” See Julian Droogan, *Religion, Material Culture, and Archaeology*, Bloomsbury Advances in Religious Studies (New York: Continuum International Pub. Group, 2012), 34.

¹⁶⁰ Edward Burnett Tylor, *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art and Custom*, 1st American, from the 2d English ed., 2 vols., vol. 2 (Boston: Estes & Lauriat, 1874), 16-17.

rudimentary natural science devised by “ancient savage philosophers” who practiced “rational speculations” in their own cultural settings.¹⁶¹ In order to link primitive cultures with civilized cultures, Tylor developed the concepts of “survival” and “recurrence,” suggesting that higher stages of culture retain vestiges of the beliefs or practices of earlier modes of thought that have lost their original meanings and utilities in the new context. These methods and theories, as Wheeler-Barclay observes, dominated anthropological studies of religious beliefs and practices in the years after 1870.¹⁶²

Tylor’s scientific study of religion exerted a tremendous impact on Giles’ translation of the *Liaozhai*. In the preface to *Strange Stories*, Giles praises Tylor’s *Primitive Cultures* as an “accurately compiled work,” but points out that it is nonetheless far from comprehensive, as the “allusions to the religious rites and ceremonies of nearly one-third of the human race are condensed within the limits of barely a dozen short passages.”¹⁶³ *Strange Stories*, therefore, partly constitutes Giles’ effort to fill this lacuna and apply a similar scientific investigation to the study of Chinese religious thought.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶¹ *Primitive Cultures*, Vol 1, 1-2.

¹⁶² Wheeler-Barclay, *The Science of Religion in Britain, 1860-1915*, 72.

¹⁶³ Giles, *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio*, 1, xv.

¹⁶⁴ When contending with earlier translators of the *Liaozhai*, Giles exhibits the same hostility towards amateur writers of ethnography that characterized Tylor’s endeavor to establish anthropology as a scientific discipline. Disparaging missionaries (a representative group of the early *Liaozhai* translators) and travelers for “a distorted image” of China and the Chinese, Giles cites Tylor’s grievance concerning these “superficial observer[s], more or less ignorant of the native language [...] careless retailer[s] of unsifted talk [...] [who are] prejudiced or even deliberately deceitful.” See Marvin Harris, *The Rise of Anthropological Theory: A History of Theories of Culture*, Updated ed. (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2001), 157. His approach, by contrast, is the objective approach of the professional ethnographic observer. Giles remarks that while he “make[s] the picture [of China] more suggestive and more acceptable to the European eye, [he] claim[s] only so much authority as is due to the opinion of one qualified observer who can have no possible motive in deviating ever so slightly from what his personal experience has taught him to regard as the truth.” Giles, *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio*, 1, xiv.

3.1. “Cultural Notes” in the *Strange Stories* and the Victorian Science of Religion

Giles’ familiarity with contemporary discussions of animism is well demonstrated by one of the two appendices he added to *Strange Stories*. Entitled “Cultural Notes,” this appendix consists of eleven quotations categorized under nine topics (Ancestral Worship, Bilocation, Burial Rites, Dreams, Shade or Shadow, Shadow, The Soul, Transmigration, Tree-Souls). Four of the quotations come from an article by the eminent philosopher Herbert Spencer entitled “The Origin of Animal Worship” (1870).¹⁶⁵ The main point of Spencer’s article is that etymological forgetfulness causes the leap from ancestral worship—“the rudimentary form of all religion”—to animal worship or totemism, which is already a higher form of religion. Drawing on Max Müller’s “disease of language” theory, Spencer hypothesizes that this leap occurs when the savages begin to take their ancestors’ “nicknames” – often derived from animals and plants (or other inanimate objects) – literally instead of figuratively.¹⁶⁶

However, neither animal worship nor linguistic corruption form the subject of the passages quoted by Giles; instead, the excerpts from Spencer’s article in Appendix II are mainly comments on primitive man’s encounter with death and with dreams. Two of these excerpts, under the headings of “Dreams” and “The Soul,” specifically discuss the primitive belief in a “second self” capable of existing separately from the (self’s) body. Giles’ choice of these excerpts may actually reflect the influence of Tylor, who gives the problem of the human soul a central place in his theory.

¹⁶⁵ Herbert Spencer, "The Origin of Animal Worship, Etc.," *Fortnightly Review* 2 (1870).

¹⁶⁶ Müller argued that myth stems from a primitive proclivity for transposing words for natural phenomena into supernatural entities. He first developed this theory in a lengthy essay entitled “Comparative Mythology” (1856). For a more detailed discussion on Müller’s theory, see Wheeler-Barclay, *The Science of Religion in Britain, 1860-1915*, 46-49.

The remaining nine excerpts in Appendix II all come from Tylor's discussion of animism in his *Primitive Cultures*. Differently from Müller's linguistic explanation of mythology, Tylor's theory of animism locates the origin of religious thought in primitive man's experience of dreaming, in his ruminations over death, his aversive reactions to disease, and trance-states related to nervous disorders. In *Primitive Cultures*, Tylor writes:

It seems as though thinking men, as yet at a low level of culture, were deeply impressed by two groups of biological problems. In the first place, what is it that makes the difference between a living body and a dead one; what causes waking, sleep, trance, disease, death? In the second place, what are those human shapes which appear in dreams and visions? Looking at these two groups of phenomena, the ancient savage philosophers probably made their first step by the obvious inference that every man has two things belonging to him, namely, a life and a phantom.¹⁶⁷

For Tylor, the two biological questions have given rise to "two great dogmas" that "form the groundwork of the Philosophy of religion, from that of savages up to that of civilized men."¹⁶⁸

The first dogma concerns the "souls of individual creatures, capable of continued existence after death or destruction of the body."¹⁶⁹ The second concerns "other spirits, up all the way to the rank of deities."¹⁷⁰ Of the two dogmas, Tylor argues that the doctrine of the human soul is the most basic stage of animism. The worship of animals, plants, and inanimate things, which forms the second category of animism (the belief in spirits), is an extension of the primary belief in the human soul to nature.

¹⁶⁷ Tylor, *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art and Custom*, 1, 428-29.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

Giles was receptive to Tylor's theory about the primitive imagination of a second self and its biological origin. One of the headings in "Appendix II" of *Strange Stories* is "Bilocation." Under this category, Giles quotes Tylor's own explanation that the belief in bilocation survives in modern cultures and gave rise to certain doctrines of the Roman Catholic church.¹⁷¹ In the Chinese language, Giles finds an equivalent term *fenshen* 分身, which he glosses in the first volume of his Chinese-English Dictionary as "to get away, as from business. Also, the supposed separation of soul and body in cataleptic fits."¹⁷² In many of the *Liaozhai* tales, especially those I discuss next, Giles evokes this connection between bilocation and catalepsy.

3.2. Catalepsy and Bilocation: Giles' Search for Survival and Recurrence of Animistic Beliefs in the *Liaozhai*

Giles is particularly interested in a number of *Liaozhai* tales in which a character visits the Ten Courts of the underworld and then comes back to life. This interest was already visible in Giles' first attempt at translating Pu Songling's tales: "Dr. Tseng's Dream," his translation of Pu Songling's "*Xu huangliang*" 續黃梁, is the other *Liaozhai* translation he published in the *Celestial Empire* in 1877.¹⁷³ In this tale, a smug scholar named Zeng enters a daydream, induced

¹⁷¹ To cite the passage in full: "As a general rule, people are apt to consider it impossible for a man to be in two places at once [...] But the rule is so far from being universally accepted, that the word 'bilocation' has been invented to express the miraculous faculty possessed by certain saints of the Roman Church, of being in two places at once [...]—Tylor's *Primitive Culture*, Vol.i, p.447." Giles, *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio*, 1, 389.

¹⁷² Herbert Allen Giles, *On Some Translations and Mistranslations in Dr. Williams' Syllabic Dictionary of the Chinese Language* (Amoy, China: A.A. Marcal, 1879), 962. Furthermore, when discussing the *Liaozhai* tale "The Priest's Warning" in his book *A History of Chinese Literature*, Giles reiterates the opinion that "cataleptic fits or trances give rise to many similar tales about visiting the realms below and being afterwards restored to life."

¹⁷³ Pu Songling's "*Xu huangliang*" is inspired by famous Tang dynasty tale *Zhenzhong ji* 枕中記 ("Record in the Pillow").

by a Buddhist monk, in which he is punished in the courts of the underworld. The narrative vividly describes the hellish tortures and the protagonist's physical as well as psychological reactions to enduring them.

From Giles' perspective, several other tales in Pu Songling's collection that tell similar stories can all be explained by the theory of animism. He adopted this interpretative approach in his reading of Pu Songling's "*Kaocheng huang*" 考城隍 (translated as "Examination for the Post of Guardian Angel"), which is the first tale in both Dan Minglun's edition and Giles's *Strange Stories*. In the tale, the protagonist is invited to participate in an infernal examination for the post of city god (*chenghuang*). Unaware of his recent death until the end of the examination, the protagonist pleads for an extension of another three years of life in order to take care of his aging mother. On grounds of filial piety, his request is granted by Guan Yu, one of the ten presiding judges.¹⁷⁴ As a result, the protagonist comes back to life and lives for another three years.

In his commentary to the tale, Dan Minglung interprets "*Kao Chenghuang*" as an "allegory" (考城隍寓言也), arguing that it propagates the Confucian precepts of "benevolence and filial piety" (仁孝).¹⁷⁵ Giles was familiar with Dan's comment, as he quoted it once to explain the Chinese devices of figurative speech in his *Notes on Chinese Composition*, an article read before the Royal Asiatic Society on the 28th of October, 1881.¹⁷⁶ But Giles' footnote in *Strange Stories* does not adopt Dan Minglun's moralistic reading of the tale. Instead, it remarks that catalepsy is "the explanation of many a story in [the *Liaozhai*]."

¹⁷⁴ Giles, *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio*, 1, 2.

¹⁷⁵ Yixuan Zhu, *Liaozhai Ziliao Huibian* (Zhengzhou: Zhongzhou guji, 1989), 453.

¹⁷⁶ Herbert A. Giles, "Notes on Chinese Composition," *Journal of North-China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1881).

“*Meng Lang*” 夢狼 (“Wolf’s Dream”) and “The Lost Brother” are two of the tales he has in mind. In his footnotes to these tales in *Strange Stories*, Giles points out that catalepsy is the explanation for the infernal lictors’ occasional employment of a specific Chinese character. In “Wolf’s Dream”, Giles further links this note to the previous note he wrote for “The Examination for the Post of Guardian Angel,” implying that the resurrection of the main character in the latter may be also a case of catalepsy. In his book *A History of Chinese Literature*, he identifies the same theme in the *Liaozhai* tale “The Priest’s Warning,” arguing that “cataleptic fits or trances” gives rise to the imagination of a character “visiting the realms below and being afterwards restored to life.”¹⁷⁷

In his other writings, Giles also uses catalepsy to explain the theme of the journey to the underworld in folklore and mythology. He regards this state of insensitivity as the origin of the *Wuchang gui* 無常鬼 (Demon of Impermanence), who is believed to seize the souls of the newly dead at the command of the King of the Underworld. Before Giles, Samuel Williams had glossed the *Wuchang* as “[a] demon regarded as the messenger of Yen-lo Wang, —as in 無常到 death has come.”¹⁷⁸ Giles disputed this explanation, arguing that “a *Wuchang gui* is the spirit of a living man employed to arrest wicked spirits on earth and convey them to Purgatory, the ordinary lictors of the Infernal Regions not being able to stand the 陽氣 (light, etc.) of the upper

¹⁷⁷ *A History of Chinese Literature* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1901), 354.

¹⁷⁸ Samuel Wells Williams, *A Syllabic Dictionary of the Chinese Language* (Shanghai: American Presbyterian Mission Press, 1874), 1059.

world.”¹⁷⁹ During this period, “the body of the man remains inanimate; which phenomenon is of course easily explained by the one word catalepsy.”¹⁸⁰

Giles’ particular interest in the tales about characters’ sojourn in the netherworld explains why he includes a translation of the religious tract *Yuli Chaojuan* 玉歷鈔卷 (also known as 玉歷寶鈔) in the first appendix to *Strange Stories*. This tract contains graphic descriptions of erring souls’ journey through the ten courts of justice in afterlife. Giles emphasizes the ubiquity of the Chinese belief in underworld punishment by noting that visitors to Daoist and Buddhist temples frequently encounter the “rightly-named Chambers of Horrors” recreating infernal torture scenes, the sight of which, he writes, is so appalling that “Madame Tussaud has nothing more ghastly to show in the whole of her wonderful collection.”¹⁸¹

Giles further argues that the subject of *Yuli chaojuan* “has a direct bearing upon many of the stories in [Pu Songling’s] collection.”¹⁸² This assertion may seem puzzling to us at first sight: given *Yuli chaojuan*’s main association with Buddhism and Daoism, it appears to be at odds with Giles’ view that the *Liaozhai* is primarily a book about Confucian ethics and moral codes. Nevertheless, for Giles, “the superstitions” in Buddhism and the corrupted version of Daoism are traces of primitive thoughts. Although he regards the *Liaozhai* as a collection primarily reflecting the beliefs and practices of Confucianism—which for him are more developed than the other two doctrines, Giles also holds the view that animistic beliefs survive in many of Pu Songling’s tales.

¹⁷⁹ Giles, *On Some Translations and Mistranslations in Dr. Williams' Syllabic Dictionary of the Chinese Language*, 26.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁸¹ Giles, *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio*, 1, 361.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

In addition, he thinks that the same beliefs survive in other cultures. This is probably why he draws parallels between the Ten Courts of Justice in the Chinese underworld and the “nine lessening circles” of Purgatory in Dante’s *Divine Comedy*.¹⁸³ The comparison here is obviously geared towards the demonstration of a universal human psyche manifested across cultures.

3.3 The Conjectural Paradigm

Giles was working at a critical historical juncture that gave birth not only to the science of religion but also to a new theoretical model of thinking, which Carlo Ginzburg defines as the “conjectural paradigm.” According to him, this new model of thinking involves the intuitive connection of seemingly unrelated clues and negligible details to produce knowledge that is “indirect, presumptive” and to construct “a complex reality that could not be experienced directly.”¹⁸⁴ by reconstructing a coherent sequence of events based on the traces left by his prey, and is exemplified by the late Victorian physician’s diagnostic techniques (or Sherlock Holmes’s “deductive” method, for that matter). The conjectural paradigm, Ginzberg asserts, rose above the level of popular knowledge to the status of an alternative scientific method in the mid-to late-nineteenth century, penetrating a wide range of “humane sciences.””

Contributors to the Victorian science of religion often employed this new model of thinking when theorizing about human societies. Tylor, for example, practiced what Ginzburg calls “abductive reasoning” in ways similar to Sherlock Holmes. His theory of animism is a perfect example of the use of the reading of “clues” to reconstruct the religious views of the

¹⁸³ Ibid., 361.

¹⁸⁴ Carlo Ginzburg, *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 98,103.

past.¹⁸⁵ It involves a combination of careful examination of empirical evidence and the speculations that piece the information together.

A number of Giles' publications, especially those pertaining to Sinology, present conspicuous traces of the conjectural paradigm. After arriving in China in 1867, Giles devoted himself to learning Chinese language and culture. His earlier works published up to 1874 are mainly devoted to the study of the Chinese language.¹⁸⁶ Then, an interest in case histories of Chinese jurisprudence began to manifest itself three years before he set out to translate the *Liaozhai*. In 1874, the first half of his translation of Song Ci (1186-1249)'s *Xiyuan lu* 洗冤錄 (*Washing Away Wrongs*)—China's first forensic medicine manual—was published under the title "The 'Hsi Yüan Lu', or Instruction to Coroners" in the journal *China Review* (the second half was not published until 1923 because of Giles' dispute with N. B. Dennys, editor of *China Review*). In 1882, Giles published *Historic China and Its Sketches*, which includes his English rendition of Lan Dingyuan (1680-1733)'s *Luzhou Gong'an* 鹿州公案 (*The Legal Cases from Luzhou*), a record of the criminal cases tried by the author during his short career as a Magistrate. Giles describes Lan's record as a work that "inveighs against the pitfalls of sub officials and 'litigation tricksters' and harps on familiar official themes about the evils of cult superstition."¹⁸⁷ Both translations suggest that around the time of his work on the *Liaozhai*, Giles was

¹⁸⁵ Ginzburg argues that Sherlock Holmes' "deductive reasoning" is essentially "abductive reasoning," as this method attempts to achieve the best possible explanation through inference. It is essentially the underlying principle of the conjectural paradigm. "Morelli, Freud and Sherlock Holmes: Clues and Scientific Method," *History Workshop Journal* 9, no. 1 (1980).

¹⁸⁶ Giles's publications in the early 1870s include *Chinese Without a Teacher: Being a Collection of Easy and Useful Sentences in the Mandarin Dialect, with a vocabulary* (1872), *The San Tzu Ching, or Three Character Classics* (1873), *A Dictionary of Colloquial Idioms in the Mandarin Dialect* (1873), *Synoptical Studies in Chinese Character* (1874).

¹⁸⁷ Jeffrey C. Kinkley, *Chinese Justice, the Fiction: Law and Literature in Modern China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 148.

preoccupied with Chinese forensic literature and specialist knowledge that showed the conjectural paradigm in action.

In many of his other translations, Giles relies on the same “reconstructive” method employed in the forensic literature he translated to explain the origins of a number of peculiar phenomena in Chinese culture. For example, in his lecture “China and Ancient Greece,” Giles forces a variety of ostensibly unrelated information into a coherent picture of the cultural exchanges between the two ancient civilizations. The same approach is also seen in his scholarly papers and reviews in *Adversaria Sinica* (published between 1904 and 1916). For example, in “Art Thou the Christ,” Giles argues, based on a woodcut image 函三為一 (boxing three in one), that the religious syncretism of the three doctrines in China may have incorporated elements from the doctrine of the Trinity; the three figures in the image are not Confucius, Laozi, and the Buddha, but the Christ (the Buddha figure) and two Nestorian priests.¹⁸⁸ The importance he attached to easily neglected details reflects his adoption of the general approach of the conjectural paradigm. To a certain extent, even the *Strange Stories* as a whole can probably be seen as a case in which Giles applies the conjectural paradigm to the study of Chinese culture, for it also seeks information from seemingly “irrelevant” sources to convey not only Chinese “sympathies and habits of thought” but also the religious beliefs of early history.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁸ Herbert A. Giles, *Adversaria Sinica* (Shanghai: Kelly & Walsh Ltd., 1906).

¹⁸⁹ *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio*, 1, xiv.

Conclusion

Several translations for the *Liaozhai*'s title had existed before the publication of Giles' *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio*. These include *Extraordinary Legends* (Gützlaff), *Pastimes of the Study* (Williams), *The Record of Marvels, or Tales of the Genii* (Mayers), and *Tales of the Marvelous* (Allen). Giles contested all these renditions, arguing that none "is sufficiently near to be regarded in the light of a translation."¹⁹⁰ By translating the term *yi* into "strange," Giles avoided the most common terms in the Victorian folklore vocabulary, such as the "marvelous," "supernatural," and "fantastic." Giles also chose not to translate the first character *liao* literally, insisting that it is untranslatable, even though he was certainly familiar with a legend about the meaning of *liao* as "resource."¹⁹¹ Instead, he substituted it with the term "Chinese."

It is Giles who popularized the translation of *yi* into "strange" and the replacement of *liao* with "Chinese." John Minford borrowed the same terms in his acclaimed 2006 *Liaozhai* translation entitled *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*. Many other translations, including *Strange Stories from the Lodge of Leisure* (Georges Soulié de Morant 1913), *Strange Stories from Ancient China* (Graham Brash 1987), *Strange Tales from Made-do Studio* (Foreign Press 1989), *Strange Tales from the Liaozhai* (Sidney L. Sondergard, 2014), all demonstrate the influence of Giles' title.

¹⁹⁰ *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio*, 1, xxviii.

¹⁹¹ In his preface to *Strange Stories*, Giles recalls that [a]n apocryphal anecdote traces the origin of [*liao*] to a remark once made by [Pu Songling] to his failure for the second degree. 'Alas!' he is reported to have said, 'I shall now have no resource (*Liao*) for my old age'; and accordingly he so named his study, meaning that in his pen he would seek that resource which fate had denied to him as an official." *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio*, 1, xxviii.

However, most readers nowadays would not recognize the associations of the terms “strange” and “Chinese” with the Victorian science of religion, which not only motivated Giles’ translation of the *Liaozhai* but also affected the approaches he took in his interpretation of Pu Songling’s tales. As I mentioned earlier, Giles translated the *Liaozhai* to fulfill two related agendas. One was to replace the misconceptions about China propagated by the accounts of missionaries and travelers with an accurate picture of Chinese culture and society. The other was to unveil the primitive animism that survives in Chinese religious beliefs and thus demonstrate the human psyche’s universality. Both agendas display the influence of the Victorian science of religion, which sought to introduce the scientific method into studies of folklore, mythology, and religious beliefs of all human cultures.

In his translations of Chinese strange narratives, Giles incorporated discourses from contributors to the Victorian science of religion, such as anthropologists Haddon and Tylor. Similarly to these theorists, Giles endorsed a relative conceptualization of the strange, believing that it can be rationally explained through rigorous investigation. This is why the conjectural paradigm plays such an important role in his reading of the *Liaozhai* tales. The interpretative approach Giles used in *Strange Stories* is essentially one that reflects the principle of disenchantment of the world. Yet, because Giles’ translation of Pu Songling’s strange tales appeared at the precise moment when the Victorians imagined the East as a place of enchantment, his translations are drawn into the *fin de siècle* evocation of oriental magic.

Coda. “Freemasonry in China” and Giles’ Disenchanted Enchantment

From the discussions above, one may get the impression that Giles represents a determinedly rational reader who rejected any hint of an occultist reading of Pu Songling’s tales. The conjectural paradigm detectable in his various writings even tempts one to assume that Giles’ study of the *Liaozhai* was oriented towards a world forcibly disenchanted by the “intellectualist rationalization” that Weber identifies as the driving force behind the decline of religions in the West. Such an assumption, however, would be incorrect, as Giles was scarcely less devoted to the quest for the spiritual than were any of the active participants of the so-called “magical revivals” of Victorian England.

In the year *Strange Stories* was published, Giles delivered a lecture at the Freemasons’ Iconic Lodge of Amoy (Xiamen), on the question of whether Freemasonry existed in China. At the outset, Giles assures the audience that no secret society in China bears “singular resemblance to [the Freemasonry] Craft.”¹⁹² But he quickly points out that in China there are countless “speculative masonries,” which, similar to “operative masonry,” “also point to that higher and more ethereal scheme of morality, veiled in an allegory and illustrated by symbols drawn from operative masonry [...] initiated in pre-historic times when the human race [...] first turned to contemplate the wondrous works of the Great Architect of the Universe and began to recognize the mutual obligations subsisting between man and man.”¹⁹³ According to Giles, the “Supreme Power” of the “Great Architect of the Universe” is indeed recognized by members of the Chinese secret societies such as the Triad society. In another article, Giles refers to this creative force as the “Light ineffable” or the “perfect Truth,” which he argues defines the mission of the

¹⁹² *Historic China and Other Sketches*, 379.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 386.

Freemasonry enterprise.¹⁹⁴

While Giles's belief in transcendence here stands in marked contrast to his work of disenchantment on the *Liaozhai* tales, he relies on the same conjectural paradigm to illustrate the divine as manifested in the human world. Availing himself of his extensive knowledge of Chinese ancient texts, Giles cites a wide range of examples to show the audience that “compasses and square”—the two Freemasonry symbols—are also venerated among the Chinese as metaphors for truth and authority, as illustrated by the Chinese term *guiju* 規矩 (norms, guides, or standards), which is merely the formula “compasses and square” in reverse order. In addition, he points out that both the visual representations of the two symbols and the initiation rites of operative masonry have equivalents in the Chinese context.

It is noteworthy that, in the same lecture, Giles also uses the presupposition of a uniform human psyche to explain intriguing parallels between East and West, as he argues that it is a universal truth that “the straight is more graceful and more enduring than the crooked, the upright a better weight-supporter than that which is awry, and that the rectangle and the circle are more practically useful and beautiful than other and irregular shapes.”¹⁹⁵ The only difference between the masonic brotherhood and superstitious believers is that the latter “came to adore the symbol instead of the force symbolized.”⁶⁵; other than that, the two share the same fundamentally rational basis for their fantasied constructs.

Giles's comparison between operative and speculative masonries is essentially geared towards revealing the embodiment of the Great Architect of the Universe in universally

¹⁹⁴ Herbert Allen Giles, *Arcana Saitica Briefly Discussed in Three Essays on the Masonic Tracing Boards* (Amoy,: Printed by A.A. Marçal, 1879), 5.

¹⁹⁵ Giles, *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio*, 1, 379.

recognized symbols. While this comparison is really a project of enchantment on account of its orientation towards transcendence, it is nonetheless characterized by recognizable features of disenchantment, e.g. the conjectural paradigm, evincible in the reading of symbols and the commitment to a rationalized understanding of the spiritual. “Freemasonry in China” thus unmask the seemingly disenchanted reader-ethnographer in the *Strange Stories* as one actually seeking to reconcile disenchantment and enchantment through cross-cultural comparisons.

CHAPTER TWO

The Later *Liaozhai*: Wang Tao (1828-1897)'s Classical Tales in the Age of Lithography

My book has twelve chapters [...]If Pu Liuxian [i.e. Pu Songling] were able to see them, he would definitely 'hold my arm and walk [together with me] towards the grove' with great joy. He would say 'you, sir, have surpassed me. The *Liaozhai* has a successor now' 此書都十有二卷[...]合之前錄共二十四卷，使蒲君留仙見之，必欣然把臂入林曰：“子突过我矣。聊齋之后，有替人哉。”¹⁹⁶

Introduction: the Swan Song of Chinese Classical Tale?

In his preface to *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio*, Giles mentions in passing that Pu Songling, the author of *Liaozhai*, has “succeeded in founding a school of his own, in which he has since been followed by hosts of servile imitators with more or less success.”¹⁹⁷ But he did not bother to enumerate who the constituents of this school might be. It is Lu Xun who provides us the earliest scholarly account of the imitations of the *Liaozhai* in his *A Brief History of Chinese Fiction*—a seminal book generally regarded as China's first full-fledged literary history devoted solely to fiction.¹⁹⁸ While revering the classical tale as one of the indigenous forerunners of modern Chinese novels, novellas, and short stories, Lu Xun also characterizes *Liaozhai*, the collection of classical tales par excellence, as the consummation of a literary genre that had

¹⁹⁶ Wang Tao, “Preface,” *Dianshizhai Pictorial*. no.126 (1887). Unless otherwise indicated, all translations of Wang Tao's writings in this chapter are mine.

¹⁹⁷ Giles, *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio*, 1, xxx.

¹⁹⁸ *A Brief History of Chinese Fiction* was based on the lecture notes Lu Xun prepared for a course he taught at Peking University in the 1920s. It is “Lu Xun's single most important contribution to the study of traditional Chinese literature.” John C.Y. Wang, “Lu Xun as a Scholar of Traditional Chinese Literature,” in *Lu Xun and His Legacy*, ed. Leo Ou-fan Lee (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985).

passed its prime. A sense of genre “mutation” is particularly palpable at the end of his survey, where he comments on classical tales by two late-Qing authors as follows:

In the course of time, Wang Tao from Changzhou wrote *Dunku lanyan* or *Unfound Talks of the Getaway Grotto* (completed in the first year of the Tongzhi reign or 1862), *Songyin manlu* or *Random Notes from the Wusong Recluse* (completed in the early Guangxu reign), and *Songbin suohua* or *Idle Chat at the Riverside of Wusong* (with a preface dated 1887), each in twelve chapters [*juan*]. Xuanding from Tianchang wrote *Yeyu qiudeng lu* or *Records on Rainy Nights under the Autumn Lamp* in sixteen chapters [*juan*] (preface dated the twenty-first year of the Guangxu reign or 1895). All these works were once again written in a narrative style (*bifa*) unmistakably modeled on that of the *Liaozhai*, and they were widely circulated within a brief period of time. However, the records of the fox-spirits and ghosts [in these tales] had already become scarce, whereas stories about courtesans abounded (迨長洲王韜作《遁窟讖言》(同治元年成)《淞隱漫錄》(光緒初成)《淞濱瑣話》(光緒十三年序)各十二卷, 天長宣鼎作《夜雨秋燈錄》十六卷(光緒二十一年序), 其筆致又純為聊齋者流, 一時傳布頗廣遠, 然所記載, 則已狐鬼漸稀, 而煙花粉黛之事盛矣).¹⁹⁹

After this comment Lu Xun mentions no more *Liaozhai* imitations in *A Brief History*, and the absence of twentieth-century titles in the genre has led some scholars to characterize the Guangxu era (1875-1908) as the last flowering period of the Chinese classical tale. Alan H. Barr, for example, describes Wang Tao's *Songyin manlu* as the “swan song for the classical tale near the end of the empire.”²⁰⁰ Although recent discoveries of works left out by Lu Xun's survey have shown that the output of classical tales in fact did not reduce during the formative period of modern Chinese fiction, these findings have not fundamentally challenged the prevailing discourse of the genre's decline in existing literary histories, since this decline tends to be

¹⁹⁹ Lu Xun, *Zhongguo Xiaoshuo Shilue* 中國小說史略 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 2006), 141 (my translation). For an excellent discussion of Lu Xun's reception of Wang Tao, see Fangying Gao, "Luxun Yanzhong De Wang Tao Chutan--Jianxi Luxun Pingdian Wang Tao Zuopin 魯迅眼中的王韜初探: 簡析魯迅評點王韜作品," in *Shanghai Luxun Yanjiu*, ed. Shanghai Luxun jinianguan (Shanghai: Shanghai shehui kexue chubanshe, 2010). For monographs on Wang Tao and his writings, see Paul A. Cohen, *Between Tradition and Modernity: Wang Tao and Reform in Late Ch'ing China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987); Zhang Hailin, *Wang Tao Pingzhuan* 王韜評傳 (Nanjing: Nanjing University Press, 1993); Xiuyun You, *Wang Tao xiaoshuo sanshu tanjiu* 王韜小說三書研究 (Taipei: Xiuwei zixun keji ltd., 2006).

²⁰⁰ Allan H. Barr, "The Later Classical Tale," in *The Columbia History of Chinese Literature*, ed. Victor H. Mair (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 696.

interpreted in terms of qualitative degeneration rather than quantitative decrease. Many scholars agree with Lu Xun that late-Qing imitations of the *Liaozhai* are inferior texts influenced by the contemporary genre of “depravity fiction.”²⁰¹

In his comment, Lu Xun recognizes Wang Tao as the author of three collections of strange tales, the last of which is the twelve-juan *Songbin suohua*. But the title as he cites it was first used in an unauthorized edition published by the Commercial Press in 1887. The original tales were published under the title *Songyin xulu* (*A Sequel to the Records of the Recluse of Wusong*). Although Wang Tao planned to publish a twelve-juan collection consisting of 120 tales, he completed only less than five *juan*. We do not have a single edition of *Songyin xulu* that contains all 120 tales written by the author. Similarly, the 1897 sixteen-juan *Yeyu qiudeng lu* that Lu Xun mentions is very likely the pirated edition also published by the Commercial Press, which contains a large number of biographies of courtesans lifted from the *Shen Bao* newspaper and the contemporary classical tale collection *Yingchuang yicao* 螢窗異草 (*Exotic Herbs Seen from a Firefly-Lit Window*).²⁰² The original eight-juan edition published by the Shen Bao press in 1877 and its sequel *Yeyu qiudeng xulu* (1880), by contrast, are dominated by stock *Liaozhai* characters, and unlike the sequence presented by Lu Xun, they all predate Wang Tao’s classical tales.²⁰³

²⁰¹ According to Zhang Zhenguó’s statistics, the decades bracketing the turn of the twentieth century (1880-1920) produced twice as many collections of classical tales as the entire preceding forty-year period. Many of these new collections are members of the *Liaozhai* school, suggesting that the imitation of Pu Songling was still active during the formative period of modern Chinese fiction. Zhenguó Zhang, *Wanqing minguo zhiguai chuanqi xiaoshuoji tanjiu* 晚清民國志怪傳奇小說研究 (Nanjing: Fenghuang, 2011), 143-323.

²⁰² *Yingchuang yicao* circulated in manuscript during the Qianlong period but was not published until the Guangxu period. For the history of this collection, see Zhongyi Hou and Shilin Liu, *Zhongguo wenyan xiaoshuo shigao* 中國文言小說史考 (Peking: Peking University Press, 1990), 225-28.

²⁰³ For a detailed discussion of the content of the original *Yeyu qiudeng lu*, see Heng He’s editorial preface in the 1987 Shanghai guji edition of *Yeyu qiudeng lu*, 1-11. Ling Shuowei examines the differences between the

Although Wang Tao scholars nowadays mainly use scholarly editions that have excluded tales from other sources, they have nonetheless made no effort to engage with *Songyin manlu* and *Songyin xulu* in their original format. Like Lu Xun, they have fallen into the same pitfall of content-oriented analysis that, by treating Wang Tao's classical tales purely as abstract texts, has ignored the impact editorial changes have had on our interpretation of the texts. As I will show in this chapter, Wang Tao's classical tales, in their original format, are drastically different from late-imperial collections of strange tales like the *Liaozhai*. Because of this difference, no discussion of Wang Tao's innovation in classical tales can be adequate without a sufficient understanding of the original medium in which these tales appeared.

Therefore, in view of the limitations of content-oriented analyses, I adopt a different approach to examine Wang Tao's classical tales in this chapter, one that entails a return from the *text* to the *work*. I argue that Wang Tao's *Songyin manlu* and *Songyin xulu* constitute a continuous series that reflect visions of Chinese enchantment particular to its medium. This chapter is divided into three parts. First, I describe the publication history of *Songyin manlu* and *Songyin xulu* in order to undercut their artificial division into two separate collections. Then I challenge the common assumption that Wang Tao modeled his tales on the *Liaozhai* by charting the history of the process through which his tales became *Houliaozhai zhiyi* (*Tales after the Strange Tales of the Liao Study*), which only happened as a result of the popularity of contemporary lithograph-print collections of classical tales, including late-nineteenth century illustrated editions of the *Liaozhai*. Finally, through close examination of a recurring theme in

original edition and the pirated editions in his article; see Ling Shouwei, "Yeyu qiudeng lu banben kaolun 夜雨秋燈錄版本考論," *Journal of Ming-Qing Fiction Studies*, no. 107 (2013).

Wang Tao's classical tales, I discuss the impact of the lithographic medium on his version of enchantment.

I. A Material Approach to the Study of Wang Tao's Classical Tales

Carefully compiled collections, either in manuscript or print, constitute the primary means of circulation for late-imperial strange tales like the *Liaozhai*. Although a widespread rumor goes that Pu Songling served free tea to travelers in exchange of good stories to be put into the *Liaozhai*, scholars nowadays generally believe that the bulk of *Liaozhai* tales did not have a history of circulation before entering the collection and were written by the Historian of Strange himself. By default, strange tales like the *Liaozhai* in late imperial China existed and circulated as “integral components of a larger hermeneutic framework constructed by the author as writer/anthologist.”²⁰⁴ Usually, a collection is already complete as a manuscript before it is handed to publishers. Hong Mai 洪邁 (1123-1202)'s *Yijian zhi* 夷堅志 (*The Record of the Listener*) and Ji Yun 紀昀 (1724-1805)'s *Yuewei caotang biji* 閱微草堂筆記 (*Jottings from the Thatched Cottage of Careful Reading*) are two exceptions to this general rule, as they were published in installments. But even in these rare cases, an installment was not a single tale but a collection in its own right, albeit on a smaller scale. The compilation of the installments therefore did not transpose the tales from one form to another.²⁰⁵

²⁰⁴ Chiang, *Collecting the Self: Body and Identity in Strange Tale Collections of Late Imperial China*, 2.

²⁰⁵ *Yijian zhi* was published in a series of installments, which “were divided into three series of ten. A fourth series was begun but only two installments of it ever came close to completion prior to the author's death in 1202.” See Alister D. Inglis, “A Textual History of Hong Mai's 'Yijian Zhi',” *T'oung Pao* 93, no. 4/5 (2007). Ji Yun's *Yuewei caotang biji* was published in five parts between 1789 and 1798, each under a different title. In 1880, Sheng Shiyuan, a disciple of Ji Yun, merged the five collections into one voluminous jointed edition under the new title *Yuewei caotang biji*, see Chan, *The Discourse on Foxes and Ghosts: Ji Yun and Eighteenth-Century Literati Storytelling*, 12.

1.1 *Songyin tushuo*: the Original Format of Wang Tao's Classical Tales

The tales in Wang Tao's *Songyin manlu* and *Songyin xulu*, however, were first circulated in a different medium before their formation into two collections. Originally published in consecutive installments in the lithography-printed *Dianshizhai Huabao* 點石齋畫報 (*Pictorial of the Touching Stone Studio*) between 1884 and 1888, with one tale in each issue, they are some of the earliest examples of periodical literature in China. Although Wang Tao left the reader with the impression that the two collections had already taken shape before their publication, several attributes of the installments suggest that their compilation in print was actually simultaneous with their formation into collections. First, all the tales are around three thousand words long, taking up a designated space of three half folios in the pictorial. It would make sense if they were written specifically for the pictorial, since uniformity in length is not a norm among classical tales in collections before Wang Tao. Secondly, the table of contents, a paratextual device common among late-imperial classical tale collections, is only seen in reprinted editions of *Songyin manlu* and *Songyin xulu*. Its absence in the pictorial further suggests Wang Tao lacked prior knowledge of the constituent pieces of his collections. Thirdly, some of the tales could not have been written before 1884 because they either allude to later events or were copied from the work of other writers contemporary with their publication.²⁰⁶ It is very likely that Wang Tao was writing under a fixed deadline. After the *Dianshizhai Pictorial* suspended the serialization of *Songyin xulu* in 1888, we see no further tale from this collection.

²⁰⁶ According to Zhang Zhenguo, a number of Wang Tao's tales were copied from Wang Jiazhen, Zou Sou, and Xu Cheng'en during the 1880s. See Zhenguo Zhang, "Wang Tao *Songbin Suohua* Zhong De Zou Sou Xiaoshuo Kaobian," *Jinan Journal*, no. 175 (2013).

Because they first circulated in installments, *Songyin manlu* and *Songyin xulu* cannot be read alongside late-imperial collections of classical tales. The conventional approach to *Songyin manlu* and *Songyin xulu* as two related but independent collections comes at the cost of sacrificing the original for the copy and neglecting the ontological changes undergone by the tales when reprinted in later collections. In the original pictorial, there was no interval between the publication of the last tale in *Songyin manlu* and that of the first tale in *Songyin xulu*. Therefore, we should not mistake the artificial division of Wang Tao's serialized classical tales into two separate collections as a real partition, even if sanctioned by the author.

Furthermore, on the cover pages of *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, Wang Tao's installments are advertised as *Songyin tushuo* 淞隱圖說 (figure 2.1).²⁰⁷ The title did not change with the completion of the *Songyin manlu* and the commencement of *Songyin xulu* (The cover page only used *Songyin xulu* after the tale "Shen Lanfen" in the third volume was published, and never used *Songyin manlu*). The shared title not only underlines the continuity between the *Songyin manlu* and the *Songyin xulu* but also draws our attention to another aspect of Wang Tao's installments so far overlooked in existing scholarship. As the term *tushuo* (illustrated explanations) makes clear, Wang Tao's installments combine verbal and visual elements into a single medium.

To be sure, illustrations are nothing unusual in late-imperial literature. Many vernacular novels and desktop plays carry images of the characters, which are often indicated by terms such as *xiuxiang* 繡像, *quanxiang* 全相, *lianxiang* 連相, *huaxiang* 畫像, and sometimes *huitu* 繪圖.

²⁰⁷ As early as the publication of the second tale in the *Songyin manlu*, the term *tushuo* was seen on the cover page. Later the term was changed to *Songyin tushuo*.

But this is not the case with the majority of collections of strange tales.²⁰⁸ The sixteenth-century scholar Luo Maodeng claims to have read a Yuan-dynasty imprint entitled *Xinbian lianxiang soushen guangji* 新編連相搜神廣記.²⁰⁹ Its title employs the standard term *xiang* 相/像 (image or portrait) to identify the illustrations. *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, by contrast, uses the unusual term *tushuo* to describe the pictorial aspect of Wang Tao's installments. As far as I know, this term has not been associated with any imprints of vernacular fiction or collection of strange tales before 1880.

When comparing Pu Songling's *Liaozhai* and Wang Tao's classical tales, Lu Xun observes that the latter diverges from the former in terms of its subjects, characters, and themes. What he overlooks, however, is the further divide between two print cultures. In Pu Songling's time, the mainstream technique of printing involves carving woodblocks, which was both expensive and time-consuming. Pu never saw his tales in print—the first edition of *Liaozhai* only came out decades after his death. During the Guangxu reign, however, woodblock-printing became increasingly obsolete with the ascendance of Western printing techniques such as typeface and lithography. And this technological revolution, as Perry Link points out, facilitated the emergence of modern periodicals in Shanghai, encouraged the growth of China's modern literature, and made possible the expansion of commercially driven readership markets.²¹⁰ Wang Tao was writing his *Songyin tushuo* in the golden age of Shanghai's lithography-print publishers,

²⁰⁸ Gan Bao's *Soushen ji*, Qu You's *Jiandeng xinhua*, and Li Zhen's *Jiandeng xuhua* are, to my knowledge, among the few collections of strange tales that had illustrated editions before the nineteenth century. Anne E. McLaren, *Chinese Popular Culture and Ming Chantefables* (Boston: Brill, 1998), 59.

²⁰⁹ For the history of *Soushen ji* in illustration, see Jianguo Li, "Ershi Juan Ben Soushenji Kao," *Wen Xian* 4 (2010).

²¹⁰ Perry Link, *Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies: Popular Fiction in Early Twentieth-Century Chinese Cities* (Berkeley: University of California Press 1985).

who had mastered the technique so as to mass-reproduce images and texts in a fast and economic way and thereby contributed to the birth of illustrated magazines in China. The *Songyin tushuo* installments were the first classical tales to appear in a Chinese pictorial, and at the time of their first publication were circulating in a medium that had been unknown to China until the late 1870s.

1.2 *Dianshizhai Huabao* as a New Medium

A brain child of Ernest and Frederick Major, who also ran the *Shenbao* 申報 newspaper (founded 1872) and the Dianshizhai Publishing House 點石齋書局, *Dianshizhai Pictorial* made its debut in the midst of the Sino-French War (1884-1885), featuring pictorial reports on the war. As the fifth in a series of lithographic supplements to the *Shenbao*, it was sent free to *Shen Bao* subscribers, and at the same time was sold separately in Shanghai at newspaper vendors and at Major Brothers' Shenchang Calligraphy Studio. Compared to the typeface-printed *Shen Bao*, which has only limited space devoted to images, the lithography-printed *Dianshizhai Pictorial* exemplifies a new medium in which the printed words are almost engulfed in a frenzy of visuals. During its fourteen years of existence between 1884 and 1898, the thrice-monthly issued *Pictorial* carried about 4,500 lithographic illustrations, covering a vast range of topics from China's foreign wars to treaty-port life, family conflicts, bordello life, along with a fair amount on foreign technology. Because of its far-reaching influences, *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, as

Christopher Reed argues, “marks the threshold across which works of visual arts entered the age of mass production in Qing China.”²¹¹

Although the illustrated magazine originated from the West, the format adopted by *Dianshizhai Pictorial* was not entirely foreign to Chinese readers familiar with traditional woodblock print culture. The issues of the Pictorial are formatted according to the so-called “back-wrapped technique” standardized in the late-imperial period: first, folios are formed by double-folding each *xuanzhi* sheet down the middle, with the illustrations (printed only on one side of the sheet) facing outward. Next, stacks of folios are placed between pinkish or greenish covers, perforated along one edge, and then sewn together with white silk cord to form a stitch-bound volume.²¹²

Many features of the block-printed folios are detectable on the “pages” of the *Dianshizhai Pictorial* (figure 2.2). For example, the upper margin or *tiantou* 天頭 (heavenly head) is wider than the lower margin or *dijiao* 地腳 (earthly foot). A single heavy black border forms a rectangle to frame the printed portion or *banmian* 版面 (block face). The narrow space near the fold contains information such as folio number, volume number, and titles to help the reader navigate the text. On the folio pages containing supplemental literature, a triangular black *yuwei* 魚尾 or “fish tail” folding mark is still visible on the upper part of the fold even though it is non-functional—the printed portion on lithographically press-printed sheets is always

²¹¹ Christopher A. Reed, *Gutenberg in Shanghai: Chinese Print Capitalism, 1876--1937* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004), 112.

²¹² For further discussion on the techniques of woodblock printing and traditional ways of book binding, see chapter 9 of Tsuen-hsuei Tsien, *Collected Writings on Chinese Culture* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2011).

centered. All these features are absent in Western illustrated magazines but are common in Chinese woodblock print matter.

As Reed points out, *Dianshizhai Pictorial* combines traditional illustrative idioms with a modern.²¹³ I would add, however, that the format of *Dianshizhai Pictorial* comes the closest to that of the traditional Chinese pictorial album. When flipping through the folios in the *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, the reader encounters a continuous series of illustrations, which have the distinct appearance of traditional Chinese paintings. The pictorial, therefore, is mainly to be viewed rather than to be read given that it prioritizes images over texts. The latter are usually placed, together with the signature and seal of the painter, in the blank part of the illustrations. Only in the supplemental section are texts featured at any length separately from the related images. But except for the occasional advertisement or editorial announcement, no text in the *Dianshizhai Pictorial* remains unillustrated.

Pictorial albums in China can be roughly divided into two categories, one closely associated with *tu* 圖 and the other closely associated with *hua* 畫. The former term denotes informative and instructive images, especially those identified as “templates for action.” The latter term, by contrast, describes aesthetic images that serve the pleasure of viewing and are more useful for the cultivation of connoisseurship or enhancement of painting skills.²¹⁴ Although *Dianshizhai Pictorial* claims to be a *huabao*, its illustrations, due to their journalistic nature, are not quite in the same category as the hua-oriented pictorial albums such as *huapu* 畫譜. Instead,

²¹³ Reed, *Gutenberg in Shanghai: Chinese Print Capitalism, 1876--1937*, 124.

²¹⁴ For a detailed discussion of the distinction between *tu* and *hua*, see Francesca Bray, Vera Dorofeeva-Lichtmann, and Georges Metaillie, *Graphics and Text in the Production of Technical Knowledge in China the Warp and the Weft*, (Boston: Brill, 2007).

it is similar to the *tu* school of pictorial albums such as *tushuo* 圖說, *tuzhi* 圖志, and *tuhui* 圖會. Major's editorial statement in the first issue of the *Dianshizhai Pictorial* especially exalts the encyclopedic *Sancai tuhui* 三才圖會 to explain the utilitarian value of *tu*. It is against the background of the *Dianshizhai Pictorial*'s valorization of *tu* that *Songyin tushuo* makes reference to *tushuo*, a specific kind of pictorial album. To grasp fully the significance of this reference, we must first take a closer look at the structure of the *Dianshizhai Pictorial* within which *Songyin tushuo* is placed.

1.3. The Pictorial Proper and Pictorial Supplement

Following the convention of Western illustrated magazines, *Dianshizhai Pictorial* includes supplements to promote its own sales. The first clue to distinguishing the pictorial proper from the supplement is provided by the cover of *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, which has a tripartite structure. The title *Dianshizhai huabao* is printed vertically in the largest panel in the middle. To its right is the *xun* (ten days), month, year, and reign title, followed by the incremental issue number. The opposite side mentions noteworthy supplemental material, usually preceded by such verbs as “added and appended to” (*zengfu* 增附) or “given as a bonus” (*suisong* 隨送), “newly added” (*xinzeng* 新增), “appended to” (*houfu* 後附). The price of the *Dianshizhai Pictorial* is based on the illustrations in the pictorial proper, which is defined by another standardized phrase in the leftmost panel—“Only eight folios of *tu* are counted towards the price 計圖八頁，概不加價” (in the editorial announcement, the term “frame” (*zhen* 幀) is used instead of “folio”). In reality, it is the number of illustrations, not the folios, that add up to eight. Of these eight illustrations, the first and last usually occupy the space of only one half of a

double-folded folio. They bracket a series of six larger images printed on the verso of the preceding folio and the recto of the succeeding folio, so that without flipping between folios, the reader can see a full-size illustration in its entirety.

The distinction between pictorial proper and the supplement is further indicated by the complex numbering system that *Dianshizhai Pictorial* devised for the texts to be collectible. The system groups every twelve issues together into one collection, which are identified in a sequence “starting off with the ten heavenly and the twelve earthly stems, and ending with the four categories under which the hexagrams were subsumed.”²¹⁵ While the issue number restarts from one in each collection, the folios in the same collections are continuously numbered. This numbering system, however, only appears at the fold of the folios in the pictorial proper. The supplements are either numbered according to a different system or not numbered at all.

In terms of content and format, there are also significant differences between the pictorial proper and the supplement. The former is exclusively devoted to the depiction of contemporary events (or at least purports to be so), whereas the latter, for the most part, is geared towards entertainment and connoisseurship, hence the inclusion of literature, literati-paintings, and riddles. In the former, texts are brief and completely integrated with the illustrations, being

²¹⁵ “From the outset, the *Dianshizhai Pictorial* had a well-developed complex numbering system. Each of the eventual six ‘collections’ used a new numbering set, starting off with the ten heavenly and the twelve earthly stems, and ending with the four categories under which the hexagrams were subsumed. Each element in these categories would comprise ninety-six or nineteen-seven double pages with illustrations plus an index. The covers with the title and date were of greenish or reddish thin paper of low quality. These were to be removed upon binding, and with them the date disappeared, which had tied the illustrations to a particular moment and event. From then on, the illustrations had to live by their timeless interest and attraction. The long life of the paper (1884-1898) and frequent reprints attest to fact that it was successful on both counts, actuality and timeless interest.” Rudolf G. Wagner, “Joining the Global Imaginaire: The Shanghai Illustrated Newspaper *Dianshizhai Huabao*,” in *Joining the Global Public: Word, Image, and City in Early Chinese Newspapers, 1870-1910*, ed. Rudolf G. Wagner (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2007), 132.

relegated to the space of inscription. In the latter, the length and position of the texts vary according to the folio and are not necessarily part of the illustrations.

Two kinds of supplements are seen in the *Dianshizhai Pictorial*. One consists of a large number of inserted images that were never been included in the reprints. These images encompass a wider spectrum of pictorial diversity than those in the pictorial proper. Almost every genre of the traditional Chinese painting is represented, as well as reproductions of photographs and maps. The majority of these images are not printed on double-sided folios. In the format of pop-outs or foldouts, they disrupt the reader's continuous viewing of the pictorial by requiring continuous turning of the folios from right to the left. Sometimes the reader has to rotate the pictorial 90 degrees. At other times, the reader the folio must be spread out in order to see the entirety of the images. Some of the images are advertised on the cover of the *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, and in such cases, they are always introduced as *hua* instead of *tu*, even though they are produced by the same printing technique as the illustrations in the pictorial proper.

Besides sequences of images collected on an ad-hoc basis, serialized books form the other group of supplements. Wang Tao's writings dominated the serial literature in *Dianshizhai Pictorial* from its inception. *Songyin manlu*, which was carried on into *Songyin xulu* in 1887, was the first literary supplement to be published in *Dianshizhai Pictorial*. Wang's travelogue entitled *Manyou suilu* 漫遊隨錄, written in the style of jottings (*biji*), was the third serial to appear on the *Dianshizhai Pictorial*.²¹⁶ Its publication had some overlap with that of *Songyin xulu*. After Wang Tao's three books, *Dianshizhai Pictorial* also serialized two *chuanqi* plays, namely Li Yu

²¹⁶ *Manyou suilu* was serialized in *Dianshizhai Pictorial* issues 126 to 174.

(1610-1680)'s *Fengzheng wu* 風箏誤 (*Mistakes with the Kite*), He Yong (a.k.a. Gaochang Hanshi Sheng 1841-1894)'s *Chenglong jiahua* 乘龍佳話 (*Superb tales of the Dragon Aflight*); a collection of biographies of famous women *Guiyuan conglu* 閨媛叢錄 (Collection of Records from the Ladies' Boudoirs), a collection of riddles entitled *Aiyuan Misheng* 藹園迷勝 (Riddles from the Ai Garden), a newly assembled collection of Tang *chuanqi* tales entitled *Dianshizhai congchao* 點石齋叢鈔.²¹⁷ All these supplements are illustrated, and half of them were written specifically for *Dianshizhai Pictorial*. Nevertheless, none of the above-mentioned works belongs to the category of modern Chinese fiction. Although in a 1895 *Shen Bao* editorial entitled "The Educational Value of Pictorials," Major claims that pictorials attract a much wider readership that would include merchants, villagers, and even illiterate women, it is obvious that the literary supplements of *Dianshizhai Pictorial* would only have been accessible to educated readers familiar not only with classical Chinese but with various cultural and historical references as well.²¹⁸ The literary supplements, more than any other sections of the *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, foreground the active participation of literati writers like Wang Tao in the genesis of a fully commercialized medium, whose success would pave the way for the emergence of Chinese mass media in the following two decades.

Different from their counterparts in late-imperial collections of classical tales, the consecutive *Songyin tushuo* installments appeared in a medium that is essentially ephemeral. For

²¹⁷ *Fengzheng wu* was serialized in *Dianshizhai Pictorial* from issue 153 through issue 172. *Guiyuan conglu* was serialized in *Dianshizhai Pictorial* from issue 223 through issue 260. *Aiyuan misheng* was serialized in *Dianshizhai Pictorial* from issue 253 through issue 279. *Chenglong jiahua* was serialized in *Dianshizhai Pictorial* from issue 280 through issue 297. *Dianshizhai congchao* was serialized in *Dianshizhai Pictorial* from issue 304 through 413.

²¹⁸ Ye Xiaoqing, *The Dianshizhai Pictorial: Shanghai Urban Life, 1884-1898* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003), 11.

this reason, the responsibility for forming collections was shifted from the publisher to the reader. To make this task easier to complete, *Dianshizhai Pictorial* inserted special guiding information into a narrow column at the fold of the folios containing these installments. The title of the collection is printed on the top of the column and is separated from the titles of the individual tales by a black fishtail folding mark, which is standard in woodblock-printed books. On the lower part of the column is the volume number and the folio number, which is separated from the pagination of the folios in the pictorial proper. A reader can rely on this unique system to collect the installments and bind them into a collection.

But the same device that makes the installments collectible also highlights their externality to *Dianshizhai Pictorial*. In this regard, the pictorial at least outwardly maintained unity by applying the designation *Songyin tushuo* to the installments. In reality, however, it is the pictorial proper rather than Wang Tao's illustrated installments that bear more resemblance to the historical *tushuo* in woodblock print culture.

1.4. The History of *tushuo* and its transformation during the Guangxu reign

In late-imperial woodblock print culture, the term *tushuo* designates a specific type of narrative illustration mainly associated with the pictorial albums that seek to communicate with their readers through images rather than texts. While its format shares much affinity with neighboring genres such as *tuzhi* and *tuhui*, pictorial albums categorized as *tushuo* are devoted chiefly to moral education or technical instruction.²¹⁹ In many cases, the producers of *tushuo*

²¹⁹ For example, the former is represented by the Ming dynasty *Dijian tushuo* (*The Emperor's Mirror, illustrated and discussed*), whereas the latter is represented by the *Yuanxi qiqi tushuo* (*Amazing Instruments from the Far West*).

justify the relegation of texts to auxiliary roles by underlying the persuasive power of images to reach readers who have limited literacy (such as women and children) or little knowledge of a particular subject matter. A fine example in point is the Ming-dynasty *Dijian Tushuo* 帝鑒圖說 (*The Emperor's Mirror, Illustrated and Explained*), a sumptuous didactic album with painted pictures and hand-written texts originally presented by the Senior Grand Secretary Zhang Juzheng to the then nine-year old Shenzhong emperor (reign title Wanli) in 1573. To encourage the child emperor to become a sage ruler, Zhang “had orchestrated this appealingly illustrated and copiously annotated collection of exemplary and cautionary tales about rulers from remote antiquity to the late Northern Song period. One volume presented eighty-one models to emulate, and the other contained thirty-six examples to avoid.”²²⁰ A woodblock-print reproduction of the original court album appeared at the end of the same year and was adopted into a number of editions throughout the late-imperial period. Its appearance coincided with the beginning of a flourishing period for narrative illustrations within late-imperial woodblock-print culture, which further contributed to the maturity of *tushuo* as a print genre.

Because they purport to use documentary illustrations (*tu*) to represent certain actions as examples to be followed, the *tushuo* albums are conditioned by their utilitarian value, either moral or technical, to endorse a historical or factual framework of interpretation. As Julia Murray puts it, “visual representations [in them] were powerful because they were associated with the real thing.”²²¹ But such an adherence to history does not characterize Wang Tao’s illustrated installments. As one of the literary supplements catering to readers’ pleasures of viewing,

²²⁰ Julia K. Murray, *Mirror of Morality : Chinese Narrative Illustration and Confucian Ideology* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007), 91.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 92.

reading, and collecting, *Songyin tushuo* is removed from the historical reality that the illustrations in the pictorial proper seek to portray.²²² It is instead placed in a domain where the lithographs are more associated with *hua* and *xiang* in woodblock-print culture.

Besides the lack of any claim to factuality, the absence of moral or technical discourse also highlights the great distance between *Songyin tushuo* and conventional *tushuo* in woodblock-print culture. Because traditional collections of strange tales were usually composed in the vein of unofficial historical writings, they are burdened by the task of Chinese historiography to distinguish good and evil. In the *Liaozhai*, moral judgment is conferred upon the tales through the appended end-comments, where Pu assumes the persona of the “Historian of the Strange” (異史氏 *yishi shi*), a sobriquet modeled after the title Grand Historian of Sima Qian of the second century BCE, who wrote the first general history of China. Wang Tao was familiar with this moralizing device. In his 1877 collection of classical tale *Dunku lanyan*, which was completed before its publication, he takes on the identity of “Historian of the Unknown Anecdotes” (*yishi shi* 逸史氏, a pun on Pu’s literary name) in the end-comments. In the *Songyin tushuo*, however, the end-comment is completely absent, together with the identity of the historian. Here Wang Tao refers to himself as the “recluse of Tiannan [the area south of the five Ridges]” 天南遯叟 in both the prefaces and tales in which he includes his own persona as a character. As potently suggested by Lu Xun in the parallel he draws between Wang’s tales and contemporary depravity fiction, *Songyin tushuo* is far from a moralizing work. In addition, the

²²² As Laikwan Pang argues, there is a strong realist effect to the illustrations in the *Dianshizhai Pictorial* pictorial proper. Laikwan Pang, *The Distorting Mirror: Visual Modernity in China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), 176. However, as time went on, the pictorial proper, as Nanny Kim points out, gradually ceded its standard of immediate, accurate information to entertainment; but its historical claim remained intact. Nanny Kim, "New Wine in Old Bottles? Making and Reading an Illustrated Magazine from Late Nineteenth-Century Shanghai," in *Joining the Global Public: Word, Image, and City in Early Chinese Newspapers, 1870-1910*, ed. Rudolf G. Wagner (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2007).

heterogeneity of its tales also determines that *Songyin tushuo*, unlike the conventional *tushuo*, does not have clear, unequivocal *raison d'être*.

For the reasons mentioned above, *Songyin tushuo* is a misnomer for an illustrated fiction that promises entertainment to its reader. But the misuse of *tushuo* is not uncommon in late-19th century print culture. In the same year *Songyin tushuo* began its serialization, the Guanke shou Studio published a woodblock-printed guidebook of Shanghai entitled *Shenjiang mingsheng tushuo* 申江名勝圖說 (*Famous Scenes along the Shen River, Illustrated and Explained*), which helped create the image of “Shanghai as the world’s playground” by presenting a series of leisure activities within the discourse of *qi*, the fascinating or strange.²²³ To convey better the *qi* to the reader, the Shanghai commercial print industry hired talented artists such as Wu Youru to adorn plain text with attractive illustrations. As I will discuss further on, the same discourse of *qi* is intertwined with a recurring theme in *Songyin tushuo*. *Songyin tushuo* thus appears in the specific context in which *tu*, detached from timeless generality and moral exemplarity, found new employment in journalistic reports and print entertainment.

II. From Serial to Collection—How Wang Tao’s Installments Became the *Hou Liaozhai*

The previous section engages with the material form of Wang Tao’s classical tales. I argue that our study of them should be based on the *Songyin tushuo* serial instead of the reprinted collections because the latter has removed the former from its original interpretative framework.

²²³ Catherine Vance Yeh, *Shanghai Love: Courtesans, Intellectuals, and Entertainment Culture, 1850-1910* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006), 166. Although *Shenjiang mingsheng tushuo* is woodblock-printed, its subject resembles that of the *Dianshizhai Pictorial* as well as the 1884 lithographic *Shengjiang mingsheng tu*. I have not found another pre-1880 guidebook for leisure activities whose title includes the term *tushuo*, and I believe that a guidebook portraying city life in the way *Shenjiang mingsheng tushuo* could appear no earlier than the late-Qing.

This adjustment of focus will enable us not only to note the enormous differences between Wang's illustrated installments and late-imperial collections of classical tales but also to shift the center of our focus from the *product* to the *process*. This shift is important because it allows us to challenge the assumption, widely manifested in existing scholarship, that the *Songyin manlu* and the *Songyin xulu* are the result of Wang's endeavor to imitate *Liaozhai*. As I will show next, this false lineage was drawn only during the serialization of the *Songyin tushuo*.

The earliest comparison between Wang Tao's installments and Pu Songling's strange tales can be found in an advertisement in the *Shen Bao* newspaper dated 6 July 1884 (dated the fourteenth day of the fifth month in the lunar calendar), a little less than one lunar month before the serialization of the *Songyin manlu* commenced. This advertisement first introduces Wang Tao as an erudite scholar whose "writing emits an aura of brilliance" (下筆便有奇氣) and then remarks that the *Songyin manlu*, "albeit nonessential [in the author's oeuvre], has been a rarely seen work after Pu Songling's masterpiece"(是書雖先生之緒餘, 然已爲蒲留仙後僅見之作).²²⁴ It further encourages the readers to assemble the folios into a collection, which "can be perused in conjunction with the *Liaozhai*" (可與聊齋志異合讀叅觀).²²⁵ When speaking of the merit of *Songyin manlu*, the advertisement points out that "*Liaozhai* tales are unaccompanied by illustrations, but every single tale in the *Songyin manlu* is illustrated and printed in the dignified script style. Free of errors as a result of careful proofreading, it is on a par with the *Liaozhai*

²²⁴ *Shen Bao* newspaper, issue 4033.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*

zhiyi, if not superior to it 而且聊齋有說無畫, 此書每說繪一圖, 字又端楷, 校正無訛, 則視聊齋誌異有過之無不及”。²²⁶

It is important that similarity in content is not the criterion on which the comparison between the *Songyin manlu* and the *Liaozhai* is based here. Rather, the passage's evaluation of the *Songyin manlu* focuses the language and style. By introducing Wang as a literary genius and evoking the criteria of *qi* (brilliance) and *bi* or *bifa* (narrating techniques) for evaluating the *Songyin manlu*, the rhetoric of the advertisement is apparently reverting to imagery and terminology that are typical for the commentary tradition spawned by vernacular novel and drama. The famous seventeenth-century commentator Jin Shengtan (1610-1661), for example, grouped literary masterpieces of completely different genres into an annotated collection entitled “Six Works of Genius,” identifying their commonality in their all being replete with subtle clues easily missed by the ordinary reader.²²⁷ The use of annotation is then to help the reader decipher the hidden meaning of these texts through a discussion of *bifa*. During the nineteenth century, this stylistic approach was extended to the reading of the *Liaozhai*. By interpreting Pu's collection as a fictional and ironic construct intended for the superior reader, this approach had helped to canonize the *Liaozhai* as “the culmination of the classical tale in style, complexity, and range.”²²⁸ It is thus the literary fame of the *Liaozhai*, rather than its investigation of the strange, that the *Shen Bao* advertisement seeks to harness with the aim of presenting Wang Tao as a

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ For Jin Shengtan's influence on later commentary on fiction, see David L. Rolston, *Traditional Chinese Fiction and Fiction Commentary: Reading and Writing between the Lines* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 20-50.

²²⁸ Zeitlin, *Historian of the Strange: Pu Songling and the Chinese Classical Tale*, 4.

master of abstruse classical language and sophisticated narrative techniques. It does not explicitly identify *Songyin manlu* as a collection of strange tales in imitation of the *Liaozhai*.

2.1 Strange Tales or Miscellaneous Notes? Two Versions of the Preface to *the Songyin manlu*

In fact, it is quite likely that Wang Tao did not originally intend to write a collection of strange tales. Among the collections of strange tales that predate the *Songyin manlu*, I have not found a single precedent to justify Wang's designation of his collection as a *manlu* 漫錄, literally "random notes." Most of the pre-19th century *manlu* known to us belong to the *biji* (miscellaneous notes) genre—a loosely defined literary category "consisting of study notes, literary sketches, anecdotes, and personal observations written in the classical language."²²⁹ For example, Chen Shichong (1245-1309)'s *Suiyin manlu* 隨隱漫錄, a copy of which was owned by Wang Tao, records various miscellaneous anecdotes about the Southern Song.²³⁰ In *Songyin manlu*, only a small number of the tales can be clearly identified as bearing any resemblance to *Liaozhai* tales. More tales are similar to the elastic and heterogenous *biji* writings,

The Wang Tao archive housed at the Shanghai library includes some important documents that may help illuminate the connection between the *Songyin manlu* and the *biji* genre. Among the manuscripts held there is a preface to a collection also entitled *Songyin manlu* (an unpublished work bearing the same title as the later published collection). It is dated "the

²²⁹ Chiang, *Collecting the Self: Body and Identity in Strange Tale Collections of Late Imperial China*, 27.

²³⁰ Other examples include *Nenggai zhai manlu* 能改齋漫錄, *Chuanqi manlu* 傳奇漫錄, *Xuelin manlu* 學林漫錄, *Mozhuang manlu* 墨庄漫錄 in 10 volumes, *Kuaya manlu* 枯崖漫錄 in 3 volumes, *Dushi manlu* 讀史漫錄 in 14 volumes, and *Nanyuan manlu* 南園漫錄.

middle *xun* or ten days of the fifth month of the tenth year of the Guangxu reign, sequential Jia Shen” (光緒十年歲次甲申五月中澣), so that its date is the same as that given to the preface of the *Songyin manlu* published in *Dianshizhai Pictorial*. This hand-written preface is shorter in length than the published version, but otherwise the similarities between the two are evident.

The unpublished text this earlier preface is meant to introduce is not found among the manuscripts, so there is no way to determine whether it was, in fact, merely a draft version for the published *Songyin manlu* installments, or whether it differed sufficiently from the published version to be considered a separate work. Nonetheless the most noteworthy feature of this preface is that it is identical to the preface of yet another manuscript in the archive, namely, the second preface to a collection entitled *Laotao zhuiyu* 老饕贅語 or *Idle Chatter of the Old Epicure*. *Laotao zhuiyu* itself is no longer extant, so we can only infer what it is about from the information provided by three sources: Wang’s autobiography *Souyuan laomin zizhuan* 弢園老民自傳 catalogues this work as an unpublished collection of sixteen volumes, while Wang’s *Souyuan zhushu zongmu* 弢園著述總目 or *The Complete Catalogue of the Works of the Master of Sui Garden* describes the work as an eight-volume collection akin to *shihua* or Remarks on Poetry (詩話之流亞也), a special kind of *biji* writing fully devoted to the discussion of poetry and poets; and an advertisement in the *Zilin hubao* 字林滬報 newspaper, which was edited by a student of Wang Tao, indicates that an eight-volume edition of *Laotao zhuiyu* was published as serialized supplements, but there are no surviving copies to testify to its existence.²³¹ However, this advertisement echoes the description in the *Souyuan zhushu zongmu*, adding that “the book

²³¹ For an excellent discussion on the *Laotao zhuiyu*, see Guoyi Wu, "Wang Tao Shengzu Nianyueri Zai Kaozheng," *Journal of Eastern China Normal University* 35, no. 5 (2004): 113. Also see You Xiuyun, *Wang Tao Xiaoshuo Sanshu Yanjiu* 43.

records everything. Besides discussing poetry and essays, it also [covers] many things that people have never heard of 其書記載一切，談詩論文之外，以及事物之靈所未聞。”²³²

Despite the inconsistencies between these three descriptions, we can still infer that *Laotao zhuiyu* is not strictly speaking a collection of strange tales in the vein of the *Liaozhai*. We are not certain whether *Laotao zhuiyu* reflects Wang Tao's original ideas about the *Songyin manlu*, but the unpublished preface to *Songyin manlu* shows that as late as in mid-1884 Wang Tao was still debating between different options to submit for serialization in *Dianshizhai Pictorial*.

2.2 “Writings are properties common to all under heaven”: pirated editions of the *Songyin manlu*

It is in the midst of the controversies stirred up by unauthorized publications of the *Songyin manlu* that we see for the first time an explicit attempt to place Wang Tao's classical tales within the school of *Liaozhai* imitations. On 14 August 1887, an advertisement in the *Shen Bao* newspaper announced that the Weixian lu (味閑廬) Press was going to publish a lithographic collection entitled *Houliaozhai zhiyi tushuo chuji* 后聊齋誌異圖說初集 (*The First Collection of Illustrated Sequel-Tales to the Liaozhai Zhiyi*) in early September. The collection, according to the advertisement, is “a showpiece 极得意之作” by Wang Tao that “uses a narrative style approximating that of the *Liaozhai*” and defines its raison d'être as the “discussion of strange phenomena 用笔仿乎《聊斋》，命意等于说怪。”²³³ The advertisement also mentions

²³² quoted in "Wang Tao Shengzu Nianyueri Zai Kaozheng," 113.

²³³ *Shen Bao* Newspaper, issue 5145.

that this collection covers a wide range of topics drawing upon the author's "life experiences in the past decades and multiple journeys over thousands of miles," during which the author "had acquainted himself, either directly or indirectly," with the stories of many unusual personalities: "from female warriors to extraordinary men, from intelligent fox-spirits to aged monsters, all the way to talented courtesans of green bowers and humble scholars residing in unadorned rooms; he takes the pain to depict them in an unreserved manner, as long as their stories raise surprise and alarm or inspire respect and joy 以数十年之阅历，数万里之遨游，所见闻之侠女高人、灵狐老怪、以至青楼妙妓，白屋书生，凡有可惊可愕可敬可喜之事，无不曲意描摹。”²³⁴

Wang Tao soon found out that the advertised book in question was none other than his own *Songyin manlu*, the *Dianshizhai Pictorial* serialization of which would not be completed until early September of 1887. In response, he released a statement, published on August 22 in the *Shen Bao* newspaper, forcefully asserting that he did not authorize the Weixian lu edition: "I was shocked and baffled [by Weixian lu's advertisement]. This is not a book I created. I gather that it must be my *Songyin manlu*."²³⁵ His vehement reaction obviously demonstrates his vexation over the unauthorized publication of his work, but it may also indicate his sheer surprise at seeing a sequel to the *Liaozhai* suddenly attributed to him. In any event what is quite clear is that if he had consciously imitated the *Liaozhai* in *Songyin manlu*, the question of which of his books had been pirated would not be the matter for conjecture that it evidently is in his statement..

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ *Shen Bao* Newspaper, issue 5153

Two days following the release of Wang's statement, the Weixian lu press issued a public apology to him, also in the pages of the *Shen Bao*. Yet the printed apology makes the still rather blatant pretext that, not knowing Wang Tao personally, the publisher of the Weixian lu had decided to publish the *Songyin manlu* in the belief that "writings are nothing but properties common to all under heaven 文章為天下之公器而."²³⁶ Because no legal protection of copyright existed in China at this time, it would have been futile for Wang Tao to make further claims against Weixian lu. As Wang Fei-hsien points out, while the local practices and norms in East Asian xylography-based book cultures had, in fact, developed certain rough equivalents to modern copyright, this "proto-copyright" equated to "the ownership of printing blocks [ban] rather than ownership of abstract intellectual creations"²³⁷. Even this protection was voided by the age of lithography, however, once a publisher could easily replicate a book without having access to the original *ban* or press block. Indeed, the *Hou liaozhai* published by the Weixian lu were directly copied from the *Songyin tushuo* installments. Under the circumstances, Dianshizhai Publishing Works had to lower the price of its reprinted edition of the *Songyin manlu* in order to compete with this new rival.

But despite protests by the Dianshizhai Publishing Works, other publishers did not hesitate to reprint Wang Tao's serialized tales. Several lithographic editions of the *Songyin manlu* are known, all of which copied the layout and design of the original version of Wang Tao's installments on the *Dianshizhai Pictorial*. One curious feature of the unauthorized reprints is that, like the Weixian lu edition, most of them categorized Wang Tao's *Songyin manlu* as an

²³⁶ *Shen Bao* Newspaper, issue 5155

²³⁷ Wang Fei-Hsien, "Creating New Order in the Knowledge Economy: The Curious Journey of Copyright in China, 1868--1937" (Ph.D. dissertation, The University of Chicago, 2012), 60.

imitation of the *Liaozhai*. The 1887 Datong Shuju edition, the 1891 Jishan editions and 1894 Hongwen editions, all print the title *Hou liaozhai zhiyi tushuo* 后聊齋誌異圖說 (*Tales after the Strange Records of Liao Studio, Illustrated and Explained*) at the fold of the folios. The 1896 Wenyun shuzhuang edition uses the title *Zhengyixu liaozhai zhiyi* 正續聊齋誌異 (*The Authentic Sequel to the Strange Records of the Liao Studio*).

After publishing the *Songyin manlu* tales as a collection under the same title in 1887, Dianshizhai itself reprinted the same collection in 1893 and 1903. Tellingly, both of the later editions converted the title from *Songyin manlu* to *Huitu hou Liaozhai zhiyi* 繪圖後聊齋誌異 and crossed out the original title *Songyin manlu* at the fold of the folios in black ink. The 1903 edition also adds the phrase “and therefore changed its name to *Hou liaozhai zhiyi* 而爰名之后聊齋誌異” at the end of Wang Tao’s preface (figure 2.3). Following the convention of collections of strange tales, both editions added a table of contents to the beginning of the book. These changes in the Dianshizhai Publishing Works’ own editions only served to reinforce the impression of Wang Tao as an imitator of Pu Songling, thus promoting a literary lineage that had initially been fabricated by the pirated reprints of the *Songyin manlu*.

It is noteworthy that when the Weixian lu first reprinted *Songyin manlu* as *Hou liaozhai*, the original serialization of Wang Tao’s installments was still in progress, and none of the tales comprising the *Songyin xulu* collection had yet been published. But instead of discouraging belief in the false literary lineage touted by the pirated edition, Wang ended up actively presenting his *Songyin xulu* in a way that would only encourage the reader to identify him as an emulator of Pu Songling’s classical tales.

2.3. *Songyin xulu* and Wang Tao's self-portrait as a writer of strange tales

A twelve-juan *Songyin xulu* was not part of Wang Tao's original plan. In 1884, when his classical tales first started to appear in the *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, Wang had announced that the installments would accrue to a collection of twelve volumes entitled *Songyin manlu*. After the completion of the *Songyin manlu* in 1887, however, Wang made known his intention to carry on the serial and let it culminate into another collection of twelve volumes entitled the *Songyin xulu*. But shortly after the completion of the fourth volume, the serialization of *Songyin xulu* suddenly stopped and did not resume, leaving the project unfinished.

In his 1887 preface to the *Songyin xulu*, Wang Tao claims that the tales in the new collection differ in content from those in the *Songyin manlu*:

Songyin manlu mainly contains records about human affairs. Very few tales are devoted to those about intelligent foxes, cunning ghosts, flower demons, tree spirits, and their ilk (not to mention birds, beasts, insects, and sea creatures), nor is the coverage of their variety at all comprehensive. Now I especially create a world among the non-human creatures and relate anecdotes about encounters with illusions in marvelous realms to later generations. Words alone are not enough to fully describe this world because it is solely created from my own mind/heart (*xin*) [...] All [I wrote] are nothing but illusions! Since it generates illusions, the mind/heart is the most extraordinary [*qi*] human faculty (《淞隱漫錄》所紀，涉于人事為多，似於靈狐黠鬼、花妖木魅，以逮鳥獸蟲魚，篇牘寥寥，未能遍及。今將于諸蟲豸中，別辟一世界，構為奇境幻遇，稗傳于世，非筆足以達之，實從吾一心之所生「...」悉幻焉而已矣！幻由心造，則人心為最奇也)。²³⁸

According to this passage, the continuation of the *Songyin manlu* into the *Songyin xulu* entails the shift of the serial's focus from humans to ghosts, fox, flower spirits and other creatures, all of which are stock characters in the *Liaozhai*. In reality, however, the difference between *Songyin*

²³⁸ Wang Tao, "Preface," *Dianshizhai Pictorial* no. 126 (1887).

manlu and *Songyin xulu* in terms of content is not so clearly demarcated as Wang makes it out to be, since *Songyin xulu* also demonstrates many characteristics of the *biji* genre. Moreover, many of the *Songyin xulu* installments that depict courtesans in Shanghai and Tokyo do not support the predominance of *Liaozhai* characters Wang's preface would imply.

In addition to exaggerating the differences between *Songyin manlu* and *Songyin xulu*, in the 1887 preface Wang Tao sought to create an image of himself as a writer of strange tales.

Near the end of the preface, he describes the process of writing as follows:

When living in Hong Kong, I used to suffer from spasms of coughing in autumn. Unable to lie on the pillow when the heteropathic *qi* reversed its course and went up, I had to sit upright and stay up the whole night. Spending every day by the herb brew pot simmering on the fire stove, I already had one foot in the grave – in the long nights of insomnia, with a single greenish lamplight at my side, I was palpably in the vicinity of ghosts 向居香海，入秋咳作，气上逆不能著枕，终宵危坐达旦，日在药火炉边作生活，去死几希。长夜辗转，一灯荧碧，几于与鬼为邻。²³⁹

This image of the author, slowly wasting away while writing by dim lamplight in autumn, stands in contrast to Wang Tao's self-portrait in the 1884 preface, which simply relates that after "having a few drinks and some tea," he would sit by the furnace and start to write under the lamp; the earlier description has nothing ghostly about it. The later preface, on the other hand, evokes an eerie atmosphere that befits the writing of strange tales through the depiction of sleepless autumn nights and greenish lamplight, both of which are associated with spectral visitations. In his 1679 self-preface to the *Liaozhai*, Pu Songling sets a similar ghostly scene by depicting himself alone and working the night away: "It's just that here it is the glimmering hour of midnight as I am about to trim my failing lamp. Outside my bleak studio the wind is singing;

²³⁹ Ibid.

inside my desk is cold as ice. Piecing together patches of fox fur to make a robe, I vainly fashioned a sequel to *Records of the Underground* 独是子夜荧荧，灯昏欲蕊；萧斋瑟瑟，案冷疑冰。集腋为裘，妄续幽冥之录。”²⁴⁰

Wang Tao did not necessarily base his own moribund self-portrait on the above-mentioned passage, but he certainly had in mind the historian of the strange when writing the 1887 preface. In particular, he was haunted by the climactic question that Pu Songling addressed to readers of the *Liaozhai* at the end of the 1679 preface: “where are those who truly know me? Are they only to be found in the so-called ‘green maple grove’, and at the ‘dark frontier passes’”? Without directly responding to this question, Wang appropriates Pu Songling’s voice to suggest that the latter has finally found his ideal reader: “[t]his book [*Songyin xulu*] has twelve chapters [...] adding up to twenty-four volumes when combined with the earlier tales [*Songyin manlu*]. If Pu Liuxian [i.e. Pu Songling] were able to see them, he would definitely ‘hold my arm and walk [together with me] towards the grove’ with great joy. He would say ‘you, sir, have surpassed me. The *Liaozhai* has a successor now” (此書都十有二卷[...]合之前錄共二十四卷，使蒲君留仙見之，必欣然把臂入林曰：“子突过我矣。聊齋之后，有替人哉）。²⁴¹ As this quoted line suggests, the only person who truly knows Pu is none other than his literary successor of nearly two centuries later, while the historian of strange has now become precisely the kind of ghost-reader he was originally seeking. By imagining the endorsement of Pu’s ghost, Wang is now explicitly identifying his *Songyin manlu* and *Songyin xulu* as imitations of the *Liaozhai*. The rhetoric of emulation here, in all likelihood adopted from the example set by

²⁴⁰ Zeitlin’s translation.

²⁴¹ Dianshizhai Pictorial, issue 126.

Weixian lu, is best understood as a promotion strategy that aimed to use *Liaozhai*'s popularity in the late-nineteenth century to the advantage of a contemporary writer.

2.4 *Songyin tushuo* and the *Liaozhai* Illustrations

Reprinted numerous times after 1887 under various titles, Wang Tao's *Songyin manlu* was not just one of the earliest lithograph-printed collections of classical tales. It was the first among these collections to be sold as a sequel to the *Liaozhai*, and in many ways it marked a watershed moment for the late-nineteenth century Shanghai book market. Just a decade earlier, imitations of the *Liaozhai* such as the *Yeyu qiudeng lu* and the *Dunku lanyan* were still published as unillustrated, typeface books.²⁴² During the two decades after the republication of *Songyin manlu* as the *Hou liaozhai*, however, Shanghai publishers came to use principally lithography to print collections of classical tales; they moreover developed a new habit of reprinting earlier works from different genres as collections of strange tales, indeed, frequently as *Liaozhai* imitations. For example, Yin Qinglan (1738-1788)'s *biji* collection *yichuang yingcao* 螢窗異草 was rebranded as *Xuliao zhai zhiyi tuyong* 續聊齋誌異圖詠 in 1895. Wang Kun's *Xunyou bingzai* 薰菽并載 (preface dated 1829) was renamed *Huitu gujin yanqian bao* 繪圖眼前報 in the same year.²⁴³ Deng Xuan (active in the 18th century)'s *Yitan kexin lu* 異談可信錄, a morality

²⁴² The *Yeyu qiudeng lu* was later republished by Jinzhang shuju in an illustrated edition in 1915. The DKLY was never illustrated.

²⁴³ For an excellent study of some of these collections, see Xiaoyong Zhan, "Qingmo Minchu Weibei Congkao," *Wen Xian* 1 (2002).

text, was rechristened *Huitu xiqi gugai* 繪圖稀奇古怪 in 1916. As these titles suggests, the addition of lithographic illustration was a major selling point of these reprinted editions.

The *Liaozhai* itself was reprinted several times in the form of lithographic illustrated editions during the second half of the Guangxu reign. The most influential of these was a 16-volume edition (1886) published by the Tongwen Press, the “largest, most prestigious, and first truly Chinese” commercial lithographic publisher in late-nineteenth century Shanghai.²⁴⁴ Entitled *Xiangzhu liaozhai zhiyi tuyong* 詳註聊齋誌異圖詠 (*Comprehensively-Annotated Strange Tales of the Liao Studio, with Illustrations and Encomia*), it is not only the earliest lithographic reprint of Pu’s masterpiece but also the first published edition of his work to include illustrations.

According to the laudatory preface by He Yong, whose *chuanqi* play *Chenglong jiahua* was serialized in the *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, it was the “Master of Guang Bai Song Zhai” 廣百宋齋主人 (Xun Run)—one of the co-founders of the Tongwen Press, who hired artists to paint the 445 illustrations in this edition (figure 2.4).²⁴⁵ Each of the illustrations occupies one side of a folded folio, with the title caption, an accompanying *qijue* (seven-syllable truncated) encomium, and a seal printed in the blank on its upper part. But the seal here does not reveal the identity of the painters; instead, they are merely a reworking of the tale’s title in a decorative form. The illustrators thus remain anonymous. The illustrations are inserted at the beginning of each volume. The interstitial space between each pair of illustrations harkens back to woodblock printing; the title *Xiangzhu liaozhai zhiyi tuyong* is printed on both sides, along with a shared

²⁴⁴ Christopher A. Reed, *Gutenberg in Shanghai : Chinese Print Capitalism, 1876-1937* (Vancouver, BC: UBC Press, 2004), 114.

²⁴⁵ Yong He, "Xu," in *Xiangzhu Liaozhai Zhiyi Tuyong* (Tongwen Press, 1886).

volume number, the tale title that matches the caption and the seal in the illustration, and the folio number (though there is no fish-tail folding mark).

Like Wang Tao's *Songyin manlu*, Tongwen's illustrated *Liaozhai* also spawned a number of pirated books (I personally have seen the editions published by the Jiangzuo shulin 江左書林 and Hongwen shuju 鴻文書局). Despite some insignificant variations in title, content, and script style, these pirated books look so similar to the *Xiangzhu liaozhai zhiyi tuyong* that the Tongwen Press could only lower the price of its edition in order to compete with other lithographic publishers. For these reason, the pirated editions can be considered as variants of the same Tongwen Urtext, itself presented as a *tuyong*.

John Minford calls Tongwen's illustrated *Liaozhai* "a celebrated example of Late-imperial book Illustration," because the lithographs "help to visualize the setting, and are especially well-preserved in terms of details of interior decor, furniture, clothes, architectural environment and courtyard/garden layout."²⁴⁶ Yet although it is seemingly influenced by late-imperial illustrated books, Tongwen's *Liaozhai* did not in fact develop from the *tuyong* pictorial albums in the woodblock print culture. Instead it represents an innovation in the late-nineteenth century adoption of the term *tuyong*.

In late-imperial woodblock print culture, the *tuyong* pictorial albums are mostly associated with landscape painting. For example, the early-seventeenth century urban guidebook *Jinling Tuyong* 金陵圖詠 (*Jinling* [nowadays Nanjing], *with Illustrations and Encomia*) consists of a selection of pictures, each showing a different scenic spot, accompanied by poems of praise and cartouches identifying and describing their special attractions. With its detailed directions for

²⁴⁶ Minford, *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*, xxxv.

seeing Nanjing, it “purports to be a *substitute* for an actual touring experience and was intended to facilitate ‘armchair travel’ (*woyou* 臥遊)—a celebrated cultural practice among the literati.”²⁴⁷ Other famous examples include the *Yuzhi gonghe bishu shanzhuang tuyong* 禦制恭和避暑山莊圖詠 (*Royal Production of the Scenic Spot of Imperial Summer Villa, with Illustrations, Encomia by the Kang Xi Emperor, and Responding Poems by the respectful Qianlong Emperor*), the *Yuanming yuan sishijing tuyong* 圓明園四十景圖詠 (*Forty Scenic Spots in the Summer Palace, Illustrated with Encomia*) and the *Zhulu tuyong* 竹爐圖詠 (*The ‘Bamboo Burner’ Paintings, Illustrated with Encomia*), all of which were commissioned by the Qianlong emperor (1711-1799).

The *tuyong* distinguishes itself from other sub-genres of pictorial albums by adding accompanying poetic verses to the images, which are themselves—since their creators evidently prized their aesthetic value above all—better categorized as *hua*. Because it is traditionally associated with landscape painting, the *tuyong* genre has hardly any overlap with late-imperial illustrated fictions, which favor figure painting, especially portraits (*xiang*) of the literary characters. The 1879 woodblock-printed *Honglou meng tuyong* 紅樓夢圖詠 (*Dream of the Red Chamber, with Illustrations and Encomia*), which boasts 48 illustrations by Gaiqi (1774—1829) and 75 poems from various literati, is the earliest *tuyong* I could trace that is related to a written work of fiction.²⁴⁸ Yet it comes late enough to be affected by the emergence of entertainment-oriented *tu* albums I discussed earlier.

²⁴⁷ Si-yen Fei, *Negotiating Urban Space: Urbanization and Late Ming Nanjing* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 2009), 124.

²⁴⁸ There have been multiple lithographic reprints of this woodblock edition.

Although the Tongwen Press' reprinting of the *Liaozhai* as a *tuyong* seems to be anticipated by the 1879 *Honglomeng tuyong*, it has already gone much farther in terms of transgressing genre conventions. The *Honglomeng tuyong* does not include the text of *Dream of the Red Chamber*, whereas Tongwen's *Liaozhai* features Pu Songling's original tales as well as annotations and commentary by subsequent readers. Tongwen Press's edition of the *Liaozhai* is therefore the first *tuyong* that has all the essential elements of a typical late-imperial illustrated fiction. Furthermore, the narrative lithographs in Tongwen's *Liaozhai tuyong* have few similarities with the woodblock-printed illustrations in the *Honglouloumeng tuyong*, which are mostly non-narrative portraits of the novel's main characters. In many ways, the *Liaozhai tuyong* has given new meaning to the *tuyong* genre.

2.5 The Empress Dowager's *Liaozhai tushuo*

The fabricated literary genealogy I discussed earlier identifies Wang Tao's classical tales as imitations of the *Liaozhai*. But once we take the illustrations into account, it becomes clear that it is *Songyin tushuo* that set the precedent for Tongwen's *Liaozhai tuyong* to repurpose the traditional *tu* albums as a new medium for classical tales. Although the two reference different categories—the *Songyin tushuo* uses the term *tushuo* whereas the Tongwen's *Liaozhai* identifies itself as a *tuyong*—they have managed, by means of their striking similarity, to bridge the rift between the respective traditional connotations of the two genres. Both belong to the same kind of newly developed lithographic picture books that extend the scope of narrative illustrations to cover classical tales. In fact the only justification for Tongwen's *Liaozhai* to be called a *tuyong* and not a *tushuo* is that it includes poetic encomia (*yong*).

But even this difference was not taken into account when the Tongwen Press produced a new illustrated version of the *Liaozhai* in 1894 for the sixtieth birthday of the Empress Dowager Cixi. Now preserved in the National Museum of China, this 48-*juan* hand-painted color pictorial album (only 46 volumes have survived) contains 725 illustrations accompanying 418 *Liaozhai* tales. It surpasses the Tongwen Press's *Liaozhai tuyong* in terms of both the quantity and quality of the illustrations.

Although this edition of Pu's masterpiece also contains poetic encomia, it is curiously entitled *Liaozhai tushuo* 聊齋圖說. Compared to the etchings in the *tuyong* version, the hand-painted illustrations in this album seem far more receptive to the influences of the painting style exemplified by the *Dianshizhai Pictorial* illustrations. Not only do the clusters of figures in the *Liaozhai tushuo* resemble the urban crowd depicted in the *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, but also the architectural space and the landscape in this production, all painted in meticulous detail using Western perspective, seem to draw on the visual language of the illustrations by Wu Youru and his circle. The illustrations accompanying the famous *Liaozhai* tale "The Raksha Country and the Sea Market," for example, depict European architecture in a style that is strongly reminiscent of the "realist effect" in the *Dianshizhai Pictorial* iconography of the West (figure 2.5).²⁴⁹

As a pictorial album specifically created for the court, the *Liaozhai tushuo* invites a comparison with the *Dijian tushuo* I discussed earlier. With specific imperial readers in mind—the Empress dowager Cixi and the nine-year old Yingzong Emperor, respectively—both *tushuo* albums evoke the idea that pictures are more powerful than words to convey meanings to audiences with limited literacy such as women and children. This focus on the audience explains

²⁴⁹ Pang, *The Distorting Mirror: Visual Modernity in China*, 41.

why the *Liaozhai tushuo* excluded the scholarly annotations and commentaries of the *tuyong* edition and assigned a more prominent role to the images than the texts. After all, the *tuyong*, in its traditional sense, is a venue for literati to demonstrate their virtuosity in paintings and poetry to connoisseur audiences not unlike themselves, while the *tushuo* albums, by contrast, are meant as reading materials appropriate for women and children – though more often than not they cater to the artistic taste of male literati.

By substituting *tuyong* with *tushuo* in its new edition of the *Liaozhai*, the Tongwen Press clearly means to evoke an established bond between one type of pictorial album and the niche reader-/viewership exemplified by the *Dijian tushuo*. But we cannot establish a continuous tradition from the *Dijian tushuo* to the *Liaozhai tushuo* because the latter differs categorically from the former in one crucial aspect: as a birthday present for the Empress dowager, it is meant to entertain its target recipient and bring pleasure to her viewing; devoid of either didactic or instructive value, it cannot readily be situated into the tradition of *tushuo*. Instead, like Wang Tao's *Songyin tushuo*, it is new kind of *tushuo* that prioritizes entertainment value over all other considerations.

III. Enchantment and the Realm of Illusion as a Recurring Theme

Wang Tao's conscious imitations of Pu Songling's classical tales mainly appeared in the *Dianshizhai Pictorial* after he had proclaimed himself the successor of the "Historian of the Strange" in 1887. In these tales, which now form part of *Songyin xulu* collection, Wang Tao drew on a wide range of *Liaozhai* tales, including "“Xu huangliang” 續黃梁 (A Sequel to the Yellow Millet Dream), “Lianhua gongzhu” 蓮花公主 (Princess Water Lily), “Luocha haishi” 羅刹海市 (The Raksha Country and the Sea Market), “Xihu zhu” 西湖主 (The Princess of West

Lake), “Meng Lang” 夢狼 (Dreaming of Wolves), “Ge Jin” 葛巾 (Ge Jin), “Jiao Nuo” 嬌娜 (Jiao Nuo), “Qing Feng” 青鳳 (Qing Feng), “Huang Ying” 黃英 (Huang Ying), and several others. The first three *Liaozhai* tales listed above appear to be Wang Tao’s favorite source stories, as each of them supplied material for more than one tale in the *Songyin* series.

3.1 *Woyou*: Vicarious Journeys to the Realm of Illusion

Besides the fact that they all fall into the *chuanqi* category, the *Liaozhai* tales Wang Tao imitates in his series do not form a distinct subgroup within Pu Songling’s collection; neither are most of Wang Tao’s selections about the ghosts or fox-spirits that give the *Liaozhai* its putative epithet.²⁵⁰ However, Wang Tao does associate his adaptations of these tales with a recurring imagery in his installments, which he describes in his 1887 preface as *qijing huanyu* 奇境幻遇 (the marvelous realm where one encounters illusions). This notion is also called *huanjing* 幻境 (the realm of illusion) or *qijing* 奇境 (the marvelous realm) elsewhere in the series, and it manifests itself in various forms from story to story. For example, the same term refers to the Ten Courts of the Underworld that the characters visit while sleeping in “Weiyu meng” 煨芋夢 (The Baked Potato Dream), “Fan Huangliang” 反黃粱 (Counter-the Yellow Millet Dream), and “Meng zhong meng” 夢中夢 (Embedded Dreams), all of which are based on “A Sequel to the Yellow Millet Dream” in the *Liaozhai*; it also describes an unknown island far away from China in “Yinxun dao” 因循島 (The Island of Old Ways) and “Xianren dao” 仙人島 (The Island of

²⁵⁰ Both “A Sequel to the Yellow Millet Dream” and “Princess Water Lily” are adaptations of Tang-dynasty *chuanqi* tales.

Immortals), which are inspired by Pu Songling's "Raksha Country and Sea Market" and "The Island of Immortals" respectively; lastly, it corresponds to both a mysterious kingdom on the ocean floor and the sea market in "Xu Linshi," which draws on both "Princess Water Lily" and "Raksha Country and Sea Market."²⁵¹ Elsewhere in the *Songyin* series, the "realm of illusion" can variously describe an otherworld hidden in a well, a mountain cave inhabited by immortals, and an ethereal garden with exotic plants, among others. Not all these realms are pleasant; sometimes a dystopia or the infernal (*diyu*) can also represent the land of illusion.

Despite the infinite diversity, the "realms of illusion" are all places of transience associated with various non-historical temporalities, such as a lost past, a mythic timelessness, or a subjective notion of time. As Wang Tao writes in the 1887 preface, "as for *jing*, they are transience and nothing else" (境也者, 不過暫焉而已).²⁵² This attribute of the "realm of illusion" is illustrated by the tale "Xianren dao" (Immortals' Island). In this tale, the protagonist Cui Mengtu, after his steamship has been blown off its course, lands on an island, unmarked on any map, where he encounters an old couple dressed in the clothes of six centuries earlier. This island is a timeless place:

There is no extreme climate, nor the alternation of day and night. Most of the poultry and animals there are unseen in the Middle Kingdom. There is also no calendar. The inhabitants mark the beginning and end of a year's cycle with the blossoming of flowers and the falling of leaves [...] Approximately twenty years have passed, but the complexion of [Cui] has changed only a little. 島中無寒暑, 無晝夜, 珍禽馴獸, 多中土之所未識。亦無歷日, 以花之開謝、樹之榮落為春秋。崔自與女居, 飢則食, 渴則飲, 倦而眠, 醒則起, 約略二十年, 而容少轉。²⁵³

²⁵¹ "Xu Linshi" also appears to be influenced by the Tang *chuanqi* tale *Gujing ji* (*Record of an Ancient Mirror*).

²⁵² Wang Tao, "Preface," *Dianshizhai Pictorial* no.126 (1887).

²⁵³ Wang Tao, "Xianren dao," *Dianshizhai Pictorial* no.9 (1884).

However, characters can only remain temporarily in these non-historical temporalities; eventually, they have to return to the non-mysterious world. This is exactly how “Immortals’ Island” ends: after hearing Cui’s story, an old sailor named Yu makes the following comment:

How silly you are! Nowadays, all steamships are steered by Westerners, and they depart and return on schedule. All their ports of call are inhabited. As vast and infinite as the waters are, where can one still find a deserted earth on which the immortals set foot? Give it a break. All your thoughts are just as nonsensical as those towers built in midair. 君殆痴矣! 今時海舶, 皆用西人駕駛, 往還皆有定期, 所止海島皆有居人, 海外雖汪洋無涯, 安有一片棄土為仙人所駐足哉? 子休矣! 忽作是想, 徒空中樓閣也²⁵⁴

The old sailor’s comment here strongly echoes Wang Tao’s own remark in the 1887 preface about all the illusions in his classical tales being products of his imagination: “The mind can put itself in and out of those marvelous realms. It can entertain itself by building those realms of illusions out of nothing”(心能入乎境之中, 而超乎境之外, 且能憑虛造為奇境幻遇以自娛其心).²⁵⁵ By evoking the idea of *creatio ex nihilo* and underlining the artificiality of his tales, Wang Tao demonstrates a heightened awareness of the distinction between fiction and reality; in this regard, he is quite different from Pu Songling, for whom the boundary between the two categories is quite blurry.

Wang Tao’s typical protagonist in the tales about realms of illusions is a world traveler just like himself. He often blends into these tales elements of his own experience in Europe, where he had assisted James Legge with his translation of the Confucian classics.²⁵⁶ However,

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ Wang Tao, “Preface,” *Dianshizhai Pictorial* no.126 (1887).

²⁵⁶ For an account of Wang Tao’s overseas travels, see Hailin, *Wang Tao Pingzhuan*. Wang Tao also wrote about his travels abroad in his travelogue entitled *Manyou suilu*, which was also serialized in the *Dianshizhai Pictorial* (issue 126-174).

despite the factual basis of the characters' travel experiences, they are often mixed with dreams in the *Songyin* tales. "Xu Linshi," for example, combines oneiric journey with overseas travel. The tale recounts the travels of its eponymous character, a swordsman who unearths an ancient saber from a tomb and learns how to use it from a man who appears in his dreams. "Xu Linshi" contains two episodes, with the first one rewriting the *Liaozhai* tale "Princess Water Lily," and the second one alluding to the *Liaozhai* tale "Raksha Country and the Sea Market." Of the two *Liaozhai* tales, only the first one involves dreams—while dozing off, the protagonist Dou Xu is invited to the kingdom of Cassia. Wang Tao transforms the Cassia palace in the original tale into a palace beneath the ocean, which closely resembles the mysterious world at the bottom of the Pacific in his earlier tale "The Marvelous Realm under the Sea." When reflecting on his adventure in the underwater world, Wang's character comments, "Is this not the same as the yellow millet dream on the road of Han Dan," thereby further alluding to Pu Songling's "Sequel to the Yellow Millet Dream." At this point, "Xu Linshi" transitions into its second episode, in which the protagonist is invited to attend a sea market that is held only once every hundred years and is attended by all the maritime nations, with the Dutch prince as one of the most distinguished guests in the current year. The corresponding episode in Pu Songling's "Raksha Country and the Sea Market," which recounts the romance between the protagonist and the Dragon daughter in an underwater palace, is not set within a dream, yet Wang Tao inserts into his tale's second episode a dream in which the protagonist's sword is taken away.

Though drawing on different sources, the two episodes in the "Xu Linshi" are closely linked. Not only do the ancient sword and the female character appear in both episodes, but the underwater palace in the first episode also closely resembles the residence of the Dragon daughter in Pu Songling's "Raksha Country and Sea Market," which is otherwise mainly adapted

into the second episode of “Xu Linshi.” Furthermore, both episodes are woven into the main storyline of the discovery and loss of the ancient sabre, which appears to be influenced by the Tang tale *Gujing ji* (Record of an Ancient Mirror). While all these arrangements have increased the coherence of “Xu Linshi,” the interpenetration of the source stories in the adaptation also demonstrate the homogeneity of the dream theme and the travel theme in Wang Tao’s classical tales.

This is perhaps why voyages to the realms of illusion in Wang Tao’s series are often depicted as armchair travel (*woyou* 臥游, literally, traveling while reclining), which is also referred to as travel of the mind or heart (*xinyou* 心游) in late-Qing leisure papers.²⁵⁷ At the end of their journeys, the characters in Wang Tao’s tales often find themselves waking up from a daydream, with very little time having passed. In the “Baked Potato Dream,” for example, the protagonist, upon returning from his “roam beyond the quarters” (*fangwai you* 方外游), is surprised to find that he is “still lying on the giant boulder in the old Buddhist temple” (則身仍臥古蘭若中巨石上). Next to him, two Daoist priests are just placing the baked potatoes on the tea table, which they had been putting in the oven just when the protagonist fell asleep. The priests ask him: “How was the trip to the realm of illusions?” (幻境如何)?

This particular passage alludes to the scene in Pu Songling’s “A Sequel to the Yellow Millet” where the smug protagonist’s extended mental travel to a secondary world of fantasy, encompassing several decades, is done within a time shorter than that needed to cook the yellow millet. In Pu Songling’s tale, the protagonist’s daydream about his rise and fall in another life

²⁵⁷ Christopher G. Rea, *The Age of Irreverence: A New History of Laughter in China* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2015), 41.

and his ultimate infernal punishment does not conform to the tradition of *woyou* as a vicarious journey. In Wang Tao's "Baked Potato Dream," however, the protagonist is on a journey that involves "a visit to the immortals in the heaven of departing sorrows, a meeting with the goddesses in the residence of pure clarity, listening to song in the Jasper Pond [located on top of the Kunlun mountain], [and] watching clouds on the Jade Island" (朝真離恨之天，訪艷清虛之府。瑤池顧曲，瓊島看雲).²⁵⁸ At the end of the tale, the protagonist receives a magical mirror through which he can survey the four continents and "with clear views of the minutest details, reach a faraway landscape in a split second. So that though he does not leave his room, he can carry out a vicarious journey" (織悉畢見；大地山河，頃刻一轉。雖在一室，可作臥游).²⁵⁹ This passage subtly transforms *woyou*, conventionally understood as the literatus' vicarious journey to landscapes depicted in painting or travelogues, into an overseas travel (*haiwai you*). The emphasis is on the accuracy of the vision—even the smallest details do not escape the eye. Yet this accurate vision offered by the magic mirror (*jing*) is reminiscent of the enhanced vision through another *jing*, namely the telescope (*wangyuan jing* 望遠鏡), familiar to readers of the *Dianshizhai Pictorial*.

In fact, Wang Tao's descriptions of overseas travel are often infused with modern perspectives associated with the collective imagination of new inventions. As an example, one recurring motif in the *Songyin* series is flying. In "A Journey to Paradise" (*Leguo jiyou* 樂國紀游), a Daoist priest (the immortal of Olives) invites the protagonist An Ruoshu to make a "trip beyond the seas" with him. The flight involves a bird's eye view of the earth beneath it:

²⁵⁸ Wang Tao, "Weiyu meng," *Dianshizhai Pictorial* (1887).

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

The Daoist priest threw a white sash at the ground and helped An onto it. The sash immediately rose in midair and dashed forward in the direction of wind. Its speed was so fast that even a galloping stallion could not catch up with it. Looking down at the realm beneath, An saw people as tiny as ants and mountains as small as ant-mounts. All the things in view were so clearly distinguishable that one could count their numbers on the fingers of one's hand. 道士擲白練于地，拉與同登。忽騰空起，御風而行，奔馬不能喻其速。俯視下界，人如蟻而山如垤，了然可指數。²⁶⁰

The above-quoted passage imitates similar airborne journeys in Pu Songling's "The Immortals' Island," in which the protagonist rides with a Daoist, first on the staff he holds and then on the stepping stone he whips. However, what is peculiar about the flight in Wang Tao's tale is the clear sight of the vista below, which is absent in the *Liaozhai* tale. Indeed, during both flights, Pu Songling's character is specifically instructed to keep his eyes shut. The second time he disobeys the instruction:

A thought suddenly occurred to him: "What is the world beneath like? I have never had a chance to look at it." He secretly opened his eyes slightly and squinted. From the narrow crack he caught the glimpse of boundless ocean waves with no horizon. Terrified at the sight, he shut his eyes immediately. But right away the rock fell with him like a seagull diving into the ocean. Bang! They made a huge splash. 忽念下方景界未審何似，隱將兩眸微開一線，則見大海茫茫，渾無邊際。大懼，即复合，而身已隨石俱墮，砰然一響，汨沒若鷗。²⁶¹

The protagonist's failure to resist the temptation is the direct cause of his Icarian fall, suggesting that a view of the world from above is forbidden to mortals. Though he manages to catch a glimpse, he barely has time to see anything more than the boundless waves.

²⁶⁰ Wang Tao, "Leguo jiyou" *Dianshizhai Pictorial* (1887).

²⁶¹ Pu Songling, "Xianren dao" *Liaozhai zhiyi* (my translation).

Wang Tao's passage, by contrast, would have remind his contemporary readers of the grand overhead panoramas made possible by voyages on hot air balloons, which are frequently depicted in lithographic Chinese pictorials during the 1880s and 1890s.²⁶² The *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, for example, featured an image of a hot air balloon in 1884. As Laikwan Pang points out, "in spite of the drive toward realistic depiction, most of the flying machines that appeared in the contemporary pictorials were imagined rather than realistic" and "one most consistent elements in these pictures is the crowd packed together on the ground watching machines in awe."²⁶³ This recurring theme may explain why Wang Tao replaces the glimpse of the boundless ocean in the *Liaozhai* tale with a clear view of people as tiny as ants in his imitation. As a narrative focal point, the protagonist in "A Journey to the Paradise" thus embodies a detachable and aestheticized point of view that viewers of lithographs could imagine collectively. Wang Tao's incorporation of this point of view signifies its transferal from visual into textual culture.

The topographic view from the air is just one of the many imaginary viewpoints in Wang Tao's series that have origins in real-life inventions. The journey to the bottom of the ocean, a feature of several of Wang Tao's tales, offers another example illustrating the influence of visual culture. In the first episode of "Xu Linshi," the eponymous protagonist rides a wagon that descends to the ocean floor: "The wagon roamed the sea. [Wherever it arrived,] the waves parted in the middle and stood still on both sides as if they were walls" (車逕由海中行，水分兩旁若

²⁶² For discussion of illustrations of modern means of transportation and panoramic views in the *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, see Xiaoqing, *The Dianshizhai Pictorial: Shanghai Urban Life, 1884-1898*; Bao Weihong, "A Panoramic Worldview: Probing the Visuality of Dianshizhai Huabao," *Journal of Modern Chinese Literature* 32 (2005); Nathaniel Isaacson, *Celestial Empire: The Emergence of Chinese Science Fiction* (Middletown, CO: Wesleyan University Press, 2017), 149-70; Chen Pingyuan, "From Popular Science to Science Fiction: An Investigation of 'Flying Machines'," in *Translation and Creation: Readings of Western Literature in Early Modern China, 1840-1918*, ed. David E. Pollard (Philadelphia: J. Benjamins, 1998), 209-40.

²⁶³ Pang, *The Distorting Mirror: Visual Modernity in China*, 58.

壁立). It is noteworthy that in the *Liaozhai* tale “Princess Water Lily,” which has been transposed into the first episode in “Xu Linshi,” the main character’s trip to Cassia involves no means of transportation—“he followed the messenger and went outside the house. After turning a corner, they came to a place where pavilion rose above storied pavilion in a succession of elaborately roofed buildings.”²⁶⁴ The voyage beneath the sea in Wang Tao’s “Xu Linshi” is actually adapted from the Pu Songling’s “Raksha Country and Sea Market,” in which the character’s horse jumps into the water. Wang Tao follows Pu Songling’s original description of the “waves parting in the middle and standing like walls” (海水中分，屹如壁立), but replaces the horse in “Raksha Country and the Sea Market” with a wagon, which has two peculiar features. First, the wagon “ran in the speed of light” (電邁飄馳), and second, “it moved automatically as if driven by men” (其去若駛).²⁶⁵ As such, the wagon is no horse-drawn carriage, but a sophisticated machine similar to the submarine, which had also been depicted in the *Dianshizhai Pictorial*. Indeed, in many of Wang Tao’s tales, the characters often utilize modern modes of transportation during their overseas voyages. In several tales, descriptions of steamships depict them not as mere vehicles as but as novelties and wonders. This tendency nevertheless accords with the *Dianshizhai Pictorial*’s conventional depiction of Western technology as a spectacle rather than as an instrument of disenchantment.

Many of the realms of illusion in Wang Tao’s tales have literary sources drawn from the author’s own avid reading. Some of these sources are foreign. For example, the paradise (*leyuan*, literally the garden of happiness) in “A Journey to Paradise” alludes to Eden in the Biblical story

²⁶⁴ Pu Songling, “Lianhua gongzhu,” in *Liaozhai zhiyi*.

²⁶⁵ Wang Tao, “Xu Linshi,” *Dianshizhai Pictorial* (1887).

about the Fall. Wang Tao's character sees a Tree of Life in the garden and is told that Adam and Eve are driven out after they eat the forbidden fruit. In another story that closely resembles Pu Songling's "Shi bian" 尸變 (The Zombie), Wang Tao's character encounters a seductive blood-thirsty vampiress who is only put to death after the protagonist drives a blade into her heart and sets the body on fire. The diversity of literary sources implies that the imaginative reader who is capable of *woyou* is essentially one that has been exposed to world literature.

But in addition to avid reading, *woyou*, as Wang Tao characterizes it in the tales, also involves viewing images. In "Villa Vanilla" (*Chaiwei shanzhuang* 菑蔚山莊), for example, the protagonist enters a strange hall in a Buddhist temple where all the statues are naked and exhibit all kinds of poses: "They either sit or stand, rise up or lie down, or they are in intercourse" (坐或立, 或起或臥, 或作交構狀, 諸態悉備). Using a box camera to take a photograph (probably a gelatin dry plate) of the hall, he realizes, after obtaining the print, that was all an illusion:

He used his camera to a picture of the hall and brought back a print. Upon developing the print, he saw hundreds of Buddhist statues, all of which were nude. Then suddenly he saw a woman among them. She wore beautiful make-up and had her hair in a bun, and she had white teeth and expressive eyes. With handkerchief in hand, she appeared to be smiling. The sight of her made him intoxicated, and he was astonished by the discovery. At that time there was nobody in the hall. How did she enter the picture? 生即以照像法印一圖攜歸。展閱，佛像本百尊，悉裸無衣，而中忽有一女子，靚妝高髻，皓齒明眸，微轉秋波，拈巾欲笑，觀其媚態，真個令人魂銷。生訝當時殿中並無是人，何得留此豔影？

It is interesting that enchantment here is revealed only through an apparatus that is supposed to provide an objective view of the objects in sight. Furthermore, the entire realm of illusion is encapsulated in a picture (*tu*) that is viewed in a way analogous to the viewing of scrolls (*zhanyue*).

The visual aspect of *woyou* is of course not new. Zong Bing (375-443), who is believed to have coined the expression, was actually one of the earliest landscape painters of China.

Viewing landscape paintings, which are often depicted on scrolls, is an important component of the tradition of *woyou* in Chinese literati culture. However, in Wang Tao's tales, *woyou* connotes not landscape paintings but images of foreign nations, like those readers frequently encountered in the *Dianshizhai Pictorial*. For example, in "A Journey to Paradise," the main character, meeting a friend who has returned from abroad, is intrigued by the latter's graphic descriptions of foreign lands (異域風景), which conjure up mental images "as if they are paintings" (歷歷如繪).²⁶⁶

Late-Qing readers of Wang Tao's tales were familiar with these so-called "views of foreign lands." As Nanny Kim observes, in the *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, *woyou* was "a very gradual form of getting used to the foreign world breaking into China. For such arm-chair travelers, the [pictorial] provided information about the trends and fashions of Shanghai, customs in other regions and countries, and adventures and interesting things all over the world."²⁶⁷ When writing the *Songyin* series, Wang Tao specifically had readers of the *Dianshizhai Pictorial* in mind. The realms of illusions, therefore, are all the real and fictional places that these readers can reach through imagination, with the help of texts and illustrations.

3.2 The Realm of Illusion as a Feminine Space

²⁶⁶ Wang Tao, "Leguo jiyou," *Dianshizhai Pictorial* (1887).

²⁶⁷ Kim, "New Wine in Old Bottles? Making and Reading an Illustrated Magazine from Late Nineteenth-Century Shanghai," 194-95.

The realm of illusion in the *Songyin* series is usually associated with a female character, who is not only its inhabitant but also its embodiment.²⁶⁸ As a gendered space, the realm of illusion in Wang Tao's tales is what Wu Hung defines as the "feminine space"—the artificial world, "perceived, imagined, and represented," in the figure of a woman who is indistinguishable from her environment.²⁶⁹ In the supplemental section of the *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, we encounter many iconographies that can be considered as feminine spaces. Wu Youru's illustrations for the serialized *Guiyuan conglu* (*A Collection of Records from the Ladies' Boudoirs*), for example, depict both historical and legendary female figures in idealized interior spaces. Like the Yongzhen emperor's screen of twelve beauties analyzed in Wu Hung's study, the *Guiyuan conglu* illustrations allow the spectator to fantasize about an ideal world that is forbidden, lost, or utopian.

Wang Tao's gendered fictional world recalls an extremely famous feminine space in Chinese literature, the provenance of which, however, is not Pu Songling's *Liaozhai*, but Cao Xueqin's *Dream of the Red Chamber*. This is the "Illusory Realm of the Great Void" (*Taixu huanjing* 太虚幻境), which the protagonist Baoyu visits during his dream in chapter five of the novel. In this realm, Baoyu encounters the Goddess of Disenchantment (*Jinghuan xiangu* 警幻仙姑), who periodically sends the souls of girls down into the world to pay their "love-debt" (情債), after which they return to her, brokenhearted but enlightened. To shake Baoyu from his

²⁶⁸ The inclination is followed even in cases where the corresponding locale in the *Liaozhai* is associated with other genders. For example, when adapting Pu Songling's "Princess Water Lily" into the first episode of "Xu Linshi," Wang Tao changes the king of Cassia in the original tale into a queen whose beautiful appearance is described in detail (Pu Songling does not tell the reader what the king of Cassia looks like). Exceptions are the otherworldly realms in adaptations of the "Yellow Millet Dream," which connote horror.

²⁶⁹ Wu Hung, *The Double Screen: Medium and Representation in Chinese Painting* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 211.

attachment to the girls in his life, Disenchantment first has him look through volumes of registers that record the fate of the foremost beauties in his province using indecipherable riddles and abstruse images. She then summons twelve fairy dancers to perform a *masque* entitled “A Dream of the Red Chamber” for Baoyu. But the boy fails to understand the hidden meaning in either the riddles or the song-suite. Finally, Disenchantment leads him to a bedroom occupied by her sister, who combines the beauty of Baoyu’s two fated lovers, Daiyu and Baochai, but happens to be named Keqing. Baoyu follows Disenchantment’s instructions and makes love to Keqing. Shortly afterwards, the dream sequence comes to a sudden halt as Baoyu awakens from his fantasizing sleep.

Perhaps nowhere else in the *Honglou meng* is the complex relationship between *qing* (love, sentiment, desire, or passion) and *huan* (illusion) more profoundly explored than in this episode. In late-imperial literature, illusion is conventionally portrayed as a transient phenomenon demonstrating the ephemerality of *qing*. In Cao Xueqin’s novel, however, it appears as not only a permanent state of being but also as the key to a correct understanding of *qing* in relation to *yu* (desire). As Wai-yee Li points out, enlightenment in the Illusory Realm of the Great Void cannot be “considered separately from fascination with illusion or commitment to the aesthetic surface.”²⁷⁰ What we see in the *Honglou meng* is thus a paradoxical illusion—it is at the same time associated with sensual pleasure and transcendental knowledge, which in turn signify *qing* and its opposite state *bu qing* (lit. not feeling, or disenchantment), respectively. The paradox of this illusion appears to be personified in the ambiguous character of Disenchantment, who is both physically seductive and morally unimpeachable; she embodies the essence of the Illusory Realm of the Great Void.

²⁷⁰ Li, *Enchantment and Disenchantment: Love and Illusion in Chinese Literature*, 160.

In his series, Wang Tao makes several allusions to Cao Xueqin's novel. He introduces his tales as "playful talks" (遊戲之言) in the 1884 preface and situates them in a tradition of fiction writing that includes the philosopher Zhuangzi's "nonsensical words" (荒唐之詞).²⁷¹ Both phrases strongly echo a self-reflective passage at the end of the 120-chapter *Dream of the Red Chamber*: after passing the Urtext of the *Story of the Stone* to Cao Xueqin, the (fictional) Vanitas exclaims: "[s]o it was really all utter nonsense! Author, copyist and reader were alike in the dark! Just so much ink splashed for fun, a game, a diversion" (原來是敷衍荒唐！不但作者抄者不知，並閱者也不知；不過遊戲筆墨，陶情適性而已).²⁷² In the same 1884 preface, Wang Tao also describes himself as a sentimental author. He writes that, when composing these tales, "dripping ink often mixed with my tears, making a mess on the paper 墨瀋淋漓，時與淚痕狼藉相間."²⁷³ This image alludes to a passage in the first chapter of the *Honglou meng* that describes how the story came to be written: "Page full of idle words/Penned with hot and bitter tears 滿紙荒唐言，一把辛酸淚."²⁷⁴

A significant number of tales in the *Songyin* series allude to the Cao Xueqin's Illusory Realm of the Great Void. In "Jiang Lijuan" 蔣麗娟, the protagonist, in a dream, meets a goddess named the "Fairy of Eradicating Illusions" 絕幻仙子. The immortal reveals to him his bond in a previous life with the story's female protagonist, who turns out to be the reincarnation of a

²⁷¹ Wang Tao, "Preface [to the *Songyin manlu*]," *Dianshizhai Pictorial* no 6 (1884).

²⁷² For an excellent discussion of the fictionality in Cao Xueqin's novel, see Anthony C. Yu, *Rereading the Stone: Desire and the Making of Fiction in Dream of the Red Chamber* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997). The translation is David Hawks'.

²⁷³ Wang Tao, "Preface [to the *Songyin manlu*]," *Dianshizhai Pictorial* no 6 (1884).

²⁷⁴ HLM 1:1

handmaiden of the goddess Queen Mother of the West. “Sun Bochi” 孫伯篋 contains a similar sequence of action, except the dreamer in this instance is the female protagonist herself. In her dream, she meets the Goddess in Charge of Flowers 司花仙子, who shows her a ranked list of sixteen beauties in a volume entitled “Register of All Beauties in the World” 宇內群芳譜. This register recalls the one Baoyu reads in *Dream of the Red Chamber*’s land of illusions; curiously, Lin Daiyu, the female protagonist of Cao Xueqin’s novel, is listed as one of the sixteen beauties in the “Sun Bochi” register. A similar register of love-fate appears again in the tale “Yuxiang” 玉香, in which the protagonist learns from her father, the newly appointed “Messenger of Procreative Nebula” 氤氳使者 in charge of the love-fate register, that she and her sister are predestined to marry the same husband. Other tales go even further in providing a full description of the registers’ content. In “Ten Beauties of the Shen River” 申江十美, Wang Tao’s alter ego “Student Yu Shen of North Shanghai” 淞北玉鮪生 is invited in a dream by his deceased friend, now the “City Tutelary God of Chengdu,” to attend a banquet.²⁷⁵ With his friend’s permission, the protagonist browses through a pictorial album entitled “Ten beauties of the Shen River,” which actually records the fate of twelve flower goddesses. Here Wang Tao’s text relates all the register’s poems to the reader verbatim and adds that the messenger of Procreative Nebula will supervise the goddesses in taking charge of the twelve months. “Twelve Flower Goddesses” 十二花神, the sequel to this tale, recounts Student Yu Shen’s visit to a similar immortal land in another dream. There he runs into another old friend, the so-called “Old Persimmon of Heaven and Earth” 天地柿叟, whose literary name resembles the author’s own

²⁷⁵ “Student Yu Shen of the North” is one of Wang Tao’s *noms de plume*.

alias. Yu Shen is then guided to the main hall of the palace, where the divine host shows him a register, saying that the twelve goddesses mentioned in this volume “were born in exuberant gardens, but eventually fell into decadence. Only after going through the predestined sufferings can they return to their illusory forms and reside in the city of Luminous Jade again. But those who have fallen too deep cannot come back.”

Unlike the records Baoyu reads in Cao Xueqin’s novel, the registers in both of Wang Tao’s tales disclose the names of the beauties to the reader. Student Yu Shen recognizes that all of the flower goddesses are actual high-ranking courtesans in contemporary Shanghai, who were in fact patronized by Wang Tao’s literati friends (whose names also appear in the records). The substitution of girls from good families with courtesans in Wang’s registers enables us to look at the “realist” tales in the *Songyin series* in a new light. In his *Brief History*, Lu Xun had taken the courtesan tales to task for being too fundamentally at odds with the unequivocally supernatural tales in Wang’s collections. What he overlooked is that these tales often organize the courtesans into clusters, especially those that display multiples of twelve. Besides the “Ten Beauties” and “Twelve Flower Goddesses,” there are also tales such as “The Twenty-Four Floral Instructresses” (二十四花史), “Register of the Thirty-Six Mandarin Ducks” (卅六鴛鴦譜), and “Register of the Seventeen Famous ‘Flowers’ [i.e. Courtesans] North of the Bridge” (橋北十七名花譜). All are introduced in the guise of registers of love-fate; allusion to *Dream of the Red Chamber* thus transcends the divide between the realistic and the supernatural in Wang Tao’s classical tales.

Although a number of tales about courtesans are also included in the *Dunku lanyan*, none of them feature anything resembling the registers in *Dream of the Red Chamber*. The *Songyin series* is therefore a unique illustration of Wang’s statement that his serial is full of “playful

talks.” Intertextuality is no doubt a significant component of the playfulness of the *Songyin* series—the imitation of Cao Xueqin’s novel, though possibly an expedient that helped Wang Tao to meet the frequent deadlines for serial publication, ties the *Songyin* series indissolubly to the entertainment industry in late nineteenth-century Shanghai.

More generally speaking, a curious feature of the Shanghai entertainment industry of the time is that it drew heavily on Cao Xueqin’s novel to fashion the public images of the top courtesans, whose lives were closely followed in gossip columns and sensationalizing reports in the new media outlets. Catherine Yeh observes that from the 1860s on, and well into the twentieth century, it was fashionable among Shanghai courtesans to name themselves after characters in Cao Xueqin’s novel, an obsession with role-playing encouraged by the enthusiastic Shanghai literati who not only patronized them, but, from the 1870s onward, organized numerous “*Honglou meng*-themed” courtesan competitions.²⁷⁶ Usually, the “top twelve were award the rank of the twelve beauties in the novel, who were known as the ‘twelve golden hairpins’ (*shier jincai*). Beneath this ‘main group’ (*zhengben*) was another group of twelve, the ‘supplement’ (*fuben*), and below this, a third, the ‘secondary supplement’ (*you fuben*).” Wang Tao was an active participant in this re-enactment of the *Honglou meng*. The rankings and biographies of these thirty-six courtesans were published in Wang Tao’s *Supplement to ‘Records of Visits to Courtesan Houses in a Distant Corner by the Sea (Haizhou yeyou fulu)*²⁷⁷. By cloaking the courtesans in the mythic aura of fictional registers of predestination, Wang Tao suggests that the transaction in the bordello is an exchange of *qing*. However, this *qing* has lost

²⁷⁶ Yeh, *Shanghai Love: Courtesans, Intellectuals, and Entertainment Culture, 1850-1910*, 136.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 142.

its authenticity, for the “love-debt” here is calculated based on market price instead of emotional investment.

3.3 Empirical Praxis vs. Empty Talk in Transnational Voyages

In the 1884 preface, Wang Tao discusses some important differences between the Chinese and Western worldviews:

Those who like talking about immortals, ghosts, and monsters are convinced that there are Wutong residing in the South, just like there are foxes inhabiting the northern lands. But how could there be immortals in this world? [...] Foxes are nothing but beasts. How can they metamorphose into human shapes? The self-deceivers fabricate the monstrous and strange things, as if there were another world in the lair of the foxes. None of these are believed by Westerners, as they respect real practices in favor of empty words. Yet what the Western nations have discredited are believed to exist in China. From this [difference] we can see [a disparity] in mentality and customs. It really is as Han Yu once said “people nowadays only desire to hear about the strange.” Westerners use all their skills to manufacture instruments for utilitarian purposes. They measure the height of the sky and the expanse of the earth. They distinguish mountains and ridges, and separate water from earth. With fast vessels and vehicles, they can travel almost at the speed of lightening and wind. With powerful water and fire, they can conquer hidden and dangerous places. With telegraph communication, they can send messages thousands of miles away in a split second. With advanced chemistry, they can create a myriad of reactions in the blink of an eye. As if done by demons and immortals, their accomplishments are beyond comprehension. It is high time that he who sits and talks stand up and do things that can benefit the livelihood of the people and aid state affairs. This is of paramount importance. Without endeavoring to reach this goal, he slips into the realm where things are fragmented, absurd, unreachable and unfathomable. Is it simply the fault of his curiosity? No, it is because he has also abandoned his ambitions. 好談神僊鬼怪者，以為南有五通，猶北地之有狐。夫天下豈有神仙哉 [...] 狐乃獸類，豈能幻作人形？自妄者造作怪異，狐狸窟中，幾若別有一世界。斯皆西人所悍然不信者，誠以虛言不如實踐也。西國無之，而中國必以為有，人心風俗，以此可知矣，斯真如韓昌黎所云「今人惟怪之欲聞」為可慨也！西人窮其技巧，造器致用，測天之高，度地之遠，辨山岡，區水土，舟車之行，躡電追風，水火之力，縋幽鑿險，信音之速，瞬息千里，化學之精，頃刻萬變，幾於神工鬼斧，不可思議。坐而言者，可以起而行，利民生，裨國是，乃其犖犖大者。不此之務，而反索之於支離虛誕、杳渺不可究詰之境，豈獨好奇之過哉，其志亦荒矣。²⁷⁸

In this passage, the comparison of cultural differences revolves around the contrast between empirical praxis (*shijian*) and empty talk (*xuyan*). By giving precedence to the former, Wang Tao

²⁷⁸ Wang Tao, “Preface [to the *Songyin manlu*],” *Dianshizhai Pictorial* no. 6 (1884).

presents a world to the reader that is completely disenchanting by scientific rationality, one in which supernatural forces find no place. Scholars often interpret this passage as a justification of the preeminence of realistic tales in *Songyin tushuo*, arguing that Wang Tao's endorsement of enlightened ideas from the West contributed to his deviation from Pu Songling's model. But as I have argued, the *Songyin manlu* series was initially conceived as a *biji* collection and not as an imitation of Pu Songling's tales. Therefore, this passage cannot be read as a declaration of Wang' Taos stance towards the writing of strange tales in general. What is more, this passage's scientific rationalism advocates a mechanized view of the world, one that assumes everything in the universe is intelligible and measurable. From this point of view, the mundane world is devoid of the *qing* so often characterized as the mysterious, primordial creative force in the literary works Wang Tao would associate with "empty talk." Wang did not, however, seek to exorcise *qing* along with the supernatural from his tales altogether; even those tales that are told in a realistic mode portray their characters as individuals of deep feeling (*you qing ren*).

In Wang Tao's tales, the journeys in and out of the realm of illusion often entail rapid transition between "empirical praxis" and "empty talk." The construction of two realms corresponding to the contrasting attitudes is particularly prominent in Wang Tao's tales about transnational encounters, which have received much critical attention in existing scholarship. For my analysis, I will focus on two tales, "The Marvelous Realm under the Sea" (海底奇境) and "The Magnificent Voyage Abroad" (海外壯遊). In both tales, the realm of illusion is depicted as a place of Chinese learning, which stands in contrast to the scientifically- and technologically-developed West.

"The Magnificent Voyage Abroad"

“The Magnificent Voyage Abroad” (海外壯遊) is an adventure tale in two episodes. In the first episode, the protagonist Qian Siyan is snatched away by a Daoist priest to a wonderland on the summit of E-mei mountain. With the help of magical objects he acquires there, he is able to perform a twofold examination of the state of his own heart. First, a giant rock bearing the inscription “Mirroring the Heart” (鑒心) reveals that his heart is “unperturbed but has a tendency to disquietude” (跃然欲动), while the Daoist priest assures him his is not a heart unduly affected by vanity and desire. Later Qian is introduced to the Daoist priest’s own mentor, the adolescently nubile Fairy of Purple Jade, whose unrivaled beauty takes his breath away. In the hand mirror held out by the fairy, Qian peers once again into his heart, and this time he sees a palpitating heart burning with desire. At the sight of this over-stimulated heart, the fairy announces that Qian has not yet become one with the Dao and therefore needs to follow an alternate path to enlightenment: “[He] must go back to the mundane world and indulge [himself] in a myriad of worldly amusement. Only in the illusion of abundance and prosperity will [he] discover the Bodhimanda of serenity.”²⁷⁹

Subsequently, a magic handkerchief carries Qian to Europe. He first lands on the coast of Scotland (in the middle of a military drill!), and goes on to visit several cities where he indulges himself in delightful visits to museums, libraries, factories, and the famous Crystal Palace where the Great Exhibition was held in 1851. All these places expose him to the “empirical praxis” that lies behind the industrial revolution in Europe. On his way to Berlin, however, the Daoist priest suddenly reappears to announce the end of his pleasure trip. The tale thus abruptly ends with

²⁷⁹ Wang Tao “Haiwai zhuangyou,” *Dianshizhai Pictorial* no.77 (1886).

Qian's homebound departure on a dragon, which is shown on the upper section of the accompanying illustration.

The "Magnificent Voyage" is a *locus classicus* for illustrating how Wang Tao blends conventional and innovatory elements in his tales. The initial trip to the Daoist wonderland that sets off his subsequent excursion to Europe recycles a number of imageries and motifs from earlier sentimental literature. The diagnosis of Qian's heart, which remains the focus of this episode, folds the exploration of the complex relationship between *qing*, propensity (*xing*) and desire (*yu*) into a humorous account. The Daoist's praise of Qian's untainted heart is couched in the seventeenth-century rhetoric of the "childlike heart", which, because the preservation of a "natural" state of mind was deemed essential to authentic literary creation, exerted tremendous influence on the literature of sentiment. The childlike heart in Wang Tao's tale is no static heart, but is instead one in constant flux between two states. During Qian's encounter with the charming goddess, his heart rapidly changes from a state of tranquility to one of arousal. This transformation is best understood as a change from an un-stimulated mind (*weifa*) to a stimulated mind (*yifa*), conceits that are used to distinguish *qing* and *yu* in the conventional scheme of desire.

The major characters in Wang Tao's Daoist wonderland, namely the priest, the rock with its inscription, and the Goddess of Purple Jade, are all reminiscent of well-known characters in the *Honglou meng*. The Goddess of Purple Jade, for instance, is unmistakably modeled on the Goddess of Disenchantment described above. By contrast, many elements in the second episode of the "Magnificent Voyage" are based on Wang Tao's own journey to Europe, undertaken at the invitation of James Legge between 1867 and 1870. In his travelogue entitled *Manyou suilu* 漫遊隨錄 (*Random Jottings from Carefree Journeys*), which was also serialized on the *Dianshizhai*

Pictorial, Wang records similar marvels encountered in major European nations and provides ethnographic sketches of the local customs. Like the protagonist in the “Magnificent Voyage,” Wang appears in the *Manyou suilu* as a self-educating explorer and romantic *flâneur* strolling the boulevards of European metropolises and indulging in a kind of ocular degustation.

The strong identification between Wang Tao and his protagonist Qian makes it possible to read the second half of the “Magnificent Voyage” as semi-autobiographical. By integrating explanations of Western geography and local customs into the narrative, the tale occupies “a special space between journalism and entertainment fiction.”²⁸⁰ Wang Tao’s European tour opened his eyes to the outside world, and his first-hand observations of Western society “convinced him of the need to adopt ‘Western learning’ (*Xixue*), technology, and Western-style political reforms in order to strengthen China.” Wang Tao returned to his native land a changed man; upon his return to China, he worked to found modern Chinese journalism and promote the teaching of science. However, this was only one of his identities; when writing for the supplemental section of the *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, he finds much delight in “playful words and empty talk”.

“*The Marvelous Realm under the Sea*”

“The Marvelous Realm under the Sea” (海底奇境) is another tale that manifests an autobiographical impulse. The narrative follows the convention of the classical tale genre in beginning with a brief account of the main character Nie Ruitu’s history. Several aspects of Nie’s life resemble the author’s own experiences. Like Wang Tao, the protagonist is a *xiucai* candidate

²⁸⁰ Rania Huntington, “The Weird in the Newspaper,” in *Writing and Materiality in China: Essays in Honor of Patrick Hanan*, ed. Judith T. Zeitlin, Lydia He Liu, and Ellen Widmer (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 364.

who ardently seeks practical knowledge beyond classical learning. In the tale, we learn that Nie is particularly interested in practical matters and is especially knowledgeable about hydraulic engineering. In addition, he conceives many state projects, such as building railways, that would not only facilitate transportation but also bolster national security. These concepts are strongly reminiscent of Wang's own goal of using what he calls "practical learning" 實學 and technological innovation to strengthen China's position in a rapidly changing world. But like Wang's own reform ideas, Nie's proposals receive little attention in China—"the listeners frequently sneered at them 人多笑之."²⁸¹ Therefore, "with unfettered ambitions, Nie often thinks about trips to the unknown world 胸襟曠遠，時思作汗漫遊"²⁸²

The story proper begins when the protagonist Nie Ruitu falls into engulfing waves during a sea voyage from London to New York. The thwarted journey, however, leads him to discover a paradise on the bottom of the Pacific with exotic trees and aromatic herbs. There he encounters a Swiss girl named Lanna, whom he had met earlier in Europe. Lanna confesses her admiration for Chinese culture and begs Nie to teach her how to read and write Chinese. With the help of Nie, she quickly masters the language and is eventually able to compose excellent poetry.

Western beauties usually appear in Wang Tao's tales as masters of mathematics, land surveying, and engineering. Although the feminine space in "Marvelous Realm under the Sea" is associated with a Western woman, it is dominated by traditional Chinese literati culture. Lanna is depicted in the mold of a learned Chinese female, who proves her worthiness through the mastery of poetry and music. This idealized love, however, cannot last long. One day Nie notices

²⁸¹ Wang Tao "Haidi qijing," *Dianshizhai Pictorial* no.76 (1886).

²⁸² The expression *hanman you* comes from *Huainan zi*, *juan* 12. Here I follow Gao You of the Han Dynasty in glossing it as the "unknown world."

the water surging like walls and blocks along the path outside the gate to his house. Lanna explains that his days under the sea are coming to an end. She then arranges a farewell banquet for Nie and sends him back to the human world on a ferryboat loaded with gifts.

It is noteworthy though that the magic ferry does not take Nie to his hometown. Instead, Nie lands in a seaport in the Hangzhou bay where he sees “a myriad of lights at night.”²⁸³ Then he quickly makes up his mind to go to Shanghai because it is one of the “foremost centers of commerce in the world” (天下闐闐之最).²⁸⁴ In Shanghai, Nie uses some of the trinkets the Swiss girl gave him to buy a villa. He also sells a diamond from a French palace to a Persian merchant, so that he can raise funds for disaster relief following recent events in Shandong. By giving up the tokens the Swiss girl had given him to remember her by, he brings the *qing* between him and her to an end. As a merchandise, the diamond enters the vibrant commerce that makes Shanghai an international metropolis where traditional literati transform into hired writers. Although Nie ultimately fulfills his dream of serving the nation, in the end, he becomes just another urbanite who takes delight in participating in the excitement of life in a rapidly developing city.

Conclusion

In the preceding sections, I employed a number of means to reclaim the original *Songyin* series from the disfigurement of modern reprints and release it from the grip of a forged literary lineage. My findings show that Wang Tao, far from clinging to an increasingly obsolete narrative form, was actually experimenting with a new mode of writing in an emerging medium.

²⁸³ Wang Tao “Haidi qijing,” *Dianshizhai Pictorial* no.76 (1886).

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

Considering the drastic differences between the *Songyin* series and late-imperial collections of strange tales, it could only be to our benefit to move our interpretation of Wang's classical tales away from the history of *Liaozhai* imitation and reorient it towards an illumination of the innovations of late-Qing literature.

The enchantment in the *Songyin* series is specific to the lithographic medium of the *Dianshizhai Pictorial*. Dream and overseas travel, which remain separate themes in the original *Liaozhai* tales, are closely intertwined in Wang Tao's adaptations in reflection of the *Dianshizhai Pictorial*'s promotion of vicarious "arm-chair travel". The descriptions of journeys to realms of illusion are infused with modern perspectives popularized by imaginary illustrations of airborne and underwater voyages. The evocation of the Illusory Realm of the Great Void resonates with prevalence of visualized feminine space in the *Dianshizhai Pictorial* and the vogue of re-enacting the *Honglou meng* story in nineteenth-century Shanghai print culture. Finally, the realm of illusion as a timeless place for the cultivation of literati culture reflects the relative autonomy of the supplemental section from the main section of the *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, where events are illustrated in historical time. Thus, it was only once they were republished as sequels to the *Liaozhai* and thereby fully decontextualized that Wang's installments could strike the modern reader as a disparate amalgam of incompatible tales belonging to different genres.

CHAPTER THREE

The Explained Supernatural: Rewriting *Liaozhai* Tales as New Fiction

"Where do the Chinese ideas of monsters, witches, ghosts, and fox spirits come from? They come from Fiction (吾中國人妖巫狐鬼之思想何自來乎? 小說也)."
—Liang Qichao (1873-1929)²⁸⁵

Introduction: Counter-narratives of the *Liaozhai*

In an influential 1902 essay, Liang Qichao, long credited as one of the first Chinese intellectuals to express a theoretical interest in popular literature, advocates “a revolution in the realm of fiction” and issues a call for “renovating the nation’s fiction.”²⁸⁶ A 1913 story entitled “The Grotto of Demons” (“Gui Ku” 鬼窟, hereinafter “Grotto”), written in the format of a story within a story, is a fine example of the kind of “new fiction” (*xin xiaoshuo* 新小說) that Liang Qichao and his peers envisioned as an instrument for transforming China into a modern nation. In its frame story, an unnamed guest relates to the I-narrator certain strange incidents in his hometown, where the cult of Yama the Infernal King is widely practiced:

There is a gigantic, unfathomable grotto behind the local Yama temple to the west of the town, where the awe-inspiring *Yamen* of the Infernal King closely resembles its counterpart in the human world, and the mountains of blades by and large conform to the descriptions in popular legends. All the instruments of torture in the grotto were forged by human hands. Whenever shackles became worn from use, they were tossed aside at the entrance of the grotto. The local magistrate had to replace them with new ones, which would be subsequently found inside the

²⁸⁵ Qichao Liang, "Lun Xiaoshuo Yu Qunzhi Zhi Guanxi 論小說與群治的關係," *Xin xiaoshuo*, no. 1 (1902).

²⁸⁶ See *ibid.* Liang was not the sole advocate of literary reform, but “thanks to his rhetorical power and theoretical engagement, his proposals brought forth most emphatically the sentiment of the time” (David Der-wei Wang, “Chinese Literature from 1841 to 1937,” in *The Cambridge History of Chinese Literature*, ed. Kang-i Sun Chang and Stephen Owen (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 443.) As both theorist and practitioner, Liang played a key role in elevating the status of fiction and turning it into an open forum for social commentary and political education.

grotto the next day (縣城西有閻羅廟，廟後有大洞深不可測，為冥府公署，輝煌略如人世。刀山劍嶺與世上所傳述者略同。獄具藉人工，桎梏腐敗輒擲洞口，縣官易以新者，經宿失所在).²⁸⁷

The strange incidents in the grotto, as the I-narrator duly points out, are “identical with those associated with Fengdu in the *Liaozhai*.” (予謂此聊齋所載豐都事耳).²⁸⁸ The tale he refers to is Pu Songling’s “Imperial Censor at Fengdu County” (“Fengdu yushi” 豐都御史, hereinafter “Imperial Censor”).²⁸⁹ In the original tale, the protagonist Imperial Censor Hua, who inspects Fengdu county on behalf of the throne, ventures with two aides into a grotto while on a quest to prove the falsity of the Yama cult. One *li* (Chinese mile) into the cave, he encounters a group of underworld officials, who point to an empty chair and announce that this seat has been waiting for him, and he can no longer return to the human world. Finally realizing the dire consequence of his transgression, the repentant Censor begs forgiveness from the officials and is subsequently set free in view of his unfulfilled filial duty to his aging mother. On his way back, Lord Hua receives help from a Deity and just manages to escape from the cave, while his two less fortunate aides, unable to recite a Buddhist sutra to save themselves, are said to have forever lost their way in the eternal darkness.

The “Imperial Censor” in the *Liaozhai* collection exemplifies a subset of strange tales that visualize the potentially comic scenario of disbelievers in the supernatural running into the

²⁸⁷ Wei 蘆葦 Lu, “Gui Ku 鬼窟,” *Xiaoshuo shibao*, no. 19 (1913): 1. Translations mine unless specified.

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

very ghosts and spirits whose existence they doubted.²⁹⁰ The protagonists in these tales invariably learn their lessons from these terrifying encounters and subsequently end up providing the most eloquent testimony to the reality of the supernatural. “Grotto,” however, turns this *topos* on its head and constructs a counter-narrative. In its embedded story, the protagonist, a student who received training in Western science and forensics in Tokyo, liberates his fellow villagers from the tyranny of the underworld by exposing the true identity of the Yama and his demonic entourage: they are actually a group of bandits in disguise. The end of the “Grotto” thus dismisses the credibility of the *Liaozhai* tale and provides an alternative interpretation that is compatible with a Post-Enlightenment view of reality.

Different from earlier criticism of Pu Songling’s “authorial fabrication” in his tales, “Grotto”’s repudiation of the *Liaozhai* reflects what advocates of the “new fiction” at the beginning of the twentieth century saw as one of the major faults of traditional Chinese fiction, namely, that it is a major source of superstition.²⁹¹ The modern notion of “superstition” was imported into China from Japan through the neologism *mixin* 迷信 during the late-Qing anti-superstition campaign—a top-down movement that sought to strengthen the Chinese nation through the expurgation of beliefs in ghosts and spirits from the people’s mind.²⁹² In their efforts

²⁹⁰ For some examples of this theme, see the section on Ghostly Apologues in Anthony C. Yu, “Rest, Rest, Perturbed Spirit!” Ghosts in Traditional Chinese Prose Fiction,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 47, no. 2 (1987): 403-12.

²⁹¹ As early as the eighteenth century, the scholar Ji Yun had already criticized the so-called “historian of the strange” for including in his tales private conversations that he could not have been a party to. But Ji’s critique is nothing like a whole-sale rejection of the tradition itself of strange tales; he himself wrote the most important eighteenth-century collection of strange tales, the *Jottings from the Thatched Cottage of Careful Reading* (*Yuewei caotang biji* 閱微草堂筆記). As Judith Zeitlin notes, “[i]t is not the strangeness of the *Liaozhai* that bothers Ji Yun; rather, Pu Songling’s narrative techniques too obviously betray authorial fabrication.” See Zeitlin, *Historian of the Strange: Pu Songling and the Chinese Classical Tale*, 40.

²⁹² For an informative discussion of the late-Qing anti-superstition campaign, see Vincent Goossaert and David A. Palmer, *The Religious Question in Modern China* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), 50-

to promote new fiction as the principle vehicle for national education, Chinese intellectuals often faulted Chinese traditional fiction for being complicit in spreading beliefs in supernatural agency.²⁹³ In “Grotto,” the I-narrator’s initial reaction to the guest’s story, which traces the origin of the Yama cult to Pu Songling’s *Liaozhai*, echoes this particular criticism by linking what the I-narrator later designates as *mixin* with what contemporaries recognized as a masterpiece of traditional Chinese fiction.²⁹⁴ After listening to the entire story told by the guest, the I-narrator renounces his formerly agnostic position and claims that gods and demons merely represent human beings of different moralities—“the wise and righteous ones are gods, and the violent and ignorant ones are demons” (聰明正直者為神，橫暴迷愚者為鬼).²⁹⁵ His transformation not only confirms the final triumph of Western rationalism but also attests to the didactic effect that new fiction can have on the reader. After all, the story-within-the-story is told in the form of a Western detective story, which had only just been introduced into China at the turn of the twentieth century by advocates of new fiction (like Liang Qichao himself) for the purpose of

55. According to Marianne Bastid-Brugière, the word *mixin* seemed to have been made popular by Liang Qichao in 1901. See Marianne Bastid-Brugière, "Liang Qichao Yu Zongjia Wenti," *Tôhō gakuhô* no. 70 (1998).

²⁹³ In his influential 1898 article “Yi yin zhengzhi xiaoshuo” (“A preface to the translation and publication of political fiction”), Liang Qichao characterized Chinese fiction as the most powerful instructor on the Chinese past. Giving credit to foreign fiction for major changes in public opinion and for political progress in America, Europe, and Japan, Liang called for “a revolution in fiction” (*xiaoshuo geming* 小說革命). He wanted to use the novel for political education purposes in order to counteract what he saw as the negative values of old Chinese fiction. These negative values, as he suggested in another article “On the Relation between Fiction and the Governance of the Public,” include the “Chinese beliefs in demons, shamans, fox spirits, and ghosts” (吾中国人妖巫狐鬼之思想何自来乎? 小说也).

²⁹⁴ The influence of anti-superstitious didacticism on “Grotto” is also reflected in the destruction of the Yama temple at the end of tale, as well as in the protagonist’s suggestion that it be converted to a school. Both proposals correspond to a major policy that was first advocated by Kang Youwei, the reformist leader of the so-called “One Hundred Day Reforms” (June 11-September 21, 1898) who was regarded by anti-superstition campaigners as the frontrunner for their vision. Although ultimately the One Hundred Day Reforms did not succeed, Kang’s religious policy was continued by the Qing court after the movement had ended.

²⁹⁵ Lu, "Gui Ku 鬼窟," 13.

inculcating scientific thinking into the Chinese reader's mind.²⁹⁶ In this regard, "Grotto" exemplifies the kind of new didactic fiction that Liang Qichao saw as a powerful vehicle for national enlightenment. Its potential to rectify traditional fiction precisely relies on its construction of a counter-narrative.

This chapter is a study of *Liaozhai* counter-narratives in new fictions like the "Grotto." In my discussion, I focus on the relation between counter-narrative and enchantment in two early twentieth-century serialized fictions that share the same polemical title *Fan Liaozhai* 反聊齋. One is the eight single-episode *zhiguai*-style classical tale series entitled *Counter-Liaozhai or the Demon-revealing Mirror* 反聊齋，又名照妖鏡 (hereinafter *Mirror*) by Po Mi 破迷.²⁹⁷ The other is a namesake series of twelve *chuanqi*-style classical tales by Wu Qiyuan 吳琦緣 (hereinafter *Counter-Liaozhai*).²⁹⁸ Both series, as I will show in this chapter, were affected by the same kind of anti-superstitious didacticism we see in "Grotto"—this is no doubt the reason they proclaimed themselves as antitheses to Pu Songling's tales in their very titles.²⁹⁹ However,

²⁹⁶ Western detective stories were first introduced as reformist fiction into China in the late 1890s. In 1896, *Current Affairs Shiwubao* 時務報, edited by Liang Qichao, first introduced the concept of detective fiction and published four Sherlock Holmes stories translated by Zhang Kunde. According to Chen Pingyuan, between 1896 and 1916, Conan Doyle was the most translated foreign author in China. See Pingyuan Chen, *Ershi Shiji Zhongguo Xiaoshuo Shi*, vol. 1 (Beijing: Peking University Press, 1989), 43-44. For a list of early translations of Sherlock Holmes stories, see Eva Huang, "Giving Texts a Context: Chinese Translations of Classical English Detective Stories 1896-1916," in *Translation and Creation: Readings of Western Literature in Early Modern China 1840-1918*, ed. David E. Pollard (Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1998), 44. For an excellent discussion of the appeal of detective fiction to Chinese readers, see Kinkley, *Chinese Justice, the Fiction: Law and Literature in Modern China*, 170-239.

²⁹⁷ Po Mi's *Mirror* was originally serialized in *New Fiction* 新小說, edited by Liang Qichao, in 1905.

²⁹⁸ Wu Qiyuan's *Counter-Liaozhai* was first serialized in *Thicket of Fiction* (*Xiaoshuo congbao* 小說叢報) between 1915 and 1916.

²⁹⁹ Given their polemical dimension, both *Fan Liaozhai* seemed to be preceded by a number of what I would call "parodic rebuttals" in the Chinese literary tradition. Of these parodic rebuttals, the *Counter-Lisao* 反離騷 by the Han-dynasty poet Yang Xiong (53BCE-18 CE) is the earliest and perhaps best-known example. This poem chides Qu Yuan's choice of suicide to prove his loyalty to his lord, but couches its criticism in verses that stylistically resemble the Chu-style associated with Qu Yuan's songs. Later parodic rebuttals invariably follow this

despite the fact that supernatural elements in these two series are invariably “naturalized” through explanations that fit a post-Enlightenment view of reality, the two series’ use of supernatural elements does not always fulfill an obviously “enlightening” agenda in the way that “Grotto” does. As I will discuss further within this chapter, an important invention of the two series in question lies in their depiction of the supernatural experience as a purely psychological phenomenon. I argue that this depiction is motivated by an interest in the literary representation of an individualized voice, an important innovation of Chinese fiction at the turn of the twentieth century.³⁰⁰ Therefore, a gap exists between the stated mission and the actual employment of the supernatural in *Mirror* and *Counter-Liaozhai*.

I. New Fiction and Disenchantment

1.1. The New Fiction Movement and the Anti-Superstition Campaign

At the turn of the twentieth century, Chinese elites carried out an anti-superstition movement, whose ultimate goal was to reform popular beliefs and establish a state religion that could unify and moralize the Chinese nation. Endorsed by the Qing imperial court, this intellectual movement targeted all knowledge and social practices classified as *mixin*, which, in

strategy of forming a counterargument in the same pattern of language that characterizes the original argument. In other words, stylistic imitation is a prerequisite of all these rebuttals.

³⁰⁰ Patrick Hanan observes that “of all the changes in technique during the late-Qing period, those regarding the narrator and center of consciousness, concerned as they often are with the author’s writing persona, seem the most significant” (162). Both the narrator and the center of consciousness (a.k.a the focalized character) he discusses in his book represent highly individualized voices that are often characterized by an apparent ignorance or naivety. The author-narrator’s voice in *The New Story of the Stone* and *Adventures in Shanghai*, for example, “invites the reader to experience the national and cultural crisis through the mind and experience of an individual subjectivity” (182). For further discussion, see Patrick Hanan, *Chinese Fiction of the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 1-32 and 162-82.

contrast to another neologism *zongjiao* (religion), were considered by the campaigners as incompatible with science. In an effort to extirpate these so-called “cultic practices” (*yinci*), the Guangxu Emperor decreed during the so-called “One Hundred Day Reforms” (1898) that “all temples of the empire, with the exception of sites for state sacrifices, be taken by local officials and converted into schools and state offices.”³⁰¹ Although the Guangxu Emperor’s reform was short-lived, both the Qing imperial court and the succeeding republican government continued the same religious policy. In the four decades that followed the “One Hundred Day Reforms,” “probably more than half of the million Chinese temples that existed in 1898 were emptied of all religious equipment and activity” and converted into schools where students learned Western scientific and world views.³⁰²

The New Fiction movement was intertwined with the anti-superstition campaign. Important figures of the two movements not only shared the same goal of “reforming the customs” (*fengsu gaige*) but also came from the same intellectual circle. Liang Qichao, the advocate of new fiction, was a disciple of Kang Youwei, the reformist leader of the “One Hundred Day Reforms,” who was regarded by anti-superstition campaigners as the frontrunner for their vision. It is not surprising, then, that many of the experiments with new fictions incorporated discourse from the critics of *mixin*.

A key text in the anti-superstition campaign was Zhuang Zhe 壯者’s twenty-four chapter vernacular novel *The Broom to Sweep Away Superstitions* (*Saomi zhou* 掃迷帚, hereinafter *Broom*), which was first serialized in the literary magazine *Illustrated Fiction* (*Xiuxiang*

³⁰¹ Quoted in Lan Li, *Popular Religion in Modern China*, 219.

³⁰² Gossaert, “The Beginning of the End of Chinese Religion,” p. 308

xiaoshuo 繡像小說) in 1905 and then reprinted several times. In the words of scholars Vincent Goossaert and David A. Palmer, *Broom* is “the first comprehensive catalogue and attack on Chinese superstition in the modern sense.” The novel begins with the alarming observation that the Chinese population, still fearful of “supernatural authority” (*shenquan* 神權), has been unable to keep pace with other peoples in making progress in the evolution process. As it proceeds, the novel records a series of prolonged and animated discussions between the scientifically-minded protagonist Zi Sheng and his ghost-fearing cousin Xin Zhai on the falsity and pernicious influences of geomancy, fortune-telling, seances, ghost-quelling, worship of fox spirits so on, all of which are placed in the new category *mixin*. In the end, the protagonist proposes that the government confiscate temple properties nationwide and convert them to new schools that include scientific education in their curriculum. In this regard, the *Broom*, similarly to “Grotto,” also reflects the slogan of “dismantling the temple system to build schools” (*huimiao banxue*) during the anti-superstition movement.

Yet at the same time, Zhuang Zhe’s *Broom* is also a new fiction exemplifying what Liang Qichao considered the ideal vehicle for the enlightenment of the nation—which, after the failure of the “One Hundred Day Reforms,” had become more crucial than ever.³⁰³ The *Broom* is essentially a vernacular novel written in the form of extensive social commentaries disguised as dialogues. As such, it is a “political novel,” precisely the kind that Liang Qichao believed would benefit China the most. In “A Foreword to the Publication of Political Novels in Translation” (*Yiyin zhengzhi xiaoshuo xu*, 1898), Liang Qichao introduced the concept of the political novel,

³⁰³ As Milena Doleželová-Velingerová points out, in the aftermath of the failed “One Hundred Day Reforms,” it became obvious that “China’s salvation would not be the imperial court but an enlightened nation. Understandably, then, the most consistent statements on the late Qing theory of fiction were published in the first decade of the twentieth century.” See her “The Origins of Chinese Literature,” in *Modern Chinese Literature in the May Fourth Era*, ed. Merle Goldman (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977), 32.

arguing that it “should be given the highest credit for being instrumental in the steady progress made in the political sphere in America, England, Germany, France, Austria, Italy, and Japan.”³⁰⁴ To put theory into practice, Liang Qichao translated two Japanese political novels and began to serialize *An Account of the Future of New China* (*Xinzhongguo weilai ji*), his own political novel, in 1902.³⁰⁵ All three works rely exclusively on lengthy speeches and read like political or philosophical treatises.

Like the political novels Liang Qichao both translated and wrote, *Broom* was also crude in terms of composition, thus fitting with Xiaobing Tang’s observation that the overemphasis on didacticism had led new fictions in the early twentieth century to become “increasingly abstruse and unpalatable to actual readers.”³⁰⁶ It seeks to enlighten the reader through the kind of rationalist catechism in which Bian Yuan, one of its interlocutors, simply provides a detailed explanation of all possible “superstitions”; there is consequently little variation in plot construction and storytelling.

By contrast, “Grotto” and the two counter-narratives of the *Liaozhai* I discuss in this chapter expend far greater effort in manipulating the narrated sequence of events so as to make the stories more interesting to readers. In the terminology of Russian formalism, these writers, by constructing the “syuzhet” in a particular way, force the reader to view the “fabula” through a desired perspective, which, as I show, is the source of the stories’ enchantment. This “syuzhet”

³⁰⁴ A complete translation of Liang Qichao’s foreword can be found in Kirk A. Denton, *Modern Chinese Literary Thought: Writings on Literature, 1893-1945* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 71-73.

³⁰⁵ For further discussion on Liang’s promotion of the political novel, see Lawrence Wang-Chi Wong, “The Sole Purpose Is to Express My Political Views’: Liang Qichao and the Translation and Writing of Political Novels in the Late Qing,” in *Translation and Creation: Readings of Western Literature in Early Modern China 1840-1918*, ed. David E. Pollard (Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1998).

³⁰⁶ Xiaobing Tang, *Chinese Modern : The Heroic and Quotidian, Post-Contemporary Interventions* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 14.

configuration has two parts: first, the narrative raises the specter of the supernatural by evoking the *Liaozhai* through plot transposition or style imitation; then a counter-narrative unwinds the previous story and neutralizes all the supernatural elements. By making the reader believe in the supernatural first, this kind of plot twist signifies new fiction writers' departure from the exclusively rationalist and didactic approach to fiction exemplified by political novels.

1.2. The Explained Supernatural Formula

From a comparative perspective, the “syuzhet” configuration I mentioned above corresponds to what scholars nowadays have identified as the “explained supernatural” technique in Western literature, which originated in precursors of detective fiction and then flourished in the works of Arthur Conan Doyle, Charles Brockden Brown, and Agatha Christie in the form of the proverbial “red herring.” One of the earliest contributors to this technique is the English author Ann Radcliffe (1764-1823), an important pioneer of the Gothic novel.³⁰⁷ Her *Mysteries of the Udolpho* (1794) depicts the ghostly terrors in a gloomy castle that are subsequently explained away in accordance with Enlightenment rationality. For example, the ghost haunting the deceased Marchioness' chamber turns out to be one of the robbers who used the château to hide their booty. As Sir Walter Scott remarked, Radcliffe's use of the explained supernatural is an imperfect solution to a technical problem: “Romantic narrative is of two kinds,—that which, being in itself possible, may be a matter of belief at any period; and that which, though held

³⁰⁷ Many novelists began to follow Radcliffe's lead during the 1790s, including Charlotte Smith, Eliza Parsons, Eliza Fenwick, Isabella Kelly, Julia Maria Young, Elizabeth Bonhote, Mrs. Carver, George Moore, Regina Maria Roche, Mrs. Patrick, John Palmer, Jr, and Mary Meeke, to the extent that the explained supernatural became an identifiable school of writing. For a list of detective writers who adopted the technique of the explained supernatural, see Michael Cook, *Detective Fiction and the Ghost Story: The Haunted Text* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 8.

impossible by more enlightened ages, was yet consonant with the faith of earlier times.”³⁰⁸ In other words, the technique is contingent on the collation of two opposing views of reality, with one narrated through the transitory plot, and the other re-affirmed by the delayed expositions.

Generally speaking, traditional Chinese fiction has an aversion to the use of transitory plots and delayed expositions.³⁰⁹ Literary fantasies of oneiric journeys, which are abundant in Chinese strange tales, are perhaps among the few exceptions to this rule. The *Liaozhai* tale entitled “Princess Lotus” (“Lianhua gongzhu” 蓮花公主), which Pu Songling adapted from Li Gongzuo (c.778-848)’s Tang tale “An Account of the Govenor of Southern Branch” (“Nanke taishou zhuan” 南柯太守傳), provides an excellent example to illustrate this point.³¹⁰ At the beginning of the tale, we are told that the protagonist, who has just settled in for a nap, is awakened by the

³⁰⁸ Robert Miles, *Ann Radcliffe: The Great Enchantress* (new York: Manchester University Press, 1995), 132.

³⁰⁹ Even Chinese court-case stories – among pre-twentieth narrative genres, the most comparable to Western detective stories – seldom refrain from identifying the criminal at the beginning of the stories. As James St. Andre observes: “One of the great differences between court case fiction and detective fiction [...] is that the reader of a Chinese court case story almost invariably sees the crime committed and knows who the culprit is before Bao Zhen even appears in the story.” James G. St Andre, “History, Mystery, Myth: A Comparative Study of Narrative Strategies in the “Baija Gonggan” and “the Complete Sherlock Holmes”” (University of Chicago, 1998), 1. Chen Qingyuan argues that Western detective fiction played a critical role in introducing the inverted plot structure to China in the late Qing, even though he does not think that it deeply influenced Chinese fiction outside the detective genre.

³¹⁰ For a translation of “Nanke taishou zhuan,” see William H. Nienhauser, *Tang Dynasty Tales: A Guided Reader* (Hackensack, NJ: World Scientific, 2010), 131-88. Besides “Princess Lotus,” we also find other *Liaozhai* tales such as “Painted Wall” and “Sequel to the Golden Millet” that follow the same pattern of inverted plot. In “A Sequel to the Golden Millet,” for example, the protagonist, an ordinary scholar, is honored in a dream with a series of promotions that eventually leave him in charge of the state; this accords with his inflated private ambition after a diviner tells him at the outset of the tale that he will serve as prime minister for twenty years. But the substitution of a transitory plot can hardly be seen as a *Liaozhai* invention, since we also find similar patterns in the vernacular novel. For example, in *A Supplement to the Journey to the West*, the Monkey is unwittingly drawn into a baffling dream in which he loses sight of the purpose of his pilgrimage—in the dream, the Tang Monk renounces his plan to reach India and becomes a military commander. The *Supplement* ends with the return of the protagonists to the original order. Such awakenings hold a potential for enlightenment in the Buddhist sense, as they often result in self-reflective moments in which the characters find the reality in the story no more real than the dream. Instead, the phenomenal world is itself seen as filled with illusions; this type of tale is clearly influenced by the Buddhist principle that all forms are illusions.

surprise visit of a messenger in brown clothing. Following the messenger, Dou arrives at an exotic land called Cassia where he is warmly received by the king, who offers him the hand of princess Lotus. Near the end of the story, however, a calamity befalls the kingdom without a warning—a giant serpent has encamped outside the palace and is ready to destroy everything in its way. At this moment, Dou “suddenly woke up and began to realize that he was only dreaming” (頓然而醒，始知夢也). The bees droning over his head lead him to discover that a snake has crawled into the beehive in the neighbor’s garden; from this he infers that in his dream he was abducted to the world of bees. This revelation enables the tale to strip the dream kingdom of its aura of mystery and re-assimilate it into the sphere of the familiar and knowable. But it is noteworthy that the dream in the “Lotus Princess” is not purely insubstantial and illusionary. The awakening in the tale therefore does not necessarily enable the dreamer to dismiss the previous dream as a non-reality. This is why, at the end, the exposition is imposed onto, but not necessitated by, the protagonist’s return from the world of dreams to the order of reality. In fact, in “Princess Lotus,” Student Dou already wakes up once in between his first and second visits to the mysterious kingdom. During his second visit to Cassia, he has this interesting conversation with the princess:

Dou said to the princess: "I am so elated by your presence that I would forget even death itself. But I am afraid that this is nothing but a dream." "And how could it be a dream," the princess covered her mouth while giggling, "when you and I are here together?" The next morning, Dou amused himself by helping the princess to paint her face, and once it was done, he began to measure the size of her waist with a girdle and the length of her feet with his fingers. "Are you crazy?" The princess asked in laughter, to which Dou replied: "I have been so frequently deceived by my dreams that I have to make efforts to keep a good record. In case this is indeed a dream, I shall still have something to remember. 生曰：“有卿在目，真使人樂而忘死。但恐今日之遭，乃是夢耳。”公主掩口曰：“明明妾與君，那得是夢？”詰旦方起，戲為公主勻鉛黃，已而以帶圍腰，布指度足。公主笑問曰：“君顛耶？”曰：“臣屢為夢誤，故細志之。倘是夢時，亦足動懸想耳。”

The princess’ reply underlines the fact that the dreamscape in the *Liaozhai* tale is not so much a private imagined world as an alternative world occupied by characters who are no less real than

the protagonist. The subsequent taming of the strange therefore does not entail the construction of a binary between the dream world and the order of reality in a way that would resemble the distinction between fiction and reality in Western literature.

The “explained supernatural” technique we see in “Grotto” only started to appear in Chinese literature around the turn of the twentieth century. Han Bangqing’s “Discussion of Ghosts” (Shuo Gui 說鬼), published in 1892 as part of the serial (*Sketches of Taixian*), is likely the first Chinese tale to use this technique.³¹¹ However, “Discussion of Ghosts” is unlikely to represent more than an accident in a randomly assembled collection of strange tales that, for the most part, run contrary to scientific interpretations. Conscious use of the “explained supernatural” technique only started to appear in the aftermath of the anti-superstition movement. Liang Qichao’s “Specter in the Russian Palace” (“E huangong zhi rengui” 俄皇宮之人鬼, hereinafter “Specter”), the first work to be labeled a “fiction of the weird” (語怪小說) in the *New Fiction* magazine, employed this technique to promote a disenchanting view of the world.³¹² More instances of this technique are found in contemporary detective stories, which were introduced into China in the late 1890s and soon became one of the most popular literary genres. At least three translations of Arthur Conan Doyle’s “The Hound of the Baskervilles” (originally serialized in *Strand* from August 1901 to April 1902), a classical example of the use

³¹¹ The collection *Sketches of Tai Xian* (*Taixian mangao* 太仙漫稿) was serialized in the biweekly magazine *Wonder-book of Shanghai* (*Haishang qishu* 海上奇書, consecutively with the magazine *Lives of the Flowers of Shanghai* (*Haishanghua liezhuan* 海上花列傳) in 1892. *Sketches* consists both of tales written by Han Bangqing himself and tales he drew from other collections, including the *Liaozhai*.

³¹² Qichao Liang, "E Huangong Zhong Zhi Rengui 俄皇宮中之人鬼," *Xin xiaoshuo*, no. 2 (1902).

of the technique, appeared before 1910.³¹³ Similarly, early Chinese detective tales such as “The Grotto” and “Ancient Coins” (“Guqian” 古錢) also created ghostly “red herrings.”³¹⁴

The two *Fan Liaozhai* series I discuss in this chapter also use the explained supernatural technique. Though nowadays they are often classified in the categories of “simulating the old school” (擬舊小說) or “make-over fictions” (翻新小說), which suggest a lack of originality, the two series are on the contrary new fictions that are highly innovative.³¹⁵ Their plot of “explained supernatural” is enhanced by the use of personalized narrative voice, which, as Patrick Hanan argues, is a new invention in nineteenth century Chinese fiction.³¹⁶ It is generally agreed that traditional Chinese fiction lacks psychological portrayal; scholars such as C.T. Hsia and Kirk A. Denton have observed: “traditional Chinese narrative was not generally interested in representing linguistically the mind cut off from the external world, in painting an interior landscape through

³¹³ From 1896 to 1916, almost all of Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes stories were translated into Chinese, and most of them received multiple renditions. The three Chinese translations of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* include *A Record of Subduing Demons* (*Xiang yaoji* 降妖記, translated by Lu Kanghua and Huang Dajun and published by Commercial Press in 1905), *A Case of a Strange Mastiff* (*Guai’ao an* 怪獒案, collaboratively translated by the Editing and Translation Bureau of Renjing xueshe and published by the latter in 1905), and *A Haunting by a Mastiff* (*Ao sui* 獒祟, translated by Cheng Tinrui 陳霆銳 and published by Zhonghua shuju as part of the 12-volume *Complete Collection of Sherlock Holmes Stories Fu’er mosi tan’an quanji* 福爾摩斯偵探案全集).

³¹⁴ For a study of the use of supernatural elements in early Chinese detective stories, see De Xu, “Ershi Shijichu Zhongguo Yuanchuang Zhentan Xiaoshuo De Meixue Tezheng 二十世紀初中國原創偵探小說的美學特征,” *Jiangnan luntan*, no. 5 (2008).

³¹⁵ See Zhenguo Zhang, *Wanqing Minguo Zhiguai Chuanqi Xiaoshuoji Yanjiu* (Nanjing: Feng huang, 2011), 305-09; Yiyun Zhuang, “Mingmo Qingchu De ‘Ni Liaozhai’ 清末民初的‘拟聊斋,’” in *Wenxue Wenxian Yanjiu*, ed. Mingxian Wu (Beijing: Commercial Press, 2005), 29. The category “niji xiaoshuo” was first proposed in 1937 by the literary scholar A Ying to describe fictions that “adopt old titles and characters from old works for the purpose of writing essentially new stories” (大都是襲用舊的書名與人物名，而寫新的事), such as Wu Jianren’s *New Story of the Stone*. See A Ying, *Wanqing Xiaoshuo Shi* (Beijing: Remin wenxue, 1980). Ouyang Xiu agrees with the categorization but uses a different term *fanxin xiaoshuo* 翻新小說 to emphasize the new elements in the fictions. See Jian Ouyang, “Wanqing ‘Fanxin Xiaoshuo’ Zonglun 晚清翻新小說綜論,” *Shehui kexue yanjiu* no. 5 (1997).

³¹⁶ Patrick Hanan, *Chinese Fiction of the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries*, Masters of Chinese Studies V. 2 (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

direct representation of the mind."³¹⁷ At the turn of the twentieth century, however, we begin to see depictions of the psychological life of characters told through a personalized narrative voice. The I-narrator in "Grotto," for example, is fundamentally different from the traditional anonymous storyteller in that he is more interested in articulating his own ambivalent opinions concerning the existence or non-existence of ghosts than in dispensing generic formulas of received wisdom.

However, although "Grotto"'s choice of first-person narration allows the reader to access the mind of the narrating subject before his full conversion to rationality, it is noteworthy that this access is restricted to the frame tale. In the inner story, the ghost-fearing characters are flat in the sense that their internal experiences remain unknown to the reader. As a result, these characters do not share the thoughts and ideas that the mysterious events surrounding the Yama cult provoke in them. It is interesting, then, that the *Mirror* and *Counter-Liaozhai*, which are considered imitations of traditional narratives, actually go further than "Grotto," the story influenced by Western detective fiction, in terms of psychological character portrayal. In both series, the characters believing in the supernatural often appear as centers of consciousness, in the sense that the reader's perception is filtered through what they see, hear, experience, and think. We do not know whether their authors learned these techniques directly from Western literature, but one thing is for sure: the authors of both series were familiar with translations of foreign literature, many of which were published in the same venues as their stories.

In the following analysis, I will undertake a close reading of each of the two series and examine the techniques through which their respective narratives share with the reader the inner

³¹⁷ Kirk A. Denton, *The Problematic of Self in Modern Chinese Literature: Hu Feng and Lu Ling* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 35.

thoughts of these characters in response to what they see as undoubtedly supernatural occurrences. Through this analysis, I hope to show how new fictions like the *Fan Liaozhai*, through their avowed ideological antipathy towards old fiction, paradoxically create an indigenous past for what are essentially modern narratives.

II. Phantasms and the Subjective “Weird” in Po Mi’s *Mirror*

In 1905, the *New Fiction* magazine, edited by Liang Qichao, serialized a collection of eight single-episode *zhiguai*-style classical tales entitled *Counter-Liaozhai or the Demon-revealing Mirror* 反聊齋，又名照妖鏡 (hereinafter *Mirror*) by Po Mi 破迷.³¹⁸ The author’s pen-name, literally meaning “dispelling superstitions” not only articulates the *raison d’être* of the series but also draws a connection between *Mirror*’s subversive position towards the *Liaozhai* and the early twentieth-century anti-superstition movement.

Although *Mirror* proclaims to be a subversion of the *Liaozhai*, its choice of subject is based not so much on Pu Songling’s actual tales as on a number of beliefs and practices that contemporary intellectual elites labeled as superstitions in Chinese society, such as shamanism, belief in *wu-tong* ghosts, astrology, tree worship, the cult of fox-spirits, and so on. Its catalogue of superstitions resembles that of *Broom*, although it is less comprehensive. However, the implied author references *Broom* and claims it is just part of a larger collection: in the coda attached to the last tale of the series, he further lists a number of common superstitions and

³¹⁸ First established by Liang Qichao in Japan and then moved to Shanghai, the *New Fiction* magazine was one of the earliest Chinese literary magazines. It embodies Liang’s vision to promote national reform and inculcate new ways of thinking through the medium of fiction. It was published through 24 issues until January 1906.

explains that he once wrote several tales to discuss each superstition individually, but these writings have all been lost.

Despite their clear similarity of content, *Broom* and *Mirror* were seen by contemporary readers as representing two wholly different types of fiction. Characterized by a crude manner of narration and lengthy public speeches, *Broom* adopted the foreign model of the political novel. By contrast, Po Mi's *Mirror* carries out its contention with the *Liaozhai* through an indigenous literary form, the Chinese strange tale tradition. In the *New Fiction* magazine, the *Mirror* series are labeled "fiction of sundry notes" (*zaji xiaoshuo* 劄記小說). This label corresponds to one of the twelve different types of fiction catalogued in Liang's 1902 announcement for "China's One and Only Literary Periodical *New Fiction*" (中國唯一之文學報新小說), where it is worded slightly differently as *zajiti xiaoshuo* 劄記體小說.³¹⁹ According to the announcement, *zajiti xiaoshuo* consists of "sundry notes, similar to *Liaozhai* and *Yuewei caotang biji* (*Random jottings from the Cottage of Close Scrutiny*), that were casually written down" (如聊齋、閱微草堂之類, 隨意雜錄).³²⁰ It is obvious here that content is not the sole criterion for defining *zaji xiaoshuo*. Firstly, the term *ti* 體 (literally, "body") connotes "normative form" in Chinese literary thought, and is used to describe a genre in which style is fused with the author's intent³²¹ (it does not specifically refer to the subject of the stories).

³¹⁹ Qichao Liang, "Zhongguo Weiyi Zhi Wenxuebao Xin Xiaoshuo 中國唯一之文學報<<新小說>>," *Xinmin congbao*, no. 14 (1902).

³²⁰ Ibid.

³²¹ Zong-qi Cai, *A Chinese Literary Mind: Culture, Creativity and Rhetoric in Wenxin Diaolong* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2001), 78.

Secondly, among the twelve different types of fiction, the “weird fiction” (*yuguai xiaoshuo* 語怪小說) is equally devoted to the investigation of the mysterious, as the editorial describes it as a fiction about phenomena within the scope of so-called “monsterology” (妖怪學, *yaoguai xue* in Chinese, *yōkaigaku* in Japanese).³²² This field of study was founded by the Japanese occult researcher Inoue Enryō (1858-1919), who established the Ghost Lore Institute in Tokyo and gained the sobriquet “Doctor Obake,” or “Doctor Specter” (お化け博士). In Enryō’s usage, *yokai* does not specifically refer to “monstrous beings.” Rather, monsterology includes abnormal or supernormal phenomena in general, many of which can be explained away as subjective experiences or illusions.³²³ In terms of subject matter, the tales in the *Liaozhai* and *Yuewei caotang biji*, which were categorized as *zajiti xiaoshuo*, would also fall within the purview of monsterology, but in the magazine, the label *yuguai xiaoshuo* is reserved only for translations of foreign works. Therefore, the application of the label *zaji xiaoshuo* to *Mirror* has the implication that Po Mi’s tales are fundamentally Chinese narratives.

The editorial’s categorization of the *Liaozhai* as “sundry notes” is seemingly oblivious to the phenomenal presence of literary inventions and authorial fabrications in Pu Songling’s

³²² Liang Qichao’s announcement defines “Fiction of the Weird” (*yuguai xiaoshuo*) as follows: “*Yokaigaku* is a branch of philosophy, to which many learned scholars and curious minds are dedicated. In the West, there are almost as many books discussing those non-existent things as in China. We hereby select those new and worthy works to translate. They can perhaps contribute to the study of the soul” (妖怪學為哲學之一科，好學深思之士，喜研究焉。西人空談說有之書，汗牛充牘，幾等中國。取其新奇可詫者譯之，亦研究魂學之一助也). One of the earliest examples of the “fiction of the weird” is Liang Qichao’s “The Specter in the Russian Royal Palace” (俄皇宮中之人鬼), a translated story told in first-person narrative about a mysterious haunting at the Russian Palace. In this story, the I-narrator encounters what other characters believe to be the specter of Peter the Great. See Liang, “E Huanggong Zhong Zhi Rengui 俄皇宮中之人鬼.”

³²³ For Enryō, a *yokai* is a combination of the mysterious (*fushigi*) and weird (*ijo*), both of which are subjective categories based on knowledge and experience. Foster argues that Enryō’s view of *yokai* “was akin to the medieval European notion of ‘wonders’ as a ‘distinct ontological category, the preternatural, suspended between the mundane and the miraculous.’” See Michael Dylan Foster, *Pandemonium and Parade: Japanese Monsters and the Culture of Yokai* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 83.

collection, which Ji Yun found so objectionable and insisted on replacing with narratives based on plausible sources, such as autobiographical experience or eyewitness testimony. Yet this distortion is intended to create a category into which works such as Po Mi's *Mirror* can be conveniently placed. Indeed, most of Po Mi's tales were written as relating what had been seen or heard by the implied author and subsequently jotted down in the form of notes. In fact, the implied author has revealed so much detail about himself within the tales that some scholars suspect Po Mi to be a pen-name of Wu Jianren, the writer who is "credited with some of the striking innovations of modern Chinese fiction" such as restricted narration and the fallible narrator.³²⁴ This speculation of course cannot be adequately verified, but it does demonstrate how individualized the narrating voice is in *Mirror*. In what follows, I would like to use an analysis of two tales by Po Mi to show that, together with its political objective, *Mirror*'s engagement with supernatural subjects is equally motivated by a literary interest in exploring a form of individual subjectivity.

2.1. The Deranged Spirit (*Shenluan*) in "Fox Bewitchment"

"Fox Bewitchment" ("Hu Mei," 狐魅), the second tale in the series, is an excellent example of how Po Mi uses individual perception to re-situate what is experienced as "weird" within the mind of the person experiencing it.³²⁵ According to the I-narrator, he heard this story from a certain "student from Suzhou" (蘇州某生). The protagonist in this story, an unnamed

³²⁴ Hanan, *Chinese Fiction of the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries*, 165.

³²⁵ Mi Po, "Hu Mei 狐魅," *Xin xiaoshuo*, no. 12 (1905).

family tutor (某甲) working for a rich merchant in Nanhui, is plagued by nocturnal visits from a young student whom he suspects to be a fox-spirit. While at first terrified, the tutor gradually accepts the student as a friend, not knowing he is about to be tricked:

One evening, the young student came to visit him again. The tutor bowed to him and said: "since you are an immortal, you can certainly take me with you on a trip to the otherworld." The lad replied, "An easy thing to do." He picked up a ruler from the desk and threw it out of the window, which instantly transformed into a bridge so broad that four horses could easily pass it side by side. Pointing at the bridge, he said to the tutor, "Once you cross this bridge, you will reach the otherworld." [Seeing that] the tutor was very hesitant, the young student added, "Since you are still unsure and frightened, please allow me to walk in front of you." By the time he finished his words, he was already standing on the bridge, as if he were floating in the air. The tutor bowed and exited through the window. Whump! The second he lifted up his leg, he fell hard into the courtyard. [Hearing his] screams, the entire family rushed to the site and lifted him up by the arm, but his shin-bones were already fractured. It took the tutor half a year to recover. But ever since that evening, the young student had stopped appearing (一夕, 少年復至, 甲叩之曰: "君仙人, 當可導我一遊". 少年曰: "是不難". 取案上戒尺擲窗外, 化一巨橋, 可導駟馬, 指謂甲曰: "度此即仙境矣. 甲殊逡巡. 少年曰: "君猶疑懼耶, 仆當為君先導, 言已飄然立橋上. 以手招甲, 甲乃鞠躬自窗中出, 甫一舉足, 砉然墮院中大號. 家人畢集, 掖之起, 脛已折矣. 醫治半載始愈, 少年亦自此茲杳).³²⁶

Coming to a sudden stop here, "Fox Bewitchment" reminds us of what Tzvetan Todorov has defined as the "fantastic," whose basis is the "ambiguity as to whether the weird event is supernatural or not."³²⁷ All our knowledge of the young student comes from the unnamed tutor. While he is convinced that his guest is a fox because he seems to be able to read his mind, the young student never reveals his identity. In addition, no other character has seen the student, nor are there any vestiges or material traces to confirm his existence. Therefore, the reader cannot decide whether the young student is a phantom or a fantasy. Entertaining two possibilities, the

³²⁶ Ibid., 166.

³²⁷ Christine Brooke-Rose, *A Rhetoric of the Unreal: Studies in Narrative and Structure, Especially of the Fantastic*, 1st ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 63.

story is permanently poised between two interpretations, one uncanny (there are rational explanations of the strange event), the other marvelous (the protagonist encounters a fox-spirit), of the same sequence of events.

The contrast between the two alternative viewpoints is mapped onto the ideological opposition between the raconteur (the Student from Suzhou) and the recorder-commentator (Po Mi Zi) of the anecdote, whose opposition is analogous to that between the two dramatic personae of the *Broom*. In the end comment, Po Mi Zi recalls, in a mocking tone, that the Suzhou scholar told him the story with animated body gestures, as if “he had been an eye-witness of the whole thing” (口講指畫若親見者).³²⁸ “One can infer,” notes Po Mi Zi, “the scholar was trying to show that the mysterious young man must be a fox-spirit” (然窺其意，竟以少年為狐鬼矣).³²⁹ While Po Mi Zi finds the mystery quite puzzling, he nonetheless espouses the rational explanation of the event, contending that the visitor and the magical bridge are merely hallucinations. In his words, “whenever one believes one has seen something [extraordinary, the weird], it is nothing but the result of a deranged spirit (*shenluan*). It is analogous to the derangement of a drunk person and nothing else. However, those who write down records of ghosts and fox-spirits would proclaim without fail that there is indeed a certain ghost or fox-spirit here” (凡有所睹者必皆神亂所致，是猶醉人之發狂耳，世人記鬼狐者輒謂有一狐鬼於此). Like the rational voice in *Broom*, Po Mi Zi articulates an unswerving belief in the natural explanation of the supernatural. But it is curious for us to see that Po Mi Zi bases his explanation on the observation that eyewitness accounts of supernatural beings are inconsistent. As he puts it:

³²⁸ Po, "Hu Mei 狐魅," 167.

³²⁹ Ibid.

If person A sees fox-spirits and ghosts; but person B does not see them [...] Can this be a case in which the fox-spirits and ghosts possess marvelous arts to make themselves visible to some people but not others? Or isn't it possible that those people, when their minds are unclear and eyes dazzled, claim with confidence that what they see truly exists, and those onlookers follow them and add onto their claims?" (甲睹之，乙不之睹也[...]彼狐鬼果具何神術顯於此而隱於彼哉？毋亦神亂目昏者自信所見者為實有之歟，旁觀乃從而附會之歟).³³⁰

For Po Mi Zi, this inconsistency proves that the weird and mysterious is inside the body and the mind of the person experiencing it. In this regard, his explanation is very similar to that of *yokaigaku*, which, drawing on psychological knowledge, "situates the weird inside the body and the mind of the experiencer."³³¹

In "Fox Bewitchment," the suppression of the supernatural explanation is contingent on the fact that the rational voice happens to be identical with the authorial voice, which conventionally assumes the role of conferring final judgment in the end comment. But within the tale proper, this authorial voice remains silent. The well-demarcated boundary between the tale proper and the end comment thus enables the symmetrical distribution of two conflicting ideologies onto two distinct characters, with one being the dominant voice of the tale, the other the dominant voice of the interpretation. Yet this symmetry is broken in the tale from the *Mirror* that I examine next; in this tale, the superstitious voice temporarily merges with that of the I-narrator, which is unmistakably that of the implied author.

2.2. "Losing the Po-Soul" and the Uncanny

³³⁰ Ibid., 167-68.

³³¹ Foster, *Pandemonium and Parade: Japanese Monsters and the Culture of Yokai*, 83.

Told in first-person narrative, “Losing the Po-Soul” (“Shi Po,” 失魄) amplifies the horror of an uncanny experience by providing the reader with the I-narrator’s emotional reaction upon seeing specters.³³² Structured as a series of shifts the I-narrator experiences between waking (*xing* 醒) and sleeping (*hun* 昏) states, the tale begins with the following confession:

In the ninth month of the year of *Yi You* (1885), I [...] vomited a significant amount of blood and lost consciousness. A long time passed, and I then opened my eyes once again [...] At that moment my mind was clear and fresh. I pulled myself up in bed and asked to have some tea made for me. After finishing the tea, I was fully recovered, except I still felt a little bit giddy. Above the chair in front of the bed, it seemed as if there were two little men dressed like summoners of the dead, each about six or seven inches tall, capering about in the air and making various menacing faces at me. Suspecting that I was fooled by delusions, I rubbed my eyes and looked again. There was nothing. But in a short while, there—the little men appeared again! When they revealed themselves the fourth time, I grabbed a pillow and darted it at them. The little men instantly disappeared, but the other people in the room were exceptionally surprised by me [...] I felt dizzy again and fell back to sleep. As I was resting with my eyes shut, I thought I caught a glimpse of something. I immediately opened my eyes, and then I saw a growing bubble on the drapery over my head. It grew bigger and bigger, until it burst open, revealing a hideous human face inside—a horrible sight. Then another bubble appeared and revealed a different, though still hideous face. Suddenly, faces appeared from all over the walls in the room. Some were old, others young, with various expressions. “I never believed in ghosts. Could it be true that the ghosts are humiliating me?” I pondered (乙酉九月[...]忽得衵病吐血斗餘，昏不知人良久[...]時余覺神氣頓清起做索茗飲，已良愈。惟微量耳。臥榻前本設一醉翁椅。仿佛間見椅上有二小人長六七寸許，作公差狀，凌空蹈舞。向余作種種狎暱態。疑為眼花，揉目再視，亡矣。俄而復睹。如是者再四。取枕投之，頓滅而室中人咸大驚，問何故。余恐驚眾人也，漫應之，曰：“適見鼠子戲，投之耳”。神頓昏，復睡。閉目寧息，若有所睹。及張目，則見承塵上忽漲一泡泡，漲極而裂，中一人面目猙獰可怖。瞬息就滅，俄泡復起復裂，則中已異人面矣，而猙獰如故。一剎那間，四壁皆然，老者少者，妍媸不一，各呈其狀。默念素不信鬼，茲殆為鬼侮耶).³³³

By using the first-person narrative, “Losing the Po-soul” denies the reader the possibility of examining the weird from the viewpoint of an indifferent observer. Instead, it compels the reader to accept temporarily the weird as real and share in the narrator’s emotional reactions to the

³³² Mi Po, "Shi Po 失魄," *Xin xiaoshuo*, no. 12 (1905): 165-66. According to common Chinese belief, each person has two souls, namely, a *hun* and a *po* soul. *Hun* is “perception”, according to Wang An (1615-1695), i.e. consciousness, psyche, or the sentient soul. *Po* is stamina, confidence, courage, instincts, or the corporate soul. For a full discussion of the difference between *hun* and *po*, see Kenneth E Brashier, "Han Thanatology and the Division of “Souls,” *Early China* 21 (1996): 126-58.

³³³ Po, "Shi Po 失魄," 165.

horrifying apparitions. The choice of first-person narrative is essential to the fact that “Losing the Po-Soul” ascribes the experience of the weird to the mind of the I-narrator.

To be sure, first-person narrative is nothing new to Chinese classical tales. Numerous examples can be found in the *Liaozhai* collection.³³⁴ But in the *Liaozhai*, the first-person narrator always appears as an observer of the events in the story, providing authorial guidance. He shares none of his own internal thoughts with the reader.³³⁵ As a result, the use of “I” in these narratives does not necessarily enable the reader to experience the weird from within the mind of a subjective individual.

That is not to say that third-person narrative is incapable of rendering the internal perceptions of a given character. The “Disembowelment” (“Chou Chang,” 抽腸) in the *Liaozhai*, for example, incorporates focused senses and psychological insight into its narrative. Similarly to the I-narrator in Po Mi's tale, the character in “Disembowelment” encounters the weird while lying down, with the possibility that at any given moment he might be asleep. The tale begins with the character’s glimpse of a woman and a man, who walk into his bedroom without awareness of his presence. But the voyeuristic pleasure quickly turns into a daytime horror, when the man cuts open the woman’s belly and throws a coil of her entrails at the main character. The passage that follows—“At once, an overwhelming puff of warm, bloody stench weighted heavily down on his face, eyes, chest, and throat, thoroughly sealing his nasal passages”—graphically

³³⁴ First-person narration is also frequently used in Tang *chuanqi*-tales such as *A Chance Visit to the Immortal's Cave* (*Youxian ku* 遊仙窟) by Zhang Wencheng, *An Account of An Ancient Mirror* (*Gu Jingji* 古鏡記) attributed to Wang Du, and *Biography of Ying Ying* (*Yingying zhuan* 鶯鶯傳) by Yuan Zhen.

³³⁵ As Zeitlin observes, “Although Pu Songling introduces himself as a first-person narrator in a number of *Liaozhai* tales, in keeping with his self-styled role as Historian of the Strange, he appears merely as eyewitness, listener, or recorder; he does not play a direct part in the unfolding of the story.” See Zeitlin, *Historian of the Strange: Pu Songling and the Chinese Classical Tale*, 132.

describe the assault on the main character's visual and olfactory senses to underline the horror of witnessing the disembowelment from the protagonist's perspective. The end of the tale suggests that the disembowelment witnessed by the main character may not have been entirely dreamed.

When the main character falls onto the floor, it is said that

His family, upon entering, first saw him entirely wrapped in pig intestines; yet upon close examination inside his room, they found nothing. Each believing that it must some optical illusion, no one was alarmed. It was until the man told them what he saw that they began to relate to each other the strange things they saw. However, no visible trace of the event was left in the room; there was only the bloody stench that continued to linger several days (家人趋视，但见身绕猪脏；既人审顾，则初无所有，众各自谓目眩，未尝骇异。及某述所见，始共奇之。而室中并无痕迹，惟数日血腥不散).³³⁶

Although the other characters were not witnesses to the macabre act of disembowelment, the lingering smell, similarly to the deployment of the device of material traces in the *zhiguai* tradition, verifies the historicity of the recorded event.

“Losing the Po-Soul,” by contrast, relates an entirely private experience that is cut off from any form of historical time. The narrator notices that the little men and the hideous faces remain invisible to his mother and sister who are sitting by his side. With this observation, he comes to the “sudden revelation that the faces are not specters. They are nothing but blurred visions” (頓悟是必非鬼特眼花耳).³³⁷ The incongruity of the visions, like the inconsistent accounts in “Fox Bewitchment,” has the effect of identifying individual subjectivity as the origin of the weird. But if “Fox Bewitchment” attempts to link the vision of the fox-spirit with the tutor's “deranged spirit” without explaining what actually happened, “Losing the Po-Soul” specifically portrays the “deranged spirit” (神亂) of the I-narrator in a pathological state that can

³³⁶ Pu Songling, “Chou Chang,” *Liaozhai zhiyi*.

³³⁷ Po, “Shi Po 失魄,” 165.

be explained in medical terms. The image of sickness, which appears frequently in the narrative, correlates the loss of blood with the decline of intellectual faculties. This “pathologized” explanation results in the significant difference that “Losing the Po-Soul” displays from traditional strange tales about body-soul separation.

Bilocation of the self is a common theme in traditional strange tales. Most often it is the *hun*-soul, identifiable with the intellect and the moral self, that wanders away from the body. The animalistic and amoral *po*-soul, by contrast, is believed to be more corporeal and “of this world”. In the famous *Liaozhai* tale “A Corpse’s Transmutation” (*Shibian* 尸變), the lingering *po*-soul turns the dead female body into a predatory zombie.³³⁸ Turning this *topos* on its head, “Losing the Po-Soul” evokes the voice of medical authority to naturalize the strange appearance of the horrific faces. At the end of the tale, the I-narrator visits a respected Chinese doctor who explains that the faces he sees are nothing but fragments of his own *po*-soul: “liver contains the *hun*-soul; the lung contains the *po*-soul. Once the liver, exhausted by hematemesi, loses the power to hold its contents, the *po*-soul will escape and effuse” (肝藏魂，肺藏魄，當吐衄時肺過勞動失其力而魄散於外).³³⁹ Because the object of fear is actually a part of the self, reappearing in the guise of the unfamiliar, “Losing the Po-Soul” is thus a tale of the uncanny, which, as Sigmund Freud argues, is “something which ought to have been concealed but which has nevertheless come into

³³⁸ Yuan Mei (1716-1798)’s *What the Master Would Not Talk about* (*Zibuyu* 子不語) contains two similar stories about dead bodies turning into zombies. One is the “Two Scholars from Nanchang,” which concludes with the explanation that “the *hun* soul is benign and the *po* soul is evil; the *hun* soul is intelligent and the *po* soul is not [...] After the *hun* dissolves, the *po* lingers behind. When the *hun* stays, the person is still him/herself. But once the *hun* leaves, the person is no longer him/herself. The moving corpses and running shadows are all doings by the *po*.” The tale “An Artisan Paints a Zombie” tells a similar story of the dissolution of the essential self once the *hun* leaves the body. For a detailed discussion on the recurring theme of transmutation after the departure of the *hun*-soul in Chinese strange tales, see Lydia Sing-chen Francis, “What Confucius Wouldn’t Talk About: The Grotesque Body and Literati Identities in Yuan Mei’s *Zi Buyu*,” *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews* (CLEAR) 24 (2002).

³³⁹ Po, “Shi Po 失魄,” 166.

light.”³⁴⁰ The doctor's explanation, albeit resorting to traditional Chinese ideas of the bipartite soul, is not incompatible with the early twentieth-century Chinese reception of science, which was often mixed with pseudoscientific ideas. In the comment to another tale, Po Mi Zi indicates that Chinese medical interpretation conforms with Western scientific interpretation: "In my opinion, [superstition] is also madness. Chinese doctors call it mucus confusing the opening of the heart. Western doctors call it brain disease"(窃谓此亦狂病耳。吾国医者所谓痰迷心窍，西医之所谓脑病是也)。³⁴¹

In “Fox Bewitchment” and “Losing the Po Soul,” we see that the supernatural is presented not as a part of external reality but as the consequence of an internal defect. *Mirror*'s exploration of the supernatural thus ventures into the area of psychology, which had remained untouched by the late-Qing anti-superstition campaign against "supernatural authority" and its human exponents. This difference can be illustrated through a comparison between *Broom and Mirror*. Whereas *Broom* mainly holds quacks, charlatans, shamans, priests, fortunetellers, and other deceitful agents responsible for the spread of superstition, Po Mi's *Mirror* connects the beliefs of the supernatural to a particular state of mental disorder, namely, so-called “brain disease”. As the tale “Losing the Po-Soul” indicates, even the rational mind can be susceptible to the belief in ghosts when the reasoning faculty is compromised by sickness, which allows thoughts to be articulated that are contrary to the person's beliefs under normal circumstances. To present the mental state that gives rise to belief in the supernatural, *Mirror* confines the presence of Po Mi Zi's rationalistic voice to the end comments, where he assumes a traditional role of

³⁴⁰ Sigmund Freud, “The Uncanny,” p. 394.

³⁴¹ Mi Po, "Xizi Huobao 惜字獲報," *Xin xiaoshuo* no. 3 (1906): 164.

moral authority. In the stories proper, however, the author of *Mirror* is more interested in representing the inner experience of an individualized subjectivity, a representation that creates interesting narrative effects like the uncanny and the fantastic.

In the next section, I will discuss a different depiction of supernatural experience, one that is divorced from the discourse of illness and delusion, and will address the use of an important narrative technique that is also found in "Grotto" and "Losing the Po-Soul" to show its importance to the depiction of the private inner world of the naive hero, whose temporary belief in the supernatural validates his authentic feelings.

III. The Explained Supernatural and Figural Consciousness in Wu Qiyuan's *Counter-Liaozhai*

Wu Qiyuan's *Counter-Liaozhai* was published between 1915 and 1916 in *Thicket of Fiction* (*Xiaoshuo congbao* 小說叢報), edited by Xu Zhenya 徐枕亞 (1889 - 193?). To readers nowadays, the difference between Po Mi's *Mirror* and Wu Qiyuan's *Counter-Liaozhai* is clearly analogous to that between the single-episode *zhiguai* tales and the literary *chuanqi* tales in Pu Songling's *Liaozhai*. At least three attributes of Wu Qiyuan's tales suggest that their fictional inventions are meant to convey the idea of *qi* (marvel) in style as well as content. Firstly, an average tale in Wu's collection has about three thousand words, about six or seven times the length of an average tale in Po Mi's *Mirror*. Within this expanded space, Wu is able to construct more complicated plot structures than Po Mi. For example, the longest tale in the entire collection, "Zhen Zhen in the Painting" ("Huali Zhenzhen" 畫裡真真 (hereinafter "Zhen Zhen"), consists of a series of strange encounters between the male protagonist and a mysterious female

character, whom he believes to be a portrait coming to life.³⁴² Appreciating the complexity of the story, one reader named “Pear-Dream Female Scribe” (夢梨女史) makes the following remark in the end comments appended to “Zhen Zhen”: “this tale is especially remarkable for its plot construction. If someone could set it to music and adapt it into a romance play, so that the ‘disciples of the pear garden’ are able to stage it on the red carpet and test-play new tunes, then it would be no less successful than the *Romance of the West Chamber* and the *Peony Pavilion* before it.”³⁴³ The two plays she cites here were both originally adapted from famous Tang *chuanqi* tales. By suggesting that “Zhen Zhen” too is suitable to be adapted into the form of romance play, for which inordinate length (an average of 30-50 acts) and an intricate plot are the norm, the female scribe uses the story’s potential theatrical metamorphosis to highlight the *chuanqi* characteristics of Wu’s tale.

Secondly, the language Wu Qiyuan uses is itself more ornamental and figurative than Po Mi’s. Verses are inserted in a number of tales, as characters in the *Counter-Liaozhai* frequently engage in the exchange of poetry. Metaphors, imageries and poetic allusions are especially used to describe characters or settings in detail. One comment by a reader named Yan 雁, appended to the tale “The Righteous Bandits,” clearly exemplifies this: “Wu Qiyuan’s pen,” she writes, “excels at rendering [the image of the character [Qiuweng] in subtle ways. It makes him leap out of the page. Is there really a person like [Qiuweng] in the world (琦緣之筆，尤能曲曲傳來，躍躍紙上，世有其人乎)?”³⁴⁴

³⁴² Wu Qiyuan, "Huali Zhenzhen," *Xiaoshuo congbao* 4, no. 1 (1917).

³⁴³ Ibid.

³⁴⁴ "Lulin Shangyi 綠林尚義," *Xiaoshuo congbao* 3, no. 12 (1917).

Thirdly, almost all Wu Qiyuan's tales can trace their provenance to identifiable literary sources. Of these sources, the *Liaozhai* obviously remains the most important. Nearly half of the tales in the *Counter-Liaozhai* allude to Pu Songling's strange tales. For instance, "Love-Fate in Laughter" ("Xiao yinyuan 笑姻緣) is undoubtedly a rewrite of Pu's "Ying Ning" (嬰寧).³⁴⁵ "The Dumb Couple" (Han kangli 憨伧儷) rewrites Pu Songling's "Xiao Cui" 小翠.³⁴⁶ "Crabapple Immortal" ("Tang xian" 棠仙) and "Plum Maid" ("Meibi" 梅婢) show indirect influence from the flower fairy tales in the *Liaozhai* collection such as "Gejin" (葛巾), "Huang Ying" (黃英), "Xiang Yu" (香玉), and "The Crimson Consort" (絳妃).³⁴⁷ "Extraordinary Love in the Deep Blue Sea" ("Bihai qiyuan" 碧海奇緣) tells a story similar to Pu's "The Country of Yasha" ("Yecha guo" 夜叉國).³⁴⁸

The resemblance to the source tale, however, differs according to the individual story. "Love-Fate in Laughter" ("Xiao yinyuan" 笑姻緣) is closest to the original source. In the *Liaozhai* tale, the eponymous female protagonist is a vixen known for her irrepressible laughter. When Wu transplants the laughter onto his female protagonist, he even takes pains to recreate in his own tale the two conflicting images associated with the laughing vixen in "Ying Ning", simultaneously an embodiment of a childlike mind and a femme fatale capable of inflicting serious harm. Compared to "Love-Fate," other tales take far more liberty in rewriting the originals, and sometimes the

³⁴⁵ "Xiao Yinyuan 笑姻緣," *Xiaoshuo congbao* 3, no. 8 (1917).

³⁴⁶ "Han Kangli 憨伧儷," *Xiaoshuo congbao* 3, no. 7 (1917).

³⁴⁷ "Tangxian 棠仙," *Xiaoshuo congbao* 3, no. 2 (1916).

³⁴⁸ "Bihai Qiyuan 碧海奇緣," *Xiaoshuo congbao* 3, no. 10 (1917).

reference to the original tales is limited to recognizable elements in character portrayal. In “The dumb couple,” for example, the male protagonist is depicted as being unaware of gender differences, while the female protagonist claims to be the daughter of the Jade Emperor. The couple spend their days and nights playing games and impersonating theatrical roles. While these details link them to the childlike couple in Pu’s “Xiao Cui,” the original story about a fox-spirit returning favors she received is now replaced by a basically new tale about the protagonists’ use of deception to preserve themselves in a chaotic time of dynastic transition. “Crabapple Immortal” and “Plum Maid” also differ significantly from the *Liaozhai* tales about flower fairies.

The *Liaozhai*, at any rate, is far from the only source for Wu’s tales. The longest tale “Zhen Zhen,” for example, is based on an elliptical tale in the *Extensive Records of the Taiping Era* (*Taiping guangji* 太平廣記) entitled “The Artisan Painter”, which extends only to about two hundred words.³⁴⁹ “Traces of Beauty on the Tiantai Mountain” (“Tiantai yanji” 天台艷跡) rewrites the famous legend about Liu Chen and Ruan Zhao encountering fairies that first appeared in Liu Yiqing 劉義慶 (403-444)’s *Records of the Hidden and Visible Realms* (*Youming lu* 幽明錄).³⁵⁰ “Residual Dream in the Red Chamber” (“Honglou yumeng” 紅樓余夢) alludes to Cao Xueqin’s famous novel. The diversity of these sources indicates that the object of *Counter-Liaozhai*’s intervention is not Pu Songling’s collection per se but in fact all of what was generally seen in the 1910s as old fiction.³⁵¹

³⁴⁹ *Extensive Records* indicates that this tale is originally from Yu Di’s *Yiwen lu* 異聞錄 (*Records of Strange Hearsay*).

³⁵⁰ The tale “Liu Chen and Ruan Zhao Enter Mountain Tiantai” originated from the entry of ‘Yuan Xiang and Gen Shuo’ in *More Records of the Search for Spirits*. For a full translation of the Liu Chen and Ruan Zhao story, see David R. Knechtges and Taiping Chang, *Ancient and Early Medieval Chinese Literature: A Reference Guide* (Boston: Brill, 2010), 2248 - 49.

³⁵¹ Wu Qiyuan, “Honglou Yumeng 紅樓余夢,” *Xiaoshuo congbao* 3, no. 9 (1917).

Nonetheless, this intervention relies on the adoption of the *chuanqi* form; Wu Qiyuan's use of *chuanqi* tales is in accordance with the *Thicket of Fiction*'s overall emphasis on making the readability of a story or collection an indispensable criterion for its selection and publication, to the extent that writers a decade or so later saw this selectiveness as being at the expense of political relevance. In the 1930s, Bao Tianxiao made the following comment about the magazine: "[a]nd what was the content of these entertainment papers? Amusement, of course, was at their core. Their first principle was not to speak of politics; they would hear nothing of 'the great affairs of the nation' and things like that."³⁵²

3.1 Plot Pattern and Gender Asymmetry in *Counter-Liaozhai*

In 1918, *Counter-Liaozhai* was reprinted in book form, with an added preface by Xu Zhenya, the editor of *Thicket of Fiction*. In his preface, Xu argues that what distinguishes new from old fiction is not the style but the content.³⁵³ Using this criterion, he commends the *Counter-Liaozhai* as new fiction that is devoid of what he sees as the major "problematic practices persistent in the old school of Chinese fiction" (吾國小說之積習), including "trite

³⁵² E. Perry Link, *Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies: Popular Fiction in Early Twentieth-Century Chinese Cities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 142. Bao's retrospective comment, however, reflects a mild bias against the magazine, which was essentially an outgrowth of a political newspaper called *People's Rights* founded in 1912. *People's Rights* was an organ of the revolutionary Liberty Party, and it remained an important literary forum for a group of writers who were known as the "Elements of People's Right Group." The odd name for this group was, like many others, taken from its major publishing organ, in this case a magazine called *Elements of People's Rights*. Ibid., 166. Xu Zhenya, the chief editor of the *Thicket of Fiction* once even claimed that much fiction of the past should be censored because it encouraged superstition and incited lust. However, "Since the introduction of Western novels, people have been alerted to the importance of fiction [...] I think that the power of fiction is more than enough to penetrate every corner of society and is most suited to stir up people's emotions. It would not be amiss to say that having thousands of good teachers and friends is not as beneficial as reading one or two instructive novels." (Gilbert Chee Fun Fong, "Subjectivism in Xu Zhenya (1889-193?) and Su Manshu (1884-1918) Chinese Fiction in Transition" (University of Toronto, 1981), 49.). In this respect, his opinion of the ultimate worthiness of fiction is very similar to Liang Qichao's view that fiction is an effective tool for promoting social reform.

³⁵³ Zhenya Xu, "Bianyan 弁言," in *Fan Liaozhai* (Shanghai: Xiaoshuo congbao, 1918).

designs, exaggerated records, far-fetched plots, and ventures into absurdity” (設想陳腐，過事張皇，構局離奇，涉於荒誕).³⁵⁴ Xu then urges his contemporaries to dedicate themselves to “renovating the realm of literature” in a time in which “civilizations compete with each other to move forward, [leading to] the continuous eradication of superstition” (文明競進，迷信漸除，文學界上，壁壘一新).³⁵⁵ This advocacy clearly echoes Liang Qichao’s call for a revolution in the realm of fiction. However, compared to Liang who emphasizes the utilitarian function of literature, Xu is more appreciative of the literary values of the old school of fiction. He praises *Liaozhai* and *Dream of the Red Chamber* as “remarkable writing without equal” (絕世奇文) and marvels at the two authors’ “craftsmanship” (*bimo* 筆墨, literally, brush and ink), even though these two works, as he points out, have also imparted superstitious ideas to the reader.³⁵⁶ In his view, borrowing narrative techniques from the indigenous tradition is no less valid for the creation of new fiction than working in genres imported from abroad, because the old school, he argues, falls short only in terms of content, not form. As long as writers can endow the old form with progressive ideas, their emulations would “inherit the merits [of the old school] but do away with their flaws, thus creating a connection between old and new” (擷其精華，而正其謬誤，融新舊小說而一之).³⁵⁷ At this point, Xu recalls that he was once thinking of rewriting both the *Liaozhai* and *Dream of the Red Chamber*, but was unable to meet the challenge. He is therefore delighted to see the publication of Wu Qiyuan’s *Counter-Liaozhai* and Pan Fuqin’s *Stele of*

³⁵⁴ Ibid.

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

³⁵⁶ Ibid.

³⁵⁷ Ibid.

Prunus (*Meihua bei* 梅花碑), which he sees essentially as the *Counter-Dream of the Red Chamber* 反紅樓夢. For Xu, the technique Wu and Pan used can be summarized as “emulating the pattern (*geju*) of the two works while injecting novel ideas into them” (仿二書之格局, 運以新穎之思想).³⁵⁸

What Xu refers to as the *geju* of the *Liaozhai* warrants further consideration. Overtly, the evasive term *geju*, which means pattern or layout, seems to refer primarily to a fixed structure of narrative, or the idea of “normative form” (體) in traditional Chinese literary criticism.³⁵⁹ The problem is that the individual tales in the *Liaozhai* are so different from each other that it is virtually impossible to identify a single narrative pattern that encompasses the entire collection. Thus, the *geju* Xu imposes onto the *Liaozhai* must be understood in relation to the plot pattern of *Counter-Liaozhai* tales, which exhibit uniformity throughout.

In an end comment appended to the last *Counter-Liaozhai* tale, a reader named Liyun remarks: "Including this one, I have so far read a total number of twelve tales in the *Counter-Liaozhai* collection. While many of them have extremely intricate, enigmatic plots, it is not uncommon for the tales to resemble each other"(余所見反聊齋蓋并此已十二矣。其間情節，多有撲朔迷離，不可琢磨者，而兩兩相似者亦頗不鮮).³⁶⁰ What Liyun points out here is a salient feature of the tales in the *Counter-Liaozhai* collection: the tales are formulaic in the sense that they adhere strictly to a fixed plot pattern. A bipartite structure can be observed among

³⁵⁸ Ibid.

³⁵⁹ For an excellent discussion of the concept *ti*, see Stephen Owen, *Readings in Chinese Literary Thought* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 592.

³⁶⁰ Wu Qiyuan, "Loutou Panpan 樓頭盼盼," *Xiaoshuo congbao* 4, no. 2 (1917).

them: in the first section, which takes up the main space of the tale, all the elements in the narrative encourage the reader to believe that supernatural agency is involved in the events told. Then, in the second section, which makes up the end of the tale, the mystery is explained away as a product of misunderstanding or trickery. As I discussed earlier, this is the use of “explained supernatural” technique.

Wu Qiyuan is to my knowledge the first Chinese author to use the “explained supernatural” technique consistently in a book-length text, as well as the first author to mitigate its effect. In earlier instances, the use of the “explained supernatural” invariably introduces an element of terror into the stories, which is frequently put to the service of political didacticism. In “Grotto,” for example, the gothic atmosphere evoked by the demonic cave is used to illustrate the oppressiveness of supernatural authority, thus instigating the reader to join the campaign to eradicate superstitious beliefs. In the *Counter-Liaozhai*, however, the supernatural does not appear as a threatening force in the transitory plot. Free of the negative associations with evil, crime, oppression, or anarchy that we see in its previous employments in China, the technique becomes instead an integral element of the romantic storyline that runs through the entire collection.

Indeed, in the *Counter-Liaozhai* series the formula of the explained supernatural is grafted without exception onto a storyline of romantic love. In this storyline, we see Wu Qiyuan consistently deploy a gender asymmetry that is comparable to the underlining cultural matrix that Judith Zeitlin has observed in the *Liaozhai* and other seventeenth-century classical tales of the strange, whereby the imagined coupling between the human male and the supernatural female is

made into a recurring theme.³⁶¹ In Wu Qiyuan's tales, the apparently supernatural character is invariably the female protagonist. Unlike her male counterpart, whose biographical sketch is usually given at the beginning of the tale, her real identity is not disclosed until the end. Thus, she usually appears from the outset as a mysterious figure who appears to possess supernatural powers, and the male character's speculation concerning her other-worldliness becomes the source of the tale's temporary supernatural. When the falsity of his speculation is exposed at the end of the story, her human status is duly restored. The otherwise supernatural tale thus ends with a natural explanation.

The typical female protagonist in Wu Qiyuan's tales is cunning, deceptive, and transgressive. She challenges the ethics of female subservience by impersonating female divinities to pursue freedom of marriage. Compared to her, the typical male character always plays a passive role in the romance. He attests to Denise Gimpel's observation that Chinese male characters in literary magazines of the 1910s "usually appear [...] in a traditional scholarly mode, pale and unadventurous, clinging to the social status of examination degrees rather than developing self-initiative and a sense of responsibility for the community."³⁶² In the majority of the tales, Wu's heroes are gullible and sensitive, which makes them inherently prone to the female protagonists' manipulation.

However, despite the fact that female protagonists in the *Counter-Liaozhai* have greater agency, they nonetheless remain relatively flat characters with little psychological depth. This is because only the naive heroes in Wu's tales are endowed with what Dorrit Cohn calls "figural

³⁶¹ Judith T. Zeitlin, *The Phantom Heroine: Ghosts and Gender in Seventeenth-Century Chinese Literature* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), 33.

³⁶² Denise Gimpel, "A Neglected Medium: The Literary Journal and the Case of the 'Short Story Magazine' (Xiaoshuo Yuebao), 1910-1914," *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* 11, no. 2 (1999): 72.

consciousness”—the voice of the character that absorbs “the emotional and intellectual energy formerly lodged in the expansive narrator.”³⁶³ Throughout the *Counter-Liaozhai* tales, the inner world of the female protagonist remains inaccessible to the reader, whereas the male characters' psychological activities are made transparent through a number of narrative techniques.

The portrayal of the hero's internal thought process is, I would argue, indispensable for the realization of the “explained supernatural.” This is because Wu's tales attribute belief in the supernatural as much to the cunning of the female protagonist as to the gullibility of the naive hero. It is he who voluntarily believes in ghosts and fox spirits in the first place, as a result of his belief that authenticity of feeling has the potential to challenge the norms of the established order. In the excessiveness of their feelings, Wu's naïve heroes resemble closely the tropes of the obsessive mind, the childlike heart, and folly in the *Liaozhai*, all exalted values in the late-imperial cult of feeling (*qing*). However, this resemblance is merely superficial, as the *qing* we see in the *Counter-Liaozhai* differs significantly from the cosmological *qing* of late-imperial literature.

3. 2 Phony Obsession in the “Plum Maid”

Lin Zihua, the male protagonist in “Plum Maid,” exemplifies the naive hero in the *Counter-Liaozhai* series.³⁶⁴ In terms of physique, character, and background, he has much in common with

³⁶³ Dorrit Cohn, *Transparent Minds : Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1978), 25.

³⁶⁴ Wu Qiyuan's “Plum Maid” affords an interesting comparison with Xu Fuzuo (b. 1557)'s *chuanqi* play *Hongli ji* 紅梨記 (*The Story of the Red Pear*), in which the male protagonist mistakes the female protagonist for a revenant. However, the *chuanqi* play does not use any device similar to the explained supernatural technique. Throughout the play, the reader knows that the female protagonist is a human character, and the narrative does not encourage any identification of her with a ghost. The male protagonist believes that he encounters a ghost only after listening to a fabricated ghost story told by another character, who is hired to scare him away from a garden.

other male characters in Wu's tales: he is a handsome young scholar who is known for his poetic talent. Orphaned at a young age, he is already free of the so-called "parents' command and the matchmaker's persuasion" (父母之命，媒妁之言). Also like many other male protagonists in the series, he is depicted as an eccentric character. The tale introduces him as a cultivator of the most exceptional varieties of plum blossoms in his county, and it is said that, when plum blossoms form "an ocean of fragrant snows" (香雪海) in the early spring, he would "spend the entire day sitting face-to-face with the flowers. In disregard to the proper etiquette [of a scholar], he held his knees and read poems aloud to the flowers. He would neglect his sleep and meals without regret. Sometimes he drank to his heart's content and then poured the rest of the liquor onto the earth right beneath the blossoms to honor the flowers" (日惟科頭相對，抱膝長吟，即廢寢忘食，亦所不恤，或沽酒痛飲，餘瀝則澆花下以酌之).³⁶⁵ In the eyes of other people in his county, Lin appears deranged (邑人皆目之為狂) because he treats the flowers as if they were his companions. One anecdote relates that, when reminded by his family and friends that he is unfilial for not having a wife to produce offspring, he replies in a scornful tone that he has plenty of "luck with the ladies" (豔福), for he is served by his flowers, the beauty of which is comparable to the "twelve hairpins" in *Dream of the Red Chamber*.³⁶⁶

Lin Zihua's idiosyncratic devotion to plum flowers resembles that of Ma Zicai, the protagonist of Pu Songling's "Huang Ying" 黃英, who is fanatical about chrysanthemums. In the *Liaozhai* tale, Ma's obsession is the direct cause of his encounter with two siblings from the Tao

Although the drama contains inner monologues, there is no explicit depiction of the male protagonist as willingly perceiving the female protagonist as supernatural.

³⁶⁵ Wu Qiyuan, "Meibi 梅婢," *Xiaoshuo congbao* 3, no. 3 (1916).

³⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

family who are actually metamorphoses of the chrysanthemum. Both his friendship with the brother and romance with the sister are poetic rewards for his sincere love of chrysanthemums. In other words, the inanimate objects come to life in response to the *qing* that the obsessive mind has endowed them with. This logic reflects the common late-imperial imagination of *qing* as a ubiquitous creative force that permeates a correlated universe. As Tang Xianzu wrote in his preface to the *Peony Pavilion*, "what begets *qing* is unknown, but *qing* goes very deep. Those alive can die for it, and those deceased can come back to life because of it" (情不知所起，一往而深，生者可以死，死者可以生).³⁶⁷ The *qing* discourse in late-imperial literature is essentially associated with the Confucian idea of *sheng sheng* 生生 (the constant production of life).³⁶⁸

In contrast, Lin's passion for the plum flowers is no more than an unwarranted obsession, for it merely stands in for Lin's unfulfilled romantic feelings. The tale hints at this fact first by linking Lin's affection for the plum blossoms with his longing for love. About a third of the way into the tale, we encounter a scene in which Lin, feeling distressed in the evening, wanders about the garden and converses with the flowers. He projects his own feelings of loneliness onto the plum blossoms and comforts them with the thought that he is their *zhiji* 知己 (the one who truly understands), who "never fails to visit them daily for a responsive sorrowful smile" (日來索一番

³⁶⁷ Xianzu Tang, "Preface," in *Mudan Ting* 牡丹亭 (Beijing: Remin wenzue, 2005).

³⁶⁸ As Maram Epstein points out, the overt opposition between Neo-Confucianism and *qing* in the *Peony Pavilion* is "more important on the structural and aesthetic levels than ideological [...] Although the two philosophical visions are presented as antithetical in the first half of the play, Tang brilliantly uses the structure of the finale to bring them into harmony by showing the power of *qing* to reinvigorate orthodoxy and make it more responsive to individual circumstances," Maram Epstein, *Competing Discourses: Orthodoxy, Authenticity, and Engendered Meanings in Late Imperial Chinese Fiction* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001).

苦笑).³⁶⁹ “Right at this moment,” the description continues, “there came a gust of the east wind. All the flowers seemed to nod in response. Believing that the flowers understood his words, Lin was so elated that he acted like a mad person” (時適東風吹來，梅花似咸點首以報，生以為花真解語，驚喜若狂).³⁷⁰ Yet shortly before this scene, we are told that Lin is often invited by a host to attend feasts and entertainments: “At the banquets there were clear melodies and elegant dances, so it was natural for *qing* to arise. When leaning close to those who apply thick powder and fragrant rouge to their faces, who can avoid those feelings? At first Lin was merely admiring the beauties, but by and by those feelings began to germinate in his heart” (征逐清歌妙舞，未免有情；依偎粉膩脂香，誰能遣此，生初眼底看花，久乃胸中生蒂).³⁷¹ The narrator’s comment suggests that there is a direct connection between Lin’s newly aroused romantic feelings and his desolation in the evening when he speaks to the plum flowers. Then, as the story develops further, the plum blossoms gradually fade from the reader’s sight. Instead, the narrative comes to focus on the romance between Lin and the plum maid. By the end of the tale, the plum blossoms are completely forgotten, and, as we are told: “Lin’s love was now only directed to one person. Even the plum blossoms under the eaves of his house were out of favor, as he no longer looked at them intently with admiration [...] If the plum tree had a soul, she might have complained about her heartless lover” (而生之愛力已專注一人，即檐下梅花，亦為冷落，不復加以青眼 [...] 魂兮有知，當深怨東君之薄幸也).³⁷² The imagery of the neglected plums

³⁶⁹ Qiyuan, "Meibi 梅婢."

³⁷⁰ Ibid.

³⁷¹ Ibid.

³⁷² Ibid.

further illustrates that Lin's obsession with the plum flowers is merely a compensating act. As an individual love sentiment, this kind of *qing* is without the creative potency we see in the *Liaozhai* tales about flower fairies.³⁷³

Understanding this replacement of *qing* with romantic love in the "Plum Maid" is central to our assessment of the main intent behind the *Counter-Liaozhai*. Overtly, the tale "Plum Maid" is construed as an intervention within the strange tale genre. As the authorial voice of Qiyuan remarks in the end comment, many *biji* (筆記) tales written in the past might have been distortions of real events that were regarded as indecorous (since arranged marriage is considered the only legitimate form of union between two families). Even noble families, despite their elaborate rules of decorum, could not prevent determined lovers from imitating Zhao Wenjun and Sima Xiangru, who elope together at night, heedless of the subsequent scandal. When passing down these stories, "idle-talkers" (好事者) tended to "stretch the stories and embellish them with many marvelous elements that were attributed to the magic of fox spirits and ghosts (鋪張揚厲, 飾為神奇, 托之狐鬼)."³⁷⁴ The point here echoes Xu Zhenya's critique of traditional fiction in the preface to the *Counter-Liaozhai*. But after making this observation, Qiyuan relates that, like the strange tales with which it takes issue, "Plum Maid" actually has its provenance in a true story in which the protagonists chose their own marriage. He decides to write it down because he deeply admires the hero's uprightness and the heroine's chastity. As suggested by this remark, "Plum Maid" sets its main goal as the celebration of freedom in love

³⁷³ Another example of this merely compensatory form of obsession is found in "Zhen Zhen in the Painting". The scroll in the tale, which was originally the object of the naive hero's obsession, is similarly neglected after the hero marries the female protagonist. After being stored away in a chest for several years, it "became more and more decrepit. Its colors were also fading." The material degeneration of the scroll is a metaphor for the shift in the hero's feelings.

³⁷⁴ Qiyuan, "Meibi 梅婢."

over traditional norms of marriage, something that, I would point out, is also true of the entire *Counter-Liaozhai*, taken as a collection of *chuanqi*-tales. In this respect, *Counter-Liaozhai* actually reflects the same concerns as much romantic fiction of the 1910s, which can be seen as a response to the problems created by Western-style marital freedom and the discontent caused by the conflict between social reality and personal expectations.

3.3. The Naïve Hero

Xu Zhenya, who wrote the preface to the book-format edition of the *Counter-Liaozhai* collection, is nowadays best remembered for his highly popular romantic fiction, which triggered a wave of tear-jerking love stories that were, in the eyes of May-Fourth intellectuals, conservative, decadent, and saturated with maudlin emotions.³⁷⁵ His *Soul of the Jade Pear Flowers* (*Yuli hun* 玉梨魂, hereinafter *Soul*), an early best seller published in 1912, was reprinted several times and sold more than 200,000 copies within a period of two years.³⁷⁶ Set in 1909, two years before the collapse of the Qing dynasty, the novel tells how the conflict between love and family obligations leads its two protagonists, Mengxia and Liniang, to commit suicide. The tragic ending was intended by the author to show how self-imposed dogmas and devotion to Confucian doctrines are detrimental to society. *Soul's* popularity and influence on contemporary novels are partly attested by the criticism it incurred. In a lecture given at Peking University in

³⁷⁵ Fong, "Subjectivism in Xu Zhenya (1889-193?) and Su Manshu (1884-1918) Chinese Fiction in Transition," 48.

³⁷⁶ Xu Zhenya was a prolific writer. Besides the *Soul of Jade Pear Flowers*, he also wrote a number of love stories, most of which have tragic endings. The most well-known include *Tearful Memories of the Snow Swan*, *Chronicles of the Battered Mandarin Duck Lovers*, (title later changed to *The Story of the Two Maids*), *My Wife*, and *Tale of Deeply Engraved Love*.

April 1918, Zhou Zuoren denigrated *Soul* as “the founder of the ‘Mandarin Duck and Butterfly style’,” probably referring to the fact that the novel is replete with four-six paralleled proses that compare the lovers to pairs of mandarin ducks and butterflies.³⁷⁷

Like many of the love stories published in the *Thicket of Fiction*, Wu Qiyuan's *Counter-Liaozhai* not only incorporated plot elements from the *Soul* but also betrays the stylistic influence of Xu Zhenya's four-six paralleled prose. The tale “Plum Maid” provides a good illustration of the influence that Xu's *Soul* exerted on Wu's *Counter-Liaozhai* tales. In both stories, the male protagonist works as private tutor for a fatherless child and resides in a secluded garden that belongs to the host. The female character makes her first entrance at night and borrows, without asking, the male protagonist's anthology of poetry; he takes her to be a flower fairy. Such similarities are too great to be dismissed as coincidences. The only difference, in fact, is that “Plum Maid” replaces the widow Liniang with a maid, thus allowing the lovers to marry at the end. In Wu's "Crabapple Immortal," however, the love story does come to a tragic end, as the female protagonist, realizing that she is unable to break away from family ties to pursue the freedom of love, commits suicide, just as Liniang does in the *Soul*. When the male hero visits her tomb, he writes an elegy that is stylistically similar to the paralleled verses that Mengxia wrote for Liniang in the *Soul*.³⁷⁸

³⁷⁷ As Perry Link observes, “the label of Mandarin Duck and Butterfly school was first used in the late 1910s to refer disparagingly to the classical-style love stories of a small, but widely read, group of authors who made liberal use of the traditional symbols of mandarin ducks and butterflies for pairs of lovers.” Beginning in the 1920s, “the term was given a dramatically larger scope by ardent young writers of the May Fourth Movement. Zheng Zhenduo, Mao Dun, and others began using the term to lead an attack on all kinds of popular old-style fiction.” See Link, *Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies: Popular Fiction in Early Twentieth-Century Chinese Cities*, 7. The four-six prose is so called because it “consists of rigidly stylized paralleled sentences made up of either four or six characters.” See Rey Chow, *Woman and Chinese Modernity: The Politics of Reading between West and East* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 36. For further discussion of “Butterfly” fiction, see also Xueqing Xu, “The Mandarin Duck and Butterfly School,” in *Literary Societies of Republican China*, ed. Michel Hockx and Kirk A. Denton (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2008).

³⁷⁸ Xu Zhenya, *Yuli Hun* (Shanghai: Minquan chubanshu, 1913), chapter 1.

What is essential for our purposes is that Wu Qiyuan's characterization in the *Counter-Liaozhai* adopts techniques similar to those Xu Zhenya used in *Soul*. When comparing the love stories of the 1910s to the late-Qing fiction of *qing*, Gilbert Chee Fun Fong observes that that in the latter, "the focus was on the unusual circumstances and happenings, and the characters were seen as actors whose roles were to precipitate the excitement of the strange drama" whereas the former shifts its emphasis onto the "character, and the depiction of their overflowing emotions, particularly the immediate outpouring of the feelings at the saddest moments in the story."³⁷⁹ *Soul* certainly attests to this, as Xu creates a naive hero, whose inner voice is capable of interrupting the realistic mode of the narrative. *Soul's* strong interest in the depiction of emotion and the inner workings of the naive hero's mind explains the unusual way it introduces the male character in the early chapters. At the outset of the novel, the narrator, running contrary to the conventional practice of late-imperial Chinese literature, has said virtually nothing about the hero's background. He only introduces the male protagonist as a certain Mengxia from Sutai and depicts a moment in which the latter stands alone in a garden, mourning the fallen snowy-white petals of pear blossoms that now carpet the courtyard. In contrast to the paucity of information about the male protagonist's social position, there is an elaborate portrayal of Mengxia as a sentimental character. Mengxia's obsession with the pear blossoms anticipates Lin Zihua's feelings for the plum blossoms in the "Plum Maid." In the previous chapter, the narrator takes pains to depict a scene in which Mengxia re-enacts Daiyu's act in the *Dream of the Red Chamber* of gathering the fallen flower petals and burying them in a grave. However, whereas Daiyu merely sees the fallen blossoms as a metaphor

³⁷⁹ Fong, "Subjectivism in Xu Zhenya (1889-193?) and Su Manshu (1884-1918) Chinese Fiction in Transition," 26.

for her own plight, Mengxia seems to endow the rain-battered pear tree with a soul of its own, in which he can confide, as he constantly seeks to communicate with this “spirit and shadow of the flowers” (花之魂與影) that “like mist and smoke, lingers in Mengxia’s heart and mind” (時時氤氳繚繞於夢霞之心舍，縈回往復於夢霞之腦海).³⁸⁰ After burying the petals, he even “summons the spirit of the pear flower and laments” (招花魂而哭之曰):

“Flowers in the grave, are you awake from the foolish dream of three lives or not? How short is your life and how deep is my distress [...] If you know my feelings, then next spring, you will reincarnate into exotic herbs before the arrival of the east wind, so that you can reward me for my deep feelings, and comfort me for my obsessive gaze.” (塚中之花乎，三生癡夢，醒乎？否乎？汝命何短，我恨方長 [...] 花如知感，則來歲春回，應先著東風，早胎異卉，以償餘之深情，慰餘之癡望耳).³⁸¹

In insisting that the pear tree respond to his “deep feelings” and “obsessive gaze,” Mengxia appears to see himself as capable of moving inanimate beings. Yet in the *Dream of the Red Chamber*, such “animation” of the inanimate occurs only in the mysterious world depicted in the prelude, and not in the mundane world of the novel proper. There it is said that the crimson herb watered by the Illuminated Attendant comes to life and vows to return the latter’s favor with a life of tears; the portrayal of Mengxia’s individual emotional self here is therefore useful to signal a shift into a mode of narration that deviates from the *Soul’s* overall realism.

Indeed, the account of the two protagonists’ first encounter, which immediately follows the initial character sketch of Mengxia, harks back to the earlier literary tradition of strange tales. One night, Mengxia wakes up at the moment the clock strikes ten. He wraps himself tightly in

³⁸⁰ Zhenya, *Yuli Hun*, chapter 1.

³⁸¹ *Ibid.*, chapter 2.

the blanket, as a chill suddenly sweeps into room. Just then he hears an indistinct and mysterious wailing from an unknown source, which seems to be the voice of a woman. The ghostly atmosphere seems to herald the imminent advent of a specter (to which the preceding narrative has alluded). The reader is further prepared for a supernatural encounter by Mengxia's reaction to the wailing voice: "full of shock and trepidation, Mengxia secretly contemplated: "This garden is hardly visited even during the day, how could someone come here to weep and mourn at midnight? Ah, I see – it must be the soul of the pear flowers. Feeling beholden to me as I buried her remains, she must have come here to accompany my lonely soul in this quiet hour" (夢霞驚定而怖，默揣此地白晝尚無人跡，深夜何人來此哀哭？嗚呼，噫嘻！吾知之矣，是必梨花之魂也。彼殆感餘埋骨之情，於月明人靜後來伴餘之寂寞乎). Interestingly, the ensuing narrative continues to describe the events from Mengxia's perspective:

At this time, the distance between Mengxia and the lady was merely two to three inches. Her figure was illuminated by the bright moonlight. Down from her temple tresses and her eyebrows, and up from the crease of her stocking and the wrinkles of her skirt, every detail lay bare in front of his eyes. She was indeed an unrivaled beauty of about twenty. Mengxia was first surprised by her otherworldly charm, and then moved by her depth of feeling. He also felt sorry for her. How could her fragile bones endure the midnight chill like this? At that moment, he was completely lost in reveries and illusions, as if his soul had departed from his body. Many fantastical images arose in his mind. Bam! A loud noise suddenly woke him up—his head had bumped against the window glass while his thoughts were wandering. His eyes searched for her again, but she had already disappeared. There was only the grief-stricken wind-chill and the cold, overflowing moonlight. The night was approaching the third watch. (此時夢霞與女郎之距離，不過二三尺地。月明之下，上面鬢角眉尖，下而襪痕裙褶，無不了然於夢霞之眼中，乃二十餘絕世佳人也。夢霞既驚其幽豔，復感其癡情，又憐其珊珊玉骨，何以禁受如許夜寒，一時魂迷意醉，腦海中驟呈無數不可思議之現象。忽聞錚然一聲，夢霞如夢初醒，蓋出神之至，不覺以額觸玻璃作聲也。再視女郎，則已不見，惟有寒風惻惻，涼月紛紛，已近三更天氣矣。³⁸²

Although told in third-person narrative, the voice of the narrator does not dominate the above-quoted passage. Its subtle withdrawal allows the account of the event to be given as if from the

³⁸² Ibid.

perspective of Mengxia, who is, as we are told, "lost in reveries and illusions, as if his soul had departed from the body." The point at which the narrator's voice returns to prominence coincides with the termination of the supernatural mode in the narrative. When the female character vanishes without an explanation, the narrator speaks: "Readers, do you know who this lady is? This lady is actually not the soul of the jade flowers, but their shadow. Both this ill-fated lady and Mengxia with his excess of feeling are the protagonists of this book. If you would like to know the background of this lady, you need first to know more about Mengxia" (閱者諸君亦知此女郎果為何如人乎? 女郎固非梨花之魂, 乃梨花之影也。此薄命之女郎與多情之夢霞, 皆為是書中之主人翁, 欲知女郎之來歷, 當先悉夢霞之行蹤).³⁸³ The ensuing elaboration of the protagonists' backgrounds, then, further demystifies the scene and switches the narrative back to the realistic mode.

The anonymous narrator, whose intruding voice suppresses the supernatural in the *Soul*, is, as Perry Link has pointed out, modeled on the popular figure of the detective—at the end of the tale, he goes to the village in the story to investigate the story of the lovers.³⁸⁴ As such, the narrator appears as an objective reporter and a rational voice that constantly undercuts the possibility of any supernatural interpretation of the events described in the novel. The temporary suspension of the narrator's dominance in the *Soul* thus allows his antithesis, the irrational voice of the sentimental Mengxia, to enchant the otherwise disenchanting narrative.³⁸⁵ In the *Counter-*

³⁸³ Ibid.

³⁸⁴ As Link has pointed out, at the end of *Soul*, the narrator goes back to discover the fate of the remainder of the Cui household. Here he is "playing the 'detective'" and thus adds to the novel "a touch of detective interest, which was on the increase during the 1910s" Link, *Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies: Popular Fiction in Early Twentieth-Century Chinese Cities*, 44.

³⁸⁵ As scholars commonly agree, both Mengxia and the narrator are alter egos of the author Xu Zhenya. The overt antithesis between the two figures at the beginning of the novel disappears at the end, as Mengxia subordinates

Liaozhai, Wu uses a similar technique, but makes even less use of the rational narrator's voice. As a result, we can chart the undisturbed progression of the supernatural plot in Wu's tales. In order to demonstrate how Wu infuses the narrative with the supernatural beliefs of the naive hero, a study of the techniques for rendering figural consciousness in the *Counter-Liaozhai* is now in order.

3.4. Wu Qiyuan's Depiction of Private Thoughts

Wu Qiyuan's interest in the mimesis of figural consciousness is evident from one of his earliest published works, the *Leng Hong riji* 冷紅日記 (Diary of Leng Hong, hereinafter *Diary*).³⁸⁶ Imitating Xu Zhenya's *Xuehong leishi* 雪鴻淚史 (Tearful History of the Snow Swan), which had recast the third-person narrative *Soul* into a series of diary entries penned by the male protagonist He Mengxia, *Diary* constructs a female subjectivity of considerable psychological depth by means of first-person narration.³⁸⁷ Compared to this experimental novel, Wu's slightly later *Counter-Liaozhai* easily appears less modern in terms of form, as it excludes intimate forms of first-person communication such as letters and diaries and mainly uses third-person narrative. Wu nonetheless employs several techniques to endow the naive hero with a level of psychological depth unseen in the *Liaozhai*, yet similar to that of the male protagonist in *Soul*.

his love sentiments to the heroic course of revolution, while the narrator displays strong sympathy towards the tragic death of the main characters.

³⁸⁶ *Diary* was originally serialized in *Fiction Daily* (Xiaoshuo ribao 小說日報, dates uncertain) and reprinted in book form in 1916.

³⁸⁷ Xu Zhenya's *Tearful History* first appeared in installments in *Thicket of Fiction* in 1914 under the title *The Diary of He Mengxia*. According to Chen Pingyuan, the use of the diary in narratives was introduced through Lin Shu (1852-1924)'s translation of *La dame aux camélias* (*Chahua nü* 茶花女, 1899). Xu Zhenya's *Soul*, which was influenced by Lin Shu's translation, was the first Chinese novel to incorporate the diary as a literary device, while the same author's *Snow Swan* is the first Chinese novel written entirely in diary form.

Eleven out of the twelve tales in the *Counter-Liaozhai* are told using third-person narrative. In these eleven tales, we encounter three distinct techniques for representing figural consciousness, namely, psycho-narration, quoted monologue, and narrated monologue.³⁸⁸ The tale “Plum Maid” provides a good example of how the first two of these techniques are employed to facilitate the development of the temporary supernatural. Prior to the first encounter of the male and female protagonists, there is a scene in which Lin Zihua, believing that the flowers responded to him by nodding, is surprised to see, after returning from the garden, that his anthology of poetry is gone. A quoted monologue is used to report his reaction to the theft:

He "thought to himself: the fierce snow storm and the howling wind should have kept the thieves at home. Even if there are flower fairies and nocturnal demons, who among them would appreciate the literary art? Could it be possible that poetry-loving ghosts, knowing that I am now at the end of my tether, just came to make fun of my destitution?" (且念雪孽風饕，即偷兒亦絕跡，若花妖月魅，又豈能解文翰者？或以途窮日暮，竟來詩鬼挪揄耶？)³⁸⁹

The mental verb "thought" (*nian* 念) here is a clear marker of the quoted monologue, as it indicates that the words following it are Lin's actual interior speech as opposed to merely the narrator's description of the character's inner thoughts.³⁹⁰ Quoted monologues such as this are occasionally found in pre-twentieth-century Chinese fiction, but in the *Counter-Liaozhai* tales they appear far more frequently and often serve to gesture towards the possibility of a

³⁸⁸ The schema Derritt Cohn developed in *Transparent Minds: Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction* is useful for my analysis here. Psycho-narration, quoted monologue, and narrated monologue are the three modes that Cohn distinguishes in the third-person context.

³⁸⁹ Qiyuan, "Meibi 梅婢."

³⁹⁰ Other commonly used mental verbs in the *Counter-Liaozhai* include "thought to himself" (私念), "contemplated, pondered" (默念), "believed" (以為), etc. These verbs are more common in vernacular fictions.

supernatural encounter. In the “Plum Maid,” the above-quoted example hints at the entrance of the female protagonist and Lin's subsequent belief that she is a flower fairy.

Immediately after this quoted monologue, we see an example of psycho-narration that indirectly reports the internal activities of Lin, this time in the narrator's own language: as the same evening turns into late night, Lin drinks alone to alleviate his distress.

When he turned his head, he saw the jade-like celadon vase on the desk holding a single branch of red plum. With its beautiful buds ready to burst, the plum branch seemed to be smiling like a pretty girl. Its pleasant and sweet fragrance permeated the air, and lingered over the beaded curtain and crimson draping, without dissipating. He felt that his mind was rippling like disturbed water, his imagination lost in a meandering labyrinth. As a falcon swoops down the split second he sees the hare flashing out, a train of thoughts moved through him at top speed, unstoppable. (溫磨之氣，瀰漫於珠簾絳帳間，回旋不散。殊覺心波迭迭).³⁹¹

Although reporting through the voice of the narrator, the language here, as illustrated by the feminization of the branch of budding plum, is fused with the perspective of the figural consciousness. In other words, there is a subtle intrusion of the character's thought into the narrator's description. This stylistic contagion becomes more intense in the second half of the quoted passage, as we see a profusion of verbs and nouns indicating active mental processes. Because these activities are pre-verbal, they can only be expressed through metaphors and similes. The images of concentric circles of waves and the hunting falcon are thus illustrations of these sub-verbal mental activities.

Both the quoted monologue and the psycho-narration I just analyzed help foreshadow the naive hero's initial reaction to the mysterious female in “Plum Maid.” When the female protagonist appears later that night, Lin inquires about her identity. Next,

³⁹¹ Qiyuan, "Meibi 梅婢."

She pointed at the plum trees and replied with a smile: "If you pity me with compassion, I will return your deep feeling with mine". All of a sudden, he began to see things in full light. "The plum flowers in the moonlight are the incarnation of your former self. Your noble physiognomy (*guxiang*, literally skeletal appearance) are sculpted by the clear bright winter. Are you indeed an immortal? Are you indeed an immortal?" (女笑指梅樹曰：卿須憐我我憐卿。生恍然悟，笑曰：梅花明月，聊託前身，骨相清寒，仙乎仙乎?)³⁹²

The evasiveness of the female protagonist in this passage is merely a contributing factor to Lin's misrecognition of her identity. His previously aroused feelings, which were the focus of the narrative's psychological report, constitute the real source of his belief in the supernatural.

Aside from quoted monologue and psycho-narration, Wu Qiyuan uses an additional technique that is not seen in the "Plum Maid" but that appears in his other tales. Defined as "narrated monologue," this technique transforms "figural thought-language into the narrative language of third-person fiction."³⁹³ In European literature, narrated monologue, also known as the free indirect style, is usually created through the translation of first-person, present-tense quoted monologue into third-person, past-tense narrative. In the Chinese context, where such linguistic markers are virtually absent, it becomes harder to distinguish between quoted and narrated monologue. Nonetheless, we are still able to detect the presence of narrated monologue in passages where the narrator's voice dominates, while the speech is undoubtedly the character's own. For example, in "The Graceful Lady" ("Linxia meiren" 林下美人), there is a scene in which the naive hero Ling Yun spots a shadow that resembles his deceased lover:

"A slender figure sauntered out of the flowering shrub. With the help of the bright moonlight, [he] seemed to discern the figure of a woman. [He] was afraid that the neighbors' women might also have the refined sense to tour here during the night. If [he] were spotted, would not [he] be chided for his

³⁹² Ibid.

³⁹³ Cohn, *Transparent Minds : Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction*, 102.

indecorum and transgression?" (忽有纖纖人影度出花叢，月下望之，似系女子，深恐鄰家眷屬亦抱雅懷，來此做夜遊者，設為所見，得勿嗤為孟浪)?³⁹⁴

Shortly afterwards, Ling recognizes that the figure bears a close resemblance to his cousin:

He could tell from the appearance that the figure especially resembled Liu Hua, except she was wearing a light green skirt, her cheeks had lost their rosiness, and she looked a lot thinner. He lamented that he had not yet detached himself from the root of his love. [As a result,] her fragrant soul came here by herself. With her in his sight, how could he bear it? The sobbing Lin rushed towards the figure, but she suddenly turned around and disappeared" (見來者乃絕肖柳華，惟湘裙淡碧，霞頰斷紅，豐度較前瘦削耳。咄嗟情根未斷，芳魂自來，生當此境，將何以堪！因嗚咽而前，而女已倏已返身去).³⁹⁵

The narrative in both passages is a fusion between the figural and narrating consciousness. As Cohn reminds us, the narrated monologue "reveals itself even as it conceals itself."³⁹⁶ Despite the absence of mental verbs and the overall presence of third-person discourse, both the concern of indecorum and the lament belong unmistakably to the monologic language of Ling Yun rather than to the narrator. This perception encourages the reader to believe that the figure is indeed the revenant of the deceased female protagonist, a belief echoed by Lin's ensuing soliloquy: "Could it be true that the figure in the garden is indeed a specter? [Otherwise] how could it be seen but not approached?" (園中人其果幽靈耶？胡可望不可即也)?³⁹⁷

Examples of the use of these three techniques abound in the *Counter-Liaozhai* tales. A distinctive pattern emerges across the tales, wherein the mimesis of figural consciousness always appears in the temporary plot. Once the tales transition into the exposition section, their narratives usually revert to more conventional means of portraying characters externally, through

³⁹⁴ Wu Qiyuan, "Linxia Meiren 林下美人," *Xiaoshuo congbao* 3, no. 5 (1916).

³⁹⁵ Ibid.

³⁹⁶ Cohn, *Transparent Minds: Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction*, 105.

³⁹⁷ Qiyuan, "Linxia Meiren 林下美人."

actions and speech. This pattern suggests that there is a correlation between the transparency of figural consciousness and the development of the temporary supernatural. The narrative in Wu's tales remains in the supernatural mode as long as it is open to the intrusion of the naive hero's inner thoughts. The return to a natural explanation of the strange does not, therefore, necessitate the enlightenment of the naive hero himself. In other words, at the end of Wu's tales we do not see the transformation of the naive hero into a rational voice—one that is similar to the typical scientific-minded heroes in the anti-superstition tales. Instead, the hero's demystification of the female protagonist is achieved only through chance discovery. This lack of rationalization is crucial in setting the *Counter-Liaozhai* tales apart from contemporary tales that use the same technique of the explained supernatural.

Although the majority of the tales in the *Counter-Liaozhai* are told in the third-person, one tale in the series, entitled “Residual Dream of Red Chamber,” is a first-person narrative that successfully transforms the traditional moralizing author-narrator into a sentimental figural consciousness whose genuine feelings are authenticated by his vulnerability to belief in the supernatural. An examination of this tale further demonstrates the crucial role that the explained supernatural plays in the literary construction of a sentimental subjectivity.

“The Residual Dream of the Red Chamber” is evidently an anomaly in the *Fan Liaozhai* collection, or as the author calls it, a superfluous piece (贅疣) in the series. In many ways, it can be considered a *chuanqi* version of the *Counter-Dream of Red Chamber*, as it rewrites Cao Xueqin's novel in ways similar to many so-called “counter-case fictions” (反案小說).³⁹⁸ Its

³⁹⁸ The term *fan'an* puns on the Chinese legal phrase for “overruling” (翻案, literally, “overturning the table”), which had been re-semanticized by the 17th century literatus Li Yü to describe his unorthodox reinterpretations of official historiography in his *Discussion of the Past*. However, almost all the works that have been categorized as counter-case fictions are rewritings of vernacular prose-narratives with an extended plot.

inclusion in the *Counter-Liaozhai* collection thus further suggests that it is the use of transitory plot, rather than the imitation of the *Liaozhai* tales, that is the defining feature of Wu's collection.

The tale relates the I-narrator (Qiyuan)'s dream encounters with the female characters in *Dream of the Red Chamber* in a disordered narrative that recalls the way Cao Xueqin sequences the events in Baoyu's dream journey to the Land of Illusion. But unlike Baoyu, who engages in conversations, banquets, and romantic liaisons with the fairies, the narrator Qiyuan in "Residual Dream" has limited interaction with other characters during his sojourn in the Garden of Grand Vista. For most of the story, he remains an unnoticed male intruder in a highly feminine space who eavesdrops on the residents' conversations or spies on their actions. In other words, the I-narrator appears here mainly as a center of consciousness.

An important aspect of the I-narrator's voyeurism is that it contains elements of an intense theatrical experience—it is as if Qiyuan were watching a pageant based on *Dream of the Red Chamber*, in which he becomes so absorbed that he forgets that he is only a spectator. Everything Qiyuan hears or sees harkens back to the original novel, and all the characters invariably play their own roles from the novel. For example, Daiyu once again gathers the fallen flower petals and buries them in the "Residual Dreams." The theatrical suggestion in Qiyuan's voyeurism is confirmed when the dream comes to a sudden halt. When the narrator wakes up, he finds himself holding a copy of the *Story of the Stone*. At the same time, he hears the girls next door rehearsing arias from a recent opera adapted from the *Dream of the Red Chamber*. Both the engrossing novel and the alluring music point to a highly absorbing experience that is often associated with the illusion of theater.

By revealing that the roaming voyeur is after all merely a passive spectator who has let himself be swept up in the illusion, “Residual Dream” rules out the possibility of a metaphysical journey. The dream world here thus no longer stands for an enchanted realm that functions as an extension of the moral universe of the story. On the contrary, the tale endorses the view of twentieth-century medical science that dreams are merely the result of activity in the brain. As the I-narrator confesses, his journey to the Garden of Grand Vistas owes much to the fact that “his nerves were being controlled” (神經受其控制) by the siren-like voices of the girls next door.³⁹⁹ But differently from contemporary stories that explore the horror of mind control and enslavement, “Residual Dream” uses the narrator’s proneness to the hypnotic power of the opera to underline the fact that the narrator, like Baoyu, is endowed with deep feeling.⁴⁰⁰ It is because of his ability to feel that he sympathizes with the characters of the *Dream of Red Chamber* and imagines them as real people. Thus, in the end, the hypnotic experience of the narrator’s dream is seen to emanate from wishful thinking. A line appended to the tale articulates precisely this fantasy: “with a foolish heart, I wish to transform myself into luminous jade and tour the land of dreams (癡心願化通靈玉，遊遍華胥夢里鄉).”⁴⁰¹

“Residual Dream” thus transforms the literary device of the oneiric journey into a powerful vehicle for exploring the expansive interior space of an individual subjectivity. No longer representing a metaphysical world lying outside the sphere of the familiar, Qiyuan’s

³⁹⁹ Qiyuan, "Honglou Yumeng 紅樓余夢."

⁴⁰⁰ Compare, for example, Wu Jianren’s *Strange Tales of Electric Art* (Dianshu qitan), serialized in *New Fiction* from 1903 to 1905, a novel about death by electro-hypnosis. Although labeled a love story, *Strange Tales of Electric Art*, as Patrick Hanan asserts, “could just as easily be called a detective novel” (Hanan, *Chinese Fiction of the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries*, 153).

⁴⁰¹ Qiyuan, "Honglou Yumeng 紅樓余夢."

dream is interpreted here as a state of *mi* (confusion) in which the subject's reasoning faculty is temporarily paralyzed. In my earlier discussion of the "Losing the Po-Soul", we already saw the appearance of this *topos*, but in "Residual Dream," the cause of the lapse of reason is not attributed to sickness but to the genuineness of the I-narrator's feelings.

"Residual Dream" is no doubt the most modern tale in Wu Qiyuan's *Counter-Liaozhai* series. Its modernity lies mainly in its use of first-person narrative to transform the narrator into a full-fledged figural consciousness, so that his interior space can be presented through extended narration of his hallucination in an unmediated manner. The I-narrator in "Residual Dream" is essentially an authorial impersonation of the naive hero that Wu created, with Mengxia in Xu Zhenya's *Soul* in mind. Similar to this prototype, he also embodies an innate antithesis to the purely rational voice. However, the absence of the rational voice in the "Residual Dream" is not a singular case but a consistent feature of the entire series. Compared to Po Mi's *Mirror*, Wu Qiyuan's *Counter-Liaozhai* tales have deviated further from the discourse of anti-superstition didacticism. Since Wu's use of the explained supernatural technique is ultimately serving the romantic plot, it is not surprising that, unlike its use in other contemporary works, this technique does not have the effect of introducing an element of horror into Wu's series.

Conclusion

At the turn of the twentieth century, the critique of traditional Chinese fiction propagated a new view of the *Liaozhai* as a receptacle of Chinese superstitious ideas and engendered the creation of literary inversions of Pu Songling's tales. Appearing in literary magazines where a variety of styles often "easily transgress the boundaries between traditional literature, popular literature, and New Literature," these counter-stories of the *Liaozhai* encompassed a diverse

range of writing practices, the fundamental differences of which are attenuated by their surface allegiance to the discourse of national enlightenment.⁴⁰² However, within this overt ideological unity, we witness the use of the supernatural as a useful literary device to depict the inner, private self, an important innovation for Chinese literature at the turn of the twentieth century.

The *Fan Liaozhai* series I examine in this chapter are texts in this vein. The Enlightenment agenda they claim to fulfill, most pronounced in the antithetical position they adopt towards the *Liaozhai*, often gives way to the literary exploration of the interior space of an individual subjectivity. In Po Mi's *Mirror*, the end comments contain the authorial voice's unswerving rationalistic interpretation, whereas the tale proper filters the narrated events through the eyes of the characters to produce the literary effect of the fantastic and the uncanny. In Wu Qiyuan's *Counter-Liaozhai*, the explained supernatural technique, unlike its use in contemporary detective stories, does not eventually lead to a rationalizing denouement. It is instead mainly used for the characterization of the naive hero—a stock character of the romantic stories of the 1910s. Both series, as I have shown, participated in the literary innovation of Chinese fiction at the turn of the twentieth century. The modern features of their narratives not only undercut the general assumption that they are essentially imitations of Pu Songling's strange tales, with a superaddition of Enlightenment views of plausibility, but also underline the heterogeneity of new fictions, to which the two series in question essentially belong. Although they proclaim themselves as counter-stories of the *Liaozhai*, what we detect in them is not so much a steadfast ideological affirmation of anti-superstitious didacticism as an experiment in how to write new fictions that, though distinct from contemporary foreign models, should not be mistaken as authentic traditional Chinese narratives.

⁴⁰² Michel Hockx, *Questions of Style: Literary Societies and Literary Journals in Modern China, 1911-1937* (Boston: Brill, 2003), 30.

The notions about the supernatural expressed in this innovative form of narrative are, accordingly, a unique reflection of the complex Chinese experience of modernity at the turn of the twentieth century, and defy any attempt to equate them with the dominant discourse on Chinese ideas about “monsters, witches, ghosts, and fox spirits.”

CONCLUSION

Pu Songling's cry for a sympathetic reader requires a correct reading of his collection: the "knowing one" must be truly able to understand the message of the *Liaozhai* tales. This is obviously an impossible task given that not even Pu Songling himself, when he wrote his preface decades before the collection was actually completed, could have known in 1679 how to read his tales correctly. Not to mention that the notion of a correct reading is relative rather than absolute: as Jonathan Culler reminds us, "since no reading can escape correction, all readings are misreadings."⁴⁰³ That is to say, what we call "correct" readings may simply be readings whose "misses" have been missed, so to speak.

From today's perspective, the *Liaozhai* tales reinvented at the turn of the twentieth century are without question based on misreadings of Pu Songling's tales; previous scholarship on the Chinese strange tale has thoroughly addressed their flawed interpretations of the *Liaozhai*. Pu Songling's collection is neither a book of Chinese folklore, as Herbert Giles would have had it, nor a traditional Chinese fiction, as writers of *xin xiaoshuo* maintained. But the fact of misreading does not diminish the worth of these authors' respective contributions as objects of scholarly investigation. After all, this dissertation is less about what injustices these misreadings have done to the *Liaozhai* itself, and more about how they enabled the *Liaozhai* to outlive its original readership and become a seminal work that continually spawned new texts in a different era.

Indeed, although the "knowing one" Pu Songling anticipates is most likely just a reader, those who actually responded to his cry, more often than not, picked up their pen after putting

⁴⁰³ Jonathan D. Culler, *On Deconstruction : Theory and Criticism after Structuralism* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1982), 178.

down the *Liaozhai* volumes. Rather than suffering from what Harold Bloom calls the “anxiety of influence,” these writers are more inclined to see themselves as the true inheritors of Pu Songling’s legacy. This is true even in cases in which the resemblance of their works to the *Liaozhai* is tenuous. Taking these writers’ own claims too seriously, many critics have focused on how faithful these supposed “imitations” remain to Pu Songling’s *Liaozhai*, all the while neglecting that influences go both ways, and thus the reinvented tales would have had their own impact on the *Liaozhai*. As I have discussed within the dissertation, an important change these “derivative” texts made was to recast the *Liaozhai*, from a personal collection of tales that straddle fiction and history, into a foremost example of Chinese literature, which at the same time constitutes a cultural artifact for the study of differences between Chinese and Western mentalities (a line of interpretation that has greatly influenced existing scholarship on the *Liaozhai*).

The texts I examined in this dissertation are what Genette has defined as “hypertexts”—the texts that “graft” themselves onto a “hypotext” (an earlier text; in this case, the *Liaozhai*) in “a manner that is not commentary.” While all of them evoke Pu Songling’s tales, for instance through stylistic imitation or plot transposition, many of them go further in constructing, implicitly or explicitly, a literary genealogy tying them to the *Liaozhai*. However, hypertexts are not by default inferior to the hypotext; as Genette points out, a text only becomes a hypotext after a hypertext equates it with an “idiolect” that can be imitated indirectly. In other words, the hypotext is itself the creation of the hypertext’s “tinkering” with existing materials. There is no “pure” hypotext because all hypotexts are in actuality themselves hypertexts of other texts; literature is thus “always in the second degree.”

Of course, the *Liaozhai* collection is no exception to this rule. Some of its tales are themselves clear hypertexts of earlier sources. Tales such as “A Sequel to the Yellow Millet Dream” and “Princess Water Lily” are all based on famous Tang-dynasty tales. Interestingly, it was these adapted tales that seem to have drawn the greatest attention from re-inventors of the *Liaozhai*: one of the first two *Liaozhai* tales Giles translated was “A Sequel to the Yellow Millet Dream,” and several of Wang Tao’s tales in the *Songyin* series are based on the very same *Liaozhai* tale. I have no good explanation for this curious fact; perhaps it is simply true that great stories do appeal to readers of all times.

The misreadings this dissertation examined are all consequences of relational reading, which is the norm in the realm of world literature. They arise from moments when readers of the *Liaozhai* become comparatists. It is thus not surprising that all the re-inventors I examine are Janus-faced figures: Giles studied classics before he embarked on his journey as a sinologist, while Wang Tao assisted W. H. Medhurst in translating the Old and New Testaments around 1850 and remained a translator with the Shanghai mission until 1862, before he proceeded to assist James Legge with the latter’s translation of Chinese classics; the authors of the *Liaozhai* counter-narratives were avid readers of translations of Western literature, and not only published their stories in the same venues where these translations are published, but also incorporated Western storytelling techniques and narrative conventions.

By practicing relational reading, the *Liaozhai* re-inventors adopted a method that had already been widely used by contributors to enchantment literature at the turn of the twentieth century: Wilkie’s hoax article about Indian trick draws on orientalist sources, Madame Blavatsky’s *Isis Unveiled* (1877), the Bible of the Theosophical movement, is “an unruly amalgam of Western occultism, Buddhist and Hindu teachings, and more than a dash of anti-

Christian polemic.” Similar to these occult writings, the re-invented *Liaozhai* tales are not only eclectic blends of different literary traditions, but also innovative works that incorporate scientific discourse into stories about the supernatural and fantastic. Therefore, because of their heavy reliance upon relational reading, these re-inventors cannot be studied within the narrow scope of national-literature disciplines. Instead, we need to re-trace their steps in reading Chinese classical tales in conjunction with oriental folklore, fantasy narratives, detective fictions, and supernatural fiction.

Unlike classical tales of the strange, which are strictly products of Chinese literati culture, tales of enchantment are part of a truly worldwide phenomenon that demonstrates the uncanny proximity of East and West within the reading cultures emerging at the turn of the twentieth century. They owe their rise to the expanding network of world literature, which benefited from the increasing transnational circulation of ideas, texts, and people during this period.

This dissertation focused on theorizing and investigating enchantment as part of an “authentic” Chinese culture that is actually the product of both cultural insiders’ and outsiders’ collective imagination. For this project, I have mainly used literary sources related to the rewriting of the *Liaozhai* tales; but these in fact constitute just a small part of the tales of enchantment being written at the turn of the twentieth century. Nor have I been able to examine the abundant visual and performing materials from this period, mainly because of the need to keep my dissertation within a manageable scope. This dissertation is therefore in some ways a preliminary exploration of certain components of the enchantment literature at the turn of the twentieth century; future scholars will certainly have more to add to this fascinating topic.

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APPENDIX: FIGURES

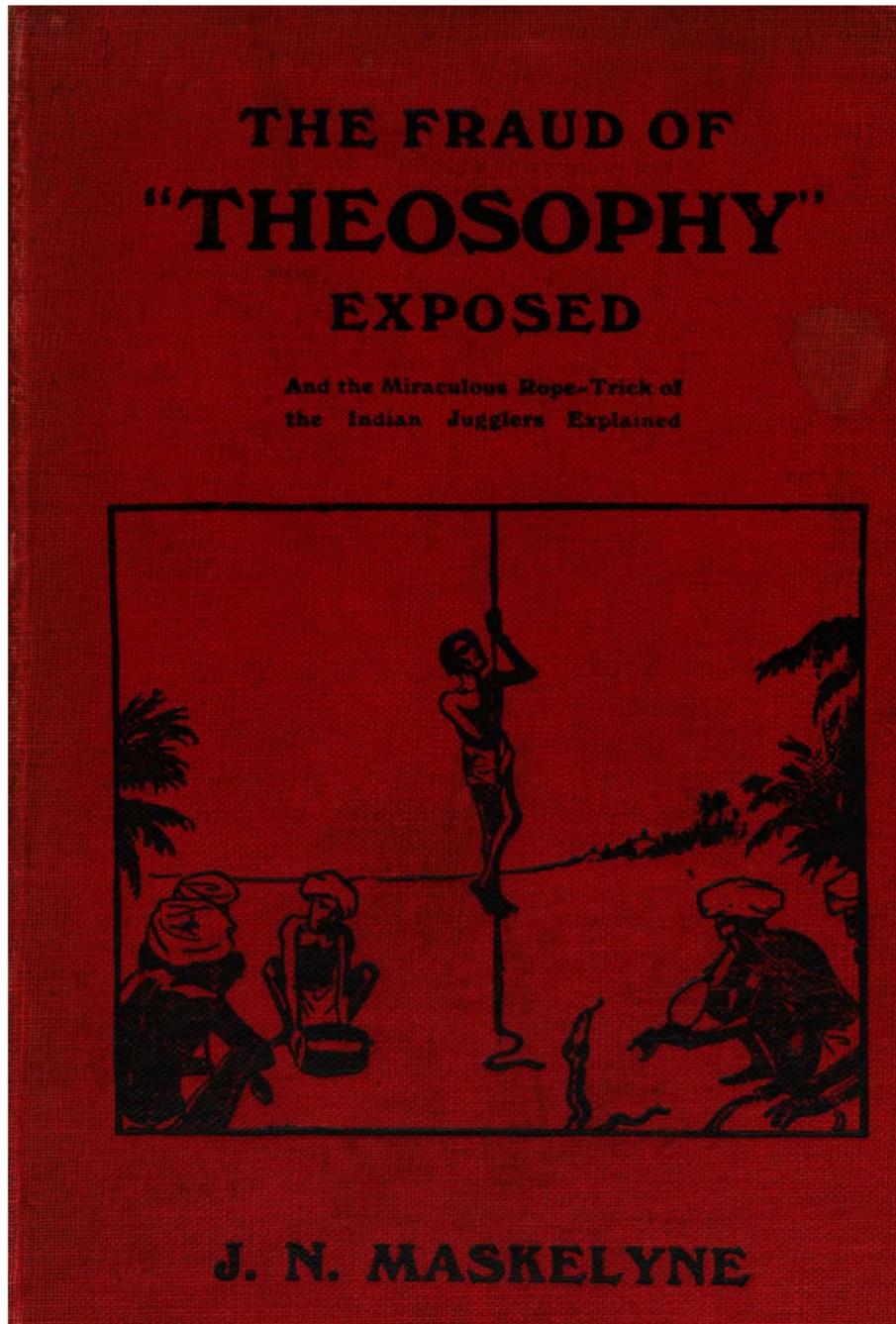


Figure 1.1 Book Cover of J. N. Maskelyne's *The Fraud of Theosophy Exposed* (London, Routledge & Sons, 1912).



MADAME BLAVATSKY

AT THE AGE OF 60.

The greatest impostor in history.

Figure 1.2. A Portait of Madame Blavatsky in J. N. Maskelyne's *The Fraud of Theosophy Exposed* (London, Routldge & Sons, 1912).

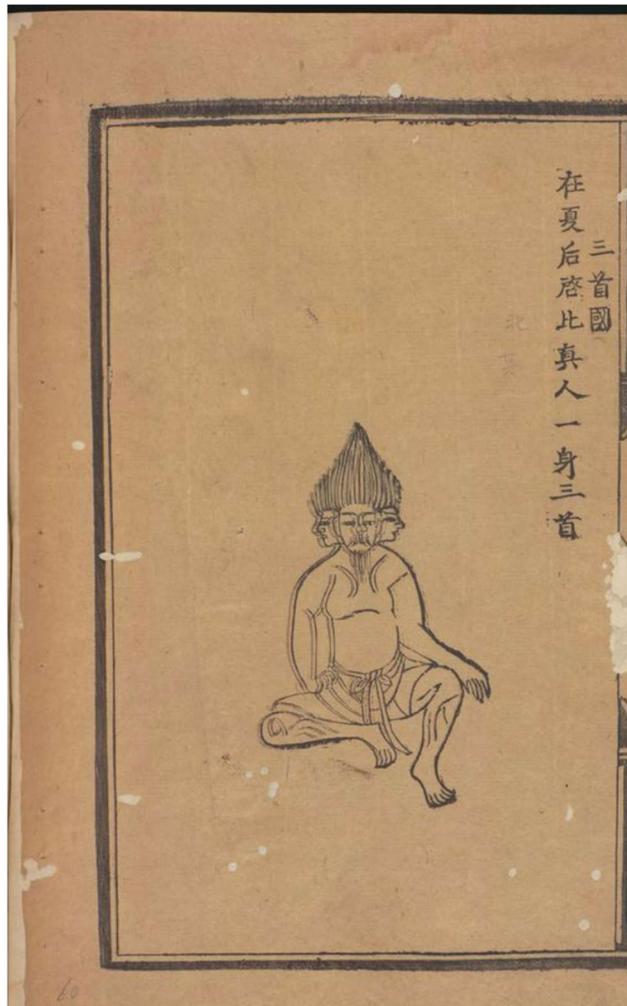


Figure 1.3 Woodblock illustration of an inhabitant of the Land of Three Heads from the *Yiyu tuzhi* (Illustrated Records of Other Realms), courtesy of Cambridge University Library.

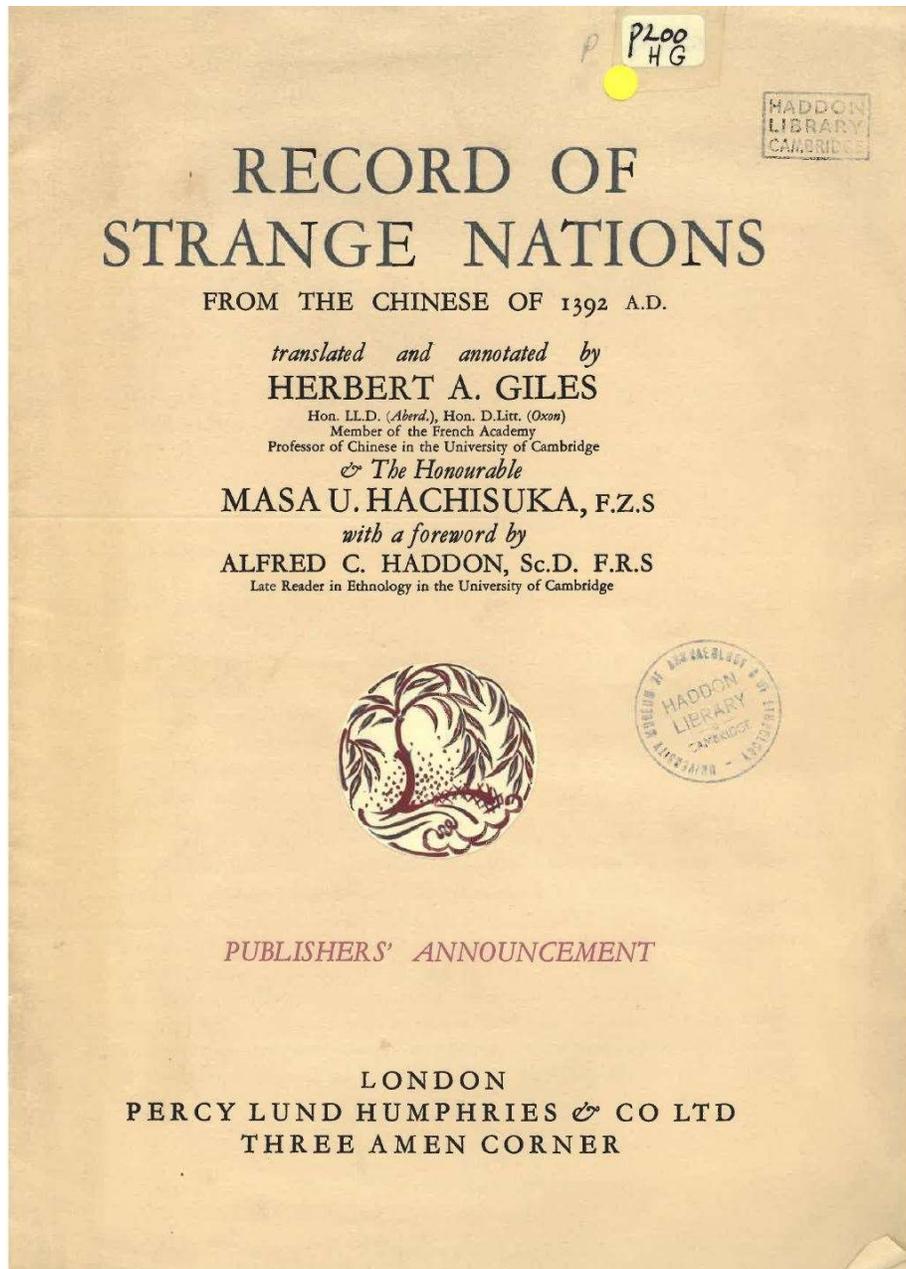


Figure 1.4 Pamphlet Cover of Giles *Record of Strange Nations*, courtesy of Haddon Library, Cambridge University

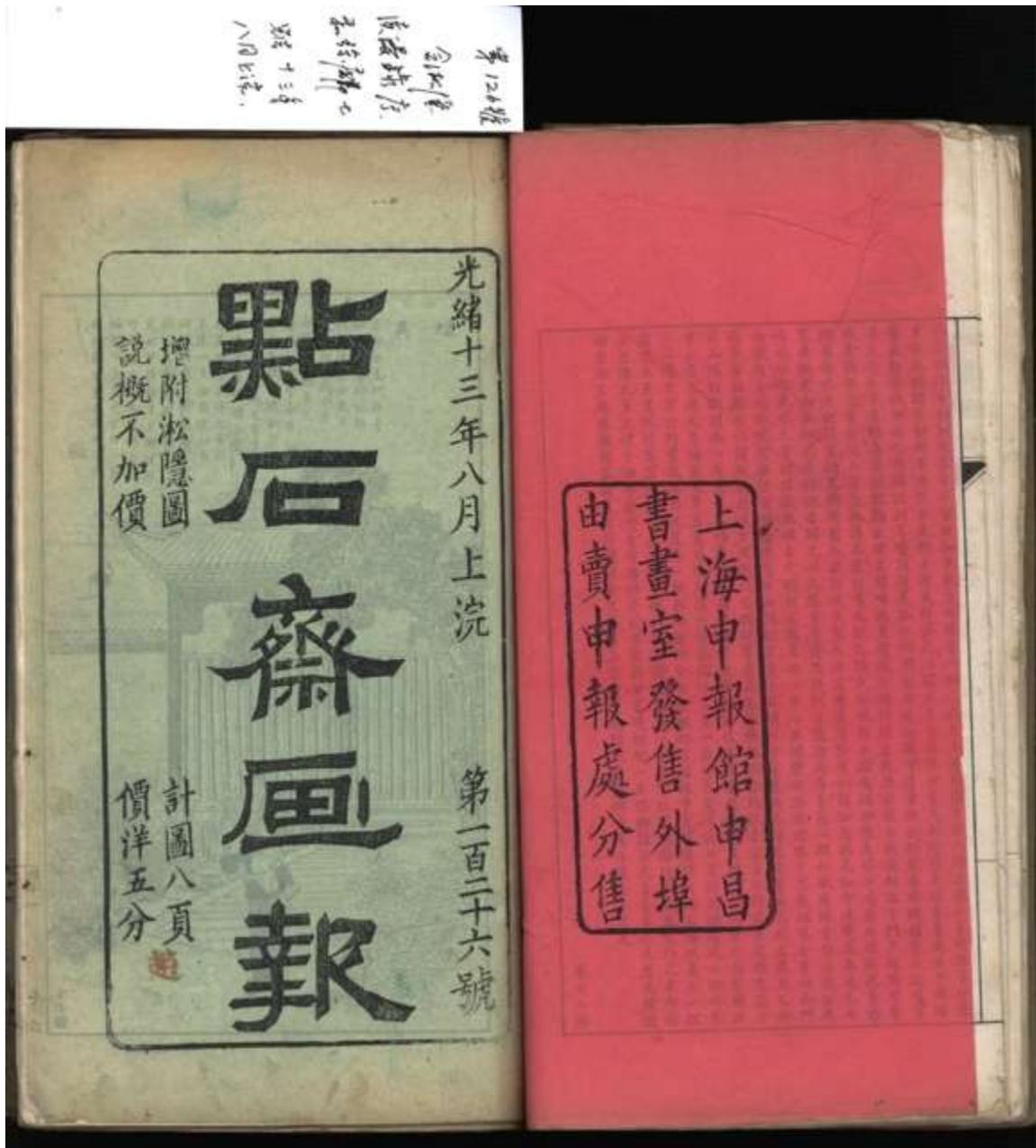


Figure 2.1: *Dianshizhai Pictorial* issue 126, courtesy of Shanghai Library

Figure 2.2: Folios in the *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, courtesy of Shanghai Library



Figure 2.3: Wang Tao. *Huitu louliao zhai zhiyi*. Shanghai: Dianshizhai shiyin shuju 1903.

Courtesy of Capital Library in Beijing

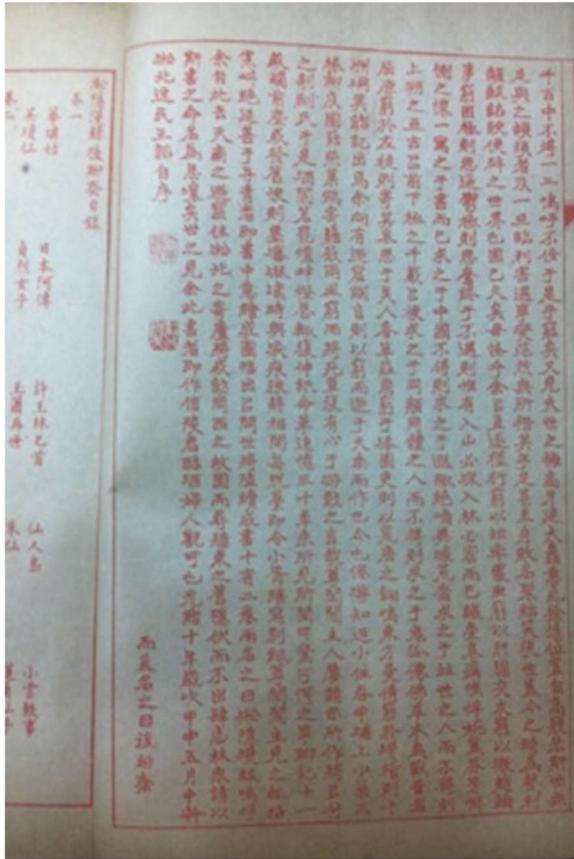


Figure 2.5: One illustration accompanying “Raksha Country and the Sea Market” in *Liaozhai tushuo*. Image printed in *Hua Meng*. Beijing: Shehui kexue chubanshe, 2011.

