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"Pu Songling and Liaozhai zhiyi: a Study of Textual Transmission, Biographical Background, and Literary Antecedents."

By Allan H. Barr (Wolfson College).

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, University of Oxford. Hilary Term, 1983.

ABSTRACT

The first chapter of this thesis examines the textual transmission of Pu Songling's collection of tales, Liaozhai zhiyi, and through a study of extant manuscripts and editions concludes that in its original format the work consisted of eight volumes. After a review of evidence for dating the composition of the collection, the two volumes of earliest and latest date are identified and their contents analysed. There is traced a pattern of development from relatively simple supernatural and romantic stories in Pu's early work to more complex character configurations in the later stories, where social criticism also plays a more conspicuous role.

The second chapter focuses on the life and times of Pu Songling and discusses the process by which the social realities of Shandong in the early Qing period - famine, military campaigns, bandit raids - and particular aspects of the author's personal experience - examination failure, observation of administrative abuses, professional activities, and family and personal relations - intrude persistently into his stories. Special attention is paid to Pu's examination career and the institutional factors which impeded his progress; his criticisms of the selection system are shown to be qualified by passive acquiescence.

The third chapter questions conventional definitions of Liaozhai zhiyi's place in literary tradition. After a survey of the Classical tale from 1500 to 1700, it is demonstrated that Pu's work can be distinguished from the early-Ming story, and should be regarded as a development of existing trends in late-Ming and early-Qing fiction. In its romantic orientation, realistic detail, and prose style, Liaozhai zhiyi has a kinship with its immediate literary forebears. What links it has to vernacular fiction concern thematic and descriptive emphases rather than the occasional use of colloquialisms. Methods of determining the derivation of plots and motifs in Pu's tales are critically examined, and a distinction is drawn between analogues and written sources.

PU SONGLING AND LIAOZHAI ZHIYI:
A STUDY OF TEXTUAL TRANSMISSION BIOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND, AND LITERARY ANTECEDENTS

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INTRODUCTION

Liaozhai zhiyi 聊齋志異 by Pu Songling 蒲松齡 (1640-1715) is an acknowledged classic of Chinese fiction. Since it first began to circulate in manuscript form in the late seventeenth century, this collection of almost five hundred tales has fascinated generations of educated Chinese readers, and many of its stories, retold orally or performed on stage, have become familiar to a wider popular audience. In recent decades, Liaozhai zhiyi has also become the subject of serious academic study both in and outside China.

Research into Pu Songling's fiction has developed in a fitful, uneven fashion, however. Although efforts were made in the first half of this century to collect together the scattered works of Pu Songling and assess their literary value, it was not until the 1950s that full attention was devoted to such endeavours. Scholarly interest in Pu Songling gathered momentum in China with a spate of articles and books in the period from 1954 to 1962, culminating in the publication in the latter year of a carefully prepared variorum edition of Liaozhai zhiyi and a voluminous compilation of Pu's prose and poetry, Pu Songling ji 集. Subsequently, however, the flow of publications in mainland China dwindled rapidly and then completely dried up in the face of political pressures. In Japan, the study of Pu Songling's work also began in the mid-fifties, and has progressed steadily since, though on a modest scale.[1] In Europe and North America, Liaozhai zhiyi has attracted only sporadic attention.

The reissue in 1978 of the variorum edition of Liaozhai zhiyi and the launching in 1980 of a scholarly journal devoted exclusively to the life and works of the author, Pu Songling yanjiu jikan 研究集刊, appear to have inaugurated a new and vigorous phase in the study of Pu Songling. The recent publication and analysis of hitherto inaccessible materials have exposed the limitations of earlier scholarship. The appearance of new theories about the format of Liaozhai zhiyi has called into question previously unchallenged assumptions about the collection. In the more animated intellectual atmosphere now prevailing in China, there has emerged a general desire on the part of literary historians with an interest in Pu Songling to embark on a critical reappraisal and extend the scope of their research, which up until now has been confined within rather narrow boundaries.[2]

This dissertation, the product of research that began in 1978, has profited from the recent resurgence of interest in Liaozhai zhiyi, which has shed light on a number of critical questions, and from opportunities for academic exchange which have permitted first-hand inspection of materials that not long ago were completely out of reach. It sets out to address problematic issues and remedy conspicuous weaknesses in the contemporary study of Pu Songling's Liaozhai zhiyi.

Much of previous scholarly literature has focused on Liaozhai zhiyi practically on its own, with little reference to other works by the author or to works by other authors. Individual stories have been selected as the central topic of discussion, or attempts have been made to characterize the collection as a whole by identifying its major (chiefly thematic) features. The former, piecemeal approach has allowed some detailed discussion of certain aspects of particular tales, but leads to a rather

fragmented view of the collection's unitary elements. The second, synthetic approach, though it may provide a helpful introductory orientation to Pu's stories, has tended to produce imprecise generalization and repetition when writers with similar outlook and partiality lay emphasis only on those features to which they are attracted. Despite these drawbacks, given the immense size of the work, critics have commonly been tempted to adopt one or other of these methods. For either purpose, the 1962 variorum edition, which made use of all versions of the text then known to be extant, appeared to be a comprehensive and reliable edition. Since 1962, however, new evidence and new ideas have undermined the authority of the variorum edition, and the possibility of a different approach to Liaozhai zhiyi has been mooted. In an attempt to test the viability of such an alternative, our first chapter addresses the problem of textual transmission.

The pronounced emphasis on Liaozhai zhiyi the book has entailed a corresponding neglect of its author, and the society in which he lived. Biographical studies of Pu Songling have been published, but these are often sketchy and uninformative in the areas about which one is most curious. Despite the fact that Pu Songling ji made available the bulk of Pu Songling's poetry and prose works, surprisingly little use has been made of these materials, which in fact furnish many enlightening details about the writer's interests and attitudes. Although it now appears that Pu Songling ji was not compiled to the highest standards of thoroughness and rigour,[3] it is still an invaluable primary source. For a solid understanding of Pu Songling's work, however, it is also necessary to consult the books written by his friends in Shandong, as well as local gazetteers and other records. Many of these works possess independent interest and merit study in their own right, but have remained practically unknown and inaccessible outside

their province of origin. An examination of these sources, coupled with a study of Pu Songling ji and the aid of modern scholarship on the early Qing period, enables us in our second chapter to explore various aspects of Pu Songling's personal experience and the social background which have a bearing on the author's preoccupations in his tales.

The relationship between Liaozhai zhiyi and its literary antecedents is probably the aspect most seldom given priority by scholars of Pu's work. Since the pioneering study of the history of Chinese fiction undertaken by Lu Xun 鲁迅 in the 1920s, very little progress has been made towards a fuller perception of the development of the Classical tale (as opposed to the vernacular short story) during the centuries leading up to the appearance of Pu Songling's collection. The most recent attempt to define the place of Pu's stories in the literary tradition does little more than paraphrase Lu Xun's views.[4] Some very basic questions are therefore still awaiting a satisfactory answer. How does Liaozhai zhiyi relate to anecdotes and tales of the Tang period and earlier? To Ming literature? To the vernacular story and novel? Where does the stuff-material of Pu's tales originate? These questions, when considered at all, have always been handled in a rather casual and cursory way, and deserve much closer attention. Our third chapter therefore presents a review of the literary antecedents of Liaozhai zhiyi, and attempts to characterize Liaozhai zhiyi through a comparison with earlier Classical fiction.

This study of Pu Songling and Liaozhai zhiyi thus advances in three distinct stages, beginning with the compact and tightly-knit topic of textual transmission, then moving out to the broader subject of the biographical background and social setting, and concluding with a still more wide-ranging survey of the interconnections between Liaozhai zhiyi and the rich and varied literary heritage.

I. THE TEXTUAL TRANSMISSION OF Liaozhai zhiyi

Introduction

Up until recently, it has been widely assumed that Liaozhai zhiyi (hereafter, simply Liaozhai) had been largely completed when its author wrote the preface to it in 1679. Some tales, it was recognized, had been written at a later date, but these were few in number and rather insubstantial in content.[1] Jaroslav Průšek, in an article that first appeared in 1959, argued most emphatically in favour of this view, referring to Pu Songling's other work to show that Liaozhai drew its inspiration from a deeply unhappy but richly creative period during the 1670s.[2]

Such an interpretation has been directly challenged, however, by a Chinese scholar, Zhang Peiheng 章培恆, first in his preface to the 1978 reprint of the variorum edition of Liaozhai, and also in a supplementary article published in 1980. His conclusions are radically different: he suggests that in its original form the work consisted of eight volumes (ce 冊), each one composed over a specific period of time, the first completed around 1681, and the others produced in turn, the last volume begun as late as 1707 and perhaps not finished until 1714.[3]

Zhang's thesis has encountered a mixed response, with support expressed in some quarters, scepticism in others, but it has effectively reopened the whole issue of Liaozhai's date of composition.[4] Considerable importance is potentially attached to this question, in that it may well shed light on the relationship between the author's life and his literary activities and creative

development. It is to this problem that our study of the textual transmission of Liaozhai addresses itself.

Our enquiries fall into three stages. First of all, we will examine the process by which texts of Liaozhai have been transmitted. At this stage, we are looking for an answer to the question: what was the original format of Liaozhai? Our next step is to review and evaluate the evidence for dating individual stories and the collection as a whole. Here we ask: can one discern a chronological scheme in the arrangement of the work? Finally, we turn to the features and themes of the stories themselves, and consider the real object of our quest: to what extent does awareness of a chronological progression in the tales enhance our understanding of the collection and its author? It is with conclusions on those questions that we bring the investigation to an end.

1. The Textual History of 'Liaozhai zhiyi'

Until fifty years after the death of Pu Songling, Liaozhai was known to its readers only in manuscript form. As it circulated, it was copied by hand, and the copies then recopied. Inevitably, textual variations arose, and readers or editors rearranged or revised the collection as they saw fit. Thus the manuscript texts and published editions which have come down to us present a complex picture. Our knowledge of their background is often tantalizingly fragmentary, and attempts to trace their interconnections are handicapped by paucity of evidence. In recent years, some texts, hitherto unnoticed, have come to light, while others, neglected for years, have been made available in photolithographic reprint, introducing new imponderables at the same time as they resolve some old problems.

Of the many versions that have survived in whole or in part, three texts will be central to our discussion:

1. Pu Songling's manuscript (referred to hereafter as the Pu MS.).[5]
2. Zhang Xijie's 張希傑 manuscript copy, postface dated 1751 (the Zhang MS.).[6]
3. The first printed edition, published by Zhao Qigao 趙起杲 in Hangzhou in 1766 (the Zhao edition).[7]

For the purposes of clarification or contrast, mention will also be made of several less important versions, where appropriate. But first let us focus our attention on the author's own manuscript, or at least the portion of it that survives.

The Pu MS.

Pu Songling lived in straitened circumstances for most of his life, and lacked the financial resources necessary to have Liaozhai published. On at least one occasion, in or about 1693, he was offered a large sum of money, said to be a thousand taels, in exchange for his manuscript of Liaozhai. But this proposal, made by the then financial commissioner of Shandong, Yu Chenglong 喻成龍, was rejected by Pu.[8] After his death in 1715, his final manuscript version was carefully preserved by his family at their home in Zichuan 淄川, some hundred kilometres east of Jinan.

Pu's grandson, Pu Lide 立德, noted in 1739 that during the preceding years people had been busily making copies, and from far and wide had come requests to borrow the manuscript. He expressed the wish that, just as the works of Han Yu 韓愈 and Xu Wei 徐渭 won lasting fame only through the support of scholars of later generations such as Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 and Yuan Hongdao 袁宏道, so too his grandfather's work would later be ensured a wide readership if a man of vision came forward to publish it at his own expense.[9]

The magistrate of Zichuan between 1734 and 1739, Tang Bingyi 唐秉彝, was one of those who applied to see the author's manuscript. Pu Lide, explaining that the original manuscript was riddled with errors and also violated the taboos of the reigning emperor, preferred instead to copy out the stories himself and present them to the official. Lide's postface to this manuscript makes it clear he had copied out only a selection of tales, 110 in all, arranged in sixteen juan 卷. Nothing is known of what became of Magistrate Tang's copy, but Pu's postface, curiously, found its way into the first published edition of 1766.[10]

Even after 1766, when Liaozhai first became widely available, the Pu MS. retained its interest for Liaozhai enthusiasts because it included stories omitted in the printed edition. In the early nineteenth century, Rong Yu 榮譽, son of the then magistrate of Zichuan, borrowed the Liaozhai manuscript from Pu's descendants. He copied out forty-two previously unpublished items and incorporated these under the title Liaozhai zhiyi shiyi 拾遺 in his compilation of 1830, the Deyueyi congshu 得月簃叢書.[11]

In the mid-nineteenth century, Pu Songling's seventh-generation descendant, Pu Jieren 价人, moved to Shenyang, taking the manuscript with him. Liu Zigui 劉滋桂, in his preface to Liaozhai zhiyi yibian 逸編 (1914), a collection of fifty-six stories not included in the Zhao edition, recalled that these tales were copied from the original MS. lent to his father by Pu Jieren in 1869. At this time, according to Liu, the Pu MS. comprised over twenty ce, the covers of which were worn and damaged.

Later, at the beginning of the Guangxu reign, Pu Jieren had the work rebound in eight volumes and stored in two boxes. Pu Jieren's son, Yinghao 英灝, lent the first set of four to a Manchu general by whom he was employed as secretary. After returning the first set, the general borrowed

the second, and took it with him to Peking. He died there in 1900, during the turmoil of the Boxer Rebellion, and the second set was never recovered.

The other half of the Pu MS. remained in the hands of the Pu family in Liaoning. In 1931, an official in the Manchukuo government, Yuan Jinkai 袁金凱, photographed twenty-four stories from the Pu MS., and two years later published a facsimile entitled Xuanyin 選印 Liaozhai zhiyi yuangao 原稿. In 1948, the Pu family lost the manuscript in the upheavals of the Communist takeover, but it was later rediscovered among a pile of old papers in a peasant's house.[12]

The four volumes that now survive include a total of 237 stories. As it stands, the Pu MS. presents several problems. Firstly, the order of the ce is unclear. Are they volumes one to four of an eight volume set, or simply four volumes out of eight? The volume beginning with the story "The City God Examination" (1. Stories are numbered according to the order in the variorum edition of Liaozhai, and are listed with their Chinese titles in the Index.) is undoubtedly the first, as it contains three prefaces and is numbered juan 1. But the other three ce give no indication of their serial order.

Further, how do the ce relate to juan divisions? Though the beginning of juan 1 is clearly marked, there is no sign to show where it ends. The volume beginning "Princess Yunluo" (380) is headed by a contents page, which lists the items in the volume title by title. Since a table of contents normally marks the start of one juan, it would seem fair to conclude that one juan corresponds to one ce. Supporting evidence can be found elsewhere. In the obituary written soon after Pu Songling's death, the author's son, Pu Ruo 箬, referred to Liaozhai as eight juan, a figure repeated in the tomb inscription of 1725 drafted by Zhang Yuan 張元, a friend of the Pu family.[13]

A certain ambiguity remains, however. Almost exactly half-way through the "Princess Yunluo" volume (below the title of the story "A Xian" [402])[14] two characters inserted in the margin, juan zhi 卷之 (juan number...), suggest the author may have intended to divide the ce into two juan. As we shall observe later on, some manuscript versions of Liaozhai appear to have undergone just such a process.

The Pu MS. therefore leaves us in some doubt as to the order of the four surviving ce and their correlation to juan. Much as these questions interest us today, Pu Songling himself evidently attached no great import to them, otherwise he would have set out the work more clearly. When no immediate prospect of publication beckoned, that sort of editorial chore must have seemed unnecessary.

It is difficult to attach a precise date to the Pu MS. Variations in the style of calligraphy suggest that the drafting of the MS. may have been drawn out over several years. Fujita Yūken has distinguished six different kinds of handwriting, four recognizably those of Pu Songling, two probably the work of other copyists.[15] Two of Pu Songling's four styles bear similarities to calligraphy in manuscripts of other works by Pu datable to 1700-1715. Two stories in the Pu MS., "The Immortal He" (392) and "The Flood" (139), refer to events of 1692 and 1695 respectively, so this also tends to suggest that the Pu MS., in part, at least, dates from the last twenty years of the author's life.

The bulk of the Pu MS., written in the author's hand, shows few signs of revision, and represents his final fair copy. In the thirty-one stories written out by copyists, however, quite substantial passages have been deleted or altered.[16] In almost all cases, the changes are made in the interests of clarity or economy, precious or redundant expressions being systematically excised. Detailed discussion of these alterations is beyond

our immediate scope here, but it will be relevant to note that in the process of revision, Pu Songling occasionally added details to existing versions of stories. The first half of "The Rolling Head" (158), written by a copyist, tells how a provincial graduate saw a human head turning round underneath his bed, and subsequently suffered a fatal illness. The author has added in his own hand afterwards: "Later his brother spent the night with a loose woman and fell victim to murder. Was this [the rolling head] an omen?"[17] It is quite possible that in other stories, too, Pu added to the original account after an interval of time, when further details came to hand.

The Zhang MS.

As manuscript copies of Liaozhai circulated among the members of Pu's local intellectual circle, a number of friends wrote short poems in appreciation of the work: the famous poet Wang Shizhen 王士禛 paid the author this compliment in 1689,[18] and two other scholars, Zhu Xiang 朱緗 and Zhang Duqing 張篤慶 added further contributions in 1706 and 1708.[19] It is Zhu's name that is associated with the second of our major versions of Liaozhai, the Zhang MS.

Zhu Xiang (zi Ziqing 子青; hao Xiangcun jushi 橡村居士), thirty years Pu's junior, came from a family of eminent officials. After 1693, he had made his home in Jinan, and became known to Pu Songling on one of the author's periodic visits to the prefectural capital.[20] Zhu shared Pu's interest in strange stories, and regarded with great sympathy and admiration Pu's aims and achievement in writing Liaozhai.[21] He also supplied a fund of fresh source material for Pu Songling: Pu was surely indebted to his friend for providing an account of the murder mystery

solved in 1688 by Zhu's father, Zhu Hongzuo 宏祚, then governor of Guangdong (Liaozhai 462), and the item about the arrival of shipwrecked Filipinos in Macao in 1689 (448). Liaozhai also quotes from a collection of miscellaneous anecdotes by Zhu entitled Er lu 耳錄 (430, 452), a work which is no longer extant.

Zhu Xiang zealously monitored Liaozhai's progress, and copied out new volumes of stories as they were completed. A letter he sent to Pu in 1697, thanking him for the loan of seven ce, asks that the author send him another eight ce which he has not yet read.[22] In further correspondence around 1702, Zhu again applied to borrow other items he had not yet copied. Prior to Pu's visit to Jinan in 1706, Zhu wrote to him again, requesting that Pu bring Liaozhai with him, to enable Zhu to check for errors in his own manuscript copy.[23] Zhu composed his dedicatory verses, it seems, during his revision and polishing of the text.

It is not known how long this copy of Liaozhai remained in the hands of the Zhu family. Zhu Xiang himself died in 1707, and his lovingly prepared manuscript of Pu's stories must have been lost some time later, for we know that Zhu's sons, Zuochen 左臣 and Youcun 右存, copied out the work anew with the cooperation of Pu Lide a number of years afterwards. According to the postface that Pu Lide wrote for this second copy, the two sons had transcribed and edited this version with a view to future publication.[24] If that was indeed their intention, it seems to have come to nothing, and their manuscript does not survive.

It is generally agreed that the pseudonymous writer of a postface, dated 1723, that appears in the extant Zhang MS., was one of Zhu Xiang's sons. The author refers to himself as the Master of the Dianchun Pavilion (Dianchun ting zhuren 殿春亭主人). This apartment was located in the garden attached to the Zhu family residence in Jinan. Different suggestions

have been made as to its Master's exact identity. Lu Dahuang 路大荒 conjectured that its Master was Zhu Chongxun 崇勛, Zhu Xiang's eldest son.[25] Recently, Yuan Shishuo 袁世碩 has argued that either Zhu Zuochen or Zhu Youcun must have been the one who adopted this pseudonym.[26] We shall reserve comment until after the content of the postface has been reviewed.

"My family used to have a manuscript copy of Mr. Pu Liaozhai's Zhiyi", the piece begins, "though I do not know from what source it was acquired." Some time before 1722, this manuscript had been borrowed by someone, and its whereabouts was unknown. Chagrined, the writer resolved to have another copy made: "One day I happened to mention it to my friend, Zhang Zhongming 張仲明, the son of my father's friend. Zhongming, like Pu, is from Zichuan, and enjoys close relations with his family. He assured me that if he asked to borrow the original manuscript and copy it, they would not refuse. In the winter of 1722, Zhongming returned from Zichuan with the manuscript, a series of large fascicles, twice as long, it seemed, as the copy previously lost." The writer hired a scribe to copy out the collection, and made himself responsible for editorial work: "The collation and arrangement of stories occupied me day after day, through summer heat and winter cold, without a break. Excessive though my zeal may have been, I made little of the tiring work."[27]

It is rather odd that Zhu Xiang's sons should have been so ignorant of their father's friendship with Pu Songling that they had no idea how their family had come to possess a copy of Liaozhai. But on the basis of the evidence collected by Yuan Shishuo, the conclusion that the author of this postface was a son of Zhu Xiang seems irresistible. Although Yuan's assumption that the writer was one of the brothers Zuochen or Youcun, to whom Pu Lide made reference, is open to doubt, Lu Dahuang's surmise that

Zhu Chongxun was the so-called Master of the Dianchun Pavilion is also problematic.[28] But in any case, no great significance can be attached to the precise identification: what matters is that this 1723 copy of Liaozhai derived from an original manuscript in the possession of the Pu family.

The 1723 manuscript was copied at least twice before it too was lost. The first transcription was made later on in the Yongzheng period by one Jia Rugeng 賈汝庚. In 1809 this copy was seen by Duan Yu 段犖 of Liyang 黎陽, who copied out a number of items not included in the available printed editions. In 1824, he published these fifty-one stories under the title Liaozhai zhiyi yigao 遺稿.[29]

Secondly, the 1723 copy was transcribed by a friend of Zhu Chongxun, Zhang Xijie (zi, Hanzhang 漢張, hao, Liantang 練塘), whose postface is dated 1751.[30] The Zhang MS., also known as the Zhuxuezhai 鑄雪齋 manuscript, after the name of Zhang's studio, is now preserved in Beijing University Library.

The Zhang MS. is one of the two fullest surviving versions of Liaozhai, containing 488 titles in twelve juan.[31] Although a comparison with the Pu MS. reveals many textual variants, these are of minor importance and on a less extensive scale than the textual corruption in the Zhao edition. Moreover, with three exceptions, the order of stories in the four extant ce of the Pu MS. is reproduced exactly in the Zhang MS.[32] These considerations persuaded Zhang Youhe 張友鶴, editor of the variorum edition of Liaozhai published in Beijing in 1962, that the twelve juan format of the Zhang MS. followed the author's original design.[33] The variorum edition therefore adopts the same structure.

It has now been established, however, that the Pu MS. was not arranged in twelve juan. Zhang Peiheng presents three pieces of evidence to show

this. Firstly, no reference to Liaozhai as a work of twelve juan was made either by Pu Songling's son, his grandson, or his friend Zhang Yuan. Secondly, the Pu MS. gives no indication that juan begin and end as they do in the Zhang MS. The first items in juan 2, 4, 6, 10, and 11, and the last items in juan 1, 3, 4, 5, 9, and 10 are all found in the Pu MS., but nowhere is there a sign of a break in the sequence at these points. Thirdly - the most telling point - the list of contents preceding 'Princess Yunluo' makes clear that this story is the first item in that ce or juan. In the Zhang MS., however, this story is the seventh item from the end of juan 9.[34]

The Zhang MS. does not, therefore, reproduce the division of juan as conceived (however imprecisely) in the author's manuscript, but represents a redivision of the work. How and why this change of structure came about is unclear, but Zhang Peiheng suggests that responsibility may lie with the editor of the 1723 copy, whose postface laid such emphasis on the time and energy expended in the collation and arrangement of stories.[35]

Zhang Peiheng then reconstructs the original format of the Pu MS. Table 1 shows the distribution of the four surviving ce of the Pu MS. in the Zhang MS: the afore-mentioned volumes beginning "The City God Examination" and "Princess Yunluo", and two that are headed by "Liu Haishi" (113) and "Yatou" (174). Each ce corresponds to about one and a half juan of the Zhang MS., and its contents are preserved intact within the Zhang MS. Zhang Peiheng therefore deduces that the sequence of stories beginning "A Certain Gentleman" (i.e. the sequence in the Zhang MS., beginning with juan 2 item 23 [2/23] and ending with juan 3 item 30 [3/30]), equivalent to about one and a half juan, formed another of the original ce. Similarly, the group of stories headed by "The Giant" (243), which covers about three juan (6/33-9/42), represents two ce, and the series 11/10-12/40, beginning "The King" (422), concluded the set of eight.[36]

TABLE 1

CORRELATION OF THE
PU MS. AND THE ZHANG MS.

Zhang MS. *juan*	Pu MS. (extant *ce*)	Pu MS. (Zhang's reconstructed *ce*)	Pu MS. (revised reconstruction)
1. 1/1	"The City God Examination"		
2. 2/21		2/22 "A Certain Gentleman" 3/30	2/22 "A Certain Gentleman" 3/30
3. 3/31			
4.	"Liu Haishi"		
5. 5/6			
5/7			
6.	"Yatou"		
6/32		6/33 "The Giant" 7/39	6/33 "The Giant" 8/14
7.			
8.		8/1 "The Painted Horse" 9/42	8/15 "The Avian Knight" 9/42
9.			
10. 9/43	"Princess Yunluo"		
11. 11/9		11/10 "The King" 12/40	11/10 "The King" 12/40
12.			

This reconstruction is based on sound reasoning. However, it is not possible to state with complete certainty where the ce beginning "The Giant" ended, and where the subsequent volume began, as both are lost. Zhang suggests that the break came at the end of juan 7 of the Zhang MS., and regards the story "The Painted Horse" (295) as the first title in a separate volume.[37] Presumably he was swayed in his choice by the division of juan in the Zhang MS. at this point. But the four surviving ce all end at intermediate points in the juan of the Zhang MS., so his proposal is not necessarily correct. Moreover, the reconstructed "The Painted Horse" volume would be unusually large (eighty-five stories), compared to the fifty-two tales in "The Giant".

In our view, it is much more likely that the last story in "The Giant" volume was "A Change of Sex" (308), and "The Avian Knight" (309) was the first title in the next ce. This conclusion was originally reached from a study of the distribution of stories in the Zhao edition (see later discussion, p. 22). The Kangxi period MS. which has recently surfaced provides further confirmation of those findings (see below). With this change made, the length of these two reconstructed volumes would then be more even: "The Giant" would contain sixty-six titles, to "The Avian Knight's" seventy-one.

Even if we need to make a slight adjustment to Zhang's reconstruction, the basic validity of his argument is not affected. Although the Zhang MS. has redivided the original eight volumes of the author's manuscript into twelve smaller units, it has not significantly disturbed the order of stories within the individual volumes. Comparison between the Pu MS. and the Zhang MS. therefore enables us to reconstruct the four lost volumes.

The Kangxi period MS.

In the Shandong Provincial Museum, there is preserved an incomplete manuscript copy of Liaozhai which, evidence suggests, was transcribed between the years 1708 and 1722.[38] This MS., which includes 260 stories, furnishes valuable variant readings for the purpose of collation and establishes Pu's authorship of a couple of short items.[39] But it is the format of the MS. which interests us here:

> Juan 1 contains the prefaces of Gao Heng 高珩, Tang Menglai 唐夢賚 and Pu Songling; a list of contents; and the 63 stories that make up juan 1 of the Pu MS., in identical order.[40]
>
> Juan 2 contains the fragment of a table of contents, and 55 stories, beginning with "The King" (422) and ending with "One official" (492). It omits thirty-eight items included in the comparable sequence in the Zhang MS. and inserts twenty-one others (71-91). The last story is followed by Zhang Duqing and Wang Shizhen's poems.
>
> Juan A (no number given) contains a list of contents and 66 stories. In arrangement, it exactly parallels the ce of the Pu MS. beginning "Yatou" (174), except that it omits three stories.
>
> Juan B contains 61 stories (245-305).
>
> Juan C (fragment) contains 6 stories (65-70).
>
> Fragment D includes 9 stories (92-100).

In this incomplete form and damaged condition, the MS. discourages categorical judgments, but the portion that survives supports the view that the Pu MS. existed in eight ce. Juan 1 and juan A reproduce almost exactly two of the extant ce of the Pu MS. To a lesser degree of clarity and integrity, three of the reconstructed ce are reflected in this MS. also.

At first glance, juan 2 bears only slight resemblance to the reconstructed Pu MS. ce beginning "The King". It includes a series of stories (71-91) that one would not expect to find in that ce, and lacks many stories that do belong there. However, this sequence of stories (71-91) has almost certainly been erroneously interpolated into the juan. The first tale in this series (71) begins on a fresh folio, unconnected with

the previous anecdote (453). When this mini-series comes to an end (91), the original sequence resumes on a new page with a new story (456), and then carries on, with no further interruptions, to the end. If this misplaced group of twenty-stories were restored to its rightful position between juan C and Fragment D, we can see the reconstructed ce "A Certain Gentleman" (65-112) beginning to take shape. This leaves juan 2 still seriously damaged by the loss of many of its stories, but the outlines of the reconstructed ce "The King" (422-492) now readily discernible.[41]

Of particular relevance to our study is juan B, as it corresponds closely to the reconstructed ce beginning "The Giant". The point at issue, we recall, was just where does that volume end? This juan B offers an answer: its last story is "A Dream of Wolves" (305). On this evidence, then, Zhang Peiheng's conjecture that the cut-off point came after "Xiliu" (294), and "The Painted Horse" (295) initiated a new ce, appears to be mistaken. On the other hand, we cannot assert with complete confidence that "A Dream of Wolves" necessarily concluded a ce of the Pu MS. The pages in a book most vulnerable to loss or damage are those nearest the beginning and the end, and this MS. seems to have suffered from just such problems. Thus juan A lacks both the first and the last stories in the corresponding ce of the Pu MS. In juan B, the first two items contained in the reconstructed "The Giant" volume are missing. It is conceivable that, likewise, a tale or two that originally followed "A Dream of Wolves" may have dropped out in the passage of time.

As to the problem of the serial order of the volumes of the Pu MS., the Kangxi period MS. provides little enlightenment. In juan A, B and C the ambiguity inherent in the Pu MS. is reflected once more. Juan 2 does supply a digit, but then it also features the dedicatory verses one would expect to see only at the end of the eighth and final juan, so the signals

are rather contradictory. We shall have to look elsewhere for a solution to that issue.

The Zhao Edition

In the spring of 1765, Zhao Qigao, a native of Laiyang 萊陽 in Shandong, then serving as prefect of Yanzhou 嚴州 in Zhejiang, began to prepare Liaozhai for publication, and in the winter of the following year, the work was finally printed.

In the preface he wrote not long before his death in June 1766, Zhao describes how this publication came about.[42] In 1746, Zhao was introduced to Pu Songling's work by a friend named Zhou Jihe 周季和, who had just returned from Jinan with an incomplete copy of Liaozhai in two fascicles. This copy was borrowed in 1757 by one Wang Runxuan 王閏軒 in Beijing. Later Zhao was transferred to a post in Fujian, and there met the son of Zheng Fangkun 鄭方坤 (zi, Lixiang 荔鄉, jinshi 進士 1723), an official who had acquired a copy of Liaozhai during his term of office in Shandong.[43] Zhao had a transcription made, and on his return to Beijing three years later, compared it with the copy made by Zhou Jihe and another in the possession of Wu Yingsi 吳穎思. He concluded that the Zheng Fangkun copy was the original manuscript. In 1763, when Zhao took office in Hangzhou, the bibliophile Bao Tingbo 鮑廷博 urged him to publish the manuscript, and gave him financial support when Zhao undertook the project two years later. Zhao's secretary, Yu Ji 余集 (jinshi 1766), a Mr. Yu Peixian 郁佩先, and Zhao's younger brother, Gaoting 皐亭, were responsible for collation and corrections.

Not too much weight can be given to Zhao's claim that his edition is based on the "original manuscript", procured from the author's family by Zheng Fangkun. His account does not convince us that his manuscript has

such a pedigree, it simply suggests that this was the fullest and most accurate available to him. At any rate, though Zhao asserts the superiority of his manuscript over other existing copies, he seems to accept that additional stories might be found elsewhere. He included two items from another copy entitled Liaozhai zazhi 雜志, noted with interest a report that the Zhu family of Jinan possess a manuscript of Liaozhai in "several tens of juan", and appealed to readers who own other versions to have them published too.[44]

Zheng Fangkun's manuscript (the Zheng MS.) comprised sixteen juan. Zhao originally intended to select the most outstanding stories from the Zheng MS. and published these in twelve juan. Once he had chosen these stories, he decided it would be a shame to omit the others altogether, and had plans to arrange the remainder in another four juan. After his untimely death, this project was completed by his associates.[45] Consequently, though his edition, like the Zheng MS., contained sixteen juan, it differed substantially in form.

We can deduce, however, that the sixteen juan of the Zheng MS. were formed by the division into two of each of the eight ce of the Pu MS. This becomes clear when one examines the distribution of stories from the Pu MS. in the Zhao edition. Let us take, for example, the first ce of the Pu MS., "The City God Examination". Twenty-six stories from this volume were selected for inclusion in the original twelve juan of the Zhao edition (see Index). With the exception of "The Bridegroom" (34), which appears in juan 8, the others follow the same order as in the Pu MS., in an unbroken sequence forming juan 1 and the first half of juan 2. The remaining stories in this ce were distributed among juan 13, 14, and 15 of the Zhao edition, but again in fairly consistent order. This correlation between the sequence of stories in the Pu MS. and in the Zhao edition cannot be coincidental, and

demonstrates that a close correspondence must have existed between the Pu MS. and the Zheng MS. Comparison using the other three extant ce leads to the same conclusions.

Further, one observes that the items in any one volume of the Pu MS. usually appear in two distinct sequences in the Zhao edition, and the break between the two occurs at a point roughly half-way through the Pu MS. volume. Thus, in the "Princess Yunluo" ce, those among the first twenty-two stories (380-401) to be incorporated in the first twelve juan are distributed among juan 9, 10, and 11. On the other hand, the series of stories beginning "A Xian" (402) up to the final "Bai Quilian" (421) is reproduced almost intact in juan 4 of the Zhao edition. It will be recalled that in the Pu MS., "A Xian" is preceded by the words "juan number . . .", indicating that another juan began at this point. Exactly on this principle, it seems, this ce had been divided into two separate juan in the Zheng MS. The same holds true of the other seven volumes of the original Pu MS. It is therefore possible to reconstruct the sixteen juan of the Zheng MS., on which Zhao Qigao based his edition (see Index).

This analysis has a practical application, in that it helps us to pin down with greater accuracy the point at which the reconstructed volume "The Giant" ends. "The Giant", like the other ce of the Pu MS., contains stories which appear in two groupings in the Zhao edition. The second sequence, beginning "Magistrate of Zitong" (273) continues through the first fourteen items of Zhang Peiheng's hypothetical "Painted Horse" fascicle, and ends at "A Change of Sex" (308). In our view, as this series represented one juan of the Zheng MS. (and the second half of the ce beginning "The Giant"), "A Change of Sex" must have been the final story

in the volume. The next story, "The Avian Knight" (309), heads a new sequence of stories, and can therefore be regarded as the first item in a separate volume of the Pu MS.

If we use the Kangxi period MS. as comparison, to test the validity of this conclusion, we find that the evidence there provides ancillary support, though it stops short of absolute proof. The relevant juan in that manuscript, we noted, ends with "A Dream of Wolves" (305). This indicates we are certainly on the right track in tracing this reconstructed ce well beyond the point where Zhang Peiheng suggested it stopped. The Kangxi MS. gives no sign that the volume extended as far as "A Change of Sex", but given the likelihood of damage to the final stories, allowance must be made for this possibility.

Now that we have a clearer picture of the manuscript that Zhao was using, his motives in rearranging the work seem quite understandable. He was faced on the one hand with sixteen juan of uneven length and varying quality, whereas on the other hand his real object was a collection in juan of even length and consistent standard. He therefore chose to ignore the format of the Zheng MS., select stories according to his own criteria, and arrange them in units of comparable size. An examination of the titles in the first twelve juan shows he employed shrewd critical judgment in their selection, preferring the most original and imaginative stories by Pu Songling, weeding out those of less outstanding merit. It is a measure of his selectivity that almost all the stories included nowadays in modern anthologies are to be found in the first twelve juan of the Zhao edition. The tales which were later incorporated in juan 13-16 are by no means lacking in interest, but have much more in common with the short anecdotes recorded by other seventeenth and eighteenth century writers, and as such, are rather

unexceptional. Zhao succeeded also in arranging the stories in *juan* of neatly consistent proportions: seven of the sixteen are identical in length, and the others differ only slightly.

Zhao not only rearranged the format of the work, he also eliminated some stories altogether. As he conscientiously informs us: "I have expunged simple items and brief notes which are dull and commonplace, forty-eight in all."[46] In fact, sixty tales which appear either in the Pu or Zhang MSS. are not included in the Zhao edition. The discrepancy between the two figures can be explained if one supposes that the Zheng MS. lacked a number of stories before it was acquired by Zhao Qigao. Later on, we will come across a hint that this may indeed have been the case.

During a debate on the question of "nationalist thought" in *Liaozhai* current in China during the 1950s, much emphasis was laid on Zhao's suppression of stories that might have offended the Manchu government.[47] Actually, this issue has been rather exaggerated. Most of the stories omitted correspond accurately to Zhao's designation as simple and commonplace items. Only a handful of stories are likely to have been censored purely for political reasons (226, 236, 357, 436, 445, and 464). Zhao Qigao was also responsible for altering the wording of a number of stories, so as to ensure that the publication could not be construed as disrespectful to the dynasty. As this topic has been amply discussed elsewhere,[48] we shall not dwell upon it here.

The Zhao edition immediately found a wide and enthusiastic readership. It was republished by Li Shixian 李時憲 (*jinshi* 1730) in Fujian in 1767, and further reprints appeared over the next century and a half, often with commentary and annotation included. The major editions

to be published were those which incorporated commentary by He Shouqi 何守奇 (1823), annotation by He Yin 何垠 (1839), commentary by Dan Minglun 但明倫 (1842), annotation by Lü Zhan'en 呂湛恩 (1843), and commentary by Feng Zhenluan 馮鎮巒 (1891).[49]

Three further extant texts

Before we bring our survey of the stages in transmission of Liaozhai to a close, three other surviving texts of the collection require some attention. Although none of them make any substantial contribution to the present study, it will be helpful to summarize their main features and explain why the texts do not play a greater role in our discussion.

(1) The Huang Yanxi MS.

Little is known about the background of this manuscript. Its editor, Huang Yanxi 黃炎熙, was a native of Minxian 閩縣 in Fujian, and it is possible there is a link somewhere with the Zheng Fangkun MS., which Zhao Qigao came across in Fujian, but there is no way to verify that. This MS., which dates from the Qianlong period, is arranged in twelve juan, of which juan 2 and 12 have been lost. The ten surviving juan contain 263 stories, including three which are not the work of Pu Songling.[50] On average, each juan consists of 26 items, so with the two missing juan taken into account the total number would not have exceeded 320. The Huang Yanxi MS. therefore represents a selective anthology along the lines of the first twelve juan of the Zhao edition.

Owing, perhaps, to this process of selection, some juan (notably 1, 6, 8, 11), when measured against our control apparatus - the Pu MS., present a haphazard appearance, with stories jumbled together in a disorderly sequence. But occasionally a close correspondence does exist.

For example, juan 5 reproduces with one slight change the exact order of the second half of the "Princess Yunluo" ce (402-421. We conjectured that this sequence formed one juan in the Zheng MS. that Zhao Qigao used). Similarly, juan 9, with one omission, duplicates the stories contained in the first half of the same ce (380-401). Most strikingly, the thirty-three tales in juan 10 are identical to the opening sequence in the Pu MS. "Yatou" ce (which again, it was suggested, formed one of the sixteen juan in the Zheng MS.).

Of limited value though it is, the Huang Yanxi MS. does, therefore, lend a certain degree of support for my earlier conclusions: that there was circulating a 16 juan text of Liaozhai that was based on the subdivision of the eight ce of the Pu MS.

(2) The 24 juan MS.

In 1962, a manuscript copy of Liaozhai in 24 juan was discovered in Zhoucun 周村, which in Pu Songling's day was a lively commercial centre across the county line from Zichuan, in the next district to the north, Changshan 長山. For years practically ignored, with its publication in 1980, this manuscript has recently aroused some interest.[51]

The 24 juan MS. observes taboos on the name of the Qianlong emperor, thereby providing initial indication of its date of transcription. Two dedicatory poems furnish the only other clues to its origins. The first was written by Bao Xun 包燻 who in 1748 took up the post of gaol warden in Changshan.[52] Of Wang Qiao 王喬, author of the second poem, nothing is known except that he wrote the handsome calligraphy for the Pu Songling preface to Liaozhai in Wang Jinfan's 王金範 edition of 1767. Both their poems were printed in that edition, hence the date in which this manuscript took shape most likely fell between 1748 and 1767.

Unlike the much-traveled Pu MS., the 24 juan MS. seems not to have strayed very far from its home in Changshan during the last two centuries.

In size and scope, the 24 juan MS., which includes 474 stories, bears comparison with the Zhang MS.[53] A recent study notes that though there are points in common between the two, there also exist considerable dissimilarities, and the two versions seem to derive from separate sources.[54] Although the writer was speaking in terms of textual variants, these conclusions apply also on the question of arrangement and format. The contents of the 24 juan version follow the same general order as the Zhang MS. and often show a strong resemblance in their sequence. However, the Zhang MS. order is not adhered to absolutely, indeed, a fair amount of jumbling occurs, particularly at the end of many juan. Thus the 24 juan of this manuscript do not represent a simple bisection of the 12 juan of the Zhang MS.

We may note a possible connection between this MS. and Zhao Qigao's copy of Liaozhai, the Zheng MS. On the basis of textual study, it has already been suggested that the two may belong to the same family group.[55] It is also worth observing that the 24 juan MS. lacks thirteen stories found in the Zhang MS. If Zhao's copy had inherited most, but not quite all, of these omissions, we would have an obvious explanation why Zhao declared that only 48 items had been deleted, when in fact the Zhao edition falls 60 short of the full total.

(3) The Wang Jinfan edition

This edition, published in 1767, bears some indistinct relationship to the 24 juan MS., as it includes the poems by Bao Xun and Wang Qiao along with the prefaces and poems of the editor and his friends.

In the preface, written in Zhoucun in 1767, Wang Jinfan explains that his friend Wang Sheng 王昇 (zi Yuexuan 約軒, assistant magistrate of Zichuan from 1755 to 1763) had borrowed a manuscript copy of Liaozhai from a Mr. Zeng 曾 in the spring of 1761. In leisure moments during his period as assistant magistrate of Changshan from 1762 to 1767, Wang Jinfan had entertained himself by selecting his favourite stories from Liaozhai, revising and abridging them as he desired, and arranging them, by fairly arbitrary procedures, in thematic categories. The fruit of his labours, an 18 juan edition that comprises 267 titles classified under twenty-six headings, never caught on with the public of the time. The Wang Jinfan edition has not found many friends among present-day scholars either.[56]

Wang Jinfan so tampered with the text of Liaozhai that his version can tell us little about the original form of the work.

2. The Dating of 'Liaozhai zhiyi'

In the first section of our study of the text of Liaozhai, we reached the conclusion that, in its original form, the work consisted of eight ce, four of which still survive, four of which can be reconstructed through careful comparison of extant versions of the work. Our next step is to consider when these volumes were completed.

Two different answers have been offered to the question of dating. In what we might call the traditional view, the most creative period of composition lay in the years up to 1679. According to the chronological scheme worked out by Zhang Peiheng, on the other hand, the majority of stories were written after that date. The evidence which has been used

to support these arguments is of two kinds: external and internal. By the former, we mean the prefaces by the author and others, poems, letters, and references to Liaozhai in the works of Pu Songling's contemporaries. The latter sort of evidence is drawn from the stories themselves, which occasionally give indications that a story was written before or after a certain date. Both types of source have been quoted by each of the two schools of thought, but, generally, more emphasis is laid on external evidence by the advocates of early composition, while the opposition places its faith largely in internal evidence.

The debate over Liaozhai's composition has resulted from the interplay of two factors: the limitations and ambiguity of the evidence, and the sometimes insufficiently critical and rigorous appraisal of it by scholars. Alertness to these problems will be required as we embark on a survey of the relevant data.

External Evidence

The author's preface to Liaozhai, clearly dated spring 1679, is often presented as proof that the bulk of the work had been written by this time. "Otherwise," Průšek argues, "a preface would have been irrelevant."[57] It is assumed that the author would have written a preface only when the work was completed, or nearing completion.

However, whilst this rule may hold true for many works of Chinese literature, in the case of collections of this kind, its application is not always valid. Authors of such works tended to continue supplementing and enlarging their anthologies years after the original collections were written or published. Er tan 耳譚, the compilation of anecdotes by Wang Tonggui 王同軌 (c. 1530-after 1608), was first printed in the mid-1590s in 5 juan. Encouraged by the popularity of this work, Wang later prepared an expanded version, Er tan leizeng 類增, comprising 54 juan

classified by content under 32 headings, and published this in 1603.[58] Jianhu ji 堅瓠集, the voluminous miscellany accumulated by Chu Renhuo 褚人穫 (c.1630-c.1705), was produced in serial form over a period of more than a decade. This preface to the first collection in the series was written in 1691, but another 62 juan had yet to be compiled before the work reached its final form (66 juan) in 1703.[59] It should not surprise us to find that, similarly, Pu Songling added further stories to the Liaozhai corpus well after he composed the preface. The assumption that such stories represent only a small proportion of the total lacks solid support at this stage, and not too much weight can be attached to it.

The preface itself provides only a general picture of the circumstances in which Pu came to write Liaozhai:

> Although in talent I fall short of Gan Bao 干寶, I take great delight in researching the supernatural; in temperament I resemble Huangzhou 黃州 [the author, Su Shi 蘇軾], and love to hear men talk of ghosts. When I hear such tales I take up my pen and write them down, and subsequently I gather them together. Over a long period of time, colleagues from far and wide have also dispatched further material to me, and thus, as things collect where they are appreciated, the accumulated fund of stories has grown ever larger.[60]

It seems fair to conclude that Pu had been engaged in writing and collecting stories for a considerable length of time, and that by 1679 a substantial number of tales had been completed. But is the "long period of time" a matter of six or seven years (as Zhang Peiheng suggests),[61] or ten years (Průšek),[62] or twenty years (Chang Chun-shu)?[63] Do the stories so far collected number forty or four hundred? The preface gives us no clear answer.

In the same year, Gao Heng (jinshi 1643), a distinguished Zichuan scholar, also wrote a preface to Liaozhai, but its concern is solely to argue the case for the supernatural story's inclusion in the literary

tradition, and provides no details on the form of Liaozhai itself. Tang Menglai (jinshi 1649), another friend of Pu, made this comment, however, in his foreword of autumn 1632:

> Formerly I acquired one juan of the stories, which was always being borrowed by friends; now I have obtained and read another juan, and what was known to me before occupies only three or four-tenths of the whole.[64]

It seems that by 1682 a larger version of Liaozhai was circulating than had been available previously, but we have no way of knowing how Tang's juan related in size and content to the fascicles of the Pu MS.

Two poems have been cited to support the view that Pu was collecting material for Liaozhai as far back as 1670 or earlier. Verses dated 1671 make passing reference to authorship. In the first poem, "Stirred with emotion", Pu writes:

> New tales are gathered up into Yijian zhi,
> A dou of wine barely dispels my anguished feelings.[65]

One is tempted to see Yijian zhi 夷堅志, the title of Hong Mai's 洪邁 great compilation of stories, as an allusion to Pu's Liaozhai. A variant reading, which substitutes "a history of ghosts and foxes" (guihu shi 鬼狐史) for Yijian zhi, makes the reference to Liaozhai even more explicit. According to Zhao Qigao, "tales of ghosts and foxes" (guihu zhuan 鬼狐傳) was the original title of Pu's work.[66]

The second poem, "I sit alone and think of someone" begins:

> The weary bird sings on a clear day,
> The homeward trail sinks in the distant sky;
> The path will go no further, my book is yet unwritten,
> As my grief waxes, wine loses all its potency.[67]

Several readers have taken "my book" to be a reference to Liaozhai.[68]

Zhang Peiheng has understood it literally to mean that composition of

the stories had not yet begun, and regards the poem as establishing effectively an earliest limit for Pu's authorship of the work.[69] But here, as in the first poem, it is unwise to draw firm conclusions from such fleeting, insubstantial mention. The most we may safely infer, I think, is that by 1671 Pu had formed the intention of writing Liaozhai, and the poems leave us only speculation as to what extent this notion had been realized at the time.

Pu's poem, "Reply written on the same rhyme to President of the Board of Punishments, Wang Ruanting 王阮亭, in return for his poem", has also attracted comment. It reads:

> When the Zhiyi book was finished, together we laughed at it,
> My cotton robe is desolate, my hair thread-like on my temples.
> For ten years I have fulfilled indeed Huangzhou's intent,
> In cold rain, by chilly lamp, at night talk time.[70]

The gift to which Pu refers in the title is the poem that Wang Shizhen (Ruanting is his zi) wrote in dedication of Liaozhai. Pu's poem was written not in 1679, as Průšek believed, but in 1689. The allusion to Su Shi in the third line recalls Pu's claim to empathy with the Song dynasty author in his preface ten years before. Once again it is difficult to deduce from these ambiguous lines of verse the stage to which the collection had progressed. Some have suggested that after a further ten years of work from 1679 to 1689, the book was largely completed or at least of substantial dimensions.[71] If such an interpretation is correct, the 1680s must be regarded as a major period of activity in the composition of Liaozhai.

Evidently, at the time this exchange of poems between Wang and Pu took place, Wang Shizhen had already read a portion of the stories. We cannot be sure that these included all the thirty-three tales to which

his comments are attached in surviving versions of Liaozhai, because Wang's perusal of Pu's work continued after 1700,[72] and it may have been only then that his commentary was added. But there is one story, evidence shows, with which Wang was undoubtedly familiar by 1689. Chibei outan 池北偶談, a collection of jottings (biji 筆記) completed by Wang in 1690 at the latest,[73] includes an anecdote entitled "The Little Hunting-dog" which bears a strong resemblance to Pu's story of the same name (Liaozhai 151). The last line of Wang's account reads: "This incident can be found in Liaozhai zhiyi by Pu Songling, xiucai 秀才."[74] Wang's testimony provides us with a firm later limit for this one particular story, a useful point to bear in mind when later we consider the internal evidence in Liaozhai.

Hints that Pu continued to add further items to the collection in the 1690s and later can be gleaned from Zhu Xiang's correspondence and poetry. A poem written by Zhu when Pu visited him in the summer of 1702 describes his impressions of the author:

> Verses you recite by bamboo fence, as ever unrestrained;
> A book you write amidst the hills, yet more earnestly with age.[75]

The implication that Liaozhai composition is still in progress seems to be confirmed by a letter Zhu sent Pu in the autumn of the same year, requesting the loan of stories he had not yet seen.[76] Another letter, written in 1706, asks Pu to bring Liaozhai with him on his next trip to Jinan, but it indicates no anticipation of further additions to the collection, simply wishing to use the manuscript for collation purposes.[77] Yuan Shishuo has drawn the conclusion that by 1706, Pu Songling had practically ended the process of supplementing his now voluminous anthology.[78]

One final piece of external evidence which should be mentioned is the statement made by Pu Ruo in a eulogy composed soon after his father's death in 1715, to the effect that Liaozhai was written in his late years (munian 暮年).[79] This cannot be taken literally, as we know the preface dates from his fortieth year, but it does suggest that Pu was actively engaged in compilation of new entries even in old age.

To sum up, our survey of external evidence indicates that composition of Liaozhai extended over a long period, beginning perhaps in the early 1670s and drawing to a close in the 1700s. It would therefore be unwise to accept too readily the date of the preface as proof that the main body of the collection had been finished by then. Clearly, the author would not have written his foreword, nor would Gao Heng and Teng Menglai have contributed quite lengthy prefaces, unless a sizable corpus had been completed. It is conceivable, however, that Pu wrote the foreword as an introduction to the first part or installment which he circulated among his friends. If it fulfilled a need to explain his motives in assembling these stories, it would not be any the less "relevant" for prefacing a smaller work rather than a larger one. Nor can Pu's poem of 1689, that referred to his book being then "finished", be taken too literally, for Zhu Xiang drops strong hints that further stories were added subsequently. In short, the writing of Liaozhai zhiyi was a cumulative process, punctuated at intervals by a preface or poem that would register a sense of accomplishment and give expression to the author's satisfaction with progress up to that point, only to be resumed as new material and fresh inspiration came Pu Songling's way.

Internal Evidence

Up till now, the most extensive and ambitious exploitation of internal evidence as a means to date the collection as a whole has been undertaken

by Zhang Peiheng. His theory of a chronological arrangement of stories in Liaozhai is based on his own reconstruction of the original eight volumes of the author's manuscript. He has presented internal evidence to show that, firstly, in each volume items written earlier precede those written later, and, secondly, each volume gathers together stories written over a discrete period of time. The inference drawn from Zhang's conclusions is that Liaozhai's eight ce were produced in the following chronological scheme:[80]

1.	"The City God Examination"	ca. 1673-1682
2.	"Yatou"	ca. 1682-1685
3.	"The Giant"	ca. 1685-1688
4.	"A Certain Gentleman"	ca. 1688-1691
5.	"Princess Yunluo"	ca. 1691-1693
6.	"Liu Haishi"	ca. 1693-1700
7.	"The King"	ca. 1700-1707
8.	"The Painted Horse"	ca. 1707-1714

This bold and ingenious thesis has several weaknesses. The relationship of this time scheme to external evidence, particularly to the authorship of the preface in 1679, is problematical. Secondly, as I have already shown, the first fourteen entries in Zhang's "The Painted Horse" volume were most likely originally attached to "The Giant", a change which has repercussions on the dating of these two ce. Thirdly, this chronological reconstruction rests rather uneasily on the shallow foundation of less than twenty stories to which Zhang ascribes dates (out of a total of 494). Finally, the dates Zhang attributes to these tales are, in one or two cases, almost certainly unreliable.

Let us examine these points in reverse order, beginning with the dating

of entries in Liaozhai. The key stories in our discussion are of two kinds:

(1) those for which we can establish a definite later limit (terminus ante quem) of composition, i.e. which were identifiably written before a certain date, and

(2) those for which an earlier limit can be set (terminus post quem), i.e. those that can be shown to have been composed only after a certain date.

To avoid the pitfalls into which dependence on internal evidence tends to lead, it will be necessary to apply more consistent and more stringent methods of dating than Zhang Peiheng has sometimes used. These will be discussed in our review of types of evidence below.

(1) Later limits

Only a handful of stories fall into this category of entries to which a terminus ante quem can be assigned. In most cases, simply the date of the events described in a story cannot set a later limit on the date of the story's composition. To give three examples: "Li Sijian" (123), based on a report in the Beijing Gazette, retells the story of a suicide in 1665; "The Earthquake" (51) gives an eyewitness account of the disaster which struck Shandong in 1668; and a postscript to the tale "Lianxiang" (69) explains that the author read the story during a stop en route to Jiangsu in 1670. Some scholars have concluded from these dates that the stories themselves came into being soon after.[81] Whilst this is a legitimate speculation, it is equally feasible that a number of years elapsed before Pu put pen to paper. Hence such stories cannot provide convincing evidence for a later limit.

Two more acceptable forms of evidence are:

a) Date of death of Pu's informant. Such details have been used by

Zhang Peiheng, who argues that the two stories, "The Mynah-bird" (112) and "Five-goat Minister" (124), must have been written no later than 1693, because they were supplied to the author by Bi Jiyou 畢 際有 (zi, Zaiji 載 績), who died in that year.[82] Whilst this argument falls short of cast-iron proof, the conclusion can be regarded as most likely to be correct. However, to be consistent, analogous cases must be treated in the same way. Therefore, we should add to Zhang's two stories the following four which he has neglected:

"Dragons" (81). One of the four anecdotes collected under this title was reported by Yuan Fan 袁 藩 , who died in 1685.[83]

"Ma Jiefu" (212). Bi Shichi 畢 世 持 , who collaborated with Pu in the composition of this story, died in 1687.[84]

"Hou Jingshan" (202) and "Shao Shimei" (335) derive from tales recounted by Gao Heng, who died in 1697.[85]

Another story that Zhang has discussed can be grouped under this heading. In "A Man named Liu" (257), the hero, Li Cuishi 李 翠 石, is said to have been seen in Zhoucun the previous year (qunian 去 年). Li was a real person, a native of Zichuan, who died probably about 1688. The story therefore is likely to have been written before then.[86]

In all, then, seven stories can be assigned a later limit of date of composition on the basis of this evidence.

b) Degree status or official rank of character in a story. Reference to a person's academic qualifications or governmental post is a reasonably sound form of evidence for dating a story. For example, Li Siyi 李 斯 義 is described as a provincial graduate in "The Giant" (243). As Li, a native of nearby Changshan whose career Pu would be able to follow quite readily, became a jinshi in 1688, the story most probably predates

that year.[87]

By similar reasoning, "Jiao Ming" (30) can be allotted a terminus ante quem of 1682.[88]

The later limit that Zhang Peiheng suggests for the story "The Sub-Director of Schools" (430) we must reject as inadmissible. Zhu Xiang in this entry is described as "the young gentleman" (gongzi 公子), whereas the title of a poem by Pu Songling dated 1702 refers to him as Secretary (zhuzheng 主政). For this reason, Zhang asserts that the tale must pre-date 1702.[89] What has escaped Zhang's notice, however, is that Pu's poetry was subject to revision, during the process of which his friends' ranks might be altered. Thus, in Pu's poem of 1689, Wang Shizhen is referred to as President of the Board of Punishments, a post he did not hold until 1699.[90] Therefore we cannot take for granted that Zhu was Secretary in 1702, nor use that assumption to date the story.

(2) Earlier limits

A fair proportion of stories in Liaozhai can be shown to have been written after a certain date. Often, however, that date is so early as to provide little information about the chronology of Pu's composition of the work. For instance, "Li Sijian", which describes an incident of 1665, tells us only that the story was written after 1665, a fact we would have expected anyway. Our concern, then, is to uncover tales that identifiably post-date 1679, the year of Pu's preface, as they can give an indication of the proportion of the collection written after that time.

Several methods can be used to establish an earlier limit:

a) Incident is dated. This sort of evidence is the most straightforward and most reliable. At the end of "Old Man Zhu" (63), for example, the author mentions that the story was told by a servant in the Bi house-

hold in 1682. Sixteen stories can be assigned a terminus post quem in this way.

b) Degree status or official rank of character in a story. Thus, in "The Bridegroom", Pu's informant, Mei Geng 梅庚, is referred to as a provincial graduate. As Mei attained the juren 舉人 degree in 1681, that date sets an earlier limit for the writing of the story.[91] There is a danger here, of course, that the author may have added or amended personal details at a later stage of revision, as he did with his poems. However, the example of Li Siyi, Hanlin Compiler in "The Immortal He" (392), but a mere juren in "The Giant", suggests that Pu did not make a point of updating descriptions in old stories.

Where an official is involved, a date can be ascribed with total confidence. "Bandit Households" (318), for example, records an incident during the time a magistrate Zhong 鍾 administered Zhangqiu 章邱 district. As Zhong took up office there in 1684,[92] that is the earliest possible date in which the anecdote could have been written.

Fourteen stories can be dated with the help of such data.

c) Reporter of story known to Pu Songling only after a certain date. Several stories use material provided by Zhu Xiang and his friend, Wu Changrong 吳長榮 (zi, Muxin 木欣), both of whom returned to Jinan from Guangdong in 1693, and became known to Pu Songling only after that time.[93] Thus, an earlier limit can be assigned to the six stories with which they are associated.

d) Questionable evidence. It is a feature of Liaozhai that brief supplementary anecdotes often follow a more lengthy main story. These may well be postscripts, written by the author after a certain interval of time, when other related details came to hand. In determining an

earlier limit on the date of composition of a story, it therefore seems necessary to make a distinction between primary and secondary entries. In "The Flood" (139), for example, the main narrative describes the miraculous survival of a farmer's sons when their village was inundated in the summer of 1682. To this story is appended a very brief report of a similar incident in an earthquake of 1695. Zhang Peiheng uses this latter date to fix a terminus post quem for the whole entry.[94] But as the second anecdote may represent a late addition to the text, it cannot necessarily confirm the date of composition for the primary story as well. Thus, Zhang's assignment of a 1695 limit for "The Flood" is unacceptable. In some cases, of course, it is quite possible that Pu Songling recorded two thematically connected stories at the same time. But we should be wary of relying on such an assumption in dating stories.

Zhang Peiheng's dating of the ce beginning "A Certain Gentleman" hinges on two very slender pieces of evidence. He seeks to establish that the story, "Zhang Cheng" (73), was written in 1684, arguing that one of its characters, aged forty-one sui, had been born in 1644. But, in fact, the time of his birth as referred to in the text, "Ming mo" 明末, is often used more loosely to denote the last years of the Ming, and need not be interpreted so literally.[95]

The second piece of evidence, which relates to Wang Shizhen's comments on a story in this ce, is also highly suspect.[96] Therefore, no earlier limits can as yet be found for this reconstructed volume.

Now that our methods of dating have been explained, it is possible to tabulate the results of an examination of the text of Liaozhai based on the above criteria. In Table 2 there are listed the entries for which either a later or earlier limit can be set, and their distribution among

TABLE 2

DISTRIBUTION OF
DATABLE ENTRIES IN LIAOZHAI

Title story of ce in Pu MS.	Entry	Earlier limit: written in or after	Later limit: written or before
"The City God Examination"			
	30. "Jiao Ming"		1682
	34. "The Bridegroom"	1681	
	63. "Old Man Zhu"	1682	
"A Certain Gentleman"			
	81. "Dragons"		1685
	112. "The Mynah-bird"		1693
"Liu Haishi"			
	124. "Five-goat Minister"		1693
	130. "The Strange Melon"	1687	
	134. "The Birth of a Dragon"	1682	
	139. "The Flood"	1682, 1695*	
	151. "The Little Hunting-dog"		1689
	173. "Young Scholar Qin"[97]	1689*	
"Yatou"			
	178. "A Dream of Foxes"	1682	
	201. "The Immortal Above"	1683	
	202. "Hou Jingshan"		1697
	212. "Ma Jiefu"		1687
	215. "Jiangfei"	1683	
"The Giant"			
	243. "The Giant"[98]	1681	1688
	257. "A Man named Liu"		ca. 1688
	262. "Miss Mei"	1684*	
	307. "Summer Snow"	1707	
	308. "A Change of Sex"	1707	

TABLE 2--Continued.

Title story of ce in Pu MS.	Entry	Earlier limit: written in or after	Later limit: written in or before
"The Avian Knight"			
	318. "Bandit Households"	1684*	
	335. "Shao Shimei"		1697
	361. "Governor Yu"[99]	1680	
	377. "The Caves of Mt. Chaya"	1688*	
	379. "Customs in Yuan"[100]	1688	
"Princess Yunluo"			
	380. "Princess Yunluo"[101]	1682*	
	390. "The Cotton Merchant"[102]	1681	
	392. "The Immortal He"	1692	
"The King"			
	429. "Millipedes"[103]	1691	
	430. "The Sub-Director of Schools"[104]	1693*	
	441. "Wang Da"[105]	1686*	
	446. "Wang Shi"	1686*	
	448. "Foreigners"	1693	
	452. "The Young Gentleman of Jiaping"	1693*	
	462. "The Boatman of Laolong"	1693	
	464. "The Owl"	1695	
	471. "Young Scholar Zhou"[106]	1694	
	475. "The Bird-messenger"	1693	
	476. "Young Scholar Ji"	1694*	
	478. "Gongsun Xia"[107]	1699	
	479. "Han Fang"	1695*	
	481. "Marquis Huan"	1693	
	486. "A Court-case in Xinzheng"[108]	1691	

Annotation that explains a story's date is provided in cases where the text itself gives no explicit date or which have not been covered in earlier discussion, pp. 33-40.

*Date derived from supplementary anecdote attached to main story.

the eight volumes of Liaozhai (according to my revised reconstruction) is shown.

In the light of the information which that table presents, let us consider the first three objections raised initially to Zhang Peiheng's chronological scheme. First of all, how strong a case exists to support a chronological progression of stories in Liaozhai? As we can see, the evidence is still limited. Although further research may uncover other items for which a date can be verified, it is unlikely that substantial additions will be made to this list, which shows that 24 primary stories and 12 secondary anecdotes post-date 1679. These two to three dozen titles seem a small proportion of the total, if one argues, as Zhang does, that the majority of stories were written after that time. However, it should be realized that fewer than 200 entries give any indication of the date of the events they describe, and such clues, when they do appear, are often little more than confirmation that the incidents took place in the late Ming or early Qing. So this group of stories is by no means negligible: it could be simply the core of a much larger collection of tales written after 1679, but which have left us no clear proof of this fact.

The basic issue, of course, is not the supposition that a time factor had its place in the composition of Liaozhai (it is self-evident that Pu Songling would have written some stories earlier, others later), but the extent to which a chronological sequence can be discerned. It is on this question that problems do arise. It is Zhang's contention that each individual ce collects together stories composed during a specific period of time. Given the scarcity of evidence, and our stricter dating procedures, the case for this view cannot be proven conclusively,

nor can the serial order of the volumes be established beyond doubt. One can detect a progression in the later limits of stories in "The Avian Knight", "Princess Yunluo", and "The King", but one would be hard put to say for certain whether, for example, "A Certain Gentleman" preceded in order or followed "Yatou". To fit the volumes into a distinct time scheme, one has to lend a great deal of weight to some very sparse and isolated items of data. Given Pu Songling's less than meticulous attention to editorial details (manifested in the Pu MS. by the confusion over the order of the extant volumes), can we rule out the possibility that the odd story may have been misplaced in a ce containing items written at a different time?

This question brings us to the second reservation we mooted. My emendation of Zhang's reconstructed "The Giant" and "The Painted Horse" volumes has the effect of transferring the two latest verifiable entries (307, 308) to "The Giant", thereby altering the complexion of the time sequence. The placement of these two post-1707 tales, however, is puzzling. "The Giant" does not give the impression otherwise of being a particularly late ce, in fact, two stories (243, 257) seem to have been finished in the 1680s, and no other items with an earlier limit after 1681 can be found. Actually, even in "The King" volume, with its high preponderance of tales that date no earlier than the 1690s, a considerable gap exists between the dates there and the year 1707. ("Summer Snow" and "A Change of Sex" fit no more readily into Zhang's hypothetical "The Painted Horse" ce, where they would precede "Shao Shimei", a story written no later than 1697). However, it may well be significant that "Summer Snow" and "A Change of Sex" are the very last two stories in "The Giant". It is my speculation that these two tales were completed some time after a halt in composition of Liaozhai had been called

(Zhu Xiang's correspondence gives some support for this conjecture. See p. 33), and were inadvertently attached, not to the latest ce chronologically, but to the end of "The Giant". This explanation could also account for the absence of these two stories from the end of juan B of the Kangxi MS.: they may not have belonged there in the first place.

There remains the problem of Pu Songling's preface. According to Zhang Peiheng's time scheme, the first volume was completed in 1682. In other words, three years after the preface was written, only sixty-four stories had actually been completed. If we assume also that the thirty-fourth entry, "The Bridegroom", dates from 1681 or later, then in 1679 Pu had, at most, written thirty-three tales, under 7 percent of his total output. Though one accepts that the preface was composed when only part of the work had taken form, this seems an uncomfortably low proportion. Zhang's response to this doubt is to postulate that, as it stood in 1679, the author's manuscript included quite a number of additional items, which, however, were excised during a reorganization of the text in 1682.[109] Like my conjecture about the last two stories in "The Giant", this suggestion can be neither proven nor disproved. Clearly, the necessity to resort to guesswork of this kind is a major flaw in the reconstruction of a clear-cut chronological scheme in Liaozhai zhiyi.

However, although at present we cannot firmly establish a specific time-frame for every volume, we need not reject out of hand the concept of a chronological development visible in Liaozhai. There is sufficiently pronounced variation between the dates in, for instance, "The City God Examination" and "The King" to indicate that they were written at different periods. Interestingly, also, the chronology that we have assembled

shows a fairly close correspondence to the sequence of ce as they are found in the Zhang MS. With the exception of "Liu Haishi" (whose inclusion of the post-1687 story, "The Strange Melon", suggests it would belong later in the order, after "The Giant"), the ce have been incorporated in the Zhang MS. in a series that interlocks with a possible time sequence, beginning with "The City God Examination" (juan 1 in the Pu MS.) and ending with "The King", the ce with the highest concentration of late stories. In other words, the sequence of stories in the Zhang MS. (which, after all, possesses a close connection with the author's manuscript) may not be nearly so "disorderly and unsystematic" as Zhang Peiheng has declared.[110]

On the basis, then, of our guarded acceptance of the principles of a chronological differentiation between ce, we will proceed in our next section to a comparative analysis of the two volumes whose date of composition appear to be furthest apart: "The City God Examination" (1670s?-1682?) and "The King" (late 1690s?). According to the degree of contrast exhibited by these two sets of stories, the results of this study should enable us to draw some conclusions about the creative direction Pu Songling followed, and to assess the value of a chronological viewpoint as an approach to Liaozhai zhiyi.

3. "The City God Examination" and "The King" Compared

In our discussion thus far, as we compare extant texts of Liaozhai and date individual stories, it has been possible to establish a set of firm procedures by which to evaluate the evidence. As we turn now to examine Liaozhai as a literary work in its own right, rather than simply a textual puzzle or a repository of datable items, it is clear that the book's contents respond less willingly to the type of analysis we have

employed hitherto. The differences between "The City God Examination" and "The King" do not usually take the form of easily quantifiable features: more often they are conveyed in rather inconspicuous distinctions and shades of emphasis. In order to isolate the particular characteristics that these volumes possess, it is necessary to adopt a new approach, capable of providing a critical awareness of these subtle shifts in direction.

For the purpose of effective comparison of the first and last ce in Liaozhai, I shall concentrate discussion around various elements or topics which throw into relief the contrasts between the two series of tales. The first distinctive difference lies in their handling of supernatural beings.

Ghost and Fox Stories

As we mentioned earlier, Zhao Qigao asserted that the original title of Liaozhai was "Tales of Ghosts and Foxes". Whether or not this was so, such a title would serve as a most appropriate formula to sum up the contents of "The City God Examination". The reader is confronted at every turn by such creatures, which are characterized with increasing sophistication as the volume develops. An uneven, but quite discernible progression from limited though imaginative scare-stories (3, 4, 7, 8, 10, 11) to lengthy and leisurely narratives (22, 39, 40, 47, 48) can be observed.

The ghost stories which open the volume share common features in theme and technique. Typically, a predatory demon confronts a human victim, usually male and single, usually at night. The demons are conceived in a traditional manner: they say nothing, but their intentions are quite unambiguously hostile; they possess inordinate physical strength. The stories, though fairly brief, are written with careful attention to

detail and excite suspense by their vivid recreation of the classic instance of terror: a solitary sleeper being stalked by silent and relentless ghoul. In "The Resuscitated Corpse" (3), for example, the action takes place one night when four weary porters accept accommodation in an outhouse occupied by the corpse of an innkeeper's daughter-in-law. One of them, slower than his companions in falling asleep,

> suddenly heard a creaking from the bed on which the dead woman had been laid out. He opened his eyes in alarm, and by the light cast by the lamp in front of the corpse his view was clear: the woman had already drawn the coverings aside and risen, and within moments she had stepped down and slowly entered the bedroom. Her face was a pale yellow hue, a silk scarf wrapped around her head. Bending down as she reached the beds, she blew over the three sleeping travellers. The fourth, now terrified, traveller, fearing she would turn to him next, furtively pulled the quilt up over his head, and held his breath to listen. Within seconds, sure enough, she arrived, and exhaled over him as she had done with the others. He sensed that she had left the bedroom, and soon he heard the rustle of her paper coverlet. When he poked out his head to take a little peep, he could see her lying immobile as before. Overcome with terror, and not daring to make a sound, he surreptitiously prodded each of his companions with his foot, but none of them made the slightest movement. No course of action now seemed open to him except to put on his clothes and flee. No sooner had he risen to shake out his clothes than the creaking broke out anew. Panic-stricken, he fell flat and pulled his head back under the covers. He could feel the woman returning and blowing over him several more times before leaving once more. Soon after, he heard a creak from the bed, and knew she had lain down again. Now, from the bottom of the quilt he gingerly stretched out a hand to collect his trousers, hastily pulled them on, and dashed out barefoot. The corpse too arose, seemingly bent on pursuit. (Liaozhai 1.5-6)

The motif of the revitalized corpse had appeared before in anecdotal fiction,[111] but never in such graphic realism. Pu Songling galvanizes a stock situation into life by the extraordinary vividness of the sensual perceptions which he invites the reader to share. A wide range of effects, visual, auditory, tactile, is utilized in this and similar stories like "The Troll" (7) and "Biting a Ghost" (8).

Such tales as these consist of a simple three-part structure: an opening passage that sets the scene, a central portion that relates the details of the assault, and a concluding section that describes the examination of evidence in the aftermath. Thus, in "The Monster in the Buckwheat" (10), after a huge, red-haired demon has attacked an old man on top of a stack of newly harvested grain, his tenants then:

> climbed up together to look, and found that a piece of his forehead the size of a man's palm had been bitten off, and the old man had collapsed unconscious. They carried him back home, and he died. The monster was never seen again. It is not known what sort of a creature it was. (1.24)

"Wild Dog" (25) ends in a similar fashion.

These short tales concerned with a life and death struggle between man and supernatural adversary rarely attract comment from modern critics of Liaozhai keen to find work of greater literary significance than simply a good horror story, but within their modest framework they succeed superbly in capturing the reader's imagination by use of telling detail. The normally restrained early 19th century commentator, Feng Zhenluan, punctuates the narrative in "The Resuscitated Corpse" with such remarks as "When you reach this point, reading late at night, with the lamp low and the paper indistinct, it is enough to make your hair stand on end!" or "This could frighten the daylights out of someone!"[112]

Nowhere in Liaozhai can be found such a concentration of stories of the kind quoted above as in the first half of "The City God Examination" volume. Why should this be so? If we are correct in concluding that this volume was the earliest to have been completed, an obvious reason suggests itself. It would be natural for a writer such as Pu Songling, experimenting with his first creative efforts in fiction, to borrow familiar plot situations from the anecdotal tradition, and only later, with some

experience behind him, enlarge his horizons to take in much more ambitious projects. But even these early horror stories already bear the distinctive Liaozhai hallmarks of sharply focussed scene, evocative atmosphere, and psychological insight.

The evidence of the series of stories beginning "The King" supports the view that Pu's interest in the simple story of a terrifying confrontation did not sustain itself beyond the early period. In this volume, the only assault reminiscent of those described above is actually a joke played on a man by a fox. She exploits the predictable terror of such an attack as a playful, rather mocking exercise, an unorthodox prelude to seduction:

> A certain Mr. Fang 房 , a scholar from east Zhejiang, was staying in Shaanxi, where he tutored younger pupils. He used to brag about his bravery. One night, as he lay naked in bed, a hairy creature suddenly fell out of the air, and struck his chest with a thump. It felt as large as a dog, and breathed with a heavy pant, its four feet scratching and scrabbling. Terrified, he tried to rise, but the animal knocked him back down with two feet, and he fainted away in a paroxysm of fear.
>
> After an hour or so, he could feel someone inserting some sharp object up his nose, gave a great sneeze, and then awoke. He saw that the lamp in the middle of the room was burning brightly, and a beautiful woman was sitting on the edge of his bed. She laughed and said, "What a man! So that's all the courage you have!" Fang realized she was a fox, and became even more panicky. Only when the woman gradually turned to flirtation did he pluck up his spirits and embark on physical intimacies with her. (12.701)

Here, the classic bestial aggression against a helpless, recumbent victim is used as a device by the author to mislead the reader, by the fox to test the true mettle of her chosen lover. It is no longer treated as seriously as the desperate tussles which open "The City God Examination".

After the early sequence of scare-stories in the first volume, a second conspicuous feature emerges: the fox story. Five

tales involve malevolent foxes, in another seven the foxes are depicted sympathetically. The latter group presents a memorable portrait gallery of individualized fox characters, including three of Liaozhai's most attractive heroines, Jiaonuo 嬌娜, Qingfeng 青鳳, and Yingning 嬰寧.

"Seizing a fox" (9), the first in the series of harmful fox anecdotes, is a short tale in similar vein to other early stories: a man is attacked during his siesta, and though he manages to retaliate and grab hold of the fox, it wriggles free of his grasp and flees. In "The Fox in a Bottle" (27), a fox that has been plaguing a woman is finally outwitted by her, boiled alive in the bottle in which it had hidden. "Jiao Ming" (30) describes the exorcism of a troublesome fox by a Daoist. The last two stories represent more lengthy and sophisticated efforts at imaginative fiction. In "The Merchant's Son" (41), for example, the hero is a ten-year old boy, whose mother has been bewitched by a fox. The tale chronicles in detail the elaborate steps taken by this uncannily resourceful and self-possessed child to destroy the vulpine predator. In "Young Scholar Dong" (44), the familiar theme of a man's fatal infatuation with a fox demon is treated with subtlety and humour, portraying the seductress in the story with considerable sympathy, and regarding ironically two scholars' vulnerability to sexual temptation.

Although Pu makes an attempt in the last-mentioned story at more rounded characterization of the fox protagonist, the antagonistic element in the situation imposes certain limits on the interplay between the fox and the human characters. The destructive effect on a man's health of physical contact with a fox dictates that the fox be regarded as a monster to be exorcised, a creature apart, thereby inhibiting fuller

development of the relationship. Consequently, it is the tales involving benign foxes which allow Pu Songling to bring his creative powers most fully into play. These generally quite lengthy stories of friendship or romance possess a light touch and refreshing charm which readily captivate the reader.[113]

The first title in this group is "The Marriage of the Fox's Daughter" (21). Here we are introduced to one of the favourite types of Liaozhai hero, the bold, devil-may-care young man who adjusts effortlessly to the novelty of consorting with foxes or ghosts. In this case, the young man is challenged by his friends to spend the night in a haunted house, and finds that his evening there coincides with the wedding of the daughter of an old fox. He is invited to meet the newly-weds and join in the celebrations, keeping one of the golden wine-cups as souvenir.

In the next story, "Jiaonuo" (22), the young man is not simply an observer, but an active participant in a life-long association with a family of foxes. Through a casual encounter with the son of the family, he is gradually drawn deeper into the domestic circle. Designated by the patriarch as tutor to his son, in his leisure hours he is initiated in the delights of female company: his attention is first caught by a lovely and talented girl musician, then he almost falls in love with the youngest daughter, Jiaonuo, and is married in the end to her cousin. He risks his life to save Jiaonuo from certain disaster and she, a skilled physician, in turn restores him to health, a measure of the mutual devotion and loyalty between man and fox which this story depicts. Further variations on the theme of fox as trusty friend appear in "Immortal Officer" (35), and "Wang Cheng" (38).

Geng Qubing 耿去病, the male lead in "Qingfeng" (39),

is a young man out of the same mould as the hero in "The Marriage of the Fox's Daughter". Eager to get to the bottom of the mysterious disturbances in his uncle's abandoned house, he bursts in one night on a fox family in the middle of their dinner, shouting gaily, "Here's one gatecrasher arriving!"[114] An elderly man, the head of the family, introduces him to his son, his wife, and Qingfeng, his niece, with whom Geng falls instantly in love. In the romance that follows, the use of realistic detail, a device typical of the very earliest stories, is combined with lively dialogue to project a vivid image of Qingfeng, swayed by the passion of her young suitor while remaining conscious of the obligations she owes to her stern uncle.

The fox stories in "The City God Examination" conclude with the celebrated tale of "Yingning" (48), perhaps Pu Songling's crowning achievement in this volume, and "Fourth Sister Hu" (62). Comment on these two stories will be included in later discussion.

In short, then, fox themes seem to have absorbed much of the author's interest in the first volume of Liaozhai. The same cannot be said of "The King", for here foxes make only rare appearances (430, 435, 476, 490, 492) with limited functions, denied the virtuoso parts they are given in "The City God Examination". In "The Sub-Director of Schools" (430), for example, the fox plays only a subordinate role, much like a conventional fortune-teller who predicts danger for the main character. Once he has served his purpose, he is no longer needed. The real thrust of the tale is directed towards a mordant commentary on corruption among examination administrators. As we shall see, a fondness for sardonic social criticism is a conspicuous feature of "The King", and this is only one instance of a fox proving to be a useful tool for Pu Songling to convey the desired effect.

Satire and Social Comment

Spine-chilling ghost stories and exuberant tales of romance between men and foxes tend, by their nature, to have little place for critical comment on social evils of the author's day, and we need to look elsewhere in the first volume for satirical treatment of such topics. In general, what satire is found in "The City God Examination" takes as its target fairly universal weaknesses in human nature - lust, parsimony, conceit, infatuation, and so on, rather than particularized contemporary problems. Often the satirical import is clearly revealed only in the authorial comment, being rather incidental to the tale itself.

Let us consider a few examples. In "The Talking Pupils" (5), a talented but rakish scholar becomes blind as punishment for impertinently ogling a beautiful immortal, is chastened by this handicap, and becomes known in the end as a model of self-restraint. In "Wang Liulang" (12), the loyal friendship between a man and a ghost is contrasted with the inconstancy of human ties. A parsimonious fruit vendor suffers the penalty for his stinginess at the hands of a Daoist magician in "Planting a Pear-tree" (14), provoking criticism of selfish attitudes among well-heeled members of the community. "The Daoist of Laoshan" (15) pokes fun at shallow individuals who fatuously persuade themselves that mastery of some slight accomplishment will impress the world. "The Snake-man" (17) reflects on the ironic discrepancy between the modesty of the snakes in the story and the spiteful pride of man. "Three Lives" (26) and "The Weeping Ghosts" (28) include brief warnings to men in high position to behave according to proper moral principles. "The Painted Skin" (40) warns against the dangers of blind, irrational passion.

The civil service examination system is frequently regarded as one of the prime targets of Pu Songling's satire in Liaozhai. In the first volume, one story, "Young Scholar Ye" (31), takes as its central character an unsuccessful candidate. Although it stresses the bitter disappointment and mental ordeal which failure entails, the tale expresses no bitterness or rancour towards the examiners or real discontent with the system as such, and ends by adopting a view of pained resignation.

Exposure of the corruption and injustice of the bureaucracy is commonly recognized as another of Pu's critical concerns in Liaozhai. "Cheng the Immortal" (33), is the one story from the first volume usually cited in this connection. This tale describes the stages by which Cheng and his friend Zhou 周 withdraw from human affairs to become Daoist immortals. The action begins with a brazen example of abuse of authority. The local magistrate, unduly influenced by powerful members of the community, the family of a high Beijing official, unjustly thrashes one of Zhou's servants. Cheng urges his friend not to retaliate, saying, "In this brutal world, there is really no distinction between right and wrong. Besides, though they may not tote arms, half the magistrates these days are bandits, are they not?"[115] Zhou, too indignant to heed this warning, lodges a complaint, and when he upbraids the magistrate for rejecting it, he is thrown into gaol and sentenced to death on a trumped-up charge. Only intercession from the central authorities, swayed by a petition from Cheng, saves Zhou from certain execution.

Vividly as this episode reveals the power of gentry interests and venality of local administration, one should note that the incident plays a subsidiary role in the story as a whole, which takes as its

theme the retirement of Cheng from the world, and then, under his guidance, of Zhou also. The function of the corruption case in the narrative is to provide the impetus for Cheng to make a break with society and become a Daoist: "After his experience of the law-suit and his friend's captivity, Cheng's disenchantment with human society was total, and he invited Zhou to go into retirement with him".[116] What follows forms the bulk of the story: Cheng's ascension to the status of an immortal, and the elaborate steps by which he conducts Zhou to eventual relinquishment of all human attachments.

To conclude this survey of the first volume, then, we may say that social satire is handled in a rather subdued manner in these stories. Only rarely do administrative malpractices come under direct fire, and even then only as a secondary theme.

By contrast, the last volume evinces a much stronger commitment to a model of good government and moral principle, and a greater degree of hostility to corruption and abuse of privilege. Three stories (462, 485, 486), devoted to the exploits of dedicated and sagacious officials, promote positive values; others (425, 428, 450, 456, 479) incorporate incidental criticism of standards of conduct among the intellectual or official class. Our discussion here will centre around those tales where satire cuts with the sharpest edge or the author's case is presented with the greatest force.

The first item in the volume, "The King" (422), imagines a remote land where the misdeeds of officials are punished mercilessly by an impartial and implacable king. As Pu Songling pointedly notes in his postscript, "If one could discover the location of this place,

there would be no end of people flocking there to present complaints."[117] A later story, "One Official" (492), set closer to home, conveys in a different manner Pu's pessimistic assessment of the government bureaucracy. Mr. Wu 吳 , the sub-prefect of Jinan, maintains strict adherence to principle, refusing to connive at embezzlement, despite the bullying threats of his superior. But such integrity, Pu Songling suggests, is shared by none of Wu's colleagues. Asked how many officials serve in the prefecture, a fox spirit replies, "One," and later elaborates: "Though the tally of office-holders in the whole prefecture runs to seventy-two, Sub-prefect Wu is the one and only man who truly merits the title 'official'."[118]

In venting his indignation against various evils in human society, Pu almost always arranges his satirical stage-props against some supernatural backdrop. Thus, in "The King", a superhuman lord serves as the agent of retribution, in "One Official", the damning verdict on local administrators is delivered by the author's wickedly uninhibited spokesman, the fox. As a variation, in "Gongsun Xia" (478), a satire on the sale of offices, he tells two stories, the first set in the supernatural world, the second in a human setting. Both involve students of the National College who purchase offices and set off with great ostentation for their posts, only to be confronted en route by higher authorities and stripped of their titles. In the first case, a would-be prefect in the underworld is met by no less a personage than Guandi 關帝 , is sternly rebuked for his excessive display, and told to write down his name and place of origin. The god's appraisal of his cultural level is scathing: "Your spelling is so faulty one can hardly recognize the words! This fellow is just a shady merchant, in no way qualified to govern a locality!"[119] - a criticism, of course, intended to apply with equal force

to upstarts in the real world.

In a number of these satirical tales, the message conveyed, far from being a minor offshoot of the narrative itself, appears rather to be the very core around which a story has been fashioned. This is particularly evident in the case of those stories which were written in response to a specific contemporary situation. Let us consider "The Owl" (464), which we know has a basis in actual historical incident. The story begins:

> Magistrate Yang 楊 of Changshan was by nature exceptionally avaricious. In the yihai 乙亥 year of the Kangxi reign [1695], when a military campaign was launched on the western frontier, horses and mules were purchased from the populace to transport grain supplies. Yang used this pretext to engage in plunder, and every pack-animal in the area was expropriated. Zhoucun was where merchants and traders congregated and the carts and horses of fair-goers converged. Yang led a troop of stout retainers and had all the stock seized, several hundred no less. Traders from near and far had nowhere to lodge a complaint. (12.1616)

The campaign to which Pu refers was the punitive expedition against Galdan, for which preparations began in 1695, and which was successfully conducted in 1696-97.[120] The work of another Zichuan writer, Gao Zhixi 高之騄, confirms that the depredations of Yang Jie 楊杰, the magistrate of Changshan, provoked a great outcry in the local community: one of his poems vividly describes the same episode.[121]

The story goes on to tell how two Shanxi merchants, now left stranded with no way to get home, beg three of Yang's colleagues to request the return of their mules on their behalf. When they try to bring the matter up during a conversation with Yang, he suggests they compose drinking rhymes, as a way of evading the issue. Their attempts to shame him, by bringing the topic of their rhymes round to his misdeeds, come adrift when he retorts with a verse that ends, "Let each man sweep

the snow in front of his own door." Suddenly a confident, dapper young man appears, and after a brief greeting, offers the company a jingle of his own which concludes, "Greedy officials should be skinned alive!" He then turns into an owl and flies off, hooting with scornful laughter that is warmly endorsed in the author's commentary as "tantamount to the call of the phoenix". This story evidently represents Pu Songling's personal form of protest against a particularly disgraceful case of a local official abusing his authority. Everything in the tale leads up to the climactic entrance of the owl, another of Pu's fictitious mouthpieces, and his bold indictment of Yang's cupidity.

Two other stories seem to have been specifically designed to counter a social trend of which the author disapproves. In "Wang Da" (441), his satire is directed primarily at administrative laxity in enforcement of debt repayment, though gambling, a social evil about which he felt strongly,[122] is a secondary target. Criticism of bureaucratic bungling of money-lending disputes is expressed by Pu in an essay written in the 1700s, "A Policy Summary for Good Administration" ("Xunliang zhengyao" 循良政要). According to Pu's analysis, the practice of debt evasion had arisen as a result of an over-reaction on the part of local officials. In the past, officials had been manipulated by powerful gentry families to the point where they always decided disputes in their favour and punished fiercely the unfortunates unable to repay their debts at the excessive interest which the gentry demanded. More recent officials, over-zealous in remedying this situation, had gone to the other extreme, completely refusing to force debtors to pay up, and thereby turning a blind eye to further injustices.[123]

"Wang Da", in fictional form, presents a critique of this state of

affairs. The soul of an unscrupulous gambler, temporarily leaving his mortal body, borrows money one night but is caught gambling and punished by the City God: his middle finger is severed and his eyes dyed in lurid colours. When he wakes and his family urge him to repay his debts to the ghost-creditor, he stubbornly resists, declaring, "Magistrates today all come out in favour of those who dishonour their debts, and the same principle ought to be followed in the underworld, all the more so in the case of gambling debts."[124] This complacent assumption is soon proved wrong: after a vigorous interrogation conducted by the City God, the man is given thirty strokes of the bamboo and compelled to repay his creditor forthwith.

Clearly, the reader is invited to draw a contrast between the decisive adjudication of the City God and his firm insistence on prompt repayment of debts with the slack, irresponsible procedures among contemporary human magistrates. In this imaginary ideal world, justice is enforced with even-handed severity, and the unprincipled receive their due punishment. The author's postscript drives home the message which the story has been designed to convey:

> The Historian of the Strange said, "Injustices in the world invariably derive from the over-correction of wrongs on the part of officials. In the past, the rich and powerful would abduct the children of free families as penalty for failure to repay 100 percent interest, and no man dared object; otherwise, at the prompting of the creditor, the official would bring the laws to bear in his favour. Thus, local administrators in the past were simply servants in the employ of influential families.
>
> Later, upright successors, cognizant of this evil, took it and turned it completely on its head. There was a man who borrowed a large sum and became a big merchant, dressed in silken finery, disdaining the finest foods, adding new extensions to his home, and rich property to his estate, - and completely unmindful of the source of his success. No sooner is repayment requested than he challenges his creditor with angry glare. When the dispute is taken to court, the magistrate says, "I will be servant for no one." What is the difference between this and the Lazy Gluttonous Monk, who did not have the time to wipe his nose for common men!
>
> I have regarded the past officials as sycophantic, the present officials as misguided. The sycophantic deserve death

> sure enough, but the misguided are detestable too. When have low-interest loans been of benefit solely to the rich?" (11.1538)

Pu's comment here is practically identical in substance to the passage in the essay referred to above which addresses itself to the same problem. The fervency with which he argues his case has led one commentator to suspect that the author may have had an unfortunate experience himself in lending out money.[125] Certainly, this level of commitment to a social issue appears striking by comparison with the first volume, but it is not unusual in this late collection of stories.

"Wang Da", perhaps because it was consciously put together to promote a fixed viewpoint, appears a somewhat disjointed and mechanical piece of fiction, indeed, it has been criticized by one reader as "in terms of writing technique, the worst story in the whole book".[126] Much more effective as satire is the tale, "Wang Shi" (446). Here, Pu Songling directs his anger at the policy of the local government towards small-scale salt dealers. Pu has given us a clear account of his views on this issue in the essay, "A Discussion of the Salt Law" ("Yanfa lun"鹽法論)[127] and in the lengthy, outspoken commentary by the Historian of the Strange, attached to the story. In both these pieces, Pu presents an impassioned denunciation of contemporary practices. Officially, poor people are permitted by law to transport small quantities of salt for sale in other districts. But big salt merchants, in an attempt to monopolize their control over all salt purchases in the area, have all peddlers seized, crippled, and then delivered to the magistrate, who can be relied upon to mete out further punishment. The injustice is compounded by the merchants' practice of setting artificially high salt prices for local residents and attractively low prices for people from other localities, thereby encouraging further small-scale dealing, and increasing the number of hapless victims who fall

into the merchants' net. Pu's exposure of these inequities is accompanied by bitter recriminations: "To defraud the treasury of tens of thousands in revenue is not deemed to be illicit, carrying a peck or more of salt on one's back is, however, so considered, . . . what an injustice!"[128] "I urge merchants to desist from setting snares to entrap our native villagers, and most of all I urge officials to refrain from aiding profiteers in killing our honest citizens!"[129]

As we might expect, when Pu Songling sets about transmuting this protest into fictional form, he utilizes a supernatural framework which allows more oblique but equally deadly criticism to find expression. In "Wang Shi", Pu Songling conveys his viewpoint in two ways. Firstly, the story itself reverses the real-life role of the small-time salt peddler, helpless to resist the combined forces of commercial interests and administrative control, and the big licensed merchant, backed by his hired thugs and the magistrate's jurisdiction, and in an imaginary setting allows the downtrodden to exact revenge on his oppressor. Secondly, the remarks made by Yama, a formidable figure of authority and justice in his own right, whose verdict would naturally carry the greatest weight, set out in succinct terms the author's basic position, and inform the reader of the exact critical thrust that propels the story forward. Yama's comments also ensure that due blame is allotted to local officials, who would otherwise emerge from the tale more or less unscathed. Thus, when a small-time salt peddler is brought before him on a smuggling charge, Yama angrily denounces his unjust arrest:

> "Salt smugglers are men who, on the one hand, defraud the state exchequer, and, on the other, devastate the people's livelihood. Those whom the cruel officials and unscrupulous merchants of the day label as salt smugglers are all simply the honest people of the land. When a poor man lays out his trifling capital in the hope of winning a peck or more's profit, what is there illicit about that!" (11.1559)

Vividly conceived and economically executed, the narrative that follows achieves brilliant satirical effect.

The author's postscript to the tale serves as powerful accompaniment. In some tales, the connection between the comment and the narrative is rather tenuous, but here, as in "Wang Da", the authorial remarks provide invaluable background details and elucidate the story's wider significance. In this case, for example, the comment clarifies the relationship between the "cruel officials" and "unscrupulous merchants" and examines the implications of the reference in the story to thieves and counterfeiters.

So far, our discussion of social criticism in the final volume has concentrated on exposures of bureaucratic misconduct and maladministration, in which Pu Songling prefers some supernatural medium as his satirical vehicle. Several other stories, which take as their theme personal standards of morality or ethical behaviour within the family structure, eschew supernatural elements almost totally while projecting a critical view.

One such tale is "Young Gentleman Wei" (449), which in a brutally realistic manner depicts the horrific consequences of one man's degeneracy. Wei, a promiscuous rake, returns home at the end a broken man, having committed double incest, murder, and bribery, and he cries in anguish on his deathbed, "He who fornicates with maids and sleeps with whores is not human!"[130] The warning against lust is made explicit in the postscript, which ascribes Wei's unknowing incest to divine retribution rather than simple ironic coincidence.

Little emphasis is placed in the first volume on the theme of moral obligations within the family, but considerable attention is accorded to it in "The King". Two stories are devoted to the problem of rivalries between family members and their proper resolution. In "The Duan

Family" (434), the dangers posed to family security by excessive jealousy on the part of the wife are highlighted. A rich man, Duan Ruihuan 段瑞環, is married to a fiercely jealous woman, Lian shi 連氏, who, though childless herself, will not brook any challenge to her status as wife, denying her husband the chance to have a son by a concubine. Only when Duan's nephews, sensing his vulnerability without an heir, begin to make acquisitive demands, does she repent her obduracy. By then it is too late: Duan dies before the hurriedly purchased concubines can produce a son. Lian on her own is defenceless to resist the predatory claims of Duan's nephews on her husband's property, and she is threatened with total dispossession. To her salvation, an unknown visitor appears, who, it transpires, is the son of Duan, by a maid whom Lian had expelled from the household years before when her intimacy with Duan had been discovered. His return enables Lian to regain the initiative, and, now backed by the secure support of the legal heir, she forces the restitution of all the possessions expropriated by Duan's nephews. As in "Young Gentleman Wei", a deathbed cri de coeur sums up the story's message:

> When Lian was in her seventies, and close to death, she summoned her daughter and granddaughters-in-law, and said to them: "Remember this, all of you: if you have borne no son by the age of thirty, you ought then to pawn your hairpins and earrings, and buy your husband a concubine. Having no son is just too unbearable a situation!" (11.1523)

This conclusion culminates from a skilfully designed narrative, which graphically demonstrates what a key factor an heir plays in the balance of power in a family. The conflict between Lian and her husband's nephews seesaws to and fro, as the prospect of inheritance by a son increases or diminishes. The nephews become increasingly assertive and aggressive as Duan approaches old age, still childless. The pregnancy of Duan's con-

cubines subdues them, and gives Duan and Lian the upper hand. The death of the son in infancy, and Duan's grave illness, swing the pendulum in the other direction and erode Lian's power base. Duan's death removes the last obstacle to the nephews' ambitions and leaves Lian completely helpless. The sudden arrival of Duan's son reverses the situation one more time, and guarantees Lian's triumph.

The same sensitivity to factors fuelling domestic conflict is evident in "Zeng Youyu" (451), an elaborate satire on fraternal rivalries in a large family. As we shall see in the next chapter, Pu Songling himself had bitter knowledge of ferocious and destructive disputes among his own kinsmen, and it is possible that this story is in part a response to those experiences. The seven Zeng brothers are born of three different wives, and with the exception of Zeng Youyu, a model of propriety and filial devotion, the brothers arrange themselves in hostile factions bent on mutual intimidation and humiliation. This legacy of resentful strife is then inherited by the next generation, who engage in ever more vicious campaigns that lead to murder, suicide, and imprisonment. The blissful harmony that prevails within Youyu's home, however, eventually instills repentance and a determination to reform on the part of his brothers, and the story ends with the establishment of friendly concord among the siblings.

Thus, this tale, like the two discussed above, warns of the disastrous practical consequences of a particular kind of ethical misconduct, and chronicles a process of remorse and enlightenment, thereby inculcating a moral lesson. To ensure that the significance of continued antagonism among the second generation of sons is not lost on the reader, Pu Songling spells it out in the postscript:

> In this world, only wild beasts recognize their mother alone and not their father; why then do educated families so often tread the same path! Patterns of behavior within the home gradually soak into one's sons and grandsons, till the very marrow of their bones is infected. So goes the ancient saying: "If the father is a thief, his son is bound to steal". Thus does the corruption spread. (11.1586)

To conclude this section, then, we may say that satire and social comment have taken a much more prominent position in "The King" than they do in "The City God Examination". In the first volume, critical comments often appear to be tacked on to a narrative almost as an afterthought, out of a wish to introduce some larger moral dimension to what would otherwise be simply a strange story. In the later stories, however, the author sometimes makes a concerted, premeditated effort to attack certain social evils, coordinating story and postscript so that together they serve a common satirical purpose.

Plot Design and Character Manipulation

We turn now to the technical aspects of Pu Songling's work in the two volumes under consideration, to examine varying approaches to structural organization and character arrangement which are adopted. Generally, "The King" shows a certain advance in technical achievement over "The City God Examination", manifested in a higher degree of innovation, ingenuity, and sophistication. Obviously, there are certain constants evident throughout Liaozhai - the unelaborated, single-episode narrative, for example, and techniques of plot construction which the author hit upon at an early date and continued to apply in much later stories (one of these will be discussed below), and for the casual reader, these common features may tend to obscure the genuine differences between early and late stories. Our task here will be to draw out the distinction as precisely as possible.

(1) Alternation of Relaxation and Tension

A characteristic of Pu Songling's narrative style is a fondness for exploiting all possible uncertainties or latent tensions in a given situation before its final happy resolution. At one moment, a character will joyfully anticipate the immediate fulfilment of his fondest dreams, the next moment, disaster strikes and all seems lost. The restlessly shifting fortunes of the hero inject surprise and suspense into the story, teasing and thrilling the reader. As a common denominator between the first and last volumes, this device stands in contrast to other identifiable structural features aligned closely with one volume alone. Credit for identifying this particular narrative technique must be given to the nineteenth century commentator, Dan Minglun, whose remarks will be quoted later. First, however, let us examine two examples of this device in operation.

In "The City God Examination", the story which perhaps most clearly exhibits this alternation of mood is "Wang Cheng" (38). This tale charts the key events in the transition from indolent poverty to diligent prosperity of Wang Cheng, under the guidance of a benign fox who had been his grandfather's lover. The undulating pattern of events is outlined below, each episode classified under the set of conditions or emotions to which it belongs.

(Hope, relief, relaxation, success)	(Disappointment, anxiety, tension, failure)
	1. Wang Cheng penniless.
2. Given 40 taels. Buys linen to sell at a profit in Beijing.	
	3. Warned that delay will be costly.
	4. Tarries en route, dismayed by bad weather.

5. Approaching the capital, hears linen is fetching a high price.

6. Arrives too late, price has fallen.

7. Forced to sell at a loss.

8. All his money is stolen.

9. Landlord gives him 5 taels, encourages him to trade in quails.

10. The quails he bought start dying off.

11. Only one left. Wang considers suicide.

12. Surviving quail a great fighter, gambling on it wins Wang 20 taels.

13. The quail defeats a prince's champion bird.

14. The prince buys his quail for 600 taels.

15. He could have got 800 taels for it.

16. Wang becomes a wealthy landowner.

The care with which the author manipulates the plot is evident at a glance. Initial optimism (2, 5) is steadily deflated (6, 7) until Wang's fortunes reach rock bottom (8), the first major crisis. Renewed hopes are raised (9), only to be immediately dashed (10), as Wang's spirits sink to their lowest ebb (11), in a second crisis, yet more grave. Suddenly, and unexpectedly, an upward trend begins (12), picking up greater momentum as events unfold, but not without the occasional sobering interruption (15). The reader's attention is held, and his expectations tantalized, by these seemingly unpredictable twists in the plot.

Similar use of these alternating relaxations and tensions is found in a late story, "Wang Gui'an" (469). Again, we will sketch in schematic form the uneven development of Wang Gui'an's romance with Meng Yunniang

孟芸娘, a beautiful girl he first sees sitting in a boat moored next to his on the bank of the Yangtze.

(Hope, relief, relaxation, success)	(Disappointment, anxiety, tension, failure)
1. Girl seems responsive to Wang's advances.	
	2. She throws away his gold ingot.
	3. She ignores the bracelet he tosses at her feet.
	4. Her father returns, danger of bracelet's discovery.
5. Girl conceals bracelet.	
	6. She leaves before he learns who she is.
	7. Wang unable to trace the girl.
	8. Further searches fruitless.
9. Wang sees the girl in a dream.	
10. He finds her at last, by chance.	
11. Yunniang loves him, predicts betrothel will be straightforward.	
	12. Her father declares she is already engaged, to someone else.
13. Marriage goes ahead, Wang and Yunniang are wed.	
	14. A joke by Wang provokes her to jump into the river.
	15. Yunniang assumed dead, Wang in despair.
16. He finds her again, by chance.	
	17. Wang bitterly rebuked, feels anguish.
18. Reconciliation and reunion.	

Here, the progress of the love affair is disrupted by four crises, one

minor (4), and three major (8, 12, 15). The father's objections to the marriage (12) come as a shot out of the blue after Yunniang's confident forecast (11), and shake Wang Gui'an to the core, but this difficulty is soon smoothed over. More serious threats to a happy resolution are posed by the apparently permanent loss of Yunniang (8, 15). As in "Wang Cheng", prospects improve not as a result of deliberate efforts on the part of the hero, but fortuitously, in sudden and unanticipated accident, as Wang twice stumbles across his lost love (10, 16).

As the Qing commentator Dan Minglun has observed, structurally one would expect the story to reach a happy conclusion with the marriage (13), and Wang's disastrous jest (14) is a brilliant and startling move on the author's part to plunge the outcome into doubt once more. Dan describes the alternation of relaxation and tension as "expansion and contraction" (shensuo 伸縮) in a perceptive discussion of this development:

> At this point [the marriage], the impetus takes you forward like a strong wind preventing anchorage, and you suspect the momentum will carry all before it: this is one expansion on top of another. If you were to close the book now, and try and think of a way for the story to contract once more, the effort would truly exhaust your ingenuity and drain your strength, for no device would present itself. But then you reopen the book and read on, and amid the quiet of the calm river waters a staggering billow swells up again; the distant peak winds its way closer, and suddenly become a sheer cliff. The romantic yearnings that have lasted years, the joyful union of a three day marriage, converted, before the bantering joke is over, to tragic sorrow beside starry reflections in the river: this contraction defies all expectations, its force is so dramatic, its effect so profound.[131]

Examples of this element of plot design, then, can be found in the first and last volumes alike, demonstrating the continuity of this narrative device over a long period. We move now to certain features in "The City God Examination" which receive modification and elaboration in "The King".

(2) Exploration of relations between wife and supernatural rival

Romance between a man and a woman of supernatural origins is the classic, perennial theme of Liaozhai stories. When the man is a bachelor, and provided he is courting only one woman (see next section), the relationship between the two can be expected to be one of unreserved mutual affection and commitment, although circumstances in the plot may conspire to obstruct, delay, or prevent a permanent union. When a married man is involved, however, his love affair may be a potential source of friction and complication, offering interesting possibilities for examination of the triangular arrangement: the relationship between man and lover, man and wife, and lover and wife. On this point, however, "The City God Examination" diverges from "The King": the former declines to consider what effect a second woman would have on a man's married life, while the latter pays some attention to this issue. A late story from "The King" also relates a man's love affair to his own unhappy marriage, a considerable advance on early plot design.

Three stories from the first volume demonstrate how little interaction takes place between the three characters. In "Qingfeng", for example, no attempt is made to breathe any life into Geng Qubing's wife, who is totally extraneous to the action of the story. When Geng is reunited with his fox lover, we are told simply that he housed Qingfeng in separate quarters: no contact between her and his wife is mentioned.

In "Nie Xiaoqian" (49), Xiaoqian, a ghost devoted to the hero, Ning Caichen 甯采臣, accompanies him home. They find that, in Ning's absence, his wife has been suffering from chronic illness, and, to avoid shocking her, Xiaoqian is never introduced. The wife dies within six months, never, it seems, having left her sick-bed or opened her mouth, and Xiaoqian,

who has in effect been running the household all this time, replaces her as Ning's wife. Again, all interest is concentrated on the man-lover relationship, to the exclusion of any other.

The wife in "The Painted Skin" (40), plays a bigger part in the story, but does not really participate in any triangular relationship. In this case, her husband's lover is a demon disguised as a beautiful young woman. When the wife, Chen 陳 , is first informed by her husband, Wang 王 , of his lover's existence, she urges him to get rid of her, suspecting that she may be a runaway from a prominent family, and that Wang's involvement with her could be risky. Wang ignores her advice. Later, after Wang's heart is torn out by the demon, Chen heroically swallows her pride in a resolute attempt to restore her husband to life with the help of a madman. Her unflinching endurance of the indignities to which the mad man subjects her demonstrates the depth of her loyalty, and this is duly rewarded with the recovery of her husband. In "The Painted Skin", then, fuller characterization of the wife is offered, but only after the death of her husband and the destruction of the demon. Her devotion provides contrast with the malice of her husband's lover and the folly of her husband, but interplay is minimal.

By comparison with the rather sketchy coverage of this issue in "The City God Examination", the author shows considerable sensitivity to the practical difficulties attending the intrusion of a second woman into a marriage in "The King". The later stories reveal a greater mastery of interrelationships, a fuller and more satisfying examination of conflicting interests in a love triangle.

In "Zhuqing" (433), the hero, Yu Ke 魚客 , is one day reunited with his beloved Zhuqing, a river spirit who had once been his mate during his

temporary existence as a crow. Disagreement arises when they discuss where to live: Yu wants to take her back to his home in Hunan, while his lover prefers that he accompany her to her place in Hanyang 漢陽 in Hubei. She overrules his objections, miraculously transporting him overnight to her house in Hanyang, declaring gaily, "My home is your home, why need you go back south!" But for Yu Ke, a married man, the solution is not so clear-cut, and after two months in Hanyang, he grows restless. The following exchange takes place:

> [Yu Ke] said to the lady, "If I stay here, my contacts with my family will be completely severed. Besides, you and I are husband and wife in name, how would it be right if you did not once meet my family?"
>
> "Disregarding the fact that I cannot go," she replied, "supposing I did go, you have a wife there already, so where would you put me? It would be better to leave me here, where I can be a second family for you." (11.1518)

From Yu Ke's point of view, it makes good sense to take Zhuqing home, where he can both enjoy her company and that of his wife and family, in the best of both worlds. To Zhuqing, however, the prospect appears much less attractive: she will be sacrificing her independence, and relegating herself to a subordinate, perhaps humiliating position. For this reason, she rejects his proposal.

From now on, Yu Ke, supplied by Zhuqing with a black suit which enables him to fly, shuttles to and fro between his two homes in Hunan and Hanyang. In due course, Zhuqing gives birth to a son, whom they call Hanchan 漢產 。 It is the common love the two women bear this child that eventually forges a stronger link between them. A vital factor affecting the relations between the two women and Yu Ke is the failure of Yu's wife, He shi 和氏 , to bear children herself. For He shi, this circumstance induces an envious interest in Zhuqing's son, and increasing dependence on Zhuqing for her own

happiness and fulfilment. Conversely, by giving Yu Ke an heir, Zhuqing claims a certain legitimacy as a wife, and although she does not deny He shi the chance to lavish affection on Hanchan, she is not prepared to have her only son monopolized by another woman, and does not hesitate to assert herself in repossessing him. While retaining her independence, Zhuqing maintains a sympathetic and understanding attitude to He shi, generously allowing her to keep Hanchan permanently after the birth of her twins, and bringing the children up to love and respect their step-mother. As for Yu Ke, his loyalties had originally been divided fairly equally between his two homes, but eventually the tug of the true family atmosphere in Hanyang proves irresistible, and he moves in with Zhuqing for good, leaving He shi with the compensation of Hanchan's company.

Thus, in this story, Pu Songling, in a subtle and understated manner, extends his plot and delves deeper into the minds of his characters with this sensitive exploration of the repercussions of Yu Ke's romance. The contrast of He shi's sterility and Zhuqing's fecundity is used as a skilful device to bring about an amicable solution to the inherent tensions in the triangle: He shi does not pose a real threat to Zhuqing, while Zhuqing supplies something that He shi needs. Both women are therefore satisfied with the arrangement.

In "Fang Wenshu" (488), interaction is examined even more fully. The story begins conventionally enough: a poor scholar, Deng Chengde 鄧成德, working as a copyist far away from home, living alone in a tumble-down temple, meets a beautiful, unattached self-possessed young woman, Fang Wenshu. She readily responds to his advances, advising him of a teaching vacancy nearby and agreeing to move in with him. They live happily together as a couple for six or seven years. The story could

almost end there, and perhaps, in the first volume, it would have done, or possibly he would have simply taken her back home with him, or one day she would have said good-bye, explaining her period of residence in the mortal world had now expired. Instead, the tale takes a daring new direction. The birth of a son causes the first rift between them. Deng Chengde, whose own wife was childless, is delighted to be a father at last, but Fang's response differs:

> "It will always be hard to convert a sham marriage into a real one", she said. "I was going to say good-bye and leave you, now what am I going to do with this bothersome creature I have borne!"
>
> "Fortune smiles on us", said Deng, "and if I manage to put some money away, I plan to return with you to my native home. How can you say that?"
>
> "Thank you indeed, much obliged! But you won't find me cringing and smiling obsequiously, anticipating every raise of the mistress's eyebrows, serving as someone else's wet nurse, or enduring the baby's dreadful wailing!", Fang Wenshu replied.
>
> In his wife's defence, Deng explained that she was not the jealous type. Fang said nothing. (12.1696)

A few weeks later, when Deng restates his intention of returning home in the future, Fang, with the infant in her arms, abruptly deserts him, with no other explanation than simply "I want to leave". Her peculiar departure (she disappears without having opened the door) awakens her lover to the realization that she is no ordinary human being.

The story so far bears a certain resemblance to "Zhuqing". Deng Chengde shares with Yu Ke a rather complacent male outlook, which fails to consider the problems of status and pride that arise when two wives live under one roof. Wenshu, who upholds her independence and self-respect even more fiercely than Zhuqing, refuses point-blank to allow herself to be drawn into a triangular situation that would operate to her disadvantage. But, lacking the financial sufficiency which enabled Zhuqing to offer the establishment of a second home as a practical alternative, and knowing

that Deng will sooner or later insist on going back home, Wenshu senses that she must terminate their relationship as promptly as possible. In these circumstances, her baby arouses her antipathy as a burden which demands a commitment from which it will become increasingly difficult to extricate herself. Only by getting rid of the child can she preserve her freedom of action. But Deng, of course, is eager to keep the child. The second half of the tale provides a resolution of the conflict of interests between the two lovers.

In what is, by comparison with the first volume, a dramatic innovation in plot design, the scene now shifts to Deng's wife, whose maiden name is Lou 婁 . Deng, the male lead, from whose point of view romantic stories are normally told in Liaozhai, is left where he is, and he comes back into the picture only in the last three lines of the story. The author diverts attention instead to the uneasy relationship that develops between Lou and Fang Wenshu.

Lou, having had no word from her husband for years, believes him to be dead, but has so far resisted suggestions that she remarry, and supports herself by weaving. One evening, a young woman with a babe in her arms suddenly appears, and requests a bed for the night. It is Fang Wenshu, though she never discloses to Lou the details of her association with Deng. Coddling the baby, Lou's maternal instincts are aroused, and she laments her own lack of a child. Fang unhesitatingly offers her the infant, even providing a medicinal preparation to promote lactation. Her unannounced exit the next morning leaves Lou with no option but to bring up the child herself. Though the extra burden proves an increasing strain on her resources, she becomes devoted to the boy: like He shi with Hanchan, she "loved him as if he were her very own."[132] One day, the child's mother

makes an unexpected reappearance. A tense scene follows:

> Lou, fearing that she had come to claim her son, began by upbraiding her for leaving without prior consultation, and then went on to recount what pains she had taken in rearing the child.
>
> The girl laughed and said, "Since you pour out such a tale of woe, sister, how can I then leave him here and not take him back?" So she beckoned the child. Sobbing, the boy buried himself in Lou's lap.
>
> "So the little critter doesn't know its own mother any more!", cried the girl. "I won't part with him for anything less than a hundred taels. Bring out your silver, and we'll draw up the deed of sale." Lou thought she was serious, and blushed hotly. With another laugh, the girl said, "Don't be alarmed. It's precisely for the boy's sake that I have come. After I left you, I was concerned that you lacked funds for his support, and so I have raised ten taels or more from various sources to bring you." So saying, she took out the silver and presented it to Lou. Lou, worried that the money, if accepted, might provide the girl with justification for her claim on the boy, firmly refused to take it. The girl tossed it on the bed, went out the door and walked right off. Clutching the child, Lou pursued her, but she was already far away, and she did not even look back when Lou called. (12.1697-1698)

Fang Wenshu holds the upper hand: she knows more than Lou does. Although her intentions are charitable, she cannot resist the temptation to inflict some psychological distress on Lou, towards whom she perhaps feels some antagonism, as a rival for Deng's affections, as the woman to whom her son has transferred his allegiance. So she teasingly plays on Lou's emotions, and her peremptory departure leaves Lou anxious and uncertain as to her true motives. Lou, for her part, is painfully conscious of her own vulnerability. In her desperation not to lose the child, she adopts an aggressive stance at the start, but once this gambit fails, there is little she can do but submit helplessly to Wenshu's manipulation, and take what defensive measures she can against the suspected threat.

Now that lines have been sketched for two sides of the triangle, it remains for the third side to be closed. Three years after the above-quoted episode, Deng returns home, not only rejoining his wife, but rediscovering

his son. They owe a common debt of gratitude to Fang Wenshu for enriching their marriage and their lives, and keep hoping that she will reappear, but this never happens. With Wenshu's retirement from the scene, the story therefore concludes with a reversion to a simple husband-wife relationship.

This story, therefore, despite its deceptively familiar opening, turns out to be a bold attempt on Pu Songling's part to examine the impact of a man's extra-marital liaison on the attitudes of the three characters involved. By taking the unusual step of allowing Fang Wenshu, unlike so many other heroines who give their names to Liaozhai stories, an existence independent of her lover, the author is able to plumb the intriguing potential of contact between her and Deng's wife, in a way that would not have been possible had Deng, in traditional format, occupied the key role.

In earlier discussion of fox stories in the first volume, the fearless young man who, in exuberant high spirits, seeks out supernatural incident as a pleasureful activity, was pointed out as a recognizable character-type. His interest in ghosts and foxes derives from nothing much more than a playful curiosity and love of derring-do. In the last volume, "Jinse" (484), provides an interesting contrast, of a hero whose entanglement with a woman in the underworld has an extremely sombre origin: his wish to escape from the misery of his married life.

Wang 王 is a handsome young man from a poor family. A rich old man took a fancy to him and gave him his daughter in marriage. But Wang's brothers-in-law despise him, and his wife regards him with cold contempt, feeding him the lowliest scraps, and saving delicacies for herself. All such insults Wang stoically endures, until the day he comes home after failing the prefectural examination:

> When he returned from the prefectural capital, his wife happened

not to be at home. In the pot there was cooking a leg of mutton, done to a turn, and he went over to help himself. His wife came in, and, without a word, shifted the pot out of his reach. Wang felt utterly humiliated, and flinging his chopsticks to the floor, cried, "If this is the way I am treated, I'd be better off dead!" His wife, in resentful retaliation, inquired how soon his death could be expected, and promptly handed him a rope with which to hang himself. Wang, outraged, threw his soup-bowl at her, cutting open her forehead. Brimming with indignation, he stormed out, and reflecting that death really would be preferable, he tucked a sash in his pocket and made his way into a deep gully. (12.1682-1683)

It is at this juncture, when Wang is cast into despairing anguish and disgust with life, that he becomes aware of a supernatural presence in the vicinity. He advances towards it knowingly, with a fearlessness born of weary disillusionment. "It is not pleasure that I seek," he announces, "but death."[133] And indeed, it is in order to demonstrate his resolute repudiation of the specious happiness of human life, that he declares himself willing to perform such unpleasant tasks in the underworld as gravedigger for mutilated corpses. When his stay in the nether-world eventually blossoms into a romance with the banished immortal, Jinse, the blissful delight that Wang finds in this affair takes on added significance through contrast with the horror of his earlier marriage. As Wang puts it when Jinse suggests that she return with him to the mortal world: "The underworld is the most joyful place! At home, I have an evil-tempered wife . . ."[134]

In "Jinse", then, in keeping with the more sober mood of the last volume and with the more subtle probing of psychological responses remarked upon elsewhere, Wang's motivation in welcoming contact with spirits, unlike Geng Qubing's unrestrained temperament, springs from his own bitter experience of life, an aching longing for relief. In plot design, Pu Songling again engineers a break with tradition: the hero's marital circumstances are introduced at the start, and possess key importance, while his romance develops much later.

(3) Doubling of romantic interest

The male characters in the first volume cannot be described as monogamous, but in most cases we find that their romantic attachment to one woman totally monopolizes their attention, to the exclusion of other women, including their wives. In the final volume, however, not only do wives, as we have seen, claim their place in the scheme of things, but sometimes a second romantic interest is introduced, to compete for the hero's affections. The appeal of the story is thereby enhanced, both in terms of plot design (alternation of attraction offered by one girl or the other, suspense over the outcome) and character delineation and interplay (does the second girl want to be his lover too, or would she rather be his friend? How do the two women relate to each other?)

The outstanding love stories in the first volume ("Qingfeng", "Yingning", "Nie Xiaoqian") all concern the relationship between a man and one woman. But the doubling of romantic interest is not entirely without its precedent among this early set of stories. In "Jiaonuo", for instance, Kong Xueli 孔雪笠 is initially smitten with the charm of his fox-host's daughter, but ends up marrying her cousin instead. In this case, however, Kong's wife is a rather colourless character with whom little interaction takes place, and depiction of the beautiful platonic friendship between Kong and Jiaonuo occupies the bulk of the author's energies. Pu Songling experiments more extensively with the rivalry motif in "Fourth Sister Hu". Here, the hero, Shang 尚 , makes love to three women, all foxes of contrasting personality. As the fickleness of his affections becomes evident, tensions are produced. At first, Shang's heart is captured by the uninhibited Third Sister Hu. In response to his plea, she introduces him to her younger sister, whose beauty, he had heard, exceeded her own. Fourth Sister Hu, a shy and sensitive

creature, warns Shang of the danger posed by her sister, who, in her promiscuous career, had already killed three men. Shang transfers his loyalties to the younger girl, inducing a reaction of mocking tolerance, accompanied by some resentment, from Third Sister. Later, Shang's brief fling with a seductive interloper arouses Fourth Sister's bitter indignation, but with help from Third Sister, the couple are reconciled. In the end, both sisters are imprisoned in bottles by an exorcist, but Shang answers Fourth Sister's appeal and arranges her escape.

This is a short tale, but within its modest confines, probes creatively the theme of romantic competition. However, the disclosure of Third Sister's malevolent propensities forfeits sympathy for her (she is not allowed to escape capture and extermination) and disqualifies her as candidate for Shang's love, thereby limiting the scope for interplay between the characters. We need to turn to the final volume to see Pu Songling exploiting fully the potential of a triangular situation.

"Xiangyu" (443) tells the story of the relationships between a young scholar named Huang 黃 and two flower-nymphs, Xiangyu, a peony spirit, and her adopted sister, Jiangxue 絳雪, a star jasmine. As Huang's partner in a passionate romance, Xiangyu gives her name as the title of the tale, but Jiangxue's platonic friendship with Huang is accorded equal attention, so that emphasis is delicately balanced between the two women. Huang's struggle to come to terms with two very different female personalities is a key focus in the tale.

As the story opens, Huang, who is studying in a Daoist temple on Laoshan, becomes fascinated by glimpses of a girl in white among the flowers in the temple garden. One day he conceals himself in the shrubbery, and to his delight, the girl soon comes into view, accompanied by another young

lady dressed in red. As they approach their hidden admirer, the girl in red suddenly retreats in alarm, crying "There is a stranger here!" Pursued by Huang, the girls disappear behind a wall. Struck with wonder and longing, Huang writes a poem to express his feelings. From this beginning, already several significant features are indicated: the captivating beauty of the two girls, the wary sensitivity of the girl in red (Jiangxue), the susceptibility to feminine charm of the bold and impulsive Huang. Subsequent episodes develop these and other character traits with great skill.

Later that same day, Xiangyu (the girl in white) walks into Huang's room. She soon makes clear her motive in offering herself to him: she is strongly attracted by Huang, whom she regards as a "poetic and refined scholar" (saoya shi 騷雅士), who is "romantically inclined" (fengliu 風流). Choosing not to disclose her true identity, she claims to be a courtesan, thereby unambiguously stating her availability as a parter in sexual intimacy. With little further ado, the couple make love, an activity which Xiangyu clearly relishes, remarking as she rises the next morning, "In our greed for pleasure, we have been oblivious to the sun-rise."[135] From now on, she and Huang are together morning and night.

Devoted to Xiangyu though he is, Huang itches to see more of Jiangxue, and presses his lover to bring her companion along to see him. Much to his disappointment, Jiangxue never comes. His interest in Jiangxue arouses no jealous reaction on the part of Xiangyu, who attributes her absence to Jiangxue's reserved disposition: "By nature, sister Jiang is very unsociable, not so giddy in her affections as me."[136] It is only after Xiangyu's death that Huang encounters Jiangxue again.

Deeply grieved by the loss of Xiangyu (the peony was uprooted by a

flower-fancier), Huang writes a series of poems mourning her, and weeps daily by the side of the flower-bed. One day, he sees Jiangxue grieving there, and this time, following the advice earlier given by Xiangyu, he approaches her with measured calm and tact, and successfully invites her back to his lodgings. He views her as a prospective surrogate lover, but Jiangxue immediately announces her refusal to fill such a role. She does not share Xiangyu's unqualified admiration for young scholars, regarding them instead with suspicion and disdain. It is only the sincerity of Huang's grief over Xiangyu's death which has convinced her that he is a man of genuine feeling. But her respect for Huang does not weaken her resolve to maintain a relationship of strict propriety with him, for she sets clear limits on how far she will go: "My association with you will be based on affection, not on lust. If it is intimate contact night and day that you desire, then I cannot oblige you."[137]

When on a subsequent occasion, Huang presses her to satisfy his physical longings, Jiangxue once again draws a distinction between herself and Xiangyu, and warns him not to expect the same response from them both. She rejects his proposition gently but firmly: "Our pleasure in seeing each other need not depend on that." Thereafter, she regularly comes over to keep him company, as Huang gradually comes to accept the notion of platonic friendship, so alien to him at first. In his words, "Xiangyu was my beloved wife, Jiangxue is my dear friend."[138]

This acknowledgement of the differing functions performed by the two women marks the half-way point in the story. Hereafter, the three characters interreact within the framework of the relationships now established.

After the rebirth of Xiangyu and her reunion with Huang, the sympathy and understanding that have grown up between the trio reach a further level of refinement in the story's ending. Following Huang's death, his soul

takes up residence in a peony that grows beside Xiangyu's. When his peony is cut down by an ignorant young novice, both the white peony and the red star jasmine wilt and expire in solidarity. In this final episode, two strands in the tale are neatly wound together: the vulnerability of the flower-spirits to the rough treatment of human beings, and the cycle of life and death and rebirth to which the spirits are tied. The unity of the loving trio to the last also brings full circle the character combinations which have shaped the narrative:

Huang

Xiangyu - Jiangxue

Huang - Xiangyu

Huang - Jiangxue

Huang - Xiangyu

Huang - Xiangyu - Jiangxue

The plot, as designed by Pu Songling, allows great scope for character interaction: the hero and both heroines are completely free agents, responding naturally and without hindrance to their own instincts and emotions. The occasional incidental figures who influence the action - the casual visitor who takes Xiangyu's life, the builder who puts Jiangxue in danger, the goddess of flowers - all these serve a useful purpose in facilitating the rotation of Huang's companions or introducing mini-climaxes into the narrative. By concentrating on the three major personalities, Pu Songling is able to endow each one with a unique identity of their own, thereby making the interaction between the three all the more credible, and all the more intriguing.

Whereas the actors in "Xiangyu" operate in an environment detached

from regular society, the hero and two heroines in "Jisheng" (470), are set firmly in a human setting, which imposes certain limits on their freedom of choice and action. The development of their relationships is determined to a greater extent by external agents, such as parents, matchmakers, neighbours and servants. Before the marriage of Wangsun 王孫 to his two loves, Zheng Guixiu 鄭閨秀 and Zhang Wuke 張五可, there is little opportunity for direct contact between any of the three protagonists; face-to-face confrontations of the kind imagined in "Xiangyu" are inconceivable in traditional Chinese society. In "Jisheng", therefore, the doubling of the romantic interest is used less to contrast and delineate character, and more to lay down the base for an exquisitely manipulated plot.

Wangsun, the hero of the tale, is the central pivot around whom the action revolves. Fastidious in his choice of future bride, his fancies turn first one way, then the other, while the two heroines, Guixiu and Wuke, take what steps they can to marry the man on whom both their hearts are set. After a series of dramatic shifts in fortune, the romantic comedy reaches a conclusion satisfactory to all concerned: the marriage to Wangsun of both Guixiu and Wuke. The brilliant contortions and elegant symmetry of the plot design are perhaps best demonstrated schematically. Below, on the left, the sequence of marital overtures made by one character to another is laid out. In the first five cases, this overture takes the form of a marriage proposal, in the last two, of the arrival of the bride at Wangsun's home to see the wedding through. On the right, the outcome of each overture is first noted, the reason for that particular outcome is recorded, and the effect on the action of that outcome is also shown.

Wangsun ------→ Guixiu	Failure. (Guixiu's father objects) Wangsun sickens.
Wuke -----→ Wangsun	Failure. (Wangsun desires only Guixiu) Wuke sickens.
Wuke -----→ Wangsun (dream)	Success. (Wangsun stirred by dream) Wangsun recovers.
Wuke ←----- Wangsun	Failure. (Wuke wants to test Wangsun) Wangsun sickens again.
Wuke ←----- Wangsun	Success. (Wuke convinced of his love) Wangsun recovers again, and Guixiu sickens.
Wangsun ←------ Guixiu	Success. (Guixiu disowned by father) Wuke's marriage in danger.
Wuke -----→ Wangsun	Success. (Wuke determined to go ahead) Happy ending: trio united.

So effectively does the author relate the uneven development of Wangsun's romances to changes in the psychological state of the characters that this carefully engineered plot has no air of artificiality: the reader readily accepts each new action as a logical consequence of what has come before. It is natural, for example, that Wangsun should first reject Wuke's offer of marriage. A precocious youth, pampered by his parents, Wangsun nourishes such an obsessive love for his beautiful cousin, Guixiu, that he has become totally demoralized after her father vetoes the match on the grounds of their kinship ties. Such is his commitment to his idealized image of Guixiu that he at first refuses to consider the possibility of any other woman being his bride, and curtly dismisses Wuke's matchmaker. His subsequent change of heart, when he dreams that Wuke comes to visit him, can be seen as a response

to the subconscious impact of the matchmaker's proposal. In his distraught mental state, her vivid description of Wuke's captivating charms induced a delayed reaction on his imagination, and his dream-vision of Wuke persuades him that she may be equally worthy of his love.

Wuke's unexpected rejection of Wangsun's suit, which reduces the young man to a physical wreck once more, has its origins in her own proud character. The youngest and fairest of the five girls in the distinguished Zhang family, her aristocratic nature does not meekly accept the thwarting of her wishes. Once she has taken a fancy to Wangsun, whom she has glimpsed on an outing one day, she is deeply aggrieved when her overtures are so bluntly spurned. Her dream, identical to Wangsun's, is in her case an expression of her feverish longings to impress upon him her own beauty and give vent to her indignation at his neglect. When she senses that Wangsun is now regarding her with renewed interest, her original humiliation makes her anxious to avoid further rebuffs and eager both to exact some vengeance on Wangsun and to test the depth of his love for her. When she learns that the announcement that she is already engaged has rendered him even more heartbroken than in his lovesick Guixiu phase, her self-esteem is fully restored, and she can accept him unhesitatingly.

In the case of Guixiu's marriage, her parents play a decisive role. Guixiu's mother is the younger sister of Wangsun's father, and from the outset she views sympathetically Wangsun's desire to marry her daughter. Guixiu's father, a degree-holder conservative in nature and irascible in temper, is, however, so sensitive to any hint of impropriety in his family that he rules out Guixiu's marriage to her cousin. When Guixiu becomes seriously ill with depression on hearing that Wangsun and Wuke are engaged, the latent disagreement between her parents breaks out into open

antagonism. Her father would rather she died than bring disgrace on the family name, while her mother, more broad-minded and soft-hearted, cannot bear to see her cherished daughter suffer in this way. In the end, her father becomes so incensed by his wife's attitude that he washes his hands of the whole business. With her mother's willing assistance, Guixiu now seizes the opportunity presented by Wuke's imminent wedding to have herself married to Wangsun first.

It is soon after this, when Wuke, gamely pressing on with her own wedding despite Guixiu's preemption, has become Wangsun's second wife, that the problem of interaction between the three becomes critical. How will the two rivals for Wangsun's love relate to each other? How will Wangsun manage to keep both of these proud and highly-strung young women content with only a half-share in their husband? While giving due attention to this issue, the author ensures that a happy ending to this comedy of lost and found loves is not long delayed. Both girls approve their mother-in-law's compromise solution that their status be determined by seniority, but it comes as a heavy blow to Wuke to learn that Guixiu is older than she, and the prospect of having to address Guixiu as "elder sister" dismays her. However, as days pass and Wuke becomes aware of the other girl's admirable qualities, she comes to respect Guixiu and genuinely look up to her as an older sister. So, much to the relief of the anxious in-laws, the two young brides live together in perfect harmony, exchanging shoes and wearing each other's clothes with the casual familiarity of sisters.

"Jisheng", then, as a study of a man's love for two women in a human setting, represents a considerable technical achievement. Not only does the author control the actions of the three leading characters with great deftness of touch, coordinating them so that a constant ebb and flow

of hope and despair, confidence and uncertainty, pulls the narrative this way and that, he also enriches the background to the story and provides essential linking agents by incorporating such characters as a wily matchmaker, an expansive neighbour, and all three sets of parents into the narrative.

Further evidence of Pu Songling's tendency to dwell on the one man - two women configuration in the last volume is furnished by the story "Chen Yunqi" (427). The bulk of this tale is concerned with an intricate series of unlucky accidents and happy coincidences that eventually leads to the joyful marriage of the hero, Zhen Yu 真毓, and his beloved Yunqi, a former nun. The conventional ending to their romance is avoided, however, when a hitherto minor female character reappears on the centre of the stage, giving the story a new lease of life.

The newly wed couple, returning from a visit to relatives, happen to meet Sheng Yunmian 盛雲眠, who had been Yunqi's closest friend at the priory. Now alone and without means of support, she is invited by Yunqi to cast off her nun's costume, and, assuming the identity of Yunqi's elder sister, accompany them home, where she could stay and keep Zhen's mother company. There, she soon proves herself an invaluable addition to the household. Yunqi, though obedient and attentive, had disappointed her mother-in-law by her inability to manage domestic affairs. Yunmian, experienced, efficient, and composed, quickly endears herself to the old lady by her capable handling of household administration. For her part, Yunmian finds great personal fulfilment in serving the old lady and winning her appreciation, and when it is suggested that she also marry Zhen, she assents, as such an arrangement would assure the continuation of her mission as domestic manager.

On her wedding night, Yunmian openly confesses to Zhen that she feels no sexual attraction towards him. She welcomes the marriage only for the security it guarantees and the opportunities it provides to make herself useful to her mother-in-law. "As for the joys of the bed-chanber", she adds, "please go seek them from someone else."[139] Her distaste for her marital obligations to her husband is soon demonstrated when, three days after the wedding, she moves her bedclothes over to the old lady's apartment, and refuses to move back to her own room. Yunqi, however, positively insistent that she share her husband with Yunmian, thwarts her by advance occupation of her mother-in-law's spare bed, thereby forcing her to spend the night with Zhen. From then on, a regular and harmonious routine is established, as the two wives exchange their sleeping quarters every two or three days, supplying alternately the needs of husband and mother-in-law. Yunmian and Yunqi complement each other in serving the old lady: the former's resourceful management relieves her of all household worries, and leaves her free to play board games with Yunqi and enjoy hours of casual relaxation.

Thus, in "Chen Yunqi", Pu Songling extends his story to make room for an idealized picture of polygamy, where each wife competes to allow the other nights with their husband, and their coordinated efforts to please their mother-in-law lead the old widow to exclaim: "Even when my boy's father was alive, I never knew such pleasure."[140] Yunmian's dispassionate attitude and indifference to sexual desire contrast dramatically with Yunqi's romantic nature, and as in "Xiangyu", the juxtaposition of two such personalities enhances the charm of the story.

As Pu was well aware, conjugal harmony of the sort depicted in "Jisheng" and "Chen Yunqi" was all too rare in real life, and in "Danan" (447), he considers the serious antagonisms that develop when two women are married

to one man. In this case, the action is not concerned with a young man romantically attracted to two young ladies, but with the resolution of tensions within a marriage that has already taken place. A scholar, Xi Chenglie 奚成列, has, on the death of his first wife, married a jealous woman, Shen shi 申氏, who mistreats his concubine, He Zhaorong 何昭容, and makes his life a misery. Unable to discipline her, Xi takes the simple expedient of leaving home. His long absence puts He Zhaorong at the mercy of Shen shi, who steadily reduces the concubine's monthly allowance in an effort to force her into remarriage.

When the steadfastly loyal Zhaorong refuses to be tempted, Shen shi sells her to a traveling merchant. Zhaorong stabs herself in protest, and makes another attempt on her life when resold to another trader. She begs to be allowed to enter a nunnery, but is tricked and sold again to yet another merchant. This man turns out to be none other than Xi Chenglie, who has changed his profession after leaving home. He makes Zhaorong his wife, as a reward for her constancy.

Zhaorong, physically handicapped by her self-inflicted injuries, is unable to do the housework, and urges Xi to take a concubine. Her husband hesitates, mindful of the disastrous consequences of his earlier marriage. Zhaorong calms his fears, however, by assuring him that she suffered too much in the past to bear to inflict similar treatment on a woman junior to herself. In a second irony, the concubine that Xi's friend purchases for him is his original wife, Shen shi.

Shen shi's career during the intervening period stands in stark contrast to Zhaorong's self-sacrificing allegiance to Xi Chenglie. She readily agrees to her brother's suggestion that she remarry, but to her bitter disappointment, the husband her brother selects for her proves to be an impotent old merchant, incapable of giving her sexual satis-

faction. Like Zhaorong, she tries to commit suicide, though in her case her motive is thwarted lust rather than threatened chastity. Her husband is only too happy to get rid of her, and thus she comes to be delivered into the hands of her ex-husband, Xi Chenglie.

The fortuitous series of events which has reversed the status of Zhaorong and Shen shi produces a new balance of power within the home. Xi, disgusted by Shen shi's shameless conduct, is determined to humiliate her. Shen shi, though intimidated, has too much pride willingly to accept her humble position as concubine. Zhaorong, sensitive and self-effacing, bears no ill will to her former tormentor, and adopts a mediating role:

> "Today it is a concubine that I am buying", [Xi told Shen shi,] "not a wife that I am marrying. You should first of all bow to Zhaorong, and practice the courtesies owed to the mistress by the subordinate wife."
>
> Shen balked at the ignominy of it. "Well, what was it like in the old days when you were the mistress?" exclaimed Xi. Zhaorong urged him to desist. Xi would not relent, and brandishing a stick, stood over Shen threateningly. She had no choice but to bow to Zhaorong. But she always felt it beneath her dignity to wait upon her, and simply attended to her own work in another apartment. Zhaorong treated her leniently on all occasions, and was unwilling even to exhort her to diligence or reprimand her negligence. Every time Xi dined and chatted with Zhaorong, he would make a point of ordering Shen to wait at their side and serve their needs; if Zhaorong tried to replace her with a maid, he refused to let her come forward. (11.1567-1568)

In time, the relationship between the three becomes less strained. The knowledge that Zhaorong's son is now a magistrate awes Shen shi into a more submissive attitude, and a court decision confirms her lower status. Her fears that Zhaorong will seek vengeance prove unfounded, as the latter makes ever more conciliatory gestures, calling her elder sister, and giving her generous shares of food and clothing. Xi, too, learns to forgive her past wrongs, and allows her, as well as Zhaorong, to be addressed as taimu 太母.

Thus, in "Danan", features characteristic of other stories in this volume are again conspicuous: ingenious plot design, which not only turns the tables on Shen shi, but exposes her flaws and Zhaorong's virtues in the most telling manner, and the association with the hero (here not such a sympathetic figure) of two women of radically different temperaments. This tale, along with the other examples of "Xiangyu", "Jisheng", and "Chen Yunqi", demonstrates how effectively the author utilizes the device of dual female roles in "The King", a technique only sketchily attempted in "The City God Examination".

(4) Other structural aspects

Tales in the first volume are dominated by the unilinear plot, wherein a sequence of incidents are linked together by their connection with one central male character. "Yingning" (48), although a longer story than any in the final volume, possesses a fairly straightforward plot of this kind. The hero, Wang Zifu 王子服, falls in love at first sight with a girl he glimpses on a holiday outing. His lovesick fancies induce a deterioration in his health, and, to humour him, his cousin spins him a yarn, telling him the girl is a cousin of his who lives ten miles away, and promising to arrange the engagement. Growing impatient when this promise is not fulfilled, Wang sets off to visit the girl's family himself. His cousin's casually concocted story turns out to be uncannily correct: Wang finds the girl almost immediately, learns that she is indeed his cousin, and takes her home and marries her. In the story, events are recounted in the chronological order in which they befall the hero. Where it is necessary to provide supplementary information about the actions of other characters elsewhere, a short summary is inserted into the narrative, introduced by a phrase such as "Prior to this, . . ." (xian shi 先是). For instance, after Wang has

been staying with his aunt for a couple of days, a family servant arrives to collect him. The author then briefly retraces the steps by which this came about: Wang's mother's concern for his long absence, an unsuccessful search conducted in the local neighbourhood, the family's realization that Wang must have headed in this direction, the delegation of a servant to look for him. The original narrative resumes with Wang's next move: his invitation to his aunt and cousin to return home with him.

The unilinear principle characterizes not only many of Pu Songling's stories, but much of Classical fiction in general, with its tendencies to a pseudo-biographical approach. More often in the vernacular short story does the plot divide into two strands which develop for a time in parallel, to be reintegrated at some later point. Subject matter, of course, is an influential factor: the unilinear narrative is particularly common in tales of romance between a man and a supernatural woman, where the latter's movements are seldom observed independently of her encounters with her mortal partner. When Classical authors turn to more realistic subject matter, they are likely to employ variations in the traditional structural feature. Song Maocheng's 宋 楙 澄 "Zhushan" 珠 衫 is a case in point: the action is not followed through the eyes of any one character, rather, attention switches smoothly from one person to another, from merchant's wife to seducer, from seducer to husband, and then back to wife.[141] As the worldly dimension assumes greater importance in the last volume of Liaozhai, we also encounter several plots which abandon the conventional emphasis on the hero's actions as the unifying factor.

We have already pointed out how, in "Fang Wenshu", the reader's attention is directed first of all to Deng Chengde, and to his relationship with Fang, then switches back to his wife and her contacts with Fang,

before concluding with the couple's reunion. Here, Fang Wenshu provides the narrative thread that binds the two halves of the story together. "Danan" even more dramatically alternates different actors in the development of the plot.

"Danan" is really two stories in one. There is the story, referred to above, of the troubled marital careers of Xi Chenglie and his two wives, and also the story of He Zhaorong's son, Danan. The two stories, linked in the early part of the tale, separate and proceed independently of each other, before merging again towards the end. Danan is born soon after his father left home in disgust, and while still a child resolves to set off in search of him. The narrative follows Danan on his varied adventures on the road, but after his adoption by an old man Chen 陳 , attention reverts to He Zhaorong and the string of suicide attempts that eventually leads to her reunion with her husband. They are then joined by Shen shi, whose activities are reviewed retrospectively by means of the "Prior to this,. . ." formula. At this point, the local magistrate Chen is introduced into the action, and he, it is soon revealed, is none other than the adult Danan. The reader is brought up to date with Danan's career, and the story ends with the return of Xi and his wives, with Danan's assistance, to their original home. Thus, the plot of the tale amalgamates episodes concerning different characters by a combination of "after the fact" summaries and genuine parallel developments in the narrative.

In the artfully contrived plot of "Chen Yunqi", the heroine, who is courted so single-mindedly by Zhen Yu in the opening section of the tale, is unwittingly delivered into his hands by his mother, whose activities occupy the central portion of the story. Elements of deception and mistaken identity add piquancy to the narrative, and only in the denouement is the characters' confusion fully resolved.

This romantic comedy begins when the hero, captivated at first sight by a beautiful young nun, asks her her name, and is told "Yunqi, surname Chen". Zhen Yu responds facetiously with the remark, "What a coincidence! It so happens I have the surname Pan!"[142] His reference to the legendary romance between the nun Chen Miaochang 陳妙常 and the young scholar, Pan Facheng 潘法成,[143] is meant as a flirtatious invitation to embark on a love affair. While understanding its implications, Yunqi is misled into thinking that Pan is his real name. This initial misapprehension is followed by a series of unfortunate events which separate the two lovers. After Zhen Yu loses contact with Yunqi, his mother displaces him from the centre-stage position. After a chance encounter with Yunqi on a pilgrimage to Lotus Peak, she heatedly forbids her son to marry the nun. Later, however, Mrs. Zhen happens to meet Yunqi a second time, in different circumstances. Failing to recognize the girl, she sees her as the ideal consolation to her son for his thwarted romance。 Yunqi, who does not recall Mrs. Zhen, readily agrees to be her adopted daughter. And Zhen, not noticing her resemblance to Yunqi, regards this even more attractive young lady as a satisfactory replacement.

Thus far, none of the three protagonists are aware that Mrs. Zhen, initially the stubborn obstacle to her son and Yunqi's marriage, has now become their matchmaker. Realization dawns on them in a decisive dialogue:

> Mrs。 Zhen said to the girl, "Do you know what my idea was in bringing you back with me?"
>
> "I already know that", she replied, smiling. "Only what you don't know is my original motive in coming back with you. When I was younger, I was engaged to a Mr. Pan of Yiling 夷陵, but communications between us have long been broken, and surely by now he is happily married to someone else. If that is so, I will be a wife for your son; if not, I can always be your daughter, and repay your kindnesses in the future."
>
> "Seeing that you are engaged", said Mrs。 Zhen, "I will certainly not press you. But some time ago, when I was visiting Wuzushan 五祖山, there was a nun who inquired about a Mr. Pan, and now you mention another Mr. Pan, but I know in fact that there is no clan in Yiling with that surname."
>
> Startled, the girl asked, "Where you the lady, then, who spent the night below Lotus Peak? The one who asked after Mr. Pan was me."
>
> Only now did it all suddenly become clear to Mrs. Zhen, who laughed and said, "If that is the case, then your Mr. Pan is actually right here."

"Where?" said the girl.

Mrs. Zhen told a maid to conduct her over and put the question to her son. Stunned, he cried, "Are you Yunqi?"

"How did you know?" the girl responded. Only when the young man explained the situation did she realize that he had called himself Pan as a joke. Now that she knew who he was, she was too embarrassed to continue the interview, and hastily rushed back to tell his mother. (11.1500-1501)

Through this series of disclosures, the layers of misunderstanding and mutual ignorance among the characters which have built up as the plot developed are peeled away, and the comic irony of the situation is as evident to the trio as it has been for some time to the alert reader. By allowing Mrs. Zhen such a major part in the story, the author makes her privy to knowledge denied to both Zhen Yu and Yunqi, delaying and enhancing the dramatic impact of the dumbfounded questions which the perplexed lovers put to each other, before they, too, comprehend. Only after this vivid unmasking scene is over does Pu Songling release the information, so long withheld, about Yunqi's change of identity from nun to young Miss Wang, prior disclosure of which would have ruined the effect of surprise. The author's achievements in structural organization of this tale are a measure of the technical skill manifested in this volume.

One or two other innovative or experimental features in "The King" also deserve mention. "Wang Gui'an" and "Jisheng", for instance, are coupled together, the latter tale a sequel to the former. The first story, which describes Wang's romance with Meng Yunniang, ends with the birth of their son, Jisheng (zi, Wangsun). By the beginning of "Jisheng", the boy has grown up to be a handsome young scholar, whose love affairs form the second story. A sense of continuity between the narratives is maintained not only by a dream motif common to both stories, but the participation in the action of the second tale of Jisheng's parents, the main protagonists in "Wang Gui'an".

"Zeng Youyu" incorporates two series of incidents involving two generations of a family within one narrative. Rarely do more than three or four characters play a major role in Liaozhai stories, but so as to lend weight to this expose of fraternal strife, Pu employs such a vast array of actors that a sketch of the family tree is almost necessary when discussing, or even reading, the story.

This tale is designed to deliver a moral lesson, and the multiplicity of characters (some twenty people take part in the action at one time or another), the plethora of incidents, are organized to intensify the didactic effect. Although the dominance of Zeng Cheng 曾成, the eldest brother, superficially limits the scale of hostilities among the first generation, the fatal infection is unavoidably transmitted to the second, with even more deleterious consequences. Each character and each incident has its part to play in illustrating the moral decline which, the narrative indicates, will be irreversible without a conscious attempt at self-redemption. Thus, in "Zeng Youyu", Pu Songling does not hesitate to introduce a large cast of characters and pile episode upon episode in his efforts to convey his message to greatest effect.

Conclusion

Our comparative study of "The City God Examination and "The King" demonstrates that an analysis informed by a sense of chronology is indeed a fruitful line of approach. By taking the two sets of stories at opposite ends of the time continuum, and subjecting them to close scrutiny, it is possible to discern the differences in theme and structure which are easily overlooked if one treats the collection as a monolithic whole.

The first volume demonstrates how quickly Pu's talent for imaginative fiction blossomed. "The City God Examination" includes some of the author's most inspired writing, much of it devoted to traditional subject matter: accounts either of romantic entanglements between man and ghost or man and fox, or of hostile encounters between the same protagonists. The concern to entertain is paramount: serious social commentary is generally avoided, as the narrative is animated by a desire to amuse or shock the reader. Although the author already employs with great success some characteristic structural devices, effective use of conventional plot design is more common than adventurous innovation.

In "The King", by contrast, the novelty appeal of ghost and fox themes has waned, to be replaced by a mature, socially oriented approach, more sensitive to the human background. Pu's satiric purpose is conveyed more plainly, in tales that deliver forthright criticism of contemporary affairs. No longer content with simple romances, the author examines the implications of love outside marriage, and the complications that arise when more than one woman is involved. Stories exhibit a high degree of technical accomplishment in their control of intricate plots.

The signs of increased concern with social and administrative problems in "The King" tally with the evidence from Pu's prose writings that such questions occupied him increasingly in his later years. "A Policy Summary for Good Administration", a seventeen-point programme of policies designed to uphold law and order and minimize corruption, was written after 1698, and other essays dating from the 1700s present critiques of government abuses.[144] Some of the views expressed in these works are strikingly similar to issues raised in some items in "The King". Our awareness of the chronology of Pu's fiction, coordinated with biographical knowledge, enables

us to relate Liaozhai the book more closely to Pu Songling the man, and to monitor in his stories the author's responses to problems on which he felt more strongly as the years advanced.

Illuminating as a comparison of the early and the late stories is, we should be careful not to exaggerate the change of direction in Pu's work. In highlighting certain distinctive features in these two volumes, our discussion has of necessity been selective, concentrating on the major stories where the authorial presence is most clearly felt, where creative purpose and narrative technique can be most precisely identified and differentiated. The brief, unelaborated anecdotes which are interspersed among the longer stories are also a significant part of Pu Songling's output, but can make little contribution to this kind of study. They are neutral elements which could fit as easily into the last volume as into the first, a stabilizing feature that counteracts any trend towards dramatic development. Other aspects have been observed as common to both "The City God Examination" and "The King", the alternation of relaxation and tension within a story, for example. Unitary factors such as these cannot be ignored when examining Pu Songling's creative growth.

This qualification should be borne in mind as we consider to what extent the shift from "The City God Examination" to "The King" can be discerned in the intervening six ce. As one might expect, the differences between these volumes is less clear-cut than at the two extremities of Pu's writing career.

The horror stories that appear in the first half of "The City God Examination" rarely recur elsewhere, so it seems that this sort of material can be isolated as characteristic only of Pu's earliest work. In other respects, the ce most closely resembling "The City God Examination"

is "A Certain Gentleman". This volume contains a large number of fox stories (67, 68, 69, 71, 75, 78, 79, 80, 89, 93), and though critical comment on administrative and judicial issues acquires a slightly harsher tone, it appears infrequently (79, 92, 107). Pu Songling does, however, announce his interest in family conflicts and domestic morality in two stories (73, 111), the first which deals with a stepmother's cruelty and the solidarity between stepbrothers, the second with the antagonism between a young man and his in-laws. Here, too, the first full treatments of a double romantic interest are to be found (69, 75), and thereafter crop up regularly in other ce. This device, then, while absent from the first volume, was introduced relatively early.

In terms of content, "Liu Haishi" and "Yatou" are not easily distinguishable, though in some respects the latter perhaps shows certain development. In "Liu Haishi", we see for the first time a man choosing whom he loves more: his wife or a supernatural rival (122), and the relationship between spirit and mortal spouse is further elaborated in "Yatou" (181, 185, 235). "Liu Haishi" includes several stories which present a sustained, critical view of corruption and abuse of power (127, 135, 149), and "Yatou" offers other treatments of the same theme (194, 211, 240, 241). Domestic topics, still a minor interest in "Liu Haishi" (148), take on increased importance in "Yatou" with the first major study of a shrew (212), a character type to exercise Pu's pen in every subsequent volume, as well as three other stories on tensions within a family or a marriage (197, 200, 227). In "Liu Haishi", we may note, Pu returns on one occasion to the early horror theme (147), but here introduces a comic note to his narrative of an exorcist and a demon who both frighten each other out of their wits. One occasionally

encounters plots of relative complexity in both "Liu Haishi" (131, 153, 161) and "Yatou" (177, 186), but in their abundance of fox stories and the still limited scope of social criticism, these two volumes generally appear to be aligned with the early rather than the late phase of Pu's fiction.

Three volumes which progress more markedly towards the position occupied by "The King" are "The Giant", "The Avian Knight", and "Princess Yunluo", roughly in that order. In "The Giant", stories of domestic problems are particularly well represented, with two extensive recastings of the termagant theme (252, 258), along with other relationships within the home (260, 270, 278, 294). Corruption in the examinations is touched upon (279) and misconduct by officials in other capacities occupies a certain amount of attention (297, 302, 305). In one entry (282), Pu Songling attaches to a story for the first time a lengthy exposition of his views on problems in local administration.

In "The Avian Knight", considerable energy is devoted to the most prolonged discussion of the examination system to date (321, 339, 369), and problems of administration at the local level also undergo scrutiny (318, 340, 373, 374). Family themes again are present (323, 337, 342). Some of Pu's plots and character configurations, which have been increasing in complexity, show a high level of accomplishment in this volume (315, 320, 327, 366).

Skillful plot manipulation is a particular feature of "Princess Yunluo", which contains an unusual preponderance of long, well-developed stories. Apart from maintaining a greater degree of consistency in length of individual tales, "Princess Yunluo" possesses features that correspond quite closely to the characteristics of "The King" that we outlined earlier.

A similar blend of social concerns (381, 392, 396, 398, 400) and domestic or moral issues (380, 383, 385, 397, 404, 407, 411) occupy attention, combined with intricately crafted narratives (380, 394, 399, 401, 404).

Let us compare this observed progression with the apparent chronological order (in parentheses after the volume titles):

1.	"The City God Examination"	(1)
2.	"A Certain Gentleman"	(2?)
3.(or 4?)	"Liu Haishi"	(5?)
4.(or 3?)	"Yatou"	(3?)
5.	"The Giant"	(4?)
6.	"The Avian Knight"	(6)
7.	"Princess Yunluo"	(7)
8.	"The King"	(8)

The first sequence does not correspond exactly with the second, over which, obviously, doubts remain. Clearly, one would like to be able to resolve the uncertainty over the order in the first sequence of "Liu Haishi" and "Yatou", and, in the second, of "A Certain Gentleman" and "The Giant" in addition. However, it is unrealistic to expect a totally satisfactory progression in distinctive features from one volume to the next. Given that some individual ce resists attempts to fit them neatly into a pattern of either chronological order or literary content, the most practical solution is to regard Pu Songling's fiction as falling into three phases:

1. Early (ca. 1675-1683): "The City God Examination" and, probably, "A Certain Gentleman".
2. Middle (ca. 1683-1690): "Liu Haishi", "Yatou", and "The Giant".
3. Late (ca. 1690-1705): "The Avian Knight", "Princess Yunlou", and "The King".

Such a scheme remains sensitive to the changes in Liaozhai which took

place over a thirty-year period, while acknowledging the cohesive factors that unite the work. As we concede the difficulty of establishing a cut-and-dried serial sequence of volumes, we recognize the special nature of Pu Songling's authorial role, operating usually within self-imposed limits, repeatedly producing subtle variations on a restricted number of favourite themes, alternating the most sophisticated fiction with the simplest anecdote, in a seemingly haphazard process of accretion. Yet, at the same time, by retaining a conception of a broad chronological progression, we can bring an awareness of creative growth and technical development to our reading of Liaozhai, which introduces a critical edge that would otherwise be dulled by the sheer bulk of the collection.

II. THE BIOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND TO LIAOZHAI ZHIYI

Introduction

The basic facts of Pu Songling's career make unexciting reading. He was born in Zichuan in 1640, the third of four sons, in a family of modest social position and declining economic status. His father, a man of scholarly leanings, had never succeeded in passing the first stage of the civil examinations, and had made a living as a merchant for some years before retiring to his books. Pu Songling married the daughter of a local licentiate when he was seventeen, and in the following year was awarded the first degree, coming top of the list of graduates in Jinan prefecture. For the next twenty years he divided his time, as far as we know, between study for the examinations, teaching, and writing, remaining probably in his native county apart from a visit to Jiangsu in 1670-1671, when he was employed as a private secretary by a friend serving as magistrate there. In 1679, the year in which he composed his preface to Liaozhai, he took up the post of tutor in a prominent gentry household, where he would stay for much of each year until his retirement in 1709. His regular activities as schoolteacher, examination candidate, and author proceeded uneventfully throughout these years. After a series of fruitless attempts to pass the provincial examination, he had to content himself with the degree of senior licentiate, granted to him in 1710, just five years before his death.

On closer inspection, several aspects of the social and biographical background offer valuable insights into reasons why certain preoccupations

so absorb the author of Liaozhai zhiyi。 Up until now, no systematic attempt has been made to trace the connections between Liaozhai and the author's personal experiences in life. Although two competent biographies and two life chronologies (nianpu 年譜) have been devoted to Pu Songling, these works are limited in scope, and leave much ground still to be covered.[1] Recently, Jonathan Spence has explored in more adventurous fashion some of the links between Pu's stories and the social realities of the day, but the topic clearly merits a more specialized study.[2] This chapter, therefore, will attempt to correct the tendency in past studies of Liaozhai to discuss the collection in isolation from its biographical background.

Our material is drawn from a wide variety of sources, some of which, though widely available, have been largely neglected hitherto, whilst others survive only in rare manuscript copies. Of particular value to this study have been the collected prose and poetry of Pu Songling, the works of Pu's friends and contemporaries, the Zichuan district gazetteer, and clan genealogies.

Our discussion will centre upon five topics, which are selected for the prominent place accorded to them in Liaozhai, and for the documentary evidence that supplies an insight into their significance in Pu's life. Our treatment of each topic will vary according to its specific characteristics. In some cases, we will offer a reassessment of the views put forward by other scholars, when this seems necessary, and in others, we will simply present materials not before given the attention they deserve. If we offer only partial answers to the many questions that Pu Songling's work raises, this is perhaps inevitable, when we remember how incomplete or how shadowy our picture of the author still remains.

1. Zichuan in the Early Qing Period

No reader of Liaozhai can fail to be struck by the pronounced regional emphasis and period flavour in Pu Songling's stories. The bulk of his tales are set in Shandong, and many describe events in the author's native county or adjacent districts in the Jinan prefecture. Apart from the occasional episode set in the Ming period, the vast majority of narratives are set in Pu's own time, the first sixty years of the Qing dynasty. Our understanding of Pu's work will therefore be enhanced by an awareness of the distinctive features of the place and time in which the author was active.

Pu Songling was born in Zichuan, and although as a young man he spent several months in Jiangsu, and, at intervals throughout his life, made visits to Jinan, the provincial capital two counties to the west, Zichuan was to remain his home territory, from which he seldom strayed. How, then, should we characterize the local environment, which inevitably conditioned his experiences and left deep impressions on his work?

Zichuan straddles the northern reaches of the central Shandong massif, of which Taishan is the most prominent peak. The hilly terrain in the southern part of the county gives way to level plain as one proceeds north. Two rivers flow down from the mountains in the south: the Xiaofu He 孝婦河, which passes through the centrally situated county town of Zichuan, and the Zi He 淄河, on the east side of the district. Precipitation is extremely variable, and in wet years two or three times as much rain may fall as in a dry year. Moreover, rain is concentrated in the summer months: half the annual rainfall comes in July and August alone. Consequently the seasonal changes in the rivers are dramatic. Though their flow dwindles to nothing in the dry season, the Xiaofu He and Zi He are transformed into dangerous torrents in the summer.[3] During Pu's day, the hilly terrain

hampered transport and inhibited the development of trade. As the rivers were unnavigable at any time of the year, all communications were by road. Bridges that spanned the rivers and their tributaries were often destroyed by flash floods, thereby necessitating regular reconstruction and imposing an additional economic burden on the local community.[4]

Pu Songling recorded the disastrous effects of Zichuan's unstable climate in a Liaozhai entry:

> In the twenty-first year of the Kangxi reign [1682], there was a drought in Shandong, and from spring to summer not a blade of grass grew in the barren earth. On the thirteenth day of the sixth month [17 July], a little rain fell, and only then did farmers sow millet. On the eighteenth, a heavy downpour watered the land to a sufficient degree, and beans were planted. One day, an old man from Stone Gate Village saw two oxen fighting on the hillside at dusk, and said to the villagers, "A great flood is going to come!" Then he took his family and moved elsewhere, mocked by all the locals. Shortly afterwards, rain poured down fiercely, and continued to pour unceasingly the whole night through. On level ground, the water was several feet deep, and the homes and cottages were all inundated. (4.492)

The droughts which inevitably ensued from the variability of rainfall in turn made the livelihood of the local population extremely precarious. So severe was the famine in the year of Pu's birth that cannibalism was widespread.[5] Periods of acute hardship were to afflict the district throughout Pu's life. A year or two before his death, he summarized conditions in Zichuan in the following terms:

> The land is cramped and the population crowded, and though customs are simple, the soil is poor. In the thousand villages, the ploughshares know nothing of the commerce of lake or littoral. For every hundred li of arable land, half the area is taken over by gorges and mountains. There is little surplus to be gained from the peasants' industry in the fields; as they suffer the sorrows of the famine-stricken, the people are reduced to ever greater distress, and every eight or nine years, intense drought occurs.[6]

Educated men of sensitive temperament were appalled by the recurrent famines, and found their own attitude to life affected by their personal observations of misery and despair. Pu's friend, Tang Menglai, was a boy of eleven in 1639, during the protracted drought that continued until the following summer, when Pu was born. Later in life, Tang recalled the incidents of cannibalism which he had heard about at the time, and related one particularly horrific episode: one day, as dusk was falling, he was passing a mountain village when he saw in the distance a man confined in a stone pit, who was screaming desperately for help. Seconds later, Tang noticed another man approaching, with a knife in his hand and a basket on his back, about to slit his throat. The boy fled back home in terror. "That year, there were many days when we secured the doors and dared not venture outside", Tang remembered, and went on to explain how this memory had affected him:

> During my life, on any occasion when I am attending to matters of personal comfort, and happen to be stirred by some aspiration to luxury which unsettles my heart, I look back to this episode. Even when I see another man who adopts a somewhat extravagant life-style, I feel inclined to recount this story as a way of remonstrating with him, but I lack the courage to be so abrupt.[7]

Pu Songling, for his part, made frequent references in his poetry to crop failures, locust infestations, and so forth. He documented in great detail the terrible famine of 1703-1704, and sent a lengthy report on the disaster to the Shandong financial commissioner, including practical suggestions on how to rectify administrative problems that handicapped relief measures.[8] Pu's preoccupations with the very basic concerns of survival in unfavourable conditions are reflected in Liaozhai occasionally. Foxes and other beings possessed of supernatural powers were traditionally credited with the ability to predict unerringly what commodities would

produce a handsome profit in the future.[9] When Pu made use of this motif, he tended to imagine the fox as capable of rescuing its human associate from the fickle and cruel vagaries of natural conditions. In "The Drinking Companion" (68), a fox gives guidance to his friend, a poor scholar:

> One day, the fox said to the scholar, "Buckwheat is selling for a low price in the market. You can hoard it as a commodity that will increase in value." The scholar followed his advice, and harvested over forty piculs. Everybody made fun of him for doing this. Soon afterwards, a severe drought set in, and millet and beans withered up entirely: only buckwheat could be sown. He sold the seeds, and was paid ten times the amount he originally spent. From now on, he became ever richer, and came to manage two hundred mu of fertile fields. He simply asked the fox for directions: if it said to sow more wheat, then a full wheat harvest would follow, if it said to sow more millet, then a good crop of millet could be collected. The timing of the cultivation of all cereals was determined by the fox.[10]

A simple agricultural economy predominated in Zichuan. The main crops were wheat, barley, millet, and beans; vegetables, melons, and other fruit were also grown. Tussore was spun from the silk of mountain silkworms, but for the peasants this was only a sideline occupation to provide for their own needs, not a commercial enterprise. Some coal-mining was carried on in the southern part of the country. The local gazetteer describes how the miners are winched down deep shafts, and labour in tunnels, "crawling like maggots, bent like inchworms", and asks what could induce them to attach such little value to their own lives. Its answer is that the men are so poor they can find no other course open to them.[11]

As the development of the economy was restrained by topographical and climatic factors, the local population was little affected by new social attitudes prevalent in more active commercial areas. Pu Songling alluded in his prose works to the down-to-earth honesty and unsophisticated simplicity of Zichuan people.[12] Even in Liaozhai, where the central characters are usually educated men like himself, Pu found space to sketch the personality

of the straightforward and hard-working country-folk in such stories as "A Farmer's Wife" (371).

Pu Songling's childhood and youth coincided with the years of invasion and rebellion that accompanied the fall of the Ming dynasty and the establishment of the Qing. Many of his stories evoke images of this turbulent and repressive period, and, by so doing, have aroused much speculation as to the extent of the author's antagonism to the Manchu authorities. Before we offer any views on this question, let us first examine in some detail those events which had the most direct bearing on Pu's personal experience, and consider how they are reflected in Liaozhai.

Zichuan had its first glimpse of China's conquerors in January 1639, when scouts from a Manchu expeditionary force, commanded by Dorgon 多爾袞, penetrated the outlying areas around the county town.[13] In February of that year, Jinan was stormed by the invading army, and in the massacre that ensued, 130,000 residents of the city are said to have been killed;[14] grim confirmation, if any were needed, of the ruthlessness of the Manchus in crushing resistance. More than three-quarters of a million people in north China were taken prisoner and removed to the Manchu homelands during this raid and a subsequent campaign of 1643, and although Zichuan was not directly affected, the Shandong population at large paid a heavy toll.[15]

From 1641 onwards, a series of rebel armies began to spring up in the Jinan area, and forces led by a local insurrectionist, Wang Maode 王茂德, threatened the town of Zichuan. Pu Songling's father, in conjunction with other members of the clan, organized a defense force to protect the village of Pujiazhuang 蒲家莊, and to offer support to the regular militia. One of Pu's older cousins died in a skirmish with Wang Maode's men. In the

summer of 1644, after the collapse of the central Ming administration, an appointee of the rebel leader, Li Zicheng 李自成, took up the post of magistrate in Zichuan. Wang Maode launched a new attack on the town, and by the time that his army, numbering several tens of thousands, finally abandoned their assaults on the stout walls of Zichuan, the surrounding country areas had been devastated.[16]

Although the new Qing government established its jurisdiction over Shandong in the second half of 1644, assigning new officials to take charge of local administration, resistance remained widespread, and disturbances were common in the early years of the Shunzhi emperor. In 1646, a native of Gaoyuan 高苑 county, Xie Qian 謝遷, organized a rebel army several thousand strong, and then proceeded to rampage through the neighbouring districts of Xincheng 新城 and Changshan. In July 1647, he decided to make Zichuan his temporary base, and with the help of accomplices inside the town, who suspended ropes from the walls during the night, he captured the county seat. Several members of the local gentry were put to death in revenge killings. Zhang Tairui 張泰瑞, a relative of Pu's friend, Zhang Duqing, was murdered by a blacksmith, with whom he had been engaged in a property dispute.[17] The rebels reserved their harshest treatment for Sun Zhixie 孫之獬, an ex-official whose sycophantic attitude to the Manchus had aroused much popular resentment. Sun, a jinshi of 1622, had been dismissed from the post of reader-in-waiting in the Hanlin Academy in 1628, on account of his association with the Wei Zhongxian 魏忠賢 clique. After the fall of the Ming dynasty, he was quick to ingratiate himself with the new authorities. In 1644, he secured himself a new position in the Hanlin Academy during the brief interregnum of Li Zicheng. The following year, he won favour with China's Manchu rulers by vigorously support-

ing the adoption by the Han population of the Manchu hair-style and fashion of dress. He was rewarded with an official post, but was relieved of his duties in 1646, whereupon he retired to Zichuan. Once Sun realized that Xie's forces had entered the town, he anticipated that they would be bent on revenge, and tried to hang himself. The rebels cut him down, revived him, then murdered his four grandsons before his eyes. "You covet an official post so much," they said, "that you have made the whole nation braid its hair. Now we are going to sow hair back on your head." They pierced the top of his skull with an awl, and inserted several strands of hair into the hole before Sun collapsed and died.[18]

The rebels underestimated the speed with which government forces would respond to their uprising. As Manchu detachments from Jinan and Qingzhou 青州 were deployed, the rebels soon found themselves trapped within the city walls of Zichuan. After a month's siege, the troops blew up sections of the wall and burst in. When the rebels realized that further resistance was impossible, they discarded their uniforms, and hid in local homes, hoping to escape detection. Some residents, innocent of any association with the rebels, committed suicide so as to avoid unjust capture, and many others suffered the same fate as the supporters of Xie Qian. Zhang Duqing, a young boy at the time, later recalled the horror of the massacre and the ordeal of the siege:

> At this time, punishment was meted out indiscriminately. It was difficult to distinguish the innocent citizens from the guilty, so all alike stretched forth their necks to receive the executioner's blow, like chickens and dogs to the slaughter. . . . Though I was just an ignorant child at the time, through the forests of pikes and thickets of swords I would often glimpse corpses scattered one on top of the other, and blood flowing right across the courtyards, but in those days I knew no fear. When I look back

upon it, even now I tremble to my bones, and am shocked to the soul. I remember that during this period, if we happened to get a calabash of rice gruel, young and old alike would fight to drink it, finishing it all in a moment, as though they were sucking sugar-cane. Spilled blood flowed into the wells, and there was no rope if you wanted to draw water. When the servants suffered from extreme thirst, some scooped up horses' urine in their hands and drank: experiences that cannot be retold to people living in a peaceful age.[19]

In Pu Songling's home village, his father and his uncle, Pu Chu 祝 , had organized local resistance to Xie Qian's rebel army. Pu Chu was killed in a courageous and successful defence of the village against an attack by Xie's lieutenant, Yue Zhengtang 岳 正 堂 . Pu Chu's son, Zhaoxing 兆 興 , died tragically when he was suspected of collaboration with the rebel forces. After his father's death, and the seizure of Zichuan by Xie Qian, Zhaoxing made his way to Qingzhou, and begged that government troops be sent to crush the uprising and avenge his father. When, later, a Qingzhou official named Li 李 advanced towards Zichuan with a body of soldiers, Pu Zhaoxing went out to welcome them. Suspicious of his motives, Li became convinced that Zhaoxing was in cahoots with the rebels, and, refusing to listen to explanations, put the young man to death. Despite these casualties, the village itself survived the disturbances unscathed.[20]

For the more affluent members of the Zichuan community, the events of 1647 and their aftermath came as a crippling blow. Gao Wei 高 瑋 (jinshi 1646), Gao Heng's elder brother, recalled in a memoir the prosperous times in the late Ming, when the town was enlivened by lavish dramatic performances, and prominent gentry and wealthy merchants could picnic in gardens and glens, carousing to their hearts' content. But so destructive were the killings carried out by rebels and Manchus, so ruined were the survivors, that all was irrevocably lost: "The dancing skirts and singing fans of yesteryear have been reduced to ghostly phosphorus and bleached bones, the hills of copper and streams of gold dispersed like clouds and mist."[21] In the prevailing

atmosphere of suspicion, where anyone believed to be conniving at rebellion was severely punished, wealthy families like that of Zhang Duqing found themselves vulnerable to malicious accusations. In 1649, when a country villa belonging to Zhang's father was occupied by bandits, a powerful member of the local gentry used this as a pretext for accusing the Zhang family of harbouring rebels, so as to blackmail them into handing over property. Zhang Duqing's father, and two of his uncles, were sent to prison in Jinan, and the clan was forced to sell many of its assets in an effort to bribe the authorities and secure their release. By the time their names were cleared, the family estate had been reduced to a fraction of its former size.[22]

Although Pu Songling was only a boy of seven when Xie Qian's revolt took place, this violent episode was to leave a lasting impression on him.[23] He was familiar, too, with the fateful consequences of the rebellions that broke out during his adult life, notably the revolt of Yu Qi 于七, a native of Qixia 棲霞 district in east Shandong, whose forces were crushed after a year of fierce fighting (spring 1661 - spring 1662), and the loss of numerous innocent lives. All those known to have had contact with Yu Qi at any time, even those who had simply exchanged a name-card, were executed or imprisoned, and many more were implicated on the basis of unfounded suspicion. As Yu Qi had earlier enjoyed quite extensive social intercourse with members of the educated elite, gentry families suffered particularly heavily from the government reprisals.[24] Pu Songling credited his friend, Tang Menglai, with presenting a persuasive case for leniency to the governor-general, thereby preventing further bloodshed and securing the release of many people unjustly detained.[25] Pu Songling's knowledge of the indiscriminate and large-scale killings that occurred during government campaigns led him in later life to urge officials to take firm measures to eradicate banditry when it was still in an incipient

stage. For if bandits multiplied and formed a sizable rebel force, it would be necessary to call in troops to suppress them. And government troops, he warned, posed a greater threat to the populace than the rebels themselves.[26]

In Liaozhai, Pu Songling conveys the terrors and injustices of the age in a number of ways. Some of his lightest stories are yet clouded by an ominous premonition of imminent disaster, which introduces a sense of brooding insecurity. Again and again, warnings of future calamity are delivered by foxes to their human companions. An old fox tells his Daoist friend:

> "I have come to say good-bye, and to bring you a piece of advice: you too ought to move elsewhere, for a great calamity is imminent, and this is not a land of good fortune." Having said this, he made his farewells and departed. The Daoist took his advice, and removed to another area. Soon afterwards, the dramatic changes of jiashen 甲申 [1644] took place. (1.97-98)

Another fox explains why he has left his home in Qinzhong 秦中 (Shaanxi): "'Your province is a land of blessings. It is not safe to reside in Qinzhong, for great troubles will break out there.' . . . Soon after Qinzhong suffered armed insurrection."[27] An official in Shanxi derives benefit from his fox-wife's foresight:

> One day, as they sat together, she suddenly looked up at the sky and cried in alarm, "A great calamity is about to come - what can be done to avoid it?" . . . "Before long this place will be a battlefield, you should request an assignment that will take you far away, and perhaps we can escape the disaster." . . . Soon afterwards, Jiang Xiang 姜瓖 rebelled, and Fenzhou 汾州 fell into the hands of the rebels. Liu's second son, who had come from Shandong to visit, stumbled into the uprising, and was killed. After the fall of the town, all the officials were put to death, and only Liu, who had left on his mission, was spared that fate.[28]

The fish-spirit, Suqiu 素 秋 , offers to teach her sister-in-law magical arts that will enable her to survive the ravages of war, explaining, "'Three years from now, there will be nobody left alive in this place.' . . .Three years later, Li Zicheng revolted, and the villages were reduced to rubble." (10.1356-1357)

One grim story, "The Ghost Runners" (445), is constructed entirely around this kind of supernatural prediction, and concerns the infamous Jinan massacre of 1639.[29] Another, "The Weeping Ghosts" (28), is set in Zichuan soon after the crushing of the 1647 rebellion. Recalling the scenes which, in retrospect, so horrified Zhang Duqing, Pu intensified the effect by quoting the testimony of the slain, whose souls lingered on to haunt local residents.[30]

Although "The Weeping Ghosts" suggests a certain sympathy for the victims of the Zichuan massacre, it is in a later story, "Gongsun Jiuniang" (136), that Pu wrote his most moving memorial to the unjustly slaughtered. Here he takes the innocent casualties of the Yu Qi rebellion as his subjects, but the tone of sorrow and suppressed indignation which informs the narrative appears to reflect commiseration with all the unfortunates - close relatives, like his cousin, as well as the countless anonymous men and women - who perished during the brutal campaigns of the early Qing. The story begins in a sombre, subdued key, setting the mood for the main events:

> In the case of Yu Qi, of those who were implicated and executed, natives of Qixia and Laiyang counties were the most numerous. In just one day, several hundreds were seized and put to the sword on the military training ground. Their jade blood covered the ground, and their white bones were stacked up to the sky. Higher authorities took pity, and contributed funds for the purchase of coffins. The carpenters of Jinan were completely sold out of coffin wood. For this reason, many of the victims from the eastern counties were buried on the southern outskirts of the city.[31]

The story itself concerns a Laiyang scholar visiting Jinan, who makes an offering to the souls of two or three friends, executed during the reprisals. From this initial gesture of mournful commemoration, he is drawn into an ever more intimate series of relationships with ghosts, enjoying a fleeting happiness in their company, before a final and irrevocable separation. The day after his sacrifice to his friends, he is visited by the ghost of a man he used to know, a licentiate named Zhu, who died in the suppression. He asks the scholar to arrange his marriage to the ghost of the scholar's niece, who, taken as a captive to Jinan, had died there on hearing that her father had been executed. The scholar accedes to this request, and is led to the home of Zhu's proposed bride. There he makes the acquaintance of a beautiful young lady, Gongsun Jiuniang, and marries her. On the wedding night, he learns the details of her own tragic death: she and her mother were being sent as prisoners to Beijing, and when the old lady died of exhaustion in Jinan, she cut her own throat. As she recounts her sad history, Gongsun Jiuniang bursts into tears, and, too distressed to sleep, she composes two quatrains to express her lingering grief. The second of the poems evokes that aching sense of loss which shrouds the whole story:

> By the white poplar, wind and rain swirl around the lonely grave,
> Who could anticipate another rendezvous on Sunny Terrace?
> Suddenly I open the gold thread case and look inside,
> The reek of blood still stains my old silk dress.[32]

The scholar's attachment to the ghost becomes so strong that he is deeply distressed when she announces that they cannot stay together:

> She said mournfully, "The fragile soul roams a thousand miles, like a tumbleweed that wanders aimless, without roots. So lonely are we, mother and daughter, that it is painful to discuss. I hope that you will remember our night of married love, and collect my bones to carry

back and bury by the ancestral tombs, so that I may have a place to rest safely for eternity, and, though dead, I may not wholly perish." The scholar promised to do this. "Men and ghosts follow different paths," she then said, "and it is not fitting that you linger here." Thereupon she gave him her silk stockings as a keepsake, and, brushing away her tears, she urged him to leave. He left disconsolately, stricken with grief. (4.481-482)

In an ending almost unique in Liaozhai, the scholar's obsessive desire for a reunion with his beloved remains unfulfilled, and his last sight of Jiuniang some months later is a moment of unbearable poignancy. The potency of Pu's narrative derives not from the plot, which is unusually bare and austere, but from the atmospheric depiction of a twilight world, illumined only by the failing rays of the sun and pale moonbeams, and from the brooding bitterness of the innocent ghosts, tormented forever by the memories of their shattered lives.

In his postscript, by alluding to classic historical cases of faithful allegiance spurned by royal distrust - Qu Yuan 屈原 and Prince Shensheng 申生 [33] - Pu Songling dignifies and ennobles the victims of the 1662 suppression, elevating them to martyrdom, and at the same time emphasizes the depth of his sympathies for their tragic demise. As an attempt to come to terms with the chilling events of the early Qing, and to translate his response into a literary work of striking imaginative force, "Gongsun Jiuniang" must rank as one of Pu Songling's most remarkable achievements.

Elsewhere, through the form of anecdotes or episodes embedded in a longer narrative, the reader is frequently reminded of the troubled social background in the author's home province: of the abduction and rape of Shandong women by Manchu troops, of the harsh punishment meted out to those suspected of harbouring fugitives from the Manchu banners, of the repressive administration which lent a ready ear to unjust accusations of collaboration with outlaws, and so on.[34] Some of these stories were

probably based on true-life incidents, while others reflected widespread problems of the day.

Such elements in Liaozhai have presented certain problems of interpretation, particularly for contemporary scholars in China. Some readers have concluded that Pu Songling was inspired by a Han nationalist orientation, and regard his "nationalist thought" as one of the major themes in the collection. In strong exception to this view, another school of opinion has claimed that Pu did not object to Manchu rule in any significant sense.[35] As an academic debate, the controversy has not produced many enlightening results: standards of scholarship have been low, and both sides have tended to polarize the issue and overstate their case. Moreover, one can discern two basic misconceptions hampering a clear resolution to the discussion. In order to see Pu Songling's references to the early Qing upheavals in their context, these two aspects merit consideration.

The Shunzhi and Kangxi periods are commonly depicted by Chinese scholars as an era of intense literary persecution, when any written expressions of protest were ruthlessly annihilated. It is often suggested that the threat of inquisition forced Pu Songling to adopt the medium of the supernatural story so that he could indirectly express his true convictions. Great significance is attached to his references to Manchu atrocities, for instance, which appear to these readers as distinguishing Pu Songling from many other intellectuals of the time, and establishing his credentials as a writer hostile to the Qing administration. In the political climate of the seventeenth century, the argument goes, Pu's work marked a bold and provocative statement of nationalist feeling.[36]

In fact, as L. C. Goodrich has convincingly shown, the first two

Qing emperors were relatively restrained in their handling of literary censorship. As he points out, during the Kangxi reign, "dozens of scholars were engaged in writing books and composing poems which were later to be placed on his grandson's Index [Expurgatorius], yet no action was taken against them."[37] The Qianlong emperor was far more sensitive than his predecessors to unfavourable accounts of the Manchu rise to power, and of the sufferings inflicted on the Han population during the Qing campaigns of the seventeenth century. An examination of collections of prose and poetry by Pu's contemporaries uncovers many explicit references to events similar to those described in Liaozhai.[38] A number of these authors served the Qing dynasty as officials, but evidently they shared with Pu Songling an honest resolve to record their observations of individual and collective tragedies, and the atmosphere at the time allowed them to do so. On this evidence, we must question the conventional belief that circumstances gave Pu no option but to convey his ideas in a fictional framework, nor can we take too seriously the assumption that Pu's inclusion of details discreditable to the Qing administration necessarily exhibits "anti-Qing" tendencies.

Those critical of the "Liaozhai nationalism" school, on the other hand, are susceptible to a second misconception, in that they recognize only two forms of reaction among Han intellectuals in the early Qing: either absolute defiance to the Manchus or craven submission. As Pu cannot be said to have conformed to the first model, he must be associated with the latter, they imply. It would be more accurate, however, to distinguish three types of response to the Manchu takeover among Chinese scholars. At one extreme, there were Ming loyalists, such as

Gu Yanwu 顧炎武 (1613-1682), who had attained adulthood under the Ming and refused to serve the new administration in any capacity. At the other extreme, there were a number of opportunists, like Sun Zhixie, who had held office under the Ming but were now so eager to curry favour with the Qing authorities that they encouraged the institution of measures damaging to the cultural traditions of the Han population. The majority of intellectuals in the early Qing, however, simply passively accepted Qing rule, neither sharing Gu Yanwu's uncompromising approach nor adopting the exaggeratedly obsequious posture of Sun Zhixie. They were willing to recognize the legitimacy of the new dynasty, and if given the opportunity, welcomed the prospect of a government appointment. But they remained sensitive to the ordeals undergone by their people during the collapse of the Ming and the installation of its successor, and were not afraid to reflect this awareness in their literary work. It is in this majority group that Pu Songling should be placed, and his handling of themes related to the Manchu takeover may be regarded as a not untypical response.

Through the Liaozhai collection, we can gain some insight into the attitude of the author towards members of the other intellectual groups. One isolated reference to the Ming martyr, Zuo Maodi 左懋第 (1601-1645), implies respectful memorial of that loyal servant to the Ming throne.[39] Ming loyalists, as one might expect, were deeply contemptuous of officials who changed their allegiance and served the Qing emperors: Gu Yanwu, for instance, wrote a poem celebrating the execution of Sun Zhixie by Xie Qian's soldiers.[40] To a milder degree, Pu Songling also showed some distaste for sycophantic careerists and Ming officials who switched sides. Hong Chengchou 洪承疇 (1593-1665), one such official, appears in a very poor light in a Liaozhai anecdote, and it is possible that one or two

satirical stories are aimed at just such people as Sun Zhixie.[41]

To sum up, the inclusion by Pu Songling of materials relating to the painful experiences of the Han population during the Manchu take-over conformed to the practice of Chinese writers in his day. Although he and his contemporaries were clearly deeply moved by these unhappy events and expressed great sympathy for the victims, their submission to Qing authority was not suspect. When Liaozhai was edited in the 1760s in preparation for publication, and stories such as "The Ghost Runners" were excised by Zhao Qigao, these censorship measures demonstrated the more intolerant atmosphere prevailing in the Qianlong period, rather than any rebellious impulse on Pu Songling's part.

Quite apart from the initial Manchu conquest and the uprisings crushed by government suppression, the Shandong area was plagued by small-scale banditry in the Kangxi period. Particularly in the all too frequent years of bad harvest or natural disaster, predatory incursions by gangs of robbers were a constant threat to the law-abiding populace. In his prose works, Pu Songling constantly stressed the gravity of the situation, particularly in his own district of Zichuan. The famine years of 1703-1704 impelled him to complain of local maladministration in the most forceful terms:

> In the case of Zichuan, since the poor harvest last year, it was at first only one or two men who would knock holes in a wall and rifle the strongbox. Then, gradually, four or five would gang together and cast a rope ladder to gain entrance to the courtyard. With the turn of the year, bands never less than forty or fifty strong, armed to the teeth, with flaming torches in hand, would launch attacks on villages. If they were unable to get their hands on items of value, they would roast people to death, and if they could not gain access to the village, they would start a blaze and raze it to the ground. So it reached the point where a whole village might be reduced to mounds of rubble.
>
> The victimized families suffered their distress and endured the injustices in silence, not daring to report the incidents publicly.

> In occasional instances where they recognized their assailants and submitted accusations against named offenders to the authorities, the accused would either be released at a price by the arresting officers, or they would be punished lightly or loosely confined, as the law was not fully enforced. Thus, as the officials considered appeasement to be a form of benevolence, bandits grew daily more numerous, and as officials regarded the refusal to discuss brigandage as an astute policy, honest people grew daily more scarce.[42]

As bandits proliferated, and acted with increasing impunity, country folk lived in fear that their turn would be next, and complete ruin of one's worldly property was a genuine danger:

> There was not one safe village in the county, nor one safe day in any village. If a family had so much as a full peck of millet, a complete string of cash, or an entire wardrobe of clothes, they never dared close their eyes, for if they relaxed their vigilance in the slightest, a knife would be at their throats. So there were cases of people who were wealthy in the morning, and begging for their dinner by the evening.[43]

Given that brigandage was a matter of such concern to Pu Songling, it is not entirely surprising that bandits should appear with great regularity in his short stories. Apart from realistically reflecting a major social crisis of the day, the scenes or incidents in which robbers play an active role are used by the author for several narrative purposes.

First of all, they may suddenly introduce a tingle of shock and fear into a story that might otherwise be advancing towards a placid conclusion. At the same time, the consummate ease with which Pu's supernatural heroines deflect the threat of robbery and murder provides a striking illustration of their resourcefulness and magical power. An episode in the story "Gejin" (412) is a typical example. Here, Chang Dayong 常大用 and his younger brother have married two flower spirits, and the tale appears to be drawing smoothly to a close as the two couples live together in happy prosperity. Suddenly a band of brigands surrounds their house and threatens

to burn it down unless they are given a fortune in gold and allowed to see the immortal ladies. In the tense scene that follows, the charisma and flawless self-possession of the flower spirit, Gejin, are vividly conveyed, as she calmly challenges the intruding desperadoes, and awes them into beating a hasty retreat.

In "A Ying" (265), it is the heroine's uncanny gift of prediction which saves her human companions from a cruel fate. Local brigands are wreaking havoc in the neighbourhood, and half of the villages in the vicinity have been reduced to ruins. Gan Jue 甘 玨 and his family seek refuge in the mountains. There he encounters A Ying, a bird-spirit to whom he had earlier been married. She announces, "This is not a happy place to be," and persuades them to return to their home, discounting their apprehensions that bandits might trouble them there. She is prevailed upon to reside with the Gan family, and whiles away the days pleasantly, seemingly unmindful of the lawless turmoil elsewhere:

> One night, a clamour erupted all around, and the whole family did not know what to do. Suddenly they heard the sound of men and horses stamping and whinnying outside, and then they all noisily departed. Only when morning came did they learn that practically the whole village had been set on fire and looted, and the brigand chief had then unloosed his men on a thorough search, so that all those hiding in the rocky caves were killed or taken captive. After this they admired A Ying all the more, and regarded her as a divinity. (7.921)

Secondly, the intervention of robbers is frequently used as a device that transforms the nature of the relationship between antagonistic characters in a tale. Typically, a rich man who had earlier slighted a poor man is himself made penniless, placing him in a vulnerable position vis-à-vis the latter, who subsequently rises in the world. In "Gong Mengbi" (111), Liu He 柳 和 is engaged to the daughter of a rich man named

Huang 黃 . When Liu becomes impoverished, owing to his father's reckless spending, Huang breaks off the engagement, determined that his daughter marry well. Soon afterwards, their house is raided by bandits one night, and Huang and his wife are tortured almost to death, their house entirely stripped of valuables. The Huangs are thereby reduced to a very humble standard of living, a change which is dramatically to alter their relationship with Liu. Again, in "The Younger Shang" (260), we are told the story of two brothers, the elder rich, the younger poor. During a famine in the Kangxi period, the younger brother runs out of food to eat, but is given no help by his brother. Outlaws coveting the elder brother's wealth break into his house and begin to torture him with fire-brands. The younger brother rescues him, but later is forced to move elsewhere. As soon as he is out of the way, thieves seize his brother, steal all his money, and throw his granary open to all the poor in the local community. As a consequence, the elder brother dies, and his wife is reduced to poverty, beholden to her brother-in-law for her survival. The thieves thus act as the instrument of punishment for the callous behaviour of the elder brother.

In Liaozhai, as in earlier Chinese fiction, the breakdown in law and order often affects the development of romances: lovers lose contact with each other, separated by social dislocation or unforeseen perils. At the same time, the chaotic conditions permit miraculous coincidences and unexpected reunions to take place. Pu Songling makes full use of bandit disruptions as a means to tear his characters apart or draw them together, enhancing the shock and surprise from which his stories draw some of their effect. But in such tales, as in those discussed above, it appears that Pu Songling is not simply following a xiaoshuo convention, but incorporating his own painful awareness of social blights of the day into his fiction.

2. Examination Experiences and Reactions to Failure

Readers of Liaozhai, from the earliest days up to the present, have frequently identified the author's failure to progress beyond the first stage of the civil service examination as a major factor inspiring the composition of the work and influencing the form which it took. As Gao Fenghan 高鳳翰 (1683-1751), a poet who in his childhood had met Pu Songling, put it in his postface of 1723:

> At an early age, Liaozhai displayed brilliant talent, but, unfavoured in the examinations, he received no recognition, and to express the stifled feelings that filled his heart, he had no other course but to write this book.[44]

This assessment of the creative impulse behind Liaozhai could draw its justification from the tone of bitter dissatisfaction which pervades the author's preface to the collection, and from the satirical handling of the defects and injustices of the examination system in a number of stories. The tendency of modern critics to isolate satire of the examinations as one of the main elements in Liaozhai has further accentuated the portrayal of Pu Songling as a frustrated victim and resentful critic of this traditional institution.

Despite this common emphasis on examination failure as a creative stimulant, considerable ignorance and confusion still exist concerning many circumstances of Pu Songling's career. Our lack of precise information about many details is partly responsible for this gap in our knowledge, but mistaken assumptions about the examination system of Pu's day have also handicapped research in this field. In order to gain a clearer understanding of the relationship between Pu's own experiences in the examination-hall and his preoccupations in Liaozhai,

it will be necessary to consider anew the problems of Pu Songling's biography, paying particular attention to the administration of the provincial examination in the late seventeenth century. Such is the task to which we address ourselves here.

The first question which needs to be answered is just how long Pu Songling persisted in his attempts to pass the examinations. On this issue, views diverge. The beginning of his career can, however, be established beyond doubt. As a boy, Pu Songling was gifted with an excellent memory and an agile mind, and his father saw him as the most promising of his four sons.[45] This judgment was fully vindicated when, in 1658, Pu passed top of the list in the district examination. Fei Yizhi 費 禕 社 (jinshi 1649), the local magistrate who administered the test, saw a great future in store for him.[46] Pu went on to collect the highest position in the prefectural examination, and then repeated the performance in the qualifying examination. Here, his essays were singled out for praise by the provincial director of education, no lesser a scholar than the prominent poet, Shi Runzhang 施 閏 章 (1619-1683).[47] Pu's achievements in the examination established his reputation among licentiates of the area, and indicated that he would become one of the most outstanding scholars of his generation.

Of his subsequent attempts to pass the provincial examination, we have only fragmentary records, however. After such a brilliant start to his career, Pu Songling would no doubt have been eager to extend his run of success. Assuming that he achieved good results in the preliminary examination (keshi 科 試), he would have probably been a candidate in the first provincial examination for which he was eligible, that of 1660.[48] But on this, as on all later occasions, when the list

of new juren graduates was announced, Pu Songling's name was not included.

We do not know for certain how regularly Pu Songling entered for the provincial examinations, which were held at three year intervals. But the career of Pu's close friend, Zhang Duqing, provides a useful standard of comparison. Apart from the 1666 examination, which he was too ill to attend, Zhang was an unsuccessful candidate in all the other nine examinations from 1663 to 1690, possibly again in 1696, and certainly in 1702 and 1705.[49] Zhang's persistence at the provincial level, even after his promotion to senior licentiate by special selection (bagongsheng 拔貢生) in 1686, demonstrates the vital importance attached to the juren status, and it is likely that Pu Songling pursued this objective with much the same degree of application. During 1664, he set himself a daily quota of essays to compose as preparation for the next examination, in which he probably took part.[50]

A poem of 1678 reveals that Pu, then thirty-eight, had made another abortive attempt to pass in that year. Pu describes how, that autumn, he had gone boating with a friend on the Daming Lake 大明湖 in Jinan, and how, sitting together despondently, they shed "Lingyang's 陵陽 tears".[51] The allusion to Bian He 卞和, Marquis of Lingyang, who suffered cruelly when his precious jade was not appreciated, was a favourite of Pu's, always used to denote the rejection of true talent in the examinations.[52] The mood of disenchantment to which this failure gave rise, lingered on into the following spring, which, for Pu, then afflicted with a nagging illness, was a period of unrelieved gloom. His fortieth (sui) birthday in the summer of 1679 was a painful reminder of how little he had achieved in the first half of his life.[53]

As a licentiate, Pu Songling was required to attend the triennial

sui examination, which determined the promotion and demotion of shengyuan. In 1682, on the basis of high marks in this examination, he was awarded the rank of stipend student (linsheng 廩生).[54] A certain rise in status accrued from this title. Stipend students, of whom there was only a limited number in each government school, enjoyed higher prestige than other licentiates. Besides receiving an annual stipend, they were eligible for selection as senior licentiates, and therefore had the prospect of eventually entering civil office. However, as recommendations for promotion to the rank of senior licentiate were made in the order of seniority of the stipend students, Pu Songling knew he would have a long wait (almost thirty years, as it turned out) in store. The provincial examination remained the only real channel of advancement.

Though largely symbolic, his success in the sui examination may have given Pu renewed hope that the elusive juren degree would yet be his. He competed in the provincial examination of 1687, but had the misfortune to skip a page (yue fu 越幅) when writing out his answer, and was failed for breach of regulations.[55] His next attempt, in 1690, also ended in failure, possibly because of an illness which prevented him from completing the examination.[56]

It is the period after 1690 which presents most difficulties of interpretation, and the conflicting evidence has allowed two differing views to emerge, the first which asserts that Pu Songling did not participate in the provincial examination after 1690, and the second which argues that he did. As this issue has an important bearing on our understanding of Pu Songling's experiences as an examination candidate, it is worth examining with care.

The first view, originally put forward by Lu Dahuang, and later

followed by Liu Jieping 劉階平 and others, appears at first sight to be very well founded. It is based on a passage in Pu Songling's biographical sketch of his wife:

> At the age of fifty, I had still not abandoned hope of advancement. She urged me to desist, saying, "You must not go on with that. If you had been destined to become eminent, you would be the president of a board by now. One can find happiness here among the hills and woods, why need you look for entertainment in the music of beaten flesh!" I thought this good advice. But when my sons and grandson went to take the provincial examination, my self-absorbed mind could not but feel a certain hope, and words often betrayed my feelings, but she ignored them completely. Sometimes I would try to win her over by observing portents of success, but these too she disregarded. I laughed and said, "My dear, do you not want to be a lady?" Her answer was: "I have no other virtues, but I do know where to stop. We now have three sons and a grandson who can continue the family tradition for scholarship. We have clothes and food enough to protect us from cold and hunger, so Heaven's bounty can hardly be considered meagre. When I think of what little merit I have, how could I still profess dissatisfaction?"[57]

Although Pu Songling makes no outright declaration here that he never entered as a candidate in the provincial examinations after 1690, such appears to be the implication of his remarks. This impression is reinforced by the comments of his son, Pu Ruo, who noted that Songling "lost heart for the examinations" (huixin changwu 灰心場屋) in his fifties, after his wife dissuaded him.[58] Zhang Yuan, the author of Pu Songling's tomb inscription, also refers to Pu's repudiation of the examinations after repeated failure, and to a wholesale transfer of energies to his writing.[59] Thus, these three sources all point towards a termination of Pu Songling's examination career.

This conclusion has been challenged, however, by Maeno Naoaki 前野直彬, and most recently, by Gao Mingge 高明閣. Pointing out that, of the six visits to Jinan Pu Songling is known to have made between 1691 and 1710, four took place during provincial examination years, Maeno suggests that this was no accidental coincidence. One

of his poems discloses that he returned home from the prefectural capital on the nineteenth of the eighth month, 1702, a date which would tally exactly with his completion of the provincial examination three days earlier. Another poem, written in a hostel in Jinan that autumn, expresses a mood of listless dejection that could be best understood in terms of further examination experiences.[60]

Gao Mingge also believes that Pu Songling was a candidate in 1702, quoting an additional poem, in which the allusion to "Lingyang's tears" again appears. The couplet:

> When I think back to three years ago,
> I can still see you with tears in your eyes.

suggests, in Gao's view, that Pu failed the examination of 1699 as well.[61] Pu Songling's "practice memorials" (nibiao 擬表) are also adduced as evidence of examination participation. Pu wrote many such pieces during his life, as a method of preparation for the second session of the examination, which during the Kangxi period included the composition of a memorial as one of its requirements. The latest of these nibiao date from 1705, whilst others were written in every examination year from 1693 to 1702. On this evidence, then, Pu's frustrating examination career extended up to 1705.[62]

But how, then, do Maeno and Gao resolve the inconsistency of their conclusions with the traditional interpretation? Maeno undermines the credibility of Pu Songling's statements by observing that, of his three sons who became licentiates, two did not receive this degree until 1706, while his grandson was raised to this status only in 1711. The discussion between Pu and his wife may not, then, have taken place at the time, or in the form, which Pu indicated, and we may be misled if we conclude

from this possibly imaginary conversation that Pu followed his wife's advice and renounced the examinations for good.[63] Gao attempts to discredit the other damaging witness, Pu Ruo, whose testimony Maeno simply ignores. He offers three alternative explanations for Pu Ruo's account. Owing to a lapse of memory, Pu Ruo may have attributed to the 1690s a change which in fact took place in the 1700s. Or, textual corruption may have occurred: Pu Songling's age, as recorded by his son, was miscopied. Thirdly, Gao suggests, it may have been true that Pu Songling was more committed to his writing and less dedicated to the notion of examination success after 1690, but this cannot rule out some further participation in the provincial examination.[64]

Of the two rival assessments of Pu's activities, the Maeno-Gao interpretation is the more convincing, although it requires further elaboration. The evidence of Pu's poems of 1702 gives strong indication that Pu sat for the provincial examination in that year, and the regularity of the production of nibiao after 1690 provides confirmation that Pu was still actively considering the prospect of submitting himself as candidate. Here again, the parallel career of Zhang Duqing furnishes a helpful contrast. After he failed the provincial examination for the eighth consecutive time in 1690, Zhang experienced a period of disenchantment. He turned his back on the examinations, devoting himself to his poetry, retiring to his home to educate his sons personally. The itch to secure the juren degree could not be long suppressed, however. He renewed preparations for the examinations in 1695, and was probably a candidate in the autumn of the following year. In 1702, when accompanying his eldest son to Jinan for the young man's qualifying examination, Zhang Duqing, then sixty, could not resist the temptation to enter for the preliminary examination. His success in

that encouraged him to try his luck once more in the provincial examination later that year. Again, in 1705, Zhang's original impulse not to participate was overcome when he escorted one of his pupils to the provincial examination, and he subjected himself to what proved to be another humiliation. Only in the following year, 1706, did he resolve finally to abandon his efforts in the examination hall.[65] It is easy to imagine that Pu Songling would have undergone a similar process of increasing disillusionment, leading to a temporary rejection of the examination treadmill, which gave way in time to renewed hope of success, and further participation.

Maeno Naoaki is no doubt correct in suspecting that there are elements of fictitious embellishment in Pu Songling's sketch of his wife. Pu's main concern in this piece is to depict his wife's personality as revealed in a series of selected episodes: his own career is purely incidental. In the passage quoted above, he stresses the common sense and moderation of his wife, which he contrasts self-deprecatingly with his own ineffectuality. Nowhere does he state categorically that his wife's opinion swayed him utterly to repudiate the examinations. It is conceivable that there may have been a clash of some kind over this issue, but that Pu persisted subsequently in his attempts to pass the provincial examination. Writing his wife's biographical sketch after her death in 1713, with the benefit of hindsight, Pu would not hesitate to acknowledge the wisdom of her advice, and attributed to her a decisive influence, which, as he may have now regretted, did not in fact dissuade him from competition in the examinations.

As regards Pu Ruo's reference, the first two explanations that Gao Mingge offers are quite implausible. In his review of his father's life, Pu Ruo often borrows phrases and sentences from relevant parts of

Pu's sketch of his wife, and in saying, "Up to the age of fifty and more, he was still hoping for advancement", Pu Ruo is simply repeating his father's remark.[66] Gao's third suggestion appears more acceptable. After the age of fifty, the impetus of ambition which had earlier impelled Pu to attend one examination after another would have faltered, and the realization that success would never be his persuaded Pu Songling that he would do better to commit himself to his creative writing. But, like Zhang Duqing, he might well have made several more speculative stabs at the juren degree before a final admission of defeat. Respectful biographers tended to make efforts to put their subjects in a good light, by suppressing details of an embarrassingly long and unsuccessful career. Zhang Duqing, for example, is said to have gone into voluntary retirement after his return from the capital in 1687,[67] when, as we know, his attempts to pass the provincial examinations by no means ended then. Likewise, Pu Ruo's and Zhang Yuan's accounts were designed to present Pu Songling's humiliations as experiences of limited duration, deliberately terminated.

To sum up, then, after his attainment of the licentiate degree in 1658, Pu Songling's trials in the provincial examination hall apparently spanned almost fifty years. For reasons of indisposition or disinclination, or because of inadequate performance in the preliminary examination, Pu may have missed the occasional triennial session, but until 1705, graduation at the provincial level remained one of his prime objectives in life. After 1705, like his friend, Zhang Duqing, Pu probably abandoned his efforts as futile. Although he visited Jinan again in 1708, he seems to have been a detached spectator rather than a participant in the examinations that were held at the time.[68] However, he still had to take part in the regular sui examinations, in order to retain his linsheng status.

In 1710, Pu was awarded the degree of senior licentiate by seniority (suigong 歲貢), on the basis of a high place in the sui examinations. Belated as this success was, Pu registered his gratitude in two letters to his examiner, Huang Shulin 黃叔琳.[69] Thus, just five years before his death, Pu at last became eligible to hold a government post. The irony was not lost on him: three years later, when an artist painted a portrait of him, sitting in the costume appropriate to a scholar of his rank, Pu Songling added an inscription, protesting that he had not wished to be depicted in this garb, lest he become "the object of the derisive laughter of a hundred generations to come".[70]

Given Pu Songling's manifest literary talents, his failure to pass the higher levels of the examinations has intrigued many readers, and numerous reasons have been suggested to account for it. In some cases, the explanations offered are simply fanciful speculation: the idea mooted by an eighteenth century writer that Pu Songling was too much pestered, when sitting the examination, by resentful ghosts and foxes, for example.[71] In other cases, the question has been considered in careful scholarly discussion, by Maeno Naoaki, for instance.[72] There has been a pronounced tendency amongst almost all writers, however, to concentrate on the individual circumstances of Pu Songling's career, and to neglect the institutional features which determined the selection of provincial graduates in the Kangxi period. I will attempt to demonstrate that it was that these latter features which were crucial in deciding Pu's fate, and that there was little he himself could have done to improve his chances.

But first let us review the personal factors which have been mentioned as instrumental in Pu Songling's failure. The poor quality of many of Pu's examination essays was named as the basic reason by

Wang Peixun 王培荀 (juren 1821), a native of Zichuan, whose Xiangyuan yijiu lu 鄉園憶舊錄 provides useful details about Pu Songling and many other Zichuan scholars. According to Wang, Pu's essays tended to be "bloated" (chifei 癡肥), by which he meant "verbose and dense" (guanyang nongzhong 官樣濃重).[73] It is difficult to judge the accuracy of this appraisal without having seen the essays themselves. Even if this characterization is correct, it can hardly furnish a complete answer, for it is quite possible that some examiners actually preferred such a style, and that Pu Songling was consciously endeavouring to satisfy their requirements.

By contrast, Yuan Shishuo has suggested that Pu's examination essays were exceptionally good, but that the examiners were too mediocre to appreciate them. Quoting a surviving extract from one of his answers in the qualifying examination of 1658, Yuan points to its expressive language as a quality of which the distinguished examiner, Shi Runzhang, must have approved. Because Pu Songling did not conform to the stereotyped style of most essays, the undiscerning examiners who tested him subsequently rejected him.[74] Yuan here makes unsupported assertions about the selection procedures in the provincial examination and the quality of Pu's later efforts.

Yuan Shishuo may not be entirely mistaken, however, in his conjecture that the literary fashion current in the day may have handicapped Pu Songling. Evidence can be found to support this view. When chief examiner in the Henan provincial examination of 1681, Shi Runzhang criticized the prevailing trend whereby examiners favoured shallow and superficial essays, and selected second-rate scholars rather than men of outstanding talent. Emphasizing that essays ought to be an expression

of personal feeling, Shi urged his associate examiners to value original inspiration and reject vacuous, imitative work.[75] He asked them also not to quibble over minor errors in a brilliant piece of writing: "It would be better to select a blemished jade than an unblemished stone, for thus perhaps we can admit one or two remarkable scholars."[76]

One may well suppose that Pu Songling might have responded eagerly to the kind of adventurous examining policy which Shi advocated. Indeed, the essays of his which won Shi's acclaim in 1658 may well have been composed in the confident belief that their lively style would gain Shi's approval. Possibly, if all provincial examiners had shared Shi Runzhang's outlook, Pu Songling might have been better placed to display his talent. But, as we will see later, his chances of success would have improved only marginally.

Pu Songling's reluctance to apply himself single-mindedly to study for the examinations is another feature frequently linked to his recurrent failures in the examination hall. Friends such as Sun Hui 孫蕙 and Zhang Duqing are known to have urged him not to be distracted by other interests. A letter from Sun in 1672 advised Pu, "If you just rein in your talents and apply yourself untiringly, you will join the top flight of scholars in the future."[77] In several poems that he sent to Pu, Zhang Duqing enjoined his friend to curb his fascination with strange stories, lest his career suffer.[78]

Some contemporary scholars, in particular Maeno Naoaki and Gao Mingge, attribute Pu's examination difficulties to the dispersal of his energies in other literary pursuits. His involvement in the poetry club, the Yingzhong She 郢中社, which he and his friends founded in 1659, is identified as an early sign of his susceptibility to activities not

strictly relevant to a competitive career.[79] Maeno has pointed out that in the 1660s Pu Songling amused himself by composing lyrics for the folk tunes popular in the Shandong area. In 1666, for example, he wrote a song-cycle which describes the pained emotions of a woman whose husband, a homosexual, has a rendezvous elsewhere and does not return all night.[80] The composition of Liaozhai, which Maeno suggests may have begun as early as the 1660s, represented another conflicting investment of time and effort. Both Maeno and Gao therefore draw a parallel between Pu Songling and Wei Haogu 魏好古, the young poetry enthusiast reprimanded so sternly for his unorthodox interests by his examiner, Zhou Jin 周進, in the third chapter of the eighteenth century novel, Rulin waishi 儒林外史.[81] Like Wei, they maintain, Pu was jeopardizing his prospects by his indulgence in non-essentials. Pu Songling "took the wrong road right from the start", Gao Mingge asserts. His individual attitudes and preoccupations made his failure in the examinations almost a foregone conclusion.[82]

Although the fashion of emphasizing subjective factors has taken hold in recent years, and found its most extreme exponent in Gao Mingge, it would not be true to say that institutional features have been totally ignored. Maeno Naoaki does give some consideration to environmental restraints and some other possible elements that contributed to Pu Songling's conspicuous lack of success.[83] Corruption and administrative deficiencies in the examination system have occasionally been pointed out.[84] Such features have been discussed only in general, rather unspecific terms, however, and much more can be said to bring them into clearer focus.

Pu Songling's native district of Zichuan was proud of its scholarly traditions. Although in the first two centuries of the Ming dynasty

Zichuan had produced only nine jinshi graduates, twenty-two local scholars attained this status in the period 1573-1643, including several scholars of national repute. During the Wanli era, a number of local families rose to distinction. Of the eight sons of Bi Mu 畢 木 (1537-1601), the fourth, Ziyan 自 嚴 (jinshi 1592) served as a president of the Board of Revenue in the late Ming, the sixth, Ziyin 自 寅 (juren 1615), held office as a bureau secretary, and the eighth, Zisu 自 肅 (jinshi 1616), became an assistant censor-in-chief.[85] Zhang Zhifa 張 至 發 (jinshi 1601), the son of Zhang Jing 敬 (jinshi 1577) and great-grandfather of Pu's friend, Zhang Duqing, held the post of president of the Board of Rites.[86] Though by no means a rich area, Zichuan could boast a record of academic success that compared favourably with many other counties in the Jinan prefecture.

On a more modest scale than the prominent Bi and Zhang clans, the Pu family also prospered in the late Ming period, particularly in the generation of Pu Songling's grandfather, Pu Shengrui 蒲 生 洀 . One of Shengrui's brothers, Pu Shengwen 生 汶 (jinshi 1592), was appointed magistrate of Yutian 玉 田 , in Zhili, and a cousin, Pu Shengchi 生 池 , a senior licentiate, took office in Wuji 無 極 , Hebei, in 1584.[87] Shengchi's grandson, Zhaochang 兆 昌 , passed the provincial examination of 1621.[88]

In the opening years of the Qing period, Zichuan maintained its excellent record in the competitive examinations. In the seven provincial examinations held in the Shunzhi period (1644-1661), no less than thirty-nine local scholars were awarded the juren degree. These included two relatives of Pu Songling, Pu Rui 瑞 and Pu Zhenying 振 纓 , who passed in 1651 and 1657, respectively.[89]

Then, suddenly, it seemed that a decline had set in. In the twenty-one provincial examinations of the Kangxi period (1662-1722), only twenty-seven Zichuan men found their names listed in the announcement of successful candidates. In eight of the sessions, not one native of Zichuan graduated. Just one member of the Pu clan attained juren status in the whole sixty year span of the Kangxi emperor, and this, as we know, was not Pu Songling.[90]

The explanation for this dramatic drop in the pass rate is really quite simple. In the years immediately following the subjugation of China, the Qing administration, anxious not to antagonize the key intellectual class whose support it sought, offered aspiring scholars opportunities for upward mobility which equalled or bettered those existing in the late Ming period. Thus, the quota for successful candidates in the very first provincial examination in Shandong, in 1645, was fixed at ninety graduates, a figure slightly in excess of that which prevailed in the early seventeenth century. When Pu Rui received his degree in 1651, the quota had been raised even further: he and his ninety-seven tongnian 同年 formed the largest class ever in Shandong's history.[91]

Inflated admission quotas imposed heavy strains on the institutional structure, however: the increasing glut of licentiates exerted pressure on the provincial examination, a surplus of juren graduates destabilized the metropolitan examination, a high intake of jinshi produced far too many eligible degree-holders for the vacancies available. By the last few years of the Shunzhi period, the authorities felt confident enough to slash the entrance quotas at all three levels. In 1660, by coincidence the very year that Pu Songling began his campaign to secure a juren degree, the quota for the Shandong provincial examination was halved, to forty-six.

Although the quota was raised again to sixty, in 1696, and a further twelve were added in 1711, throughout the bulk of Pu Songling's career the graduating class in each triennial session was smaller than it had been for over a century, and smaller than it would be in centuries to come.[92]

Two other factors combined with this low quota to allow each entrant only a very dim possibility of passing the examination. In 1645, it was laid down that thirty candidates could enter for every one place in the quota of juren degrees. In accordance with this principle, when Wang Shizhen was chief examiner in Sichuan in 1672, a little over 1200 candidates competed for the 42 places in the quota.[93] This guideline was not adhered to rigidly, however, probably because, after the reduction of the quota in 1660, the authorities did not wish to discourage scholars by denying to too many their chance of participation at the provincial level. Thus, in the Shanxi examination of 1684, for example, 3800 men competed for 47 places, a ratio more like 80:1.[94] When Shi Runzhang administered the Henan examination of 1681, the probability of any individual candidate attaining the degree was 100:1 against.[95]

Not only was the likelihood of failure at the provincial examination itself extremely high, aspiring scholars were also handicapped by a shrinkage in the quota of successful candidates at the preliminary examination during the Kangxi period. Each district was alloted a set figure of candidates who could be classified in the top two grades of the preliminary test, and thereby admitted to the provincial examination proper. For Zichuan, in consideration of its record for academic success, fifty or more candidates, a larger number than for most counties, were usually approved. After 1691, the quota was cut to thirty-five, restricting the

entrance of local scholars to the provincial examination. Although there still remained a possibility of admission through the special examination for "overlooked talents" (yicai 遺才),[96] licentiates in Zichuan were so concerned by this quota reduction that they commissioned Pu Songling to submit two petitions to the provincial director of education, begging that the quota be restored to its original level.[97]

The severely competitive nature of the provincial examination presented the examiners, as well as the candidates, with almost insurmountable difficulties. The chief examiner himself read only a small proportion of the examination papers, usually just those recommended to him by the associate examiners, a number perhaps half as large again as the quota for the province. In practice, therefore, his power to control the selection procedure was circumscribed. The main responsibility for distinguishing the good papers from the bad was delegated to the dozen or so associate examiners, usually local magistrates seconded for the purpose. Within the space of about a fortnight, they were required to plough through the mountain of scripts submitted in the three sessions of the examination by thousands of candidates. The individual examiner had the task of grading upwards of five thousand lengthy answers, whose contents often differed only slightly.

Inevitably, the selection process was hasty and arbitrary, and all sorts of oversights and anomalies crept in. Not many papers needed to be recommended before the limited quota was already filled, and the remaining answers might well be overlooked, unread, not to mention, unmarked. In their hurry or in a lapse of concentration, examiners might mispunctuate a difficult passage and lose the sense, or skim through papers carelessly, without pausing to consider the quality of the work.[98] Under these circum-

stances, the decision to approve or reject a candidate was influenced by a strong element of chance.

Moreover, the answer papers might suffer any number of mishaps as they passed along the complex process of collection, copying, and proof-reading, before they were actually transmitted to the associate examiners. A friend of the early Qing writer, Ye Mengzhu 葉夢珠, for example, retrieved his failed papers after one provincial examination, only to discover that a set of answers in the third session submitted by another candidate had been copied in place of his own.[99] Zhang Duqing came to grief on several occasions. Unable to recover his papers after his failure in 1681, he later learned they had probably been incinerated in a fire in the copying office. Three years later, his papers again sank without a trace, for reasons unknown. The copy made of his answers in the examination of 1687 was so riddled with errors that he had no hope of success. In 1702, he was earmarked for selection on the basis of his performance in the crucial first session, but the copyist made a mess of his scripts from the third session, dooming him to failure once more.[100]

In the early Qing, frequent collusion between candidates and examiners seriously undermined the ideal of a selection process based entirely on the impartial evaluation of academic ability. Given the very low pass rate in the provincial examination, it was particularly tempting to resort to corrupt practices in order to improve one's chances at that level, although the problem was by no means confined to this stage. In 1679, for example, an edict was issued detailing ten sorts of irregularity which commonly occurred in the examinations administered by the provincial director of education, and demanding their eradication.[101]

The provincial examinations held in Shuntian, Zhili, gained especial

notoriety in the second half of the seventeenth century, as, in a series of scandals, it became clear that some examiners were accepting bribes and awarding degrees to sons of high officials who did not deserve to pass. The examiners appointed to grade the papers in the Shuntian examination were often officials already serving in the capital, and opportunities for collusion with candidates prior to the examination were plentiful.[102] After many graduates in the class of 1654 had secured their degree through these underhand methods, others followed suit in the next examination three years later. One associate examiner promised to pull strings for as many as twenty-five candidates, and several of his colleagues made similar arrangements. The scandal broke after the results were published, and some of the corrupt candidates discovered that the agreements made in advance with the examiners had not been fulfilled. The chief and deputy examiners were demoted, and five associate examiners executed, their properties confiscated and families exiled. Two dozen go-betweens were also punished.[103]

These stern disciplinary measures did not deter later offenders, however. The list of graduates issued after the Shuntian examination of 1684 created such a furore that the answer papers were scrutinized, and it was discovered that twelve of the approved scripts were not fit to be passed. Five of the new juren graduates were stripped of their degrees, the other seven barred from the metropolitan examination, and the examiners were penalized. Almost identical irregularities were uncovered in 1687.[104] Accusations of misconduct by examiners also circulated in 1699, though they were later found to be unjustified. In 1705, the examiners were dismissed for irresponsible marking.[105]

Collusion took place in provincial examinations elsewhere, probably

on a slightly lesser scale. The chief and deputy examiners arrived at the provincial capitals only shortly before the examinations were due to begin, and the appointment of magistrates as associate examiners could not be predicted so accurately, thereby limiting scope for advance negotiation. Nevertheless, with sufficient funds at his disposal or influential connections in his favour, a candidate could go far.[106]

After the provincial examination of Jiangnan in 1657, frustrated candidates, outraged by the examiners' blatant favouritism, pursued the homebound examiners in boats, all through Suzhou 蘇 州 and Changzhou 常 州 , hurling abuse. After an inquiry, fourteen graduates were disqualified, and many of the examiners were sentenced to death.[107]

In 1687, the volatile Jiangnan scholars staged another protest when they learned that half the graduating class consisted of the sons of high officials. They accused the chief examiner of accepting bribes, and beat up one of the associate examiners, smashing his sedan-chair. On inspection by the central authorities, ten of the selected papers proved to be below standard.[108] Again, in 1711, many sons of rich Yangzhou salt merchants were numbered among the new juren at the Jiangnan examination. To demonstrate their indignation, unsuccessful candidates carried a statue of the god of wealth into the compound of the prefectural school, and deposited it ceremoniously in the temple of Confucius. They also composed insulting songs and couplets which ridiculed the blindness and shameless behaviour of the chief and deputy examiners. One wag pasted strips of paper over the sign that hung above the gate of the examination compund, and with nimble brushwork altered the words "Examination Hall" (gongyuan 貢 院) to read "All Sold" (maiwan 賣 完).[109]

A specific example of bribery and collusion in this examination of 1711 provides a useful insight into how the system operated. One prospective candidate, Wu Bi 吳 沘, offered a go-between eight thousand taels to secure for him a place on the graduating list. Part of this sum was used to enlist the support of Yuan Bing 員 炳, a protégé of the governor, who was supervisor of the examination. Yuan made a representation to the governor on behalf of Wu, who, he said, was his cousin. The governor agreed to arrange the matter, and Wu Bi was then instructed to incorporate a particular phrase in his first essay, so that his paper could be identified by the examiners. The governor asked one of the associate examiners, Chen Tianli 陳 天 立, to call upon the deputy examiner, to whom he was related, and give him five hundred taels to connive at the approval of Wu Bi's paper. When the examination, was held, Wu's answers were alloted for grading to another associate examiner, Wang Yueyu 王 日 俞. Chen Tianli informed his colleague that it was the deputy examiner's wish that his paper be approved, so Wang obliged by recommending Wu Bi for the award of the juren degree.[110]

Unscrupulous acts of collusion of this kind naturally worked to the disadvantage of the vast bulk of candidates, like Pu Songling, who could not compete on these terms with the rich and the privileged. The disproportionate success of the sons of influential official families in the late seventeenth century finally forced the government to adopt measures to appease hostile public opinion. "Official quotas" were established in 1700, severely limiting the proportion of successful candidates who came from a high official background. In the Shandong provincial examination, thereafter only one place in ten on the list of juren graduates was reserved for scholars related to important office-

holders, and the other places were awarded to men of lower family status.[111] One may assume that, prior to 1700, the proportion of sons of officials in each graduating class was much more favourable.

In Shandong in the early Qing, Pu Songling was by no means an isolated case of a talented scholar thwarted at the provincial level of the examinations. A survey of the careers of many of his friends and associates reveals that a whole generation of gifted men shared Pu's frustrating experiences. We have already noted that Zhang Duqing made a dozen fruitless attempts to attain juren status. Another close friend, Li Yaochen 李堯臣, was just fifteen when he became a licentiate, but repeated entry in the provincial examination was never rewarded, and he gave up in his old age.[112] Another Zichuan scholar of Pu's acquaintance, Yuan Ruyu 袁如愚, was a licentiate at thirteen, and a stipend student at sixteen, but failed at the higher level on seven occasions.[113] Pu's friend Zhang Yongji 張永躋 was recognized from an early age as a man of outstanding literary abilities, and bracketed with other local talents such as Bi Shichi (top Shandong juren of 1678) and Tan Zaisheng 譚再生 (jinshi 1700), but was not awarded the juren degree until the age of fifty-nine.[114] The learned and studious Bi Shengyu 畢盛鈺 entered the local school with the top marks in the district, prefectural, and qualifying examinations, but unsuccessfully competed at the provincial stage on no less than sixteen occasions.[115]

On the basis of the evidence that we have presented above, it appears both misguided and unnecessary to seek the reasons for Pu Songling's examination failures in the writer's own personal idiosyncrasies. What really impeded his progress were the constricted juren quotas during his lifetime, which were, in practice, further narrowed by collusion between examiners and well-connected candidates, the fearsome attrition rate which

inevitably resulted, and the vagaries of the selection process.

Now that we have completed our survey of the crucial factors at work in the selection of examination candidates in the early Qing, we can turn to Liaozhai and examine just how Pu Songling responded to those prevailing conditions. Here, our findings contrast significantly with the conventional wisdom on this issue. It has become standard practice for critics of Liaozhai to isolate satire of the examination system as one of the three or four major themes of the collection. This approach, which originated in Yang Liu's 楊 柳 influential study of 1958, has been widely adopted by scholars in the West in recent years.[116] In our judgment, however, although Pu often presents the examinations in a poor light, he cannot be said to have unleashed a systematic and fundamental exposé of the sort that commentators claim.

In his short stories, Pu Songling concentrates much of his attention on scholars of relatively low status: either licentiates or students who have yet to pass the first degree. The preoccupation with this social group can be said perhaps to be the unifying principle of the collection. Individual tales differ as to what aspect of the scholars' lives they choose to focus on: some describe their romantic entanglements, some their encounters with demons, others their brushes with oppressive gentry or officialdom, their marital difficulties, and so forth. As a determining factor in their careers, the examinations are frequently mentioned in the stories, and even when they are not, their baleful influence is commonly implied by the impecunious frustration of the central character. But the projected image of the examinations is by no means universally negative: gifted men of excellent character frequently gain due recognition, although often they are passed over. In a small

proportion of stories, Pu presents an individual's examination experience as the central narrative concern. It is this latter group of tales which is commonly quoted by critics eager to depict Pu Songling as a fierce opponent of the examination system. Closer scrutiny reveals a somewhat different picture.

Nowhere in Liaozhai does Pu Songling offer a systematic, organized critique of the abuses of the examination system in the same way, for instance, that he assesses deficiencies in local administration. If we collect the scattered allusions to the examinations and subject them to analysis, four areas of emphasis can be discerned. These will be outlined below.

Firstly, the selection process is often seen as irrational and totally unpredictable. Time and again, the essays of a talented scholar are recognized by everyone as work of the highest quality, but he does not receive the expected honours in the examination hall. The bookworm, Lang Yuzhu 郎玉柱, is regularly placed top of the first rank in the preliminary test by impressed examiners, but fails with equal consistency at the provincial level.[117] Yu Xunjiu 俞恂九 passes top at all three stages of the prefectural examination, and heads the first rank in the preliminary test. After completing the session at the provincial stage, his many admirers compete to copy out his essays and recite them enthusiastically to each other. Yu himself is so pleased with his performance that he anticipates nothing less than first place. In the event, he does not even pass.[118] After Licentiate Ye 葉 passes top in the preliminary test, his friend and patron, the local magistrate, has high expectations that he will succeed at the higher level, and after reading the essays he submitted in the provincial session, showers them with praise. He fails.[119]

Cheng Xiaosi 程孝思, a gifted writer, pursues his studies with the utmost self-discipline, and devotes great effort to his compositions during the examination period, but is rejected.[120]

In a number of stories, success in the examination is attributed to influential contacts or straightforward bribery. Cheng Xiaosi becomes a licentiate through the assistance of his father-in-law, a high-ranking official. Licentiate Ye gains top marks in the preliminary test, thanks partly to a recommendation from his friend, the magistrate. The moral integrity of the provincial director of education is called into question in "Xiao Xie" (224), where the examining official accepts a bribe, and obliges the giver by having his enemy imprisoned on a trumped-up charge.[121] That unscrupulous practices of this kind lead to widespread corruption at the prefectural levels is indicated in another tale, where the heroine tells her friend that he cannot gain admittance to the offices of the examining official if his pockets are empty. Later she sends a maid with a gift to enable him to purchase a licentiate degree, and the message: "Today, the entrance to the provincial director of education's establishment is like a marketplace. Here are two hundred taels of silver, as funds for seeking advancement." (10.1315) In "The Starving Ghost" (240), a young man secures himself a place among the graduates in the prefectural examination by liberal use of bribes.[122] Corruption extends to the provincial level also, "Suqiu" (399) reveals. There, a young man with powerful connections offers to purchase a pass in the provincial examination on behalf of his brother-in-law.[123]

In a third area of emphasis, examiners are presented as utterly incompetent, or, at best, extremely irresponsible. At times, the officials in authority are blamed for entrusting the reading and grading of papers to subordinates unsuited to the task, or for not maintaining adequate

surveillance of the selection process. In one tale, a spirit visits the examination compound to investigate the grading procedure in the sui examination held in Jinan in 1691, and returns with the following report:

> I could see that the director of education was confronted with numerous official duties, but literary distinction was certainly not what was causing him anxiety. He assigned all the grading to six or seven secretaries, comprising mainly salaried licentiates and National College students by purchase. In their former lives, these men were entirely bereft of intrinsic quality, and have been largely homeless souls on the road of starving ghosts, begging for food in every place. Having dwelled in the gloomy dungeon for eight hundred years, it has damaged the clarity of their eyesight: like men who have been confined within a cave for a long period, when they suddenly emerge from it, everything takes on a different aspect, for they lack the faculty of true discernment. (10.1309)

The general thrust of the spirit's remarks, if not their specific content, is given further weight by the expressed judgement of a distinguished scholar, Sun Xiang 孫 勳 (jinshi 1685). Sun, asked to explain why a set of excellent essays were given a low mark, comments that the director of education, who has a reputation for literary achievement, cannot be guilty of such a blunder: "This must have been the hand of a drunken fellow in a secretarial post, who cannot read properly." (10.1309) Although Sun Xiang absolves the examiner from blame, it is clear that he is seriously at fault, as well as the secretarial assistants whom Pu Songling ridicules so fiercely.

In another story, poor coordination and slack controls in the provincial examinations are exposed to view. Here, an associate examiner, a magistrate, and the chief examiner are both taken to task by Yama for failing a talented scholar and passing mediocre candidates instead. The associate examiner defends himself by arguing that the chief examiner was responsible for determining the selection guidelines

and making the final decision, and he was simply following instructions. The chief examiner, on the other hand, protests that if the readers fail to recommend good papers for his inspection, he has no way of setting eyes on them. Yama pronounces both men equally guilty of dereliction of duty: the reader, for his failure to appreciate the literary qualities of the essays, the chief examiner, for his casual and perfunctory approach to his task.[124]

More direct criticism of the selection criteria adopted by examiners in the provincial examination can be found. Jia Fengzhi 賈奉雉, a brilliant scholar who fails repeatedly to attain juren status, is told by a friend:

> Your essays are more than good enough to secure you top place in the prefectural examination, but they are not sufficient to put you even at the bottom of the graduation list in the provincial examination. (10.1359)

He is advised to follow the fashions of the day, and take as his models essays whose pedestrian, hackneyed style he customarily despises. Why?

> Beautiful though essays may be, if their author is of low status, they will not be made known to the world. If you wish to keep your compositions to yourself for the rest of your life, that is all very well, but otherwise, all examiners take the kind of stuff I mentioned as the basis for approval, and I fear that reading your work will not give them new eyes and new powers of judgement. (10.1359-60)

Jia's subsequent experiences prove his friend correct. When he does eventually pass top of the list, it is because he has submitted a series of essays written in a clumsy, verbose, and stereotyped manner of which he was thoroughly ashamed. He later describes these prize-winning compositions as "dogs' excrement".[125]

Further commentary on the examiners' lack of discrimination is

provided by a blind monk, who has the gift of appraising the literary merit of a work by smelling it as it is burned. His judgement on the examiners who fail a worthy candidate and pass a very inferior scholar is simple and damning: "Although my eyes are blind, my nose is not; but those examiners have no sensation in either organ." (8.1101)

In "Yu Qu'e" (339), his most elaborate satire on the examination system, Pu Songling carries the offensive one step further, by questioning whether ordinary officials are qualified to act as readers in the provincial examination. In this story, the author invents an underworld examination system, whose operations at times furnish an enlightening contrast, at times a mocking parallel, to the conventional human administration. In the underworld, so as to maintain high standards of accuracy in examination grading, prospective examiners must themselves undergo a rigorous screening process. Only those officials who have demonstrated their literary proficiency in regular tests are permitted to become examiners, and all others are disqualified. In the human world, on the other hand, the magistrates and prefects who are commonly appointed as readers are not subjected to scrutiny, and the principle of selection of candidates on the basis of literary merit is consequently seriously undermined:

> Those officials who have attained their career ambitions do not cast so much as a glance at the ancient classics, which were simply picked up in their youth as a brick to knock upon the door and win fame and fortune, to be cast aside as soon as the door has opened; then, after ten or more years of handling official documents, even an accomplished scholar will hardly have a literary phrase left in his head. The reason why the shallow and inferior unexpectedly gain advancement in the human world, whilst the heroic talents are thwarted, is merely that this examination is lacking. (9.1167)

Although, in normal circumstances, the underworld examinations would far surpass their earthly counterparts as a justly administered testing system, in this particular year the preliminary selection of examiners is cancelled, and examiners are instead chosen in the same haphazard and irrational manner that prevails among the living. The list of readers, which includes a blind ghost and the spirit of an avaricious money-grabber, is therefore an effective commentary on the failings of the selection process in the human world. As one might expect, the results of an examination entrusted to such a motley crew are a travesty, and a superbly gifted ghost candidate is failed. Later, the results are scrutinized by Zhang Fei 張飛, on one of his periodic tours of inspection, and two-thirds of the original graduates are stripped of their degrees as being unworthy of the honour. The implications for the earthly examinations again are clear. Zhang Fei is said to visit the nether regions and human world in rotation, inspecting the former once every thirty years, the latter once every thirty-five years. At the conclusion of the story, the purge of examiners after the Shuntian provincial examination of 1657 is attributed to Zhang Fei's corrective influence. By this ingenious ending, Pu Songling demonstrates the identity which unites his imaginary underworld examinations with the very real corruption and incompetence that permeated the provincial examinations of his own day.

If the examiners, in their venality and ineptitude, were regarded as the sole determining factor in a candidate's success or failure, the criticisms outlined above would be extremely damaging to the authority of the selection process. In Liaozhai, however, a second factor balances or even outweighs the first, a decisive agent beyond human control: fate.

In practically all the tales which devote attention to the examination system, an explicit contrast is drawn between the roles played by literary merit (wen 文) and fate (ming 命 or shu 數). The latter is seen as an irresistible force, and a resigned acceptance of its influence on the examination results is urged upon the frustrated candidates. This fatalism, overlooked or underplayed by modern readers of Liaozhai, forms an inextricable part of Pu Songling's attitude to the examinations, and constitutes the fourth major area of emphasis in his handling of the theme.

Several examples illustrate how inexorably fate is perceived to operate. A spirit, asked to predict in what rank candidates in the sui examination will be placed, assesses the essays of an outstanding student as "First Rank". But almost immediately he qualifies this judgement: "When I appraised Licentiate Li 李 just now, I based my verdict on the quality of his compositions. His fate, however, is extremely unpropitious, and he is destined to commit a punishable offence." (10.1308) Although, at this juncture, the spirit expresses astonishment that such a glaring anomaly should exist between merit and fate, other tales suggest this phenomenon is by no means uncommon. In "Judge Lu" (47), where, incidentally, the examinations are not presented as an inaccurate measure of talent, a rather slow-witted young scholar never has any success until his heart is replaced by his supernatural companion, to equip him better for competition. He passes top in both the preliminary and provincial examinations. He fails, however, in all three of his attempts to become a jinshi graduate. Why? Simply because, as his friend informed him: "Your good fortune is of modest proportions, so you cannot achieve great distinction. The provincial examination is all you will pass." (2.141)

In "The Monk's Magic" (279), a monk, returning to his home district after a long absence, greets a talented licentiate he used to know with a sigh: "I imagined you would have shot up in the world long ago, but you are still a cloth-clad commoner, are you? I think your original allotment of good fortune must simply have been meagre." (7.968) After making an attempt to bribe the underworld authorities to improve his destiny, only to see the deal fall through as a result of the scholar's parsimony, the monk declares: "This demonstrates that to end up a senior licentiate conforms with your fate. Otherwise, a higher degree would be yours tomorrow." (7.969)

Licentiate Ye's failure in the provincial examination is explained in terms of a divine agency that governs his career: "Unknown to him, destiny confines a man, literary talent offends fate, and when the results were announced, he suffered defeat once again." (1.81) Later, after dying of heartbreak, Ye comes to terms with his setbacks. When his patron tests out his reaction to his examination failures, Ye responds, "It was probably destined to be so." (1.82) The author's postscript adopts the same tone of philosophical resignation:

> Living in this world, all a man can do is close his eyes and march forward, submitting to whatever destiny, lofty or low, the creator may allocate. There is no shortage of men like Ye in the world, who possess remarkable abilities yet drown in disappointment. (1.85)

In "Yu Qu'e", this notion of the ineluctability of fate is further developed. Here, the ghost Yu Qu'e informs his human friend, an examination candidate, that his fate is unfavourable, and the time inauspicious. He warns him that his chance of success in the next session of the provincial examination is only 10 percent, increasing to 30 percent three years hence, with real opportunity emerging only in the subsequent triennial session. His

friend, understandably discouraged, proposes not to participate in the intervening sessions, only to be firmly corrected by the spirit:

> "Not so," said Yu, "these matters are all determined by divine destiny, and even if you clearly know you cannot pass, the arduous labours that have been assigned to you must still be experienced to the full." (9.1170)

Yu's predictions are subsequently fulfilled when the scholar, having failed the first two sets of examinations, is given the consolation prize of a place in the list of runners-up in the third, and thereby becomes a fugongsheng 副貢生.

Just as "Yu Qu'e" represents Pu Songling's most far-reaching exposure of the defects in the selection process as administered by examiners, "The Literary Affairs Commissioner" (321) provides the most extensive exegesis of the relationship between fate and examination failure. In a series of scenes, great emphasis is laid on fate as a decisive factor governing a man's career. First of all, the blind monk, whom we quoted earlier, is challenged by an obnoxious and mediocre scholar to account for the inaccuracy of his forecast that he would fail and Licentiate Wang 王 would pass. The monk's reply, declaring that his projections were based on literary criteria alone, announces the existence of a second frame of reference, one which is to dominate the story: "What I discussed was simply literary merit. I have no intention of discussing fate with you." (8.1101-1102). Licentiate Wang's friend, a ghost named Song 宋, expands upon the monk's remark as he consoles the disappointed candidate:

> Your present failure, true enough, is because your fate is not right; but, in all fairness, your compositions have also not reached their potential peak. From now on, you should polish your skills, for there are sure to be men in the world who are not blind. (8.1102)

After months of intense preparation, Song declares just before the next examination, "If you do not win this battle, that then really will be fate." But once again, Wang is failed, this time for violation of regulations. When Song hears the news, he breaks out into an agonized wail, "Oh, this is fate! This is fate!", and it is the turn of the more composed Wang to reason with his companion, "All events, it is true, are influenced by fate." (8.1103) But according to what principles does fate operate? After a brief visit to the underworld, where he is about to take up an appointment, Song returns to explain: Yama's administration lays more stress on morality than literature in determining careers of men. One cannot rely solely on written skills to see one through, one must also maintain a high moral character. Wang's failures so far derive from an insufficient attention to the cultivation of virtue, and his luck will turn if he adheres to the righteous path. Some time later, Wang dreams that he receives more details from Song: in his case, he had been crossed off the register of officials-to-be because of his responsibility for the death of a concubine. Although his good deeds have since largely redeemed him, his modest fate still prohibits him from holding official office. Thereafter, Wang succeeds in passing both the provincial and metropolitan levels, but never becomes an official.

In his postscript, Pu Songling lays further stress on the primacy of moral factors, by implying that the obnoxious scholar must have been handicapped by his character deficiencies, for otherwise, given his mediocre essays that so appeal to examiners, he would have been able to pass not just the provincial, but the metropolitan examination too.

As we now embark on an appraisal of Pu Songling's commentary on the examinations, it is necessary to acknowledge that in the substance of his

remarks, Pu Songling offers little in the way of novel or original insights into the defects of the examination system. The ideas that Pu articulated were actually quite commonplace among intellectuals of the Ming and Qing period.

Pu's scornful references to examiners as blind men, for example, represent an almost standard response to failure by frustrated licentiates. As he showed in his classic description of the "seven metamorphoses" undergone by these unfortunates, their typical reaction to disappointment is to "violently curse the examiners for having no eyes".[126] We may note the historical instance of the protest by rebellious candidates after the 1711 Jiangnan provincial examination, when the chief examiner, Zuo Bifan 左必蕃, was lampooned in a verse couplet as no better than the blind historian, Zuo Qiuming 左邱明, whose "two eyes have not a pupil between them".[127]

In mocking the selection criteria adopted by examiners, Pu was expressing a contempt felt by many candidates jealous and resentful of scholars whose work was given preference over their own. Ai Nanying 艾南英 (juren 1624), who passed the provincial examination only at the ninth attempt, made great claims for his own erudition, whilst heaping scorn on the examiners' preference for essays which, he alleged, were "vapid and vulgar, clumsy and shallow".[128] In deploring the appointment of bureaucratic hacks as judges of literary merit, Pu was echoing a complaint raised by Ai some decades earlier:

> The associate examiners are all just temporarily seconded from their handling of official documents and legal cases, and cannot be compared with the provincial director of education, who devotes his concentration and mental energies to the reading of the papers, and whose profession it is to evaluate literary merit.[129]

Scholars, even notable established figures, frequently gave vent to their indignation about the corruption in the examinations, to which Pu sometimes alludes. Commenting on the story, "Yu Qu'e", Wang Shizhen observed: "In the past few provincial examinations, collusion has been practiced flagrantly. . . . Even if Zhang Fei appeared, there is nothing he could do about it. Sad indeed!"[130]

In the limited scope of his criticisms, Pu Songling is placed firmly in the mainstream of intellectual opinion. Hostile as he was to several abuses, he never offered any positive recommendation for their reform, unless one considers his imaginary test for examiners as a serious proposal. As an active participant in examinations, he objected to those aspects which presented obstacles to success on his own personal level, and did not dwell upon the broader implications of the system's influence on society. Like most candidates, he was never able to distance himself sufficiently from his own disappointments to adopt the analytical view which detached observers were able to take.

Although attempts have been made to link Pu's criticisms of the examinations with those of seventeenth century thinkers such as Huang Zongxi 黃宗羲 (1610-1695), Fang Yizhi 方以智 (1611-1671), and Gu Yanwu,[131] his orientation clearly differs enormously from theirs. Intellectual innovators, these men were actively seeking an alternative to a system of education and process of selection which they perceived to be extremely damaging to scholarship and society, and consequently presented many far-reaching programmes for the reform of the institution. Emerging from prosperous official family backgrounds as they did, they did not feel a pressing need to prove themselves in the examination hall and establish their place in society on that basis. They therefore found it easier to question the most basic assumptions underlying the traditional system.

For Pu Songling, by contrast, the attainment of higher degrees represented the only conceivable means by which he could improve his status (a fact of which he was often to remind his sons, as they in turn struggled to win recognition in the examination hall). Consequently, he accepted the ground-rules of the competitive system, and objected only to their violation or non-enforcement. Pu obviously was conscious of the deleterious effect of the eight-leg essay on genuine learning, as he satirized on several occasions the pedantry, shallowness, and conceit of scholars reared on the examination mentality. But this awareness did not inspire any radical rethinking in Pu's case. The gap that divided him from a scholar such as Gu Yanwu is perhaps best illustrated by the passage from "Yu Qu'e" (translated on p.154), which has recently been quoted as an instance of striking correspondence of views between the two men.[132] It is true that Pu Songling attacks the cynical careerism that accompanies the examinations in a similar tone to Gu, but he does not present this as the matter of primary concern, but as a problem only in so far as it has a bearing on the direct and immediate preoccupation of an examination candidate: the competence and reliability of the examiners. Whereas Gu's point of departure was the deterioration of intellectual standards and moral values, Pu's protest was directed much more narrowly to anomalies in the selection process.

By the nature of his criticisms, Pu Songling should therefore be distinguished from the seventeenth century political philosophers, and aligned rather with the undercurrent of resentment and dissatisfaction common among examination candidates of all periods. In his constant emphasis on the role played by fate in determining success or failure, he can also be identified as a typical representative of his frustrated social group. Even discounting the factors of corruption or administrative

ineptitude, the grotesquely high ratio of candidates competing for each available place made success such a remote possibility as to arouse in the participants a sense that they themselves could do little to improve their chances, that they were totally at the mercy of a higher force, whose operations appeared random and unpredictable. Considering the career of Gui Youguang 歸有光 (1506-1571), who was unable to pass the provincial examination until he was thirty-four, and failed the metropolitan examination eight times before eventual success in 1565, a contemporary scholar has observed: "It is clear from his case that literary ability, reputation, perseverance, and connections in high places, even taken together, could not guarantee 'success' in attaining the highest degree in the examinations."[133] When we consider that Gui seriously ascribed his successive failures to fate, we can see that candidates in the provincial examination, where the competition was so much fiercer, would even more readily attribute failure to such a cause.

"In the examinations, one cannot discuss literary merit" (chang zhong mo lun wen 場中莫論文), a common saying of Pu's day quoted by a character in Liaozhai,[134] expressed a widespread belief that examination results were a matter either of accident or of preordained fate. Yang Shicong 楊士聰 (jinshi 1631), condemning Ai Nanying for his verbal attack on one of his examiners, declared, "Success and failure are simply a matter of chance".[135] Zhang Duqing, when reviewing his unhappy examination career, points out several occasions when fate has intervened.[136] Pu's references to fate in his Liaozhai stories can be seen as an expression of the same resigned response, and are consistent with a number of remarks made in his poetry also.

In a poem of 1704, Pu wrote:

> In the examinations, essays are not judged,
> Success and failure are based on fate.[137]

A poem of 1702, addressed to his three younger sons after their failure in the prefectural examination, lists providence, along with corruption and incompetence, as the decisive factors in the selection process, a viewpoint which, of course, coincides with that projected in Liaozhai:

> Yesterday the scholars in the local school
> Won honour through their learning,
> For the first degrees attained today,
> They haggle over price like market tradesmen.
> Though the quota allows fifteen names,
> They really only number four or five.
> On top of that, the examiner,
> If not dim in mind, is blind of eye.
> Though your writing may outmatch the rest,
> Yet half the outcome lies with heavenly fate.[138]

Owing to their unmistakeable impact on a man's career prospects, the examinations had come to be regarded as an effective instrument for divine retribution to distribute its punishments and rewards. Many examples can be found in Chinese anecdotal literature of the belief that success and failure were related either to one's own moral behaviour, in this life or a previous existence, or to the conduct of one's ancestors.[139] Such explanations offered some consolation to frustrated candidates, enabling them to retain confidence in the merit of their own literary compositions and attribute their lack of progress to factors possibly outside their control. But by conforming to conventional conceptions of the requital principle in such stories as "The Literary Affairs Commissioner", Pu Songling diluted the satirical potency of his description of the examiners' corruption and incompetence, as human selection procedures lose importance

in face of Heaven, the supreme examiner.

In conclusion, it does not seem accurate to characterize the examination-related stories in Liaozhai simply as satirical attacks on the examination system. Their interest and value lie rather in their presentation of the author's complex response to the institution which constantly held out a promise of success, but was always to thwart his aspirations. In this respect, he deserves comparison with other fiction writers critical of the examination system. Such authors as Dong Yue 董説 (1620-1686) and Wu Jingzi 吳敬梓 (1710-1755) tended to be detached observers, whose protests against the effects of the eight-legged essay on intellectual standards were uncompromising and far-reaching. Dong's Xiyou bu 西游補, written just about the time that Pu was born, denounced the degeneration of literature brought about by over-emphasis on the examination essays.[140] Wu's Rulin waishi, composed some twenty odd years after Pu's death, dwelled at length on the adverse impact of the examination system on the scholarly world.[141] Pu, by contrast, was preoccupied with the narrower concerns of an unsuccessful candidate: Why did he fail? How could he pass? Only rarely could he stand apart from his own predicament, as he does in "Wang Zi'an" (369), where, after reviewing the series of agonies endured by an unsuccessful candidate in the provincial examination, he concludes: "In such circumstances as these, the competitors cry in torment, wishing they were dead, but in the eyes of an onlooker, there is no sight more ludicrous than their reactions." (9.1240) The difference between Pu and the authors of the novels was that he remained a "competitor" (dang ju zhe 當局者) almost to the end of his days, while Dong and Wu soon became simply "onlookers" (pang guan zhe 旁觀者). Thus, the Liaozhai stories are written from the point

of view of an insider, who, like many unfortunate men in the same position, responded in a variety of ways: now cursing the examiners for their stupidity, now incensed by corruption and other irregularities, now comforting himself by laying his failures at the door of heavenly fate. It is as a literary expression of this deep-seated frustration, rather than as critique *per se* of the examination system, that these stories most merit attention.

3. Officials, Gentry, and Clerks

A striking feature of Pu Songling's stories is the critical attitude displayed by the author towards the abuses of the traditional bureaucratic system. His acute perception of the self-interest and indifference to popular welfare that characterized many local officials is nowhere better demonstrated than in the definition of "the secret of a career in officialdom", which a tyrannical magistrate provides for the enlightenment of his idealistic younger brother:

> The power to authorize promotions and dismissals lies with one's superiors, not with the common people. If one's superiors are happy, then one is a good official; if one loves the common people, by what means can one make one's superiors happy? (8.1054)

So pervasive does Pu find this cynical philosophy that magistrates who do resist the pressures of bullying superiors are admired by him for their rarity:

> Mr. Zhang 張 , the department magistrate of Tai'an, was given the nickname "Wooden Peg" on account of his hard, unyielding character. Whenever high officials and important functionaries ascended Taishan, they always issued varied and burdensome demands for porters, horses, sedan-chairs and so forth, and the local populace was hard put to satisfy all these exactions. Zhang put an end to all these services. If someone simply asked for a sheep or pig, he would say, "I am a

> sheep, I am a pig, please slaughter me as a reward to your attendants." These big officials could do nothing about it. (12.1704-1705)

A second characteristic of Liaozhai stories is the frequent appearance of unscrupulous and predatory local gentry, who take actions that endanger the life or happiness of the central characters, abducting the heroes' wives, for instance, in "Hongyu" (80) and "Cui Meng" (327). Such injustices are redressed with great difficulty, because almost invariably the social status and financial resources of gentry ensure the support or connivance of officialdom. In "Xiang Gao" (244), an argument develops between the hero's brother and a man named Zhuang 莊, the son of an official:

> Zhuang urged his retainers to set in with their whips, and they left off only when he was about to breathe his last. When Gao heard about the incident, he rushed to see, but found his brother's body already cold. Overcome with grief and indignation, he presented himself as a plaintiff at the prefectural capital. But by distributing bribes at all levels, Zhuang denied any chance of a sympathetic hearing for his just case. (6.831)

Again, in "Tian Qilang" (133), the younger brother of an official who is serving as a censor in Beijing is supported at every turn by the district magistrate, to whom he makes gifts of money. At the behest of the censor's brother, the magistrate has an innocent old gentleman beaten to death. Other examples abound.[142]

Although Pu's criticism of bureaucratic evils and gentry behaviour is often remarked upon by modern scholars, there has seldom been any attempt to examine the reasons for Pu Songling's particular sensitivity to these issues. Jaroslav Průšek, it is true, has indulged in some speculation in this regard in the course of his discussion of the years 1672 to 1679, to which he attaches great significance in the creative development of Pu Songling:

> It is more than probable that his aversion to and contempt for the arrogant and callous rich, for ruthless and corrupt officials, and for all who caused their fellow-men injury and suffering, . . . have their origin in the personal experiences of these several years in which he had the best opportunity to become acquainted with the character of the Chinese gentry.[143]

Prusek, however, was unable to present any solid evidence in support of this hypothesis. Although, as he emphasizes, there is a dejected note in much of Pu's poetry of the 1670s, it is unreasonable to insist that this is linked to unhappy experiences involving conflict with local gentry.

Some materials do, however, shed light on Pu Songling's preoccupation with such issues, but have simply been disregarded up till now. Several experiences and episodes can be identified as likely factors that combined to intensify a critical attitude to gentry and officials.

The nine months that Pu Songling spent as a private secretary in the employ of a district magistrate permitted him an inside view of the abuse-ridden official world. In the autumn of 1670, Pu travelled south to Baoying 寶應 in Jiangsu, where a Zichuan friend, Sun Hui (jinshi 1661), had been appointed to the post of local magistrate the year before. Pu's motives in becoming Sun's secretary are unclear. The brevity of his stay in Jiangsu suggests that he was not attracted to the career as a long-term prospect. Financial considerations were perhaps involved: scholars like Pu who were skilled at drafting correspondence could expect more generous remuneration than a teacher's salary.[144] Pu's ties of loyalty and friendship to the slightly older man may have been a factor, and he probably considered the job a good opportunity to travel and see something of the world.

Sun Hui's abilities as an administrator were fully stretched by conditions in Baoying, a county in central Jiangsu, adjacent to the Grand Canal. His predecessors had reduced much of the local population

to poverty by corrupt tax exactions, and persistent neglect of river conservation had led to a succession of floods and famines. Soon, however, Sun established a reputation as a courageous and just official who put the people's interests above his own. He won the support of the local residents by abolishing all the unjustified tax surcharges. In maintenance of the Grand Canal, he tried to avoid excessive levies on local labour. Just before Pu's arrival, Sun had been ordered to conscript over 7000 men to dredge the stretch of the canal that ran through Baoying. Sun refused to requisition more than a thousand, and would have been impeached for his defiance but for a demonstration in his support by "tens of thousands" of local people. Lodo 羅多, the director-general of river conservancy, relented, and agreed to pardon Sun if the project was completed within a week. Thousands of people are said to have reacted spontaneously, and, by working round the clock, accomplished the task in just three days.[145] In one of his poems, Pu Songling paid tribute to his friend's firm defence of principle.[146]

The most serious problem confronting Sun was that presented by the post-stations (yi zhan 驛站). Situated along the vital transport and communications route running from Yangzhou to the north, Baoying was burdened with heavy demands for porters, horses, provisions, and expenses to supply passing officials, demands which the limited funds allotted were quite unable to satisfy. This crisis was widespread in the early Qing period,[147] but particularly acute in Baoying, depressed as it was by a series of disastrous harvests. As a junior official, Sun was constantly bullied by functionaries of higher status, who insisted on being loaned porters and horses far in excess of their proper quota. The letters composed by Pu Songling which Sun sent to his colleagues

and superiors frequently complain of being treated like a slave or singing-girl, cursed and insulted if he objected to greedy demands.[148]

Other cynical and selfish practices by officials are alluded to by Pu Songling in correspondence. One colleague is reproached for his reluctance to recompense Sun Hui for the loan of a quantity of grain, another is bitterly criticized for refusing to return some forty post-horses which Sun had supplied for the use of a high official.[149] Some magistrates, anticipating that, in the economic conditions prevailing in Baoying, young girls could be purchased at bargain prices, requested Sun Hui's assistance in procuring children. Such applications were firmly rejected.[150]

By the time that Pu Songling terminated his appointment and set off home to Shandong in June 1671, he would have become familiar with many of the problems of local administration, the inevitable conflicts and tensions in a magistrate's joint responsibility to the local populace and to his superiors, the underhand methods adopted by many officials to enhance their position at the expense of colleagues or ordinary people. Had Pu left a personal record of his reactions to his experience in Jiangsu, a more detailed evaluation would be possible. It seems safe to conclude, however, that his first-hand encounters with the bureaucratic world in operation sharpened his perception of chronic weaknesses in the system.

Some evidence suggests that both Pu's brother, Pu Bailing 柏齡, and Pu himself may have suffered from just the kind of aggressive and over-bearing behaviour of powerful gentry or officials depicted so often in Liaozhai. Two such episodes are mentioned in Pu's correspondence. The first letter, addressed to the financial commissioner of Shandong, was drafted by Pu sometime between 1668 and 1679 at the request of Wang Fuzheng 王敷政 (juren 1663).[151] Quoting the evidence of a relative of Wang's,

a licentiate named Yuan Jin 袁錦, it denounces an unnamed member of a prominent gentry household for criminal misconduct. The accused had victimized several local licentiates against whom he bore a grudge: Yang Longzi 楊龍子had been tortured and imprisoned, She Wolong 郝臥龍 had been rudely humiliated, and Pu Bailing had been stripped of his degree on a trumped-up charge. Recently he had shielded a military licentiate, Su Ji 蘇績, after the latter had hounded Yuan Jin's aunt to death, and he had also subjected innocent people to cruel beatings and unlawful detention.[152]

In the second letter, addressed to Gao Heng, Pu protests vigorously about the unduly severe penalties exacted by the local magistrate for late submission of land registers. According to his account, he himself had been beaten by the irate official and placed in detention as punishment for his failure to present a sufficient number of copies for inspection, and the whole community had been thrown into uproar by indiscriminate arrests and floggings.[153]

Even if we allow that Pu may have exaggerated the humiliations he had suffered, so as to heighten the dramatic effect of the second letter, his accusations in both cases seem to be based on personal observation, and are riven through with a tone of genuine indignation. The trenchant tone of his criticisms bespeaks a man of uncommonly forthright character, a facet of personality which Pu's son recalled in a revealing passage:

> By nature upright and outspoken, he was not afraid to cause offence, and he did not fawn on people of high status. In normal circumstances, he was the most amiable of friends, but if someone wronged his kith and kin or bullied local people, he would always admonish them, confronting them face to face, as in court. Sometimes he even went to the lengths of composing a direct report several pages long, sparing no thought for the recipient's loss of face. Such was his unrestrained character that, in his view, only in this way could he prove himself a true friend. His friends, in turn, forgave my father his innocent candour, and did not take it as an insult. It was because he did not allow personal considerations to override his sense of right and wrong that he poured out his inner thoughts in this manner.[154]

In writing this, Pu Ruo may have had a particular letter from his father to Sun Hui in mind. Sun had left his post as magistrate in Baoying in 1675, and in the following year was promoted to junior metropolitan censor, a post in which he earned respect as a frank and determined official. In 1681, he was sent to supervise the provincial examination in Fujian. During this period of absence on official duties, some members of his clan borrowed his authority to expropriate property, intimidate local residents, and pervert justice. As no one else dared take action, Pu wrote a strongly worded letter to Sun, warning him to take steps to control his subordinates. Pu's advice, informed by eye-witness accounts, shows a keen understanding of the process by which leading gentry can be misled and manipulated by their friends, clansmen, servants, and other hangers-on. Firstly, Sun should exercise restraint vis-à-vis the local people and avoid coercive measures. Secondly, he should use caution in his choice of companions and avoid flatterers. Thirdly, he should not accept uncritically all that he is told. Fourthly, he should be on guard against the misdeeds of servants, and select them with care. Fifthly, he should keep a tight rein on his clan. After cataloguing the iniquities perpetrated by Sun's dependents when such strictures are not observed, Pu concluded, dryly:

> What I say cannot be relied upon. If you were to ask someone else, they would be bound to tell you that my allegations are false. But I just pray that you could move about incognito in your home district and make personal inquiries. If there is even one person who does not stick out his tongue and bite his fingers when he hears the Sun household mentioned, then I will accept the charge of effrontery without demur.[155]

Pu's letter had the desired effect. Sun is said to have been shocked by these revelations, and to have immediately admonished his subordinates

and ensured their good behaviour.[156] Some of the details in Pu's account are reminiscent of episodes related in Liaozhai tales, and provide evidence of the realistic basis of elements in Pu's fictional narratives.[157]

Possibly as a result of his unpleasant experience in the affair of the land registers, Pu Songling appears generally to have shunned contact with the local magistrates who took office in Zichuan. Although scattered references to these officials can be found in his poetry and prose, his association with them was generally distant and formal.[158] Only two magistrates does he seem to have held in high regard: Fei Yizhi and Zhang Mei 張 崡 . To both men he paid the honour of including anecdotes about their handling of legal matters in his collection of short stories. Pu Songling's respect for Fei Yizhi, magistrate from 1658 to 1660, was perhaps not unrelated to Fei's favourable verdict on his examination essays: Shi Runzhang, another of his examiners in 1658, is also portrayed in a flattering light in Liaozhai.[159] Zhang Mei, who took office in 1686, was the most outstanding local administrator during Pu Songling's lifetime. Of particular benefit to the community were his reorganization of the system of tribute grain payments, abolition of corrupt practices, prohibition of gambling, and prompt handling of legal cases.[160]

The admiration that Pu bore Zhang Mei appears to have been mutual. Zhang was so eager to become acquainted with the writer that he paid him a visit at his own home, and solicited his advice on administrative questions.[161] He asked Pu to write a preface for a volume of his poems, and when he learned of his transfer to the post of Gongchang 鄨 昌 in Gansu in 1689, requested that he compose two letters on his behalf to the official then occupying that position.[162] For his part, Pu Songling often quoted examples of Zhang's vigorous and conscientious attention to

the public good as models of justice and good sense, comparing them favourably to the slack and unprincipled methods of lesser magistrates. In a Liaozhai story, for instance, he recorded with approval Zhang's hostility to arrogant salt merchants and sympathy for innocuous peddlers accused of smuggling.[163]

In the Qing period, contempt for the greed and dishonesty of yamen clerks was widespread among scholars and officials, and the hostility to clerks expressed by Pu Songling in his work conforms to this prevailing attitude. His loathing of clerks seems, however, to have been especially virulent. A letter to Zhang Mei warned that whilst faithful servants could be found, loyal clerks simply did not exist:

> The posts of clerks are all filled by the most cunning fellows in the district. Before they enter service, oppressing the people is their intention, and once they are attached to the yamen, deceiving the magistrate is their only talent.[164]

During his months as aide to Sun Hui, Pu Songling must have gained an insight into the difficulties of a magistrate administering a yamen whose personnel were usually far more familiar with local conditions than himself, and would have observed the subterfuges used by clerks to extort money from local people without his knowledge. In a notice he composed in 1671, urging the litigious citizens of Gaoyou 高郵 to desist from unnecessary law-suits, he highlighted such problems as he warned of the pernicious role played by yamen clerks:

> Even a wise magistrate finds it hard to banish the devils and demons that haunt the law-court, and every time a summons is issued, before the accused has been brought before the court, they first insist that the plaintiff oblige them to the fullest, otherwise they will shout and curse and take him to task, stopping at nothing: the ordeal to which he is subjected is quite beyond description, so that by the time he wins some redress for his original grievance, his own standing and property have been practically wiped out.[165]

Pu Songling's disapproval of clerks may also be linked to their activities in the Zichuan yamen. Evidence suggests that clerks there, particularly those responsible for tax administration, posed a chronic threat to the public welfare. Such are the implications of a series of letters and petitions that Pu Songling sent to local officials between 1709 and 1711. In his protests at the reinstatement of a notorious tax clerk, Kang Lizhen 康 利 貞 , who had extorted huge sums of money through fabricated surcharges during his previous term in office, Pu revealed that Kang's predecessors had also imposed excessive fiscal demands. He pointed out that ever since Zhang Mei had overhauled the tribute grain system, making collection and delivery a responsibility of the local magistrate, clerks had hoodwinked successive magistrates, increasing the rate of commutation to a level well over twice the figure that Zhang had set as the proper norm. Lamenting the apparent immunity from punishment which clerks enjoy, Pu bitterly complained that not only are their appetites insatiable, but these parasites are dislodged only with extreme difficulty:

> Even if the common people could be squeezed of their very last drop of sweat and blood, when could they ever fill the bottomless swag bag of the rapacious clerks? The authorities are unaware that the clerks are oppressing the populace, and regard them as honest subordinates, thus rendering them ineradicable. However can this be remedied![166]

Although the episode that provoked this outburst took place near the end of Pu Songling's life, it is clear that Kang Lizhen was simply extending to unprecedented limits methods of embezzlement and corruption which had been employed by clerks for decades.

Clerks make fewer appearances in Liaozhai than officials and gentry, but when the author does introduce them into a narrative, he never fails to stress their greed, cruelty, and guile, often adding further commentary

to impress upon the reader their danger to society. "Wu Qiuyue" (194), a story in which the hero, Wang Ding 王鼎, distinguishes himself by murdering four clerks, is an interesting example. After Wang has killed two clerks who were mistreating his brother, Wang's mistress is imprisoned. When he learns that she is being tormented by her jailors, he visits the prison, with anguish and indignation in his heart:

> When Wang came up close to the window and peeped through, he saw Qiuyue sitting on a couch sobbing, her face buried in her sleeve. Two clerks by her side were pinching her cheeks and clutching her slippers in taunting jest. She cried all the more bitterly. One of the clerks threw his arms around her neck, saying, "Now that you are a criminal, would you still stay chaste?" Wang was incensed, and, not pausing to speak, charged in, knife in hand. He cut down each clerk with a stroke of the blade, slicing their necks like hempstalks. Then, seizing the girl, he ran out. (5.670-671)

Evidently savouring with satisfaction the violent deaths of the four clerks, Pu remarks at the end of the story: "I would like to propose the institution of a law: the punishment for murdering yamen clerks should be three degrees less severe than for the homicide of ordinary people. Among such men there is none whose murder is unacceptable." (5.672)

In "A Dream of Wolves" (305), Pu Songling takes this notion of clerks as a sub-human species a step further. Here, the clerks who work in co-ordination with a corrupt magistrate to exploit the local people are depicted as a pack of rapacious wolves, who, in a surrealistic dream sequence, enter the magistrate's quarters with the bodies of human victims between their jaws to present for his refreshment. In the end, justice is seen to be done, when both the tiger-like magistrate and his wolfish henchmen are executed by bandits determined to vent the outrage felt by the entire district towards their oppressors. In his postscript, Pu Songling points out that the fantasy is grounded in a conspicuous social reality: "I

venture to deplore that, across the land, situations where magistrates are tigers and clerks are wolves may be 'fiercer than a tiger'!" (8.1055) As way of illustration, a supplementary anecdote notes the inability of an honest official from the nearby district of Zouping 鄒平 to detect the devious extortions practiced by his clerks. Like the advice he included in his letter to Zhang Mei, Pu believed that stories such as these could prove illuminating to men in official position, for he added: "Alas! The magistrate thinks himself pure, but the street is filled with people reviling his greed - because he has let wolves run wild, without himself realizing it. Cases of this kind are even more common in the world, and can serve as a warning to magistrates." (8.1056)

In the lengthy discussion appended to "A Miscarriage of Justice" (282), Pu reverted to the topic which had exercised his pen during his service in Gaoyou: the part played by clerks in lawsuits. He remarked again that magistrates, through oversight or ineptitude, are often misled by their underlings, with the result that hapless plaintiffs and defendants are thrown at the mercy of the clerks, and have no opportunity to explain their case to the official until the clerks' exorbitant financial demands are met. Appeals to justice, he concludes, "are in fact entirely useless - all they will do is bring about bankruptcy and ruin, fill the greedy sack of corrupt clerks, force the sale of sons and the mortgage of wives, for no greater reward than venting the private resentment of a petty-minded man." (7.978)

4. The Teacher's Life

The circumstances, vocations, and aspirations of many major male characters in Liaozhai resemble in a number of respects those of their

creator. The frustrations of examination candidates, as critics have frequently remarked, mirror the author's own unrewarded preparation for examinations. But, over and above that, Pu Songling generally placed his heroes in a social setting with which he was intimately familiar: as teachers, as secretaries, as commissioned authors of formal documents. By portraying his characters as engaged in these professional activities, Pu Songling reflected some of his own experiences and insights.

Throughout his adult life, Pu depended on teaching for the bulk of his income. Evidence suggests that in his twenties Pu was working away from home, engaged as a private tutor to gentry families, though precise details are lacking.[167] In 1679, Pu took up the post of tutor to the family of a retired official, Bi Jiyou (1623-1693). He was to live at their house in Wangcun 王村, in western Zichuan, for much of each year until 1709.[168] Initially, Pu taught the children of Bi Jiyou's sole surviving son, Bi Shengju 畢盛鉅 (zi Weizhong 韋仲); later on Shengju's grandsons became his pupils. At times, he may have shared the teaching duties with a colleague, as the boys ranged in age from very young to late teens, and may have been divided into separate classes.[169] According to his son, Pu was a patient and sympathetic teacher, who never stinted time and effort in his commitment to his students.

Some scholars have argued that prior to Pu's entry into the Bi household, he was snubbed and unappreciated by his employers, and consequently contracted a deep antipathy to overbearing gentry.[170] Little evidence can be found to support such a view. It is possible, however, that Pu may have had some unpleasant experiences as a teacher. Several of his works show an acute awareness of the hardships and petty humiliations suffered by private tutors, and sardonically expose the unscrupulousness

of employers, who try to extract the maximum effort from the teacher at minimum cost to themselves.

In Pu's play, Nao guan 鬧館, a penniless teacher, drifting far away from home in search of a job, has no choice but to accept the ridiculous terms of employment which a miserly landlord offers in return for educating his two sons. Not only will his meals be rudimentary, his bedding primitive, and his salary subject to unfavourable conversion rates, he will even be expected to pay for his pupils' writing materials, and carry the boys to school on his back if the road is muddy.[171] The vernacular ballad, Xuejiu zichao 學究自嘲, follows a teacher's progress through the course of a year: his initial apprehension as to how his new employer will treat him, his pleasure at the quality of the first welcoming dinner, and his disillusionment when he is reduced to a simple diet the next day, the discomfort of his living quarters and the loneliness of the long separation from his wife and family, and the delight which he shares with his pupils when they part at the end of the year, knowing they will not have to see each other again.[172]

Pu Songling's familiarity with life as a teacher affected his composition of Liaozhai stories in two respects. In the broader dimension, his preoccupation with pedagogy may have sharpened the didactic tone of his tales, and his protracted isolation from his loved ones may have encouraged his fanciful imagination to visualize experiences encountered by men in similar positions to his own. Such speculations need not be taken too far. Secondly, in his specific methods of constructing his narratives, he uses the teaching profession as a realistic backdrop for the strange episodes which unroll. In the discussion below, we will consider the teaching motif in conjunction with the other main option

for poor scholars to earn a living, employment as a private secretary.

Both lines of work are ideally suited to Pu's literary purposes, in that they require the character to travel away from home, and place him alone in a new and unfamiliar environment, where the true identity of his acquaintances is sometimes uncertain. Thus, Kong Xueli's adventure really begins when a friend of his, who is serving as a district magistrate, invites him to come and join him as his secretary. By the time Kong arrives, his friend has died, and the penniless Kong is forced to take a temporary job as scrivener for monks in a Buddhist temple. One winter's day as he takes a solitary walk, he is invited by a young man into what he imagined to be a deserted house, and there recruited as a private tutor to a family of whose background he knows little. There he lives happily in an enclosed world, physically restrained from returning to the outside by the barred doors. It is only many months later, after his marriage to one of the daughters of the family, that Kong becomes aware he has been living with foxes.[173]

The straitened financial circumstances of a teacher limit his control over his own happiness, and render him vulnerable to unexpected setbacks, which inject a note of tension and crisis into the narrative. In one tale, a scholar named Man 滿 falls in love with a courtesan while teaching in Hangzhou. Unable himself to pay the hundred taels needed to buy his mistress out of the brothel, he sets off for Hunan to borrow money from a friend who is holding a post of magistrate there, promising to return within three or four months. On arrival in Hunan, he finds that his friend has been dismissed from office, and has no money to spare.

> He was in dire straits now, without the funds to return to Hangzhou, so he found himself a place as a schoolteacher in that district. Three years he spent there, still unable to go back. On one

> occasion he administered a beating to one of his pupils, and the boy then drowned himself. His employer, deeply grieved by his death, laid a charge against the teacher, who was subsequently arrested and thrown in gaol. Fortunately, some of his other students, knowing he was not to blame, took pity on his plight, and regularly brought him gifts, thus enabling him to avoid real distress. (6.792)

During his long absence, the courtesan is forced to marry a rich merchant, producing a conflict of interests which finds a violent resolution at the end of the tale.

Pu Songling was deeply conscious of the gap in social status which divided the poor scholar from the prominent gentry family which made use of his services, and one of his most powerful stories is built around just such a pattern of class differentiation. In "Hu Siniang" (278), a penniless scholar applies for a job as secretary to a commissioner of the transmission office (tongzheng shi 通政使). The official agrees to take him on, and, impressed by his abilities, marries the young man to his youngest daughter. The rest of the family, much less open-minded, heap scornful abuse on the secretary, and ridicule his wife, in an unrestrained display of snobbery and self-superiority. As always in such stories, the author's sympathies lie entirely with the despised scholar, and by the conclusion of the story the tables are completely turned.[174]

"Ainu" (346) takes as its main theme the relationship between a tutor and the family (ghosts, in this case) which employs him. As the author's final comment and ancillary anecdotes indicate, Pu Songling was drawing on personal knowledge in his depiction of the uneasy tensions that develop, particularly between the teacher and the lady of the house. The story begins as a scholar Xu 徐, who has been teaching in Shandong, sets off on his way home to Hebei at the end of the year. He is accosted en route by an old man, who invites him to tutor his nephew, at twice the salary he

has received in the past. Xu accepts the offer, and soon enters into a clandestine sexual relationship with the maid of the boy's mother. Despite their efforts to keep the affair a secret, they oversleep one morning, and are discovered in bed by Xu's young pupil. The embarrassed Xu is relieved to learn that the lady of the household responds indulgently to the news of his indiscretion, but is himself unable to maintain his composure when he finds himself provoked:

> The boy did not apply himself to his studies, but if Xu reprimanded or reproached him, his mother would always intercede on his behalf. At first she would simply send a maidservant to deliver her message, but as time went on, she would come out personally, and address her appeals to the teacher from the other side of the door, sobbing tearfully, more often than not. At the same time, every evening she would make a point of asking how her son was progressing in his lessons. Xu got exasperated, and flushing with anger, he cried, "First you indulge the boy's sloth, and then you expect him to be proficient - I have no stomach for this kind of teaching post! I submit my resignation." The lady of the house despatched a maid to present her apologies, and Xu relented.
>
> Ever since he had taken up the position, Xu found that, whenever he wanted to go out for an excursion in the hills, the doors were always securely bolted. One day, having drunk too much, and sunk into depression, he summoned a maid and asked why the gate was locked. "There is no other reason," she explained, "than simply that the mistress is afraid her son would neglect his studies. If you insist on going out, she would ask only that your outings be limited to the evenings."
>
> Xu angrily shouted: "So you think that if I accept a few ounces of somebody's gold, this commits me to interminable confinement till my dying day! Where do you suggest I go, when you tell me to sneak off at night? I have long been ashamed of being paid for doing nothing, and you can see my salary is all still here in my bag." So saying, he pulled out the gold and dumped it on the table, then packed his bags in preparation for departure. (9.1192-1193)

The real motive for the lady's reluctance to let Xu out of the house is, of course, her fear that he will discover that he has been living among ghosts in their sepulchral home. But, as Pu Songling indicates elsewhere, teachers in real life often found their freedom of movement restricted by their employers, and chafed under the moral obligation to

set their pupils a good example.[175] Thus, Xu's reaction is perfectly understandable in the circumstances.

As for the lady's interference in Xu's attempts to discipline his student, Pu declares in a dry aside: "In handling her son's education, she acted in a manner identical to the human world", and adds a further anecdote to prove the point:

> Licentiate Zhu 朱 of Zhangqiu was by nature a stubborn and uncompromising man. He was engaged as tutor to the family of a metropolitan graduate. Whenever he reprimanded his pupils, the lady of the house would always send a maid to beg that they be spared. He would ignore these entreaties. One day, she came in person and stood outside the window, to use her influence with Zhu. Infuriated, Zhu seized a ruler and rushed out, swearing violently. The lady fled in terror, but Zhu pursued her, beating her fiercely on the buttocks, thereby producing the musical sound of metal on flesh. What a laugh! (9.1195)

Pu supplemented his teaching income by writing marriage announcements, celebratory greetings, obituaries, formal letters, and so on, on behalf of other people. His collected works include over fifty marriage letters and numerous funeral addresses composed on request. Although financial remuneration may not have been the condition of Pu's acceptance of such commissions, in practice it was likely that the person who solicited the piece would present a gift in exchange. In order to satisfy the required formulae for such documents, to please his clients, and to demonstrate his erudition, Pu employed an ornately allusive style of parallel prose in writing such works. As he revealed in his "On Giving up Request Compositions" ("Jie yingchou wen" 戒應酬文), Pu's attitude to this kind of task was deeply ambivalent: he welcomed the social and financial rewards that it brought, but was repelled by the tedious and uninspiring nature of request compositions.[176] Nevertheless, such employment served to enhance his skill and proficiency in the medium of parallel

prose, which he exploited on occasions in Liaozhai zhiyi. Indeed, one story, "Jiangfei" (215), is constructed entirely around an imaginary episode in which Pu himself is asked by the goddess of flowers to draft a formal proclamation addressed to the wind divinity, and the piece itself is extensively quoted.

5. Family and Personal Ties

Many of the most outstanding tales in Liaozhai centre around personal relationships within one or two contexts: in a family setting, or in a marriage or romantic liaison between a man and a woman. Certain recurrent themes are a hallmark of Pu's handling of such ties: within the domestic framework he is fascinated by the antagonisms that develop within the clan, boiling over into disputes over inheritance and property, and by the jealous rivalry between wives and concubines which transforms the home into a veritable battlefield. In a love affair or marriage, it is almost always the woman who outshines the male character: his relative passivity contrasts with the woman's energetic and resourceful organization of household affairs. Relations between a scholar and young lady of great beauty, charm, and vivacity are such a commonly treated topic as to represent the keynote of the book, in the eyes of many readers. Although some of these themes follow established literary conventions and cannot be considered to be unique to Pu Songling, it is worth considering whether Pu's pronounced interest in such relationships drew some inspiration from his own experience. In the discussion below, we shall present material that suggests a number of situations or characters described in Liaozhai were shaped or coloured by the author's perceptions of life.

The graphic realism and stern moral tone of Pu's stories of family

feuds and cruelty to kinsmen probably drew inspiration from painful memories about contention that had broken out in the Pu clan. Not long after the Wanli period, as Pu recalled mournfully in his preface (dated 1688) to the revised clan genealogy, the family's unity had been undermined by internal squabbles:

> Men of low character would rely on their favourable position to insult the venerable, whilst lesser individuals would take advantage of their wealth to outdo their betters, viciously abusing their clansmen, and then regard themselves as big shots. Relations deteriorated to the point where each envied the other's joys, and rejoiced at each other's misfortunes. Brother quarreled with brother, weakening the family's resistance to outside threats. Such conduct was first adopted by people who lacked any sense of shame and decency, but later it gradually became accepted as standard practice, and so the ideals handed down from our forefathers were utterly trampled and lost. A bitter grief indeed! Traditionally, our clan owned its property and paid its taxes in Zichuan, and none of the family was dispersed in other districts. But as soon as one man began to prey on his fellows, many moved far away, leaving a smaller proportion locally, and as another oppressed his relatives, the whole clan scattered in all directions, practically emptying the county of clansfolk. Such has been the trend of events up to the present, how can I bear to speak further![177]

Pu Songling himself appears to have maintained amicable and sympathetic relationships with his three brothers, but he too suffered his share of domestic acrimony, for which he blamed his sisters-in-law. His wife was a favourite with his mother, who appreciated her quiet manners and mild, self-effacing disposition. Envying her this honoured position, and resentful of their mother-in-law's partiality, Pu's spiteful and competitive sisters-in-law picked quarrels at the slightest pretext. Eventually, the strained atmosphere at home persuaded Pu's father that the only solution was to carry out a division of property among his sons. Their wives' aggressive instincts saw to it that his brothers received roomy living quarters and the pick of the domestic implements. Songling and his wife found themselves evicted from the main compound, and forced

to make do with an old and neglected cottage, hemmed in by thickets and swathed in a tangle of weeds.[178]

It was Hu Shi 胡適, in his discussion of the authorship of the novel Xingshi yinyuan zhuan 醒世姻緣傳, who first related Pu Songling's dislike of his sisters-in-law to the portrayal in Liaozhai of domineering wives.[179] Although we must dissent from Hu Shi's identification of Pu as the writer of the novel,[180] he is probably correct in perceiving Pu's family experiences as a formative influence on his choice of themes.

In his speculations on the actual prototypes for the termagants in Liaozhai and Xingshi yinyuan zhuan, Hu Shi quoted a second piece of evidence. A letter from Pu to a friend, Wang Luzhan 王鹿瞻, sternly rebukes him for allowing his overbearing wife to drive her father-in-law out of his own home, and then to keep him so much under her thumb that he took no prompt action to tend his ailing father, or, after his death, retrieve his body.[181] The parallels with such stories as "Ma Jiefu" (212), "Jiangcheng" (252), and "Shaonu" (258) are obvious. Hu Shi's suggestion that the Wang Luzhan episode directly inspired Pu to compose stories based on the actual events need not be taken too seriously. Tales of over-assertive women who terrorize their husbands were a favourite conversation topic, and Pu Songling no doubt drew on a number of different sources, real and fictitious. But, certainly, Pu's observations of such incidents that befell his own circle of friends can only have sharpened his awareness of marital problems of this kind.

Pu Songling's own marriage to Liu shi 劉氏 (1643-1713), the daughter of a local licentiate, Liu Guoding 劉國鼎, was a happy one. The young Songling had his first glimpse of his bride in 1655, when her

father, disturbed by rumours circulating that the imperial court was about to launch a recruitment drive for palace concubines, took the prudent step of delivering the young girl to the Pu family. She returned to her parents after the ill-informed gossip died down, and the wedding was not formally celebrated until 1657.[182] Pu Songling incorporated these reports of imminent selection of palace women into two Liaozhai stories, where such episodes play a key part in the narrative.[183] Given Pu's extended absences from home in furtherance of his studies or in teaching employment, the burden of domestic management fell squarely on his wife's shoulders. "Year after year, I travelled far afield in my scholastic endeavours, so it was she who hacked away the thorns and thickets, and hired workmen to erect more walls," Pu recalled.[184] His son described their relationship thus:

> My father depended heavily on my mother, who skimped and spared in food and clothing so as to assist him. . . . In her running of the household, she accepted poverty with equanimity and adhered to old established custom, scrupulously methodical in management. She loathed extravagance and waste, and though she scrubbed our clothes herself, we never had to feel the cold, dine on porridge as we might, we escaped the pangs of hunger. She measured her expenditure in accordance with her income, and supplemented that with her spinning.[185]

The capable women who often appear in Liaozhai to organize affairs for their studious and impractical husbands may to some degree be fictional recreations of the feminine qualities that Pu prized in his own wife. Let us consider the example of Hongyu 紅玉, the fox-lady who returns to her lover, Feng Xiangru 馮相如, determined to establish a proper home for them both:

> She set about clearing the undergrowth, and laid to with a broom, working as hard as any man. Feng was worried by his poverty, and feared they would be unable to support themselves. "Simply devote yourself entirely to your reading," Hongyu said, "and never ask

whether we have enough or not. Perhaps we can avoid dying of starvation." Then she laid out a sum of money to equip herself with a spinning loom, rented several acres of land, and hired workmen to till the soil. She herself rooted out the weeds with a hoe, and patched the holes in the roof of the cottage with wistaria creepers, making such chores her daily routine. Their neighbours, hearing of his wife's honest industry, all the more freely contributed gifts to help the couple. Within half a year or so, such improvements in their livelihood had been wrought that they could be considered well-off. (2.282)

The story ends with the successful attainment, at the age of thirty-five, of Feng Xiangru's juren degree. Thus, in his fictionalized world, Pu could find a wish fulfilment: the application of a talented scholar is duly recognized, the diligence of his loyal partner engineers a rapid change in their style of life. In reality, neither Pu's abundant gifts nor his wife's thrifty economics substantially altered their social position, a fact Pu ruefully acknowledged in a poem of 1708:

> In your childhood, you lacked silk trousers for your wedding costume,
> And in your late years, you still pick vegetables for the evening meal.
> I have grown old before I could ever rise in the world,
> I am ashamed that I have not repaid your favours.[186]

Although, in their outstanding qualities as homemakers, Liaozhai heroines share certain features in common with Liu shi, their animated and uninhibited temperament mark them off clearly from that restrained and prudent lady. Did Pu's vivid female portraits draw inspiration from some other source? The one scholar who has attempted to answer such a question is Tian Zechang 田澤長, who has posited the existence of a second woman in Pu's life, one Chen Shuqing 陳淑卿, who, he claims, lived with and then married the author. His case is built entirely on a densely allusive piece of parallel prose, "Inscription for the small likeness of Chen Shuqing" ("Chen Shuqing xiaoxiang tici" 陳淑卿小

像題辭), the meaning and implications of which are far from clear. As Tian has been unable to discover any evidence in Pu's other work that would substantially corroborate his interpretation of this prose piece, his hypothesis is, at best, unconvincing.[187]

Through Pu Songling's poetry, however, can be documented his friendship and association with several courtesans and talented musical performers, who occasionally bear a striking resemblance to women in his stories. In this connection, Pu's visit to Jiangsu in 1670-1671 may have been important in exposing him to the richer social milieu of Jiangnan and placing him in close contact with Sun Hui, who had a special fondness for female artistes.[188] A series of eleven poems, entitled "To a Courtesan", dating from this period, indicates that Pu was on familiar terms with one such lady. Several phrases in the first poem were later incorporated in a verse which a Liaozhai character composes as a gift for his courtesan lover.[189]

Sun Hui had taken as a concubine a gifted young singer named Gu Qingxia 顧青霞, and the seductive quality of her voice and the charm of her personality left a strong impression of Pu Songling. Over the years he was to write a number of poems describing with affection and humour her artistic accomplishments.[190] He personally compiled a selection of Tang jueju verse to indulge her enthusiasm for poetry, and himself wrote a short poem to commemorate the gift:

I have picked out a hundred poems for your perfume box,
The music of each imbued with musk and orchid scent.
The oriole throat warbles a true pair of quatrains,
As with joy I hand this to the lovely one, and listen as she sings.[191]

A ci lyric written some time later recalls her in terms reminiscent of Liaozhai ladies:

Clearly a young courtesan from a lunar cavern,
Banished one morning to dwell among men.
. . . . . .
In those days her laughter was unrestrained,
So lovable in her naivety,
Her morning make-up was ruined in her eager play.
. . . . . .
She comes only when called ten thousand times,
Putting on a solemn look she stands waiting,
Glancing sidelong, she peeps through the painted curtain.
When she is asked to sing for guests,
Before a sound has left her mouth,
A shy blush covers her rosy face.
I remember her: trembling like a flower,
Straight as a willow,
Conveying endless feeling in her silences.
How she hated the crazy guest who pestered her a thousand times,
Lowering her powdered collar,
She often fingered her embroidered belt.[192]

Pu admired Qingxia's artistic tastes, noting with interest that her favourite poem from his anthology was Wang Changling's "Spring Grievance in the West Palace".[193] Evidently, he found considerable pleasure in her company and satisfaction in their literary diversions. One is reminded by their relationship of the Liaozhai tale in which as scholar, Yang Yuwei 楊于畏, makes friend with the ghost, Liansuo 連瑣. Conscious of the dangers of sexual union between a ghost and a mortal man, they refrain from physical intimacy, but they find great happiness in each other's companionship:

> She turned over the books lying on his desk, and when she saw a copy of "The Song of Lianchang Palace", she said eagerly, "During my life, this was the poem I most loved to read. Seeing it again today seems like a dream". He discussed verse and prose with her, and finding her quick-witted and adorable, he trimmed the candle by the west window, as though he had found a close friend. . . . The two of them were as happy as fish in water. Though they did not go so far as to make love, their fellowship was really even closer than the most intimate marital bond. Liansuo would often practice calligraphy for Yang beneath the lamplight. Her characters were balanced and attractive. She also selected a hundred poems on palace themes, copied them out, and recited them. Then she had Yang lay out a board for go, and purchase a pipa. Every evening she would give Yang lessons in how to play go, or she would pluck the strings, and when she played a song of "Drizzle on the Plantain Window",

> it was so sad as to break a man's heart. If Yang could not bear to hear it to the end, she would change to "Oriole Song in the Dawn Park" and suddenly a feeling of ease would flood his being. So they raised the wick and made merry, so happy they cared not whether it was night or day. (3.332-333)

In another story, a young scholar named Kong 孔 makes friends with a family of foxes, marries one of the daughters, and risks his life to save her younger sister, to whom he is devoted. Pu's comment at the end suggests his own susceptibility to feminine charm, and the importance in his eyes of female companionship:

> When I consider Mr. Kong, I do not envy him having a lovely wife, I envy him having an intimate friend。 Seeing her face, one can forget one's hunger, hearing her voice, one can break into joyful laughter. With a friend as true as this, on occasions when one dines and talks by her side, the spiritual euphoria inspired by her beauty far surpasses the delights of carnal love. (1.65)

Qingxia appears to have outlived Sun Hui, who died in 1686. When she later passed away, Pu composed another quatrain, "Grieving for Gu Qingxia", lamenting her death:

> My ears seem still to retain the sound of her renditions,
> But now I gaze towards her tomb, where no song and music echo.
> In Swallow Tower leftover powder lingers yet,
> Beneath Peony Pavilion I mourn her fragrant soul.[194]

By associating Qingxia with Tang Xianzu's 湯顯祖 heroine, Du Liniang 杜麗娘, who died through love for a young man, and through the power of their passion returned to life, Pu was moved by the same romantic impulse which informs so much of Liaozhai: that wishful faith in the enduring bonds of love, which outlast physical death and preserve the potency to link the hearts of man and ghost.

III. THE LITERARY ANTECEDENTS OF LIAOZHAI ZHIYI

Introduction

The relationship between Liaozhai zhiyi and earlier tales in classical Chinese, and the extent of Pu Songling's debt to the literary tradition, have never been fully examined. In order to explore these topics effectively, it seems necessary to adopt two approaches. On the one hand, we should consider antecedents in the broader sense: the varieties of fiction which were written in and before Pu's time, the attitudes and techniques which shaped the fictional tradition, the literary culture which Pu Songling inherited, and which his collection of stories reflected. Secondly, we need to investigate the sources of specific subject matter, themes or motifs in Liaozhai in order to identify as precisely as possible both the conventional and the innovative elements in the work.

Up till now, neither of these avenues of research has been followed with much determination. Neglect of the first aspect, in particular, has probably derived from several factors. Lu Xun, in his highly influential Zhongguo xiaoshuo shilüe 中國小說史略, summarized a criticism levelled against Liaozhai by Ji Yun 紀昀 (1724-1805), namely, that it combined two kinds of narrative: the Six Dynasties zhiguai 志怪 anecdote, and the Tang chuanqi 傳奇.[1] Although he may not have agreed with the censorious tone of this comment, Lu Xun appears to have accepted as accurate Ji Yun's appraisal: he grouped Liaozhai and other Qing collections under the heading "imitations of Jin and Tang tales", and

characterized Pu's writing technique as "applying the method of chuanqi to record the strange".[2] Following him, other twentieth century critics have been largely content to repeat this description. Consequently, developments in Classical fiction in the Ming and early Qing, which may have been of much more immediate influence on Pu's writing, have been largely ignored. Lu Xun's rather negative remarks on late-Ming collections of tales, and the practical problems attending the study of such publications, now scattered among different libraries, have also discouraged further research.

Clearly, however, Ji Yun's comments require some qualification. He distinguished two forms of composition: works such as Liu Jingshu's 劉敬叔 Yi yuan 異苑 and Tao Qian's 陶潛 Xu Sou shen ji 續搜神記, which he categorized as xiaoshuo 小說 (lit. "small talk"); and pieces like "Feiyan waizhuan" 飛燕外傳 and "Hui zhen ji" 會真記, which he termed zhuanji 傳記 (biography). For Liaozhai to incorporate both forms in the same book was, in Ji Yun's view, "incomprehensible".[3] Such a verdict gives the impression that the mixture of narrative styles was a unique or, at least, unusual feature of Liaozhai. We should note, however, that Ji Yun was a man with very strong views on what constituted proper fiction: he was unsympathetic to various forms of xiaoshuo, and did not mince his words when pointing out their deficiencies in the Siku quanshu Catalogue. His remarks here are misleading, and invite contrast with the judgment of Hu Yinglin 胡應麟 (1551-1602). Hu divided xiaoshuo into six categories, two of which, zhiguai and chuanqi, are the equivalent of Ji Yun's xiaoshuo and zhuanji. Hu conceded, however, that in practice the two categories readily overlap:

> In the case of zhiguai and chuanqi, it is extremely easy for the two to interlock: sometimes, within the same book, both sorts of episode are recounted, or within the same episode, the two elements are both present. One simply has to content oneself with weighing up which is more predominant.[4]

This perceptive comment makes the very point that Ji Yun was so reluctant to acknowledge: that the integration of anecdotal and romantic fiction was an established feature of the literary tradition. The combination of techniques in Liaozhai was not therefore the radical innovation that Ji Yun implied.

Furthermore, zhiguai need not be associated so closely with the Six Dynasties (although it was in that period that the genre originated), nor is the type of extended, well-crafted narrative known as chuanqi entirely a Tang phenomenon (although the literary merits of the Tang tales have established them as pre-eminent). Zhiguai became the standard format adopted by writers of all periods to record the strange and remarkable incidents of their own day, whilst the chuanqi strain of fiction, though subject to more uneven development, was also represented in subsequent periods after the Tang. These two elements, sometimes independent, sometimes interacting, contributed to the rich Ming and early Qing literary background upon which Pu Songling would have drawn.

This study of Liaozhai's antecedents, therefore, concentrates on the period 1500 to 1700, two centuries of busy activity in the field of transmission and composition of fiction in the Classical language, which culminated in the production of Pu Songling's remarkable collection of tales. It is only recently that much attention has been paid to the Classical tale in this period, but then chiefly with reference to the vernacular short story. Maeno Naoaki is the one scholar to have made a study of early Qing collections of zhiguai anecdotes in their own right.[5]

Little work has been done in China in this field, although the publication in 1981 of a new anthology of Ming and Qing Classical tales may stimulate interest in the fiction of these periods.[6] Our survey sets out to explore this largely uncharted territory.

Although our main concern will be to shed light on the development of the Classical tale in the period under discussion, an effort will also be made to clarify the relationship between Liaozhai and vernacular fiction. It is widely assumed that Pu Songling was in some way influenced by vernacular literature, and, in particular, that the lively, often colloquial flavour of Liaozhai dialogue owes something to the example of vernacular novels and stories. Our study questions this conventional view and offers a different interpretation.

As regards the origins of particular subject-matter in Liaozhai stories, rather more research has been undertaken, but the results to date have not been impressive. To a large degree, the weaknesses of such studies have resulted from the neglect by modern scholars of Liaozhai's fictional predecessors. Unless one has read extensively in these works, it is easy to be struck by similarities in theme or motif between a Liaozhai story and an earlier tale, and to assume some tangible connection between them. As a result, words such as "source", "influence", and "adaptation" tend to be used freely in discussion, and it is claimed that Pu Songling is making use of some specific written material in composing a story. Closer acquaintance with Ming and Qing fiction induces a more circumspect attitude when discussing the relationship between Pu's tales and those found elsewhere, and at the same time enables one to distinguish more precisely between the stories which derived from popular folklore of the day and those which drew inspiration from earlier literature.

Discussion of sources has also been flawed by undue reliance on secondary materials rather than original work. In claiming a connection between a Liaozhai tale and an item in Wang Tonggui's Er tan, for instance, more than one scholar has contented himself with quoting Jiang Ruicao 蔣瑞藻, who in turn quotes a Qing miscellany, which makes a reference to the Ming story.[7] In fact, research reveals that at least three other Ming authors besides Wang describe similar incidents, and that it is doubtful whether Pu Songling was influenced by any of them. Naive or simplistic assumptions can be avoided by more thorough acquaintance with original texts.

However wide we cast our net in our search for Liaozhai source material, there is much that inevitably will escape us, limited as we are to written texts. Pu Songling was clearly exposed to a rich array of tales that were circulating casually by word of mouth, and to which now we are denied access. Our examination of sources will not, therefore, attempt to be exhaustive, but will point out the pitfalls into which earlier studies of this kind have stumbled, and consider some specimen stories whose background has not been explored in depth before, and which provide new insights into Pu Songling's approach to his work.

1. Fiction in Classical Chinese, 1500-1700

As is well known, the appearance of Jian deng xinhua 剪燈新話, a collection of Classical tales by Qu You 瞿佑 (1341-1427), whose preface is dated 1378, set the tone for Classical fiction in the early Ming period, inspiring Li Zhen 李禎 (1376-1452) to compose Jian deng yuhua 剪燈餘話, and providing Zhao Bi 趙弼 with a partial model for his Xiaopin ji 效顰集 (postface dated 1428). It is difficult to gauge the extent of writing and publishing activity in the decades that followed the completion

of the last of these works. It would be unwise to conclude from the relative scarcity of extant editions dating from the second half of the fifteenth century that stories were not continuing to be written and circulated during this period. For our immediate purposes here, however, it should be sufficient to sketch the general lines of development as they appear to us on the basis of the evidence available. In this respect, 1500 is a convenient point at which to begin, as a number of notable events took place from this time onwards.

The apparent resurgence of interest in the Classical tale in the sixteenth century had two main aspects. On the one hand, the re-editing, re-publication, and re-appraisal of earlier xiaoshuo became a prominent feature of cultural life, particularly in the Jiangnan region. On the other, Ming writers themselves composed a substantial number of new works, some of which were distinguished contributions to the tradition. Such was the volume of publications during this and the succeeding century that it will be helpful, in the interests of clarity of presentation, to order the flood of titles under four headings: editions of earlier collections, general compendia, thematic anthologies, and original works. So as to avoid burdening the reader with excessive annotation, purely technical details about the editions of the works under discussion will, wherever possible, be left to the bibliography.

New editions of earlier collections

Beginning in the Jiajing period (1522-1566), the re-publication of some of the classic works of traditional fiction made available to an eager reading public story collections which hitherto seem to have circulated in manuscript form to a limited extent only. A new version of Yijian zhi was the first major work to appear. By the sixteenth century, about half of Hong Mai's voluminous compilation had been lost, and the

edition now printed introduced a completely new format to the surviving corpus, arranging a selection of stories in thirty-seven main categories of subject-matter, and further grouping them under 113 sub-headings (classification was a compulsive concern for Ming editors). In his preface, dated 1546, to this 51 juan edition, Tian Rucheng 田汝成 defended Yijian zhi from anticipated criticism, arguing, as other sympathetic readers of fiction before, that strange and unfathomable events were an undeniable part of existence, and maintaining that the incidents recorded conveyed moral lessons from which men could benefit.[8] Yijian zhi sustained its popularity through the rest of the Ming period. A 10 juan version appeared in the Wanli era, and sequels to Hong Mai's work were also produced.[9] In his preface to a late-Ming edition in 50 juan, Zhong Xing 鍾惺 (1574-1624) supplemented Tian's remarks by praising the collection's wealth of detail and commending its value as entertainment.[10]

The publication in 1566 of Taiping guangji 太平廣記, lent further impetus to the burgeoning interest in the fictional heritage. This edition, prepared by a retired official, Tan Kai 談愷 (1503-1568), was reprinted during the Wanli period. Although Tan had made efforts to collate the imperfect manuscript which he had acquired, some textual corruption remained in his published edition. In order to remedy this weakness and also reduce the great work to more manageable dimensions, Feng Menglong 馮夢龍 (1574-1646), the energetic editor of vernacular and Classical fiction, issued an abridged version in 1626, entitled Taiping guangji chao 鈔. This 80 juan edition carried Feng's own comments, and a preface that offered a generous appraisal of the compilation.[11]

Other important works to be reprinted in the Ming period included the eleventh-century anthology of tales and romances, Qingsuo gaoyi 青瑣高議

(1595),[12] the outstanding Tang miscellany, Youyang zazu 酉陽雜俎,[13] and Zeng Cao's 曾慥 compilation, Lei shuo 類說(1626). Jian deng xinhua and Jian deng yuhua, banned in the mid-fifteenth century, were published again in the sixteenth.[14] A Hangzhou scholar, Yu Chunxi 虞淳熙 (jinshi 1583), contributed a preface to the 1593 composite edition, Jian deng conghua 剪燈叢話, in which he paid tribute to Qu You's originality in breaking new ground and producing stories with their own distinctive stamp.[15] His comments typified the adventurous spirit and enlightened attitude to fiction of a number of late-Ming intellectuals.

General compendia

The reissue of earlier collections was coupled with the production of new compilations by Ming writers and publishers. Hu Yinglin, for instance, an avid reader of Yijian zhi (he was the proud owner of a 100 juan manuscript), had plans to edit a sequel to Taiping guangji on the same colossal 500 juan scale, which would incorporate tales by Hong Mai and other Song and Yuan authors, as well as more recent work by such writers as Zhu Yunming 祝允明 (1461-1527) and Lu Can 陸粲 (1494-1551). This project, entitled Baijia yi yuan 百家異苑, was unfortunately never completed.[16]

One of the first compilations to appear was Gujin shuohai 古今說海, published by Lu Ji 陸楫 in 1544. This bulky series included over fifty Tang chuanqi and some other fiction, but its heterogeneous contents may have discouraged the casual reader of fiction, to whom a more compact anthology would be welcome.

Yu Chu zhi 虞初志, which probably originated in the Jiajing period, a collection of thirty or so chuanqi, was just such a work. It became one of the best-known selections of tales, and went through a number of printings

in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.[17] Containing as it did the cream of Tang fiction, Yu Chu zhi was well regarded in literary circles. In a preface, Wang Zhideng 王 穉 登 (1535-1612), a prominent writer in the Suzhou area, and himself a popular raconteur, asserted that fiction of this kind had its place as a welcome variety from the heavier, conventional diet of literary fare.[18] The poet Ou Daren 歐 大 任 (1516-1595) also praised the artistic qualities of the work.[19] The dramatist Tang Xianzu (1550-1616) is credited with having enlarged the collection, by adding another 32 items with the title, Xu 續 Yu Chu zhi. In his foreword, Tang drew some interesting comparisons with the traditional classics:

> The book Yu Chu sets out an array of biographies by Tang authors, . . . relating bizarre and fantastic, obscure and elusive, pleasing and astonishing events. To read it opens the heart and releases the soul, stirring the senses to excitement. Although in nobility and strength it falls short of Shi [ji] and Han [shu], and in economy and austerity it does not equal Shi shuo 世 說, with its subtlety and elegance it truly is a boat of pearls among writers of xiaoshuo.[20]

Another compendium with which Tang's name was associated was Yanyi bian 豔 異 編 . Editions of this work claimed Wang Shizhen 王 世 貞 (1526-1590) as compiler, and attributed annotation to Tang. Both ascriptions appear dubious.[21] The contents of Yanyi bian were grouped under thematic headings, and included selections from Taiping guangji, Yijian zhi, the Jian deng collections, historical biographies, and other sources. A highly successful publication, like Yu Chu zhi, it invited further elaboration and was duly supplemented by Xu 續 Yanyi bian, and another compendium, Guang 廣 Yanyi bian, organized on similar principles by a dramatist, Wu Dazhen 吳 大 震 , in the Wanli period.[22]

A different kind of compendium, which circulated widely in the Wanli period and later, was what Sun Kaidi 孫 楷 第 has called the tongsu leishu

通俗類書 ("popular reference books"). Such works as Guose tianxiang 國色天香 (first published in 1587), Xiugu chunrong 繡谷春容(1587), and Wanjin qinglin 萬錦情林 (1598), included fiction as well as an assortment of poems, lyrics, jokes, and specimen literary pieces to suit the diverse tastes of a more popular readership.[23] Fiction in these miscellanies was represented primarily by a kind of sprawling romantic story, which derived inspiration from the Tang tale "Yingying zhuan" 鶯鶯傳 and whose prototype had been Jiao Hong ji 嬌紅記(probably of Yuan authorship). These romances, sometimes known as shiwen xiaoshuo 詩文小說because of their combination of prose narrative and verses composed by caizi jiaren 才子佳人 ("talented scholar - beautiful lady") lovers, had been circulating in the sixteenth century as separate titles, and were now brought together for the first time. Although an early example of the genre, "Jia Yunhua huanhun ji" 賈雲華還魂記 , had been written by an established writer, Li Zhen, most scholars appear to have regarded such works with some contempt.[24] At the same time, pulp fiction of this kind may have afforded them a degree of pleasure as light reading.[25] However, the inclusion of such stories in popular miscellanies intended for a general audience acknowledged that the readership no longer was constituted by the highly educated elite.

A major event in late-Ming publishing history was the appearance of a new 120 juan edition of Shuo fu 說郛 at the end of the Wanli period, republished with a supplement, Xu 續 Shuo fu in 1646. Sections of this compendium which included traditional zhiguai and chuanqi items were later extracted, and printed as separate anthologies, with titles such as Heke sanzhi 合刻三志 and Jian deng conghua.[26]

Some scholars found it an attractive hobby to copy down interesting anecdotes encountered in their wide reading, and later collect them together,

often by category, and publish the resulting compilation. Qiwen leiji zhaichao 奇聞類紀摘抄, for example, includes excerpts from a large number of sources, mainly Ming biji collections, arranged by Shi Xianqing 施顯卿(juren 1552). Xiafang sou yi 霞房搜果, attributed to Yuan Zhongdao 袁中道(1570-1624), comprises fifty items culled from Taiping guangji and other pre-Ming works.[27] A scholar named Shi Lian 施廉 compiled Zhui yu chubian 綴玉初編 in 1633, selecting short anecdotes from Yijian zhi and other more recent collections.[28]

Two early Qing writers incorporated casual remarks and stories of their own, along with extensive quotation from other authors. Jiyuan ji suo ji 寄園寄所寄, compiled by Zhao Jishi 趙吉士 (juren 1651) and published in 1696, grouped its contents under twelve main headings, then in further sub-sections. Chu Renhuo, the author of Sui Tang yanyi 隋唐演義, adopted a less systematic approach, simply jotting down pieces that caught his fancy, and issuing the accumulated material in serial form. When the fifteenth and final instalment was completed in 1703, the compilation Jianhu ji extended to 66 juan。 It reproduced items from over a hundred different miscellanies and anecdotal collections of the Ming period, an indication of the familiarity of early Qing authors with the extensive fictional or semi-fictional corpus produced by their predecessors.

Thematic anthologies

As reissues of fiction and general collections of stories found a ready market in the sixteenth century, they were soon followed by specialized anthologies devoted to a particular range of subject matter. One of the first of these to appear was Jianxia zhuan 劍俠傳 (postface dated 1569)[29] Confined exclusively to tales of heroic feats by skilled men and women at

arms, it borrowed heavily from the haoxia 豪俠 section of Taiping guangji (juan 193-196), but also included selections from Wu Shu's 吳淑 (947-1002) Jiang Huai yiren lu 江淮異人錄 and Yijian zhi, and one or two stories of Ming authorship.

Humei jutan 狐媚叢談, a compilation of fox stories that appeared in the Wanli period, was also much indebted to the relevant chapters of Taiping guangji, as was Yang Erzeng's 楊爾曾 Xianyuan jishi 仙媛紀事 on female immortals, published in 1602. Two late-Ming publications, Qi nüzi zhuan 奇女子傳 and Lüchuang nü shi 綠牕女史,[30] took outstanding women as the editorial theme.

Two Ming writers made a speciality of compiling collections of stories related to certain themes. Mei Dingzuo 梅鼎祚 (1549-1618), a poet and dramatist, built up a large library of fiction titles, and in his Qing ni lianhua ji 青泥蓮花記 he assembled from many sources stories about courtesans known for various moral virtues. Tales of poetically talented ghosts were anthologized in his Cai gui ji 才鬼記. Mei is said to have produced two companion volumes to this work, Cai shen ji 才神記 and Cai huan ji 才幻記, to form a trilogy entitled Sancai lingji 三才靈記.[31]

Feng Menglong, for his part, compiled, or contributed to, voluminous anthologies on the topics of wit and humour (Gujin tangai 古今譚概) sagacity (Zhi nang 智囊), and love (Qing shi leilüe 情史類略).[32]

Original works

In the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, the two Jian deng collections by Qu You and Li Zhen still exerted a powerful influence on literary fiction, and Zhao Bi's Xiaopin ji also was regarded by some as a model worthy of emulation. At least four collections of tales were produced in response to this fashion:

Huaying ji 花影集 (comprising 20 stories), written by Tao Fu 陶輔 (1441-after 1523). Tao's preface is dated 1523, but the work was probably completed around 1500.[33]

Bing zhu qingtan 秉燭清談 (27 stories), by a Hangzhou writer Zhou Li 周禮, active around 1500.[34]

Bipo congcuo 筆坡叢脞 (22 stories), by a Jian'an author, Lei Xie 雷燮, published in 1504.

Xuechuang tanyi 雪窗談異 (30 stories), completed in the 1520s. The author, whose pseudonym was Diaoyuan huke 釣鴛湖客, was a native of Jiaxing 嘉興, in Zhejiang province.[35]

Although Bing zhu qingtan is no longer extant, and Xuechuang tanyi not accessible at present, it seems possible from a reading of the other two works to make some general observations about this series of titles. Although they differed in some respects, they followed the pattern set by Qu, Li, and Zhao. The imitative element had featured strongly in those earlier works: Qu's "Qiuxiangting ji" 秋香亭記 was clearly modelled on "Yingying zhuan"; Li's tale, "Wuping lingguai lu" 武平靈怪錄 was a reworking of the Tang story, "Dongyang yeguai lu" 東陽夜怪錄; Zhao's "Qingcheng yinzhe ji" 青城隱者記 copied Qu's "Tiantai fangyin lu" 天台訪隱錄. These collections continued the tradition: Lei Xie, for example, wrote stories based on both "Wuping lingguai lui" and "Tiantai fangyin lu".[36]

Other conspicuous features included the frequent insertion into the narrative of passages of formal prose (letters, panegyrics, judicial rulings, and the like) or sequences of poetry. A didactic and discursive tendency is also present: this, like the emphasis on display of literary skill, was inherited from the Jian deng models. However, although Tao Fu was quite an inventive and versatile writer, neither he nor the others appear to have been

able to match the talents of Qu You and Li Zhen, both accomplished poets, and maintain the standard of composition which they had set.

The decline in quality of these short story collections as compared to their models had serious consequences for this strain of Chinese fiction. The Jian deng collections had always aroused a considerable amount of hostile comment as well as admiration, and as the sixteenth century advanced, critical opinion seems to have hardened against them. Although some scholars, like Yu Chunxi, still rose to their defense in the Wanli period, their popularity had clearly diminished. Mei Dingzuo, whilst including some selections from Qu and Li's work in Cai gui ji, considered them inferior to Tang stories, and rejected the imitations as unworthy of inclusion.[37] Hu Yinglin despised the Jian deng collections, and thought Bing zhu qingtan unspeakable.[38] In deriding the Jian deng stories as "vulgar" (bilou 鄙陋) and "common" (lisu 俚俗), he may have been stating an opinion which was becoming increasingly widespread. A century later, Pu Songling's contemporary, Wang Shizhen, expressed an identical view.[39]

The Jiandeng tradition, though losing its appeal, retained just enough vigour to inspire one final tribute, Mi deng yinhua 覓燈因話, written by Shao Jingzhan 邵景瞻 in 1592. Despite the derivative title, this collection of eight stories marked a shift in emphasis away from its antecedents. Largely eschewing virtuosity, Shao preferred a sturdy narrative style, unencumbered by poetic interludes. In this respect, Mi deng yinhua anticipated a new trend in creative fiction. It was the last work to claim a link with the early-Ming tale.

Meanwhile, continuity in another branch of writing was being sustained. The early sixteenth century saw a renewal of interest in the recording of strange and supernatural stories, the zhiguai genre which enjoyed a long

and hallowed tradition in Chinese literature. One of the first collections to appear was Zhu Yunming's Zhiguai lu 志怪錄, which was assembled between about 1485 and 1515.[40] In his preface, Zhu, noted for his unorthodox views, paid lip service to convention by claiming his work would be a useful source of reference to others in the future, but went on to argue candidly that puzzling and astounding incidents were really what people liked to hear and talk about most. After all, he asked, if Hong Mai had not enjoyed compiling his Yijian zhi, how would he ever have written as much as 420 juan? On these grounds, Zhu felt himself quite entitled to follow his inclinations in producing the collection, reasoning that if any such work provoked the criticism of narrow-minded scholars, Yijian zhi must surely take precedence over his own.[41]

Zhu's remarks express the individualistic, sometimes defiant attitude which tended to characterize the authors of anecdotal fiction. The stories themselves are short, written in straightforward narrative style, with just enough detail to give the episodes a lively air.

A friend of Zhu, Xu Zhenqing 徐禎卿 (1479-1511), also recorded strange anecdotes in a work entitled Yi lin 異林. Xu, also from the Suzhou area, was awarded the jinshi degree in 1505, and acquired a high reputation as a poet. His interest in Daoism is reflected in the content of his stories, which often dwell upon magicians and immortals prominent at the time.

Yang Yi 楊儀 (jinshi 1526), recalled in his preface to Gaopo yizuan 高坡異纂 that in his younger days he had always detested fantastic anecdotes, but that personal knowledge of weird incidents later had taught him to revise his opinion.[42] Although he claimed to have rigorously rejected items of dubious reliability, in fact his collection is not limited to simple

anecdotes, but includes more lengthy and ambitious stories reminiscent of the chuanqi tradition.[43]

In the case of Lu Yanzhi 陸延枝, author of Shuo ting 說聽, his interest in the supernatural was inherited from the older generation of the family. His father, Lu Can 陸粲, had written Gengsi bian 庚已編 while still a young man, before his attainment of the jinshi degree (1526) and a short but distinguished career as official. In this book, Lu Can noted punctiliously the names of many of the informants who supplied him with material, most of it centred around his native area of Changzhou 長洲, but, like Yang Yi, did not restrict himself entirely to simple tales. His "Dong xiao ji" 洞簫記 is quite a sophisticated story of the romance between a young man and a goddess, and was later incorporated in Yanyi bian.[44] Lu Can's younger brother, Lu Cai 陸采 (1497-1537), a precocious dramatist and non-conformist, was also involved in xiaoshuo composition. He edited Tan zuan 談纂, a collection of anecdotes by his father-in-law, Du Mu 都穆 (1459-1525), and produced several works himself.[45]

In his preface to Shuo ting, dated 1556, Lu Yanzhi explained that he had loved strange stories when he was young, and made a point of jotting down tales related by his friends or his father's colleagues. After the manuscript was destroyed in a fire, he recalled what he could of the old stories, and adding many more recent incidents, arranged them in 4 juan as Shuo ting. Unsuccessful in an orthodox career, Lu defended his commitment to this seemingly superfluous project by stating simply that this was where his interests lay.[46]

The items in Shuo ting are generally brief and undeveloped, but they cast many interesting sidelights on the urban culture of the day, as the characters concerned come from a broad spectrum of occupations. Though

usually an unobtrusive narrator, Lu Yanzhi sometimes attaches comments to stories to emphasize some conclusion. He provided a rich fund of material for later anthologists: several tales found their way into such works as Qing shi leilüe and Zhui yu chubian.[47]

In the Wanli period, several writers who, like Lu Yanzhi, were otherwise rather undistinguished, responded to the growing fashion for xiaoshuo with great enthusiasm. Wang Zhaoyun 王兆雲 was particularly productive. Wang is described in a short biographical notice in the gazetteer of his native district, Macheng 麻城, as a bibliophile, whose library was called Chuiyun lou 垂雲樓 and whose circle of friends included many famous scholars of Jiangnan.[48] His love of books, and his pleasure in associating with other scholars more eminent than himself, are clearly displayed in his work. His most substantial single opus was a collection of biographies, Huang Ming cilin renwu kao 皇明詞林人物考. But he also avidly recorded notes, stories, and ideas, and issued them under a series of titles: Huhai sou qi 湖海搜奇, Shu shi xiantan 漱石閒談, Baizui suoyan 白醉瑣言, Hui zhu xintan 揮麈新譚, Shuopu shiyu 說圃識餘, Wuyi jiahua 烏衣佳話, and Wang shi Qingxiang yu 王氏青箱餘.[49] These works were probably completed between 1590 and 1615.[50]

Wang's introductory remarks to Huhai sou qi outline the framework within which he orders his material. He stresses the distinction between his casual jottings, based on hearsay, and orthodox historical works, and disclaims any attempt to comment on contemporary government. Although making use of items sent to him by friends, he has expunged remarks which apportion praise and blame, as, in his view, it is not the duty of a storywriter to handle such controversial issues. In response to the

publisher's request for a simple, readable style to encourage wider sales, he avoids difficult or arcane expressions.[51]

Whilst they would have made stronger claims for the educational value of their work, Xu Changzuo 徐昌祚 and Wang Tonggui shared Wang Zhaoyun's modest approach to storytelling. Xu's Yanshan conglu 燕山叢錄 (preface dated 1602) based on reports gathered in Beijing during the author's period of office there, arranged the anecdotes under twenty-two separate headings. Wang Tonggui's collection, in its final form of 1603, entitled Er tan leizeng, adopted a similar principle of organization. Both authors sought to report incidents in a sober and factual manner, and Wang Tonggui paid particular attention to noting his sources.

According to Qian Qianyi 錢謙益 (1582-1664), to whom he was distantly related, Qian Xiyan 錢希言 was a talented writer with high self-esteem. His bitter attacks on those who offended him alienated other scholars, and he died in poverty.[52] His collection, Kuai yuan 獪園, was entirely devoted to the supernatural. In his preface of 1613, he reviewed the history of anecdotal fiction, and, as Hu Yinglin had done earlier, observed that quality had declined since the Tang period. In and before the Tang, he maintained, fiction was written by outstanding authors, whose career ambitions had been unsatisfied, and who wrote imaginative stories of a high literary standard. During and after the Song dynasty, mediocre writers active in the field laid emphasis rather on factuality and authenticity: "Tang writers took prose and made it into fiction, whose strength was its disregard of convention; Song writers took fiction and made it into prose, whose weakness was its habit of imitation."[53] Although Qian self-deprecatingly denies that he has any notion of emulating the Tang authors, his work does to some extent attempt to avoid the same prosaic

mediocrity which he ascribes to more recent fiction. Whilst remaining within the anecdotal tradition, he shows less inhibition about providing details that helps to make a scene come alive.

The author of the last major collection of tales in the Ming period has yet to be precisely identified. The so-called Master of the Kua'e Studio (Kua'e zhai zhuren 夸蛾齋主人), by whom Tongxia tingran 桐下听然 was written, has left us few details about his life. He appears to have been a licentiate from the south Jiangsu area, born sometime before 1570.[54] Tongxia tingran is a rich and varied work, which includes random notes on strange incidents as well as some quite lengthy and well-crafted stories, like that of the maid, Laiyan 來雁, and her tragic love affair with another household employee, or that of the resourceful servant, Chunxiao 春宵, who escapes the clutches of Japanese pirates and eventually becomes the wife of a general.[55] Such tales combine a very realistic setting and convincing narrative with skilfully worked supernatural elements, and establish the author as an accomplished story-teller.

Two writers active in the Wanli period deserve special mention for incorporating sections of fictional writing in their collected works. The first of these was Jiang Yingke 江盈科 (1556-1605). Jiang received the jinshi degree in 1592, the same year as Yuan Hongdao (1568-1610), and during the time they were magistrates of neighbouring districts, the two men became close friends. They shared a critical attitude towards the classicist movement led by Li Panlong 李攀龍 (1514-1570) and Wang Shizhen, which harked back to ancient models, urging instead a natural, personal style in verse and prose. Jiang, whose bold originality was much admired by the younger man, participated in the literary society, the Putao She 葡

桃 社 , set up by Yuan and his brothers in Beijing, and was a leading figure in their intellectual circle until his untimely death in 1605.[56]

Jiang Yingke did not confine his literary efforts to poetry and prose essays, he also showed a lively interest in fiction. In the preface he contributed to Wang Tonggui's Er tan, vigorously defending the work against the carping criticism of pedants, he declared that he himself was very fond of strange tales, and was inclined to write a few of his own. In a humorous passage, Jiang blamed his wrist for being too lazy to cooperate in this venture, and threatened to punish it. The remorseful wrist begged for clemency, and promised to complete a book within three years, which Jiang planned to entitle Wan tan 腕 譚, as a companion to Wang's collection.[57]

Jiang's uninhibited approach to casual literature comes across even more strongly in his preface to a compilation of jokes, Xiao lin 笑 林 . The work was written by one Tan Yufu 譚 玉 夫, whom Jiang described as a simple man of humble background. Jiang conceded that seventy per cent of its contents was fictitious and unsophisticated, and that in places, morality was ignored. He predicted that orthodox scholars would no doubt throw it in the fire, but argued that there was no reason why others should follow suit, as it could readily entertain the leisurely reader and cheer up the depressed.[58]

Humour was a major element in the lively stories that form juan 14 of Jiang's collected works, Xuetaoge quanji 雪 濤 閣 全 集 , under the simple heading, xiaoshuo。 His tales act as centrepieces for many personal, often sardonic observations which Jiang Yingke offers on particular human and social issues or supernatural topics. One tale opens by making the point that the wicked study to increase their villainy just as the good

study to augment their wisdom, then goes on to tell how two scholars committed a murder, and after their arrest, master-minded a gaol-break that would have succeeded but for swift action on the part of an official. Another piece, devoted to the theme of unexpected coincidences, relates two stories of remarkable upturns of fortune, for an impoverished prostitute and for a down-at-heel Nanjing resident. Other stories are used to illustrate how ill-gotten gains will bring disaster on their own, or how lightning is the instrument of divine force, and so on.

The strong authorial presence often conveys a satirical message, particularly in discussions of contemporary administration. Jiang was noted for being a conscientious and compassionate official, and his concern for responsible government and hostility to bureaucratic apathy are communicated in a number of stories. The tale of a doctor who promised to straighten out a hunchback's spine, then shrugged off protests when the patient died of the successful treatment, is employed as a caustic description of the practice of magistrates to fulfil their tax quotas at the cost of ruining the local population.[59]

Jiang Yingke's stories represented a creative, individualistic response to the liberalizing intellectual trends in the late Ming. He adapted the conventional anecdotal medium into a form of personal expression, which effectively conveyed his commitment to certain moral values and social ideals. The inclusion of the tales in his collected works, along with his poetry and prose, indicated the importance which he himself laid on this form of writing. Jiang also produced two other short compilations, published separately, Tan yan 談言, a brief collection of humorous items, and Xuetao xieshi 雪濤諧史, an interesting selection of jokes and witty remarks.[60] Both works make some telling comments on human follies and the

pretensions of the gentry class.

Song Maocheng (1569-after 1620) followed a different path in his compositions. A friend of Qian Xiyan, Song was known for his literary talents, though he did not pass the provincial examinations until the age of forty-three. His collected works include two sections devoted to fiction, of both the zhiguai and the chuanqi variety. It is three stories from the latter group, "Liu Dongshan" 劉東山, "Wuzhong xiaozi" 吳中孝子, and "Zhushan", along with a biography, "Fuqing nong zhuan" 負情儂傳, which mark out his work as special.[61] They focus on the individual in a vividly evoked social or domestic setting, and examine human personalities under the stress of conflicting loyalties, emotional tension, or unforeseen misadventure. Relationships between lovers, spouses, mother and son, complacent ex-sheriff and youthful antagonist, are delineated with care and economy.

Song Maocheng directs his narrative with skill, and his stories are characterized by a well-judged sense of balance. In "Wuzhong xiaozi", the wife, whose cruel deceit secured the ejection of her mother-in-law from the home, is, with exquisite irony, made to suffer a similar fate at the hands of her husband. In "Fuqing nong zhuan", Li's craven disloyalty is weighed against the fearless act of abnegation by Du Shiniang 杜十娘. The forbearance and gallantry of the Hunan merchant in "Zhushan" are, in time, repaid by the loyalty of his ex-wife and the charity of the magistrate, whilst the humiliation inflicted on Liu Dongshan is replaced in the end by a gesture of reconciliation. Although the modern reader is apt to regard "Fuqing nong zhuan" as a piece of fiction, in the seventeenth century the demarcation line between creative story-telling and the pseudo-factual biography was much less clearly drawn, as Song

himself demonstrated by placing the story in the biography section of his work. In many respects, the informal biography, by allowing scope for realistic characterization, vivid dialogue, and involved plot, fulfilled the requirements for a successful short story. It was therefore natural that a number of Classical biographies should lend themselves to adaptation by writers in the vernacular medium, who expanded the basic material to form full-length stories.[62]

In the early Qing period, a number of well-known prose writers tried their hand in composing narrative biographies of characters of a relatively humble station in life, and in so doing, returned to many of the classic situations and characters of Chinese fiction: tragic romances and miraculous reunions, resurrections and ghostly visitations, mad Daoists and faithful foxes, and so on. In some cases, these authors may have drawn inspiration from Song Maocheng's work. "Qinhuai jian'er zhuan" 秦淮健兒傳 by Li Yu 李漁(1611-1679/80), for instance, develops the miles gloriosus theme explored by Song Maocheng in "Liu Dongshan". Many such works were collected by Zhang Chao 張潮, a scholar from Anhui familiar with prominent Jiangnan writers, and issued as a compilation, under the title Yu Chu xinzhi 虞初新志(postface dated 1700). As the name suggests, the work was intended as a contemporary equivalent of the anthology of Tang fiction.[63] Although the number of stories written by individual authors was not large, collectively their work represented a high standard of narrative writing, indicating that the semi-fictional biography offered an attractive outlet for creative energies.

The anecdotal collections of the early Qing showed a more didactic orientation than had been evident in the late Ming. Buddhist themes of

karma and retribution featured strongly in short works by several minor literary figures, which were later incorporated in Shuo ling 說鈴, a series edited by Wu Zhenfang 吳震方 (jinshi 1679).[64] Nuogao guangzhi 諾皐廣志, a collection completed in the early Kangxi period by Xu Fang 徐芳 (jinshi 1640), was more varied in its contents, but again laid emphasis on drawing conclusions from the incidents described.

The more neutral, non-committal strain of anecdote found new adherents, however, by the late seventeenth century. Wang Shizhen included six juan devoted to strange incidents in his miscellany, Chibei outan. Two works by lesser known writers, Shu yi ji 述異記 (preface dated 1701) and Kuangyuan zazhi 曠園雜記 (preface dated 1703), like Wang's stories, related episodes in a matter of fact manner, with little attempt at commentary.

Other authors of the early Qing seem to have felt no constraints in mixing brief anecdotes indiscriminately with longer, fictional biographies. One such writer was Niu Xiu 鈕琇 (died 1704), whose collection, Gu sheng 觚賸, was completed in the last few years of his life, while magistrate in Gaoming 高明 district in Guangdong.[65] His stories ran the full gamut from skeleton plots to lengthy romances which used subtle and emotive language that the Siku quanshu editors later described as reminiscent of tales by Tang authors.[66] Niu Xiu's work provides one more instance of a variation of styles within the same collection, a feature that Gu sheng shares with an anthology that was nearing completion at the same time, far away to the north, Liaozhai zhiyi.

Our review of the literary scene in the period 1500-1700 suggests certain general features of the short fiction of the time. The sheer volume of publications - reissues of Tang and Song stories, and

compilations of tales from all periods - encouraged reading, discussions, and appreciation of fictional literature, and fostered an atmosphere conducive to new efforts in the field. By the late sixteenth century, there developed a movement away from the poetry-oriented Jian deng collections and their imitators to the predominantly prose fiction of the kind pioneered by Song Maocheng, rooted more firmly in social realities. Considerable diversity was apparent in anecdotal collections: according to the preference of the individual author, he could choose to adopt a didactic or a neutral posture, supply or withhold detail, lay emphasis on one kind of subject-matter as opposed to another. Rigid boundaries between genre were absent, and several writers evinced a readiness to incorporate both the anecdote and the longer tale in the same work. As Jiang Yingke had demonstrated, a bold and talented author could do much to put his own personal stamp on a collection of tales. It fell to Pu Songling to explore the possibilities offered by the flexible medium of the Classical tale on a more extensive scale than any of his predecessors.

2. 'Liaozhai zhiyi' and its Antecedents

The rich tradition of Classical tales and anecdotes which developed in the late Ming and early Qing clearly left its mark on Pu Songling. We know that he was familiar with a number of the late Ming collections. An authorial note at the end of one of his stories points out the correspondence between it and Song Maocheng's story, "Liu Dongshan".[67] References to Er tan and Qing shi leilüe can also be observed,[68] and no doubt other works were known to him too.

Although it is sometimes imagined that Liaozhai represented a sudden revival of the Classical tale in the early Qing, Pu's work should more

properly be regarded as inheriting and building upon what had come before. Several parallels between Liaozhai and its forebears may be discerned. The format of Pu's work, a seemingly haphazard collection of heterogeneous tales, some culled from oral or written sources, others created out of the imagination, is by no means untypical of other anthologies which straddled the line between the anecdote and the fictional tale. The commentary that Pu appended to his stories under the guise of the Historian of the Strange (Yi shi shi 異史氏) is a device employed by a number of authors of the period. Although Pu's inspiration is commonly, and correctly, traced back to the historiographical tradition pioneered by the commentary of the Grand Historian (Taishi Gong 太史公) in Shi ji, it is worth noting the popularity of such commentaries in the seventeenth century. Feng Menglong's Historian of Love (Qing shi shi 情史氏) and the Historian of the Irregular (Ji shi shi 畸史氏) of Huang Zhouxing 黃周星 (1611-1680) are just two examples with close verbal similarities.[69] Three particular aspects of Liaozhai deserve detailed comparison with developments in the literary scene prior to Pu's emergence: its romantic orientation, its use of realistic detail in depicting character and scene, and its language and style. Examination of these areas will prove helpful both in gauging the impact of Liaozhai's literary antecedents and in marking off the limits of that influence.

Romantic Orientation

In its romantic orientation, one can observe a close link between Liaozhai and the individualistic, sentimental strain of thought which informed much of the best late-Ming fiction and drama. Many of Pu's heroes and heroines are motivated by that idealistic, single-minded love (qing 情)

which was affirmed as the supreme, sublime element in human existence by such writers as Tang Xianzu and Feng Menglong, and they possess a kind of naive innocence, a blithe indifference to arbitrary codes of conduct reminiscent of the "childlike heart" (tongxin 童心) to which the thinker Li Zhi 李贄 (1527-1602) attached great importance. Although Pu Songling, rather characteristically, never made any attempt to formulate in sustained exposition his own conception of qing's place in the moral universe, and never volunteered any opinion on the views of earlier writers on the subject, one may conclude from the romantic outlook of his work that Pu had been deeply affected by the liberating trends of thought current in the seventeenth century.

Both Tang and Feng made eloquent declarations of their belief in the value of love. Tang's preface to Mudan ting, dated 1598, announced:

> Love is of source unknown, yet it grows ever deeper. The living may die of it, and by its power the dead may live again. Love is not love at its fullest if one who lives is unwilling to die for it, or if it cannot restore to life one who has so died. . . . Affairs in the human world cannot be entirely understood by humanity. Those who themselves lack full understanding constantly use reason to set limits on their knowledge. They talk only of what cannot exist in terms of reason, not realizing what is bound to happen in terms of love![70]

Tang's play, based on a sixteenth century Classical tale, provided a vivid illustration of the triumph of spontaneous, headlong passion over conventional natural and social barriers.

Feng, in his preface to Qing shi leilüe, makes the claim that "As a young man, I was considered a fanatic about love (qing chi 情癡)", a sentiment which he explains as a deeply felt, expansive sympathy for others. His purpose in compiling an anthology of stories devoted to this feeling is to "let people know that love can last forever". He concludes

with the extravagant proclamation that love is the unifying, guiding force in life, the string that threads up the scattered coins of matter which make up the world.[71]

Feng's thought had been heavily influenced by the views of Li Zhi, to which he alluded in the general title of his first collection of songs, Tong chi 童癡. Li Zhi had developed the notion of innate knowledge to an extremely radical point, suggesting that the original purity of man's nature - the "childlike heart", which ought to serve as the spontaneous guide to action, is lost if received opinions and artificial moral principles are imposed on it. Cultural education, conventional values of right and wrong, acquired norms of behaviour, all deny the individual a capacity for natural, spontaneous action. Only by clinging to the original purity of his "childlike heart" can he be true to himself and fully give expression to his genuine thoughts.[72]

Such a view lent love a moral sanction. Although from the orthodox point of view passion might be condemned as folly or worse, the sympathetic writer of fiction, for whom it seemed to express an uncompromising loyalty to inner impulses, preferred to confer a positive value upon it. The author of Tongxia tingran makes just such a point in one of his tales, "Chi ernu" 癡兒女, which describes an event that took place in 1628. A young man fell in love with the wife of one of the household servants, and won equal devotion from her. On the evening before the woman was due to be expelled from the house by the young man's parents, the couple hanged themselves, their hands clutching a strand of each other's hair, and tears coursing down their cheeks. The author adds the following comments:

> Alas! That the ardour of love should come to such a point! How many heroic souls have been sacrificed for the scent that comes from skirt and sash? Surely not just this foolish young couple!

> If they were not foolish, they would not be genuine, if they were not genuine, they would not be foolish: thus foolish people are genuine people. Do not most of those who die in the name of loyalty or filial piety possess that same heart of warm and fervent blood?[73]

The line "foolish people are genuine people" (chiren zhe, zhenren ye 癡人者真人也) echoes Li Zhi's "the childlike heart is the genuine heart" (tongxin zhe, zhenxin ye 童心者真心也), and the thrust of the writer's remarks follows the direction of Li's ideas.

The current of thought articulated by these Ming authors was assimilated and reconstituted in fictional form by Pu Songling. The transcendental power of love is frequently asserted by Pu Songling, as we shall see shortly. In the portrayal of lovers, particularly young men, Pu also shows an exceptional interest in naive adolescents who still retain, in many respects, a childlike outlook on life. One striking feature of these heroes, in fact, is their very lack of social and sexual experience and their apparent ignorance of established convention. In determining upon a course of action, they respond to the pull of their innocent emotional impulses, and, disregarding normal standards of acceptable behaviour, they pursue the attainment of their desire with a single-minded, indefatigable resolve. In some ways, then, they embody the unspoiled, unregimented spirit which, Li Zhi suggested, was a necessary condition for the complete fulfulment of the individual. As their behaviour so often flies in the face of common sense, spurning instincts of self-preservation, they are frequently disparaged as foolish (chi 癡) by more worldly characters, but always in the end they are rewarded by the author with the successful achievement of their objective.

Several examples will suffice to demonstrate Pu's peculiar fondness for heroes who have yet to outgrow their childhood. Typically, they combine

a high degree of intelligence with a naive simplicity. Huo Huan 霍桓, the hero of "Qing'e" (269), is extremely precocious, and becomes a licentiate when he is just eleven. But owing to the devotion lavished upon him by his mother, who does not allow him to leave the compound of their home, his social intercourse is severely circumscribed. One day, when he is thirteen, he catches a glimpse of the fourteen year old girl who lives next door, and immediately is seized with love for her. Told that he cannot marry her, he resolves to break his way through the walls of her house with a mattock, quite unaware that to do so would be improper. When he secures entrance to her apartment, he has no more serious designs than to crouch down next to her bed and inhale the scent wafted from her sleeping body. He falls asleep, weary from his wall-demolishing exertions, and is eventually discovered by Qing'e and her servants, quite unrepentant in his pure devotion to the girl:

> He regained consciousness only when they gave him a shove, and hastily rose to his feet, his eyes as bright as shooting stars, not, it seemed, particularly frightened, and he simply stood there shyly not saying a word. Everyone accused him of being a robber, and shouted at him menacingly. Only then did he burst into tears and explain: "I am not a robber. In fact it is because I love the lady that I wanted to be close to her fragrant beauty, no more than that." (7.930)

Huo Huan is motivated by prepubescent impulses: an innocent insensitivity to the social implications of his conduct accompanied by a childlike faith that his behaviour is entirely justified.

The characterization of Wang Zifu in "Yingning" (48) is rather similar. Like Huo, he lost his father when he was very young, and had a very sheltered upbringing, doted upon by his mother. He too is exceptionally bright, a licentiate at fourteen. His view of a young girl on one of his rare outings sends him head over heels in love, and swayed by his fanatical

devotion to her, he disregards all conventions in his subsequent wooing. There is a strong element of puppy love in his infatuation: he preserves religiously the spray of plum blossom that she had dropped, storing it under his pillow, and often takes it out to fondle it. Liu Zigu 劉子固, fifteen years old when "A Xiu" (286) begins, exhibits identical tendencies in his love for the girl who works behind the counter of a haberdashery. After she wraps up his purchases, sealing them with a lick of her tongue, Liu stores them away with meticulous care, reluctant to efface the traces of her lips.

The childish innocence of love is stressed also in "The Bookworm" (415). Though the hero, Lang Yuzhu, is devoted to his lover and sleeps with her regularly, he is completely in the dark about the procedure for conceiving children, and is finally enlightened by his mistress only after several months of cohabitation. The novelty and pleasure of sex so thrill him that he exclaims in boyish enthusiasm: "I don't see that there is anything in the joy of marriage which cannot be related to others",[74] and shares the news of his blissful experience with everyone he runs across. Even more foolish than Lang is Wang Yuanfeng 王元豐, who, at the age of sixteen, has no sexual instincts whatsoever. When he has lived with his wife for three years without once sharing her bed, his mother, impatient for the birth of a grandson, forces them to sleep together. Wang soon protests, however, complaining bitterly: "Night after night Xiaocui 小翠 lies on top of me, resting her legs on my belly so that I can't breathe, and she has got into the habit of poking between my thighs!" (7.1004) Sun Zichu 孫子楚 demonstrates a callow awkwardness in the face of sexual temptation:

> By nature he was inhibited and sparing in his words; if people deceived him, he would always believe that what they said was true. If sometimes there were singing girls in the company, he would always turn

> and go when he saw them from a distance. Some people knew what he was like, and would induce him to join them, and then have a courtesan force herself on him: he flushed scarlet right down to the neck, and beads of sweat poured down his cheeks. Everybody got a great joke out of this. Then they made caricatures of how stupid he looked, which were passed around as a piece of scandal and gave him the nickname, Sun the Fool (Sun chi 孫癡). (2.233)

In a postscript to the story, Pu argues that great benefits can actually be reaped from so-called folly, and that failure and ignominy are more often associated with those who place practical considerations foremost:

> If one is foolish by nature, then one's resolve is firm: thus those who are foolish in their love of books are sure to excel in composition, and those who are foolishly devoted to the arts are bound to have excellent technique, whereas those people who make no progress and achieve nothing are always those who claim that they are not foolish. (2.238)

The apparent folly of Sun Zichu and others like him is viewed positively as an unwavering commitment to a cause, the source of success in love and life. In advocating an adherence to the dictates of one's own innate nature rather than to imposed convention, Pu is exploring a concept very akin to Li Zhi's "childlike heart". The very lack of worldly wisdom, he seems to be saying, is his characters' greatest strength.

"Foolish" obsessions, as Pu indicated, could be contracted for many different things, including literature and art, but it is their fanatical fidelity to love which distinguishes his heroes. Love possesses them utterly, winning their unqualified allegiance, inspiring acts of reckless courage and miracles fully the equal of Du Liniang's resurrection in Mudan ting. Love (qing) and folly (chi) therefore tend to operate in conjunction in Liaozhai. A typical love fanatic is Qiao Nian 喬年, the hero of "Liancheng" (104), a tale which, as Pu's friend Wang Shizhen observed, recalls Mudan ting, and, as Feng Zhenluan added, surpasses the

Ming play in the ardour of the reciprocal love depicted. The story combines romantic elements from Mudan ting with a study of the friendship ethic and a characteristic Liaozhai contrast between a poor scholar and a rich man's son. In order to select a husband for his daughter Liancheng, a provincial graduate named Shi 史 invites specimen poems from prospective suitors. Qiao's verses win Liancheng's admiration, but he is rejected by her father on the grounds of his poverty. Liancheng, however, secretly sends Qiao gifts as a demonstration of her sympathy, convincing him that she is his zhiji 知己 - a friend who alone appreciates his worth. From this initial gesture of intimacy is set in motion a whole series of generous and selfless actions by which both partners display their fidelity to their mutual love. When Liancheng is betrothed to the son of a salt merchant, she becomes dangerously ill, and a foreign priest declares that only a lump of male flesh can save her. Whereas her fiancé balks at the idea, Qiao, resolutely loyal to his zhiji, slices a piece out of his own chest without hesitation. After Liancheng's recovery, Qiao privately requests a further proof of her love: one smile. Assured then that she truly appreciates him, he announces that he will be able to die content in that knowledge, no matter what happens. Thus, in his indifference to physical pain and his defiance of the prospect of death, Qiao makes it clear that loyalty to his lover is the dominant value in his life.

Qiao is soon given an opportunity to demonstrate the truth of this assertion. When Liancheng dies on the eve of her wedding, Qiao immediately follows suit. Reunited with her in the underworld, he explains: "With you dead, how could I presume to live!" (3.364) To be together with his lover's ghost in the underworld gives him far more joy than a normal existence without her: "I delight in being dead, and have no desire to

live." (3.365) Though a helpful underworld clerk arranges that they be restored to life, the lovers, fearful of renewed separation, linger on as ghosts for several days. Liancheng, out of gratitude for Qiao's fidelity, gives herself to him on her own initiative. After her resurrection, Liancheng, as she had suspected, is married to the merchant's son, but she attempts suicide in protest, and her stubborn resistance to the marriage eventually permits the longed-for union with Qiao Nian. Both partners therefore maintain the highest standards of allegiance to qing, spurning life if it means separation from their beloved, and disregarding parental wishes whatever the cost. Their defiance of convention finally triumphs, ensuring their happiness in life. In his commentary, Pu Songling acknowledges how unusual such fanatical love is: "For the recognition conveyed in one smile, he promised his life to her: some people might criticize him as foolish" (3.367) but he goes on to reaffirm the heroic ethos of unhesitating reciprocity.

The metaphysical power of selfless, idealistic love is exhibited in a number of other stories, and often stressed by Pu Songling in his commentaries. So carried away with love for A Bao 阿寶 is the innocent Sun Zichu that his soul vacates his body and follows the young lady back to her home, making love to her in her dreams. Later, after his soul and body are reunited, Sun, still craving A Bao's company, transfers his soul into the body of a parrot, which flies to A Bao's chamber and perches by her side day and night. The fervour of his love overcomes all obstacles and the couple marry. After his death, Sun is permitted by the underworld authorities to return to life, in view of the devotion shown to him by A Bao, who had been set on committing suicide as an expression of loyalty. Here, as elsewhere, faithful love is an influential factor likely to sway the divine forces which control life and death. In "Ruiyun" (403), a poor

scholar who never wavered in his devotion to his courtesan lover, despite the disfiguring skin disease which she contracted, is applauded by an immortal, who restores the girl to her pristine beauty. After the deaths of the loving trio in "Xiangyu" (443), Pu offers the following appraisal:

> Where love reaches the ultimate peak, spirits and gods can be contacted. That a flower should follow a man with its spirit and a man can rest his soul in a flower: does this not show how deeply their love conjoined them? One is robbed of life and two perish with him: if this is not constancy, it is certainly to die for love. When people prove unable to be constant, it is simply because their love is not genuine. (11.1555)

In extreme cases, even inanimate objects may respond to the transcendental force of love. Xing Yunfei 邢雲飛, a fanatical collector of strange stones, agrees to reduce his lifespan by several years in order to guarantee continued possession of a stone to which he is especially devoted. Eventually it is buried together with him in his grave. Stolen later by grave-robbers, it is about to be deposited in the keeping of a local official when suddenly, as though it had a will of its own, it falls to the ground and smashes into dozens of pieces. Xing's sons then pick up the fragments and place them in their father's grave, reuniting man and stone. Pu remarks: "In loving the stone so much that he wanted to die for it, Xing was very foolish indeed! But in the end stone and man shared the same home, so who can say a stone is without sentiments?" (11.1578)

To conclude, one can discern a strong continuity between the ideas which inspired late-Ming fiction and drama and the romantic orientation of Liaozhai. Although Li Zhi's moral spontaneity aroused hostility and outrage from the leading thinkers of the early Qing period,[75] it appears that among unconventional literary men like Pu Songling the individualistic and sentimental spirit fashionable in the late Ming continued to maintain

its appeal.

Realistic detail

Past discussions of Liaozhai's relationship to earlier fiction have tended to attribute the realistic detail employed by Pu to delineate character and evoke a scene to the influence of the Tang chuanqi. In fact, however, one can identify an attention to detail and an interest in character as rather typical features of the seventeenth century Classical tale, and Pu's achievement in Liaozhai may more accurately be viewed as an extension or development of a prevailing trend.

The descriptive approach common to Liaozhai and other seventeenth century Classical tales may be illustrated through discussion of scenes in four stories of the late Ming and early Qing periods, which vividly recreate a vignette of interaction between characters in the kind of intimate setting that one associates with Liaozhai。 The story by an anonymous author, "Tou tao lu 投桃錄", contained in the late-Ming anthology Xu Yanyi bian,[76] includes the following confrontation between a young scholar, Liu Tangqing 劉唐卿, and the beautiful daughter of a boatman on whose craft he is travelling:

> At first, because her father was present, Tangqing did not dare fix his gaze on her, but, loath to leave, he lingered there until almost noon, unable to calm his desire. The helmsman said, "Progress is slow when the boat is so heavily laden," and urged her father to help pulling the tow rope. After he had left, Tangqing tried to flirt with the girl by making eyes, but she either turned her face away in timid embarrassment or rejected his advances with a stern expression. However, when Tangqing looked to one side, she squinted at him affectionately, smiling as if she was about to say something. Realizing that ostensibly she was assuming a serious air but secretly teasing him, Tangqing's mind and senses tingled with joy, and his spirits soared. So he placed a walnut in the brocade handkerchief stored in his sleeve, and binding the silk with a love-knot, he tossed it in front of the girl. She calmly continued rowing, seemingly unawares. Tangqing grew anxious, fearing it would be

discovered by her father, and repeatedly made signals to her with his eyes, meaning for her to pick it up, but still she did not budge. Soon her father wound up his rope and came back on board, about to go below, and as Tangqing's helpless desperation mounted, the girl finally hooked the handkerchief under the concealing canopy of her skirt with the tip of her shoe, then slowly picked it up and deposited it in her sleeve, without her father's knowledge. Then she hid her face and laughed, saying: "A bold fellow, to be so nervous as this!"[77]

The intertwining of mental processes, action, and observed responses is narrated with considerable care here, inviting contrast with a similar episode in the Liaozhai tale, "Wang Gui'an".[78] Pu's handling of the scene differs little from that of the anonymous Ming author, indicating that Liaozhai perhaps broke less sharply with tradition than is sometimes assumed.

The same point can be made through comparison of two intimate seduction scenes. Song Maocheng's tale, "Zhushan", includes a detailed account of the means by which a pearl-seller smuggles a merchant into the bed of the woman with whom he has fallen in love. After covertly extinguishing the lamp in the woman's bedroom, the pearl-seller ushers the merchant in under cover of darkness and, after inflaming the woman's sexual desires by risqué conversation, successfully introduces the man into her bed.[79] Song's narrative set a precedent for the realistic description of bedchamber scenes of the sort in which Pu Songling excels. In the story "The Human Demon", Tian 田 , the wife of Ma Wanbao 馬萬寶 , persuades a young woman (who ironically turns out to be a man masquerading as a woman) living nearby to come and administer massage to her one night. In fact her plan is to smuggle her husband into the room and allow him to have his way with her. In its telling use of detail, Pu's account of the attempted seduction recalls Song's scene in "Zhushan".[80] Song is less sexually explicit than Pu, but in other respects he shows the same concern

to present a clear picture in the reader's mind of the step by step sequence in the seduction, providing a fine model for emulation.

The anonymous author of Tongxia tingran is another Ming writer to make full use of realistic detail to intensify suspense and illuminate psychology. In one of his tales, Laiyan, a maidservant in the household of a censor, falls in love with a family clerk, A Rui 阿瑞. To their bitter disappointment, however, her mistress marries her to a doltish bearded slave whom she detests. Laiyan, fiercely loyal to A Rui, refuses to sleep with her husband, violently resisting his clumsy advances. The lovers arrange a rendezvous one night, and the ensuing scene is described in a painstaking manner worthy of Pu Songling:

> Laiyan bought a lot of wine and refreshments and, under the pretence that these were gifts from the old servant, had her urge the bearded slave to help himself. As expected, the slave became very drunk and, still dressed, covered himself with his quilt and snored away like a cow bellowing. The old servant surreptitiously called Rui over. Rui was already standing still outside the window, for he had been waiting ever since twilight, when he was informed of the assignation. When he heard the snoring, he entered swiftly and, raising the curtain of Laiyan's door, clasped her cheeks between his hands. Before their love-making had properly commenced, the bearded slave suddenly shouted out loudly in his dreams, "Stop, thief!" In the stunning shock of the moment, Rui and Laiyan practically died of fear. The old servant, who was clearing up the left-overs and still just outside the room, was initially extremely alarmed, but then it dawned on her that he was talking in his sleep, so she laughed and broke out cursing, "What a stupid creature you really are! How much have you eaten, to get yourself into this strange state?" Then the five or six people from neighbouring rooms, who had all come to ask what had happened, gave a big laugh when they heard what the woman said and withdrew. The bearded slave reverted to a deep sleep, but Laiyan and her lover's nerves were shattered. The old servant announced: "Seeing that this stupid beast is drunk, I ought to stay and keep sister Yan company." So saying she carried out her bedclothes and lay down outside the door. Although the two lovers now felt slightly more secure, still they trembled and perspired, their hearts palpitating uncontrollably. After lying in each other's arms for a long time, they were just beginning to become more intimate when they heard the cock crow.[81]

Detailed descriptions with lively and realistic images continued to be written in the early Qing, as Guo xu zhi 過墟志, by a writer with the pseudonym "Old Man of Leisure from West of the Villa" (Shuxi Yisou 墅西逸叟), demonstrates. This extremely long tale recounts a fascinating story of domestic conflict, personal tragedy, and individual courage during the tumultuous years accompanying the Manchu takeover of China. The author of this work, whose preface is dated 1676, pays particular attention to tensions that develop between members of a family, a topic that was also to fascinate his contemporary, Pu Songling. His depiction of the dominance which the young woman, Liu Sanxiu 劉三秀, enjoys over her rich husband, Huang Lianggong 黃亮功, who is thirty years her senior, bears comparison with Pu's stories of aggressive wives: although Liu is not quite the termagant that Pu's wives tend to become, her control of the household is just as uncompromising. The following extract, which relates to a period some time after the birth of Liu's daughter, Zhen 珍, gives an indication of the author's skill in revealing character through liberal use of detail:

> At this time, Huang took orders from Liu in the handling of all household affairs. Just how much silver there was in such and such a vault, just how many coins were stored in this or that cupboard, all such matters he put in her hands, and the sale and purchase of grain, the retention and issue of contracts as well as daily bookkeeping were all subject to her supervision. Liu was able, firm and quick-witted: any problem she encountered she would resolve very rapidly, and Huang waited upon her as though she was divine. When Liu combed her hair, he gathered her tresses, when she bathed, he rubbed her body. He would also sit by her bed and manicure her nails, or when she arose from a sleep he would apply her make-up and put shoes on her feet. Liu, on the other hand, treated her husband like a slave and called him "Old Ox". If he caused the slightest offence, she always slapped him across the cheeks. Huang accepted this with a sigh, saying quietly only, "Just tell me nicely, why get angry?" Thus whatever Liu fancied doing, he always complied and allowed her to direct him. One day, Huang returned from collecting debts in a nearby village, and found Liu sitting beneath the lamp with Zhen in her arms. Toying the golden rings that hung from her ears, he said jokingly, "Zhen is

about to go into school, but you have still not conceived a second child: why is that?" Liu hooted derisively, and said sternly, "Crisis is imminent, and still you put on these crazy airs! I have something to say, in the hope that it may awaken you. Wait a moment and I will tell you." Then she entered the bedroom, closed the door behind him, and gave a detailed explanation as they sat by the pillow.[82]

The examples quoted above again suggest that the Classical tale in the late Ming and early Qing was not so barren of good writing as is often imagined, and that in fact the contemporary or recent literary scenes offered Pu Songling quite fertile ground for further cultivation. Of course, the descriptive detail in these passages is applied to human encounters rather than to the kind of supernatural incident for which Pu is famous, but only some of the stories maintain a strictly realistic pose: both "Tou tao lu" and "Laiyan" go on to include supernatural elements. Polished romances of the sixteenth century such as Lu Can's "Dong xiao ji" and Cai Yu's 蔡羽 "Liaoyang haishen zhuan" 遼陽海神傳[83] also experimented with realistic detail in a supernatural setting. Thus, although the Tang chuanqi clearly left an imprint on Pu Songling's narrative approach, one should not overlook the part played by Pu's more immediate predecessors in exploring the possibilities of realistic detail.

Language and Style

A discussion of the language and style of Liaozhai as contrasted with earlier collections of Classical tales helps to put in perspective the place of Pu's work in literary history. It is sometimes said that the Jian deng collections acted as a bridge between chuanqi of the Tang and Song periods and Liaozhai, although little attempt has been made to amplify this assertion.[84] It is true that the Jian deng stories, like the earlier chuanqi and Pu's stories later, represent a creative,

ambitious strain in Classical fiction, and that chronologically they occupy an intermediate position. But the exact nature of their relationship to Liaozhai requires further examination. As our review of the literary background has indicated, the influence of the Jian deng collections was waning by the end of the sixteenth century, and in content, and more particularly in form, a substantial gap divides them from Pu Songling's tales. Although occasionally one may observe certain parallels in plot or detail,[85] the differences in language and style are extremely striking.

Qu You and Li Zhen clearly regarded the poetry they incorporated into their stories as a vital part of their work. In Liaozhai, by contrast, Pu Songling was extremely sparing in his use of poetry. Liaozhai is a literary tour de force in its attention to style, its command of the recondite allusion, its bold use of the rare or archaic expression, but only rarely does the author allow the powerful flow of his narrative to be interrupted by verse interludes. Two or three factors may have been responsible for Pu's restraint. Partly he was no doubt responding to the fashion of his day, which looked with less favour on the lyrical features associated with the Jian deng stories. Though a competent poet, Pu Songling must have known that prose was his true forte, and preferred it, therefore, as the dominant medium in his stories. As a vehicle for characterization, Pu probably also considered the poem less effective than descriptive detail and direct speech.

Only about twenty or so tales in the whole of Liaozhai incorporate verse. Poems are seldom exchanged by lovers, as they are so commonly in the Jian deng stories and longer romances like Jiao Hong ji, where the pace of the narrative inevitably slackens to accommodate these poetical duets. Instead a single poem is composed or recited by one of the characters,

serving a utilitarian function in advancing the plot, or setting the mood for a scene in a brief lyrical moment. In two notable cases, poems are written by the ghosts of women who died resisting abduction by soldiers in the early Qing. Here, verse conveys a sense of loss and desolation in an under-stated fashion appropriate to this sensitive topic.[86] In short, Pu tends to include poetry only when it serves a specific purpose and does a job more effectively than a prose equivalent.

Pu Songling's approach to prose set-pieces also differs considerably from that of Qu You and Li Zhen. The early-Ming authors never pass up an opportunity to introduce letters, formal statements, funeral eulogies and the like into their narratives, whereas Pu again appears reluctant to burden the story itself with non-essentials. A comparison between Qu You's "Shuigong qinghui lu" 水宮慶會錄 and Pu's "Zhicheng" (432) is instructive. In the Jian deng xinhua story, the dragon king of the South Sea asks a scholar, named significantly Yu Shanwen 余善文, to celebrate the completion of a new palace building with a commemorative piece (shangliang wen 上梁文). Yu immediately obliges, dashing it off with a flourish, and his piece is then quoted at length.[87] In "Zhicheng", the Prince of Dongting demands that scholar Liu 柳 write a fu 賦 on a set topic, as a test of his mettle. Unlike Yu Shanwen, Liu is slow to form ideas and sits with pen in hand for a long time. When the Prince makes a sarcastic remark about his lack of progress, Liu coolly reminds him that Zuo Si 左思 took ten years to write the "San du fu" 三都賦, and that quality, not speed, is what matters. In the end, it takes him all morning to write the piece, but the Prince is enraptured by the results, exclaiming, "A true scholar of talent indeed!" (11.1512) We have to take this evaluation on trust, because we are never shown the fu ourselves.

Thus, in this episode, Pu Songling disregards a literary piece which could do little to further the story, introducing instead a realistic scene which casts a sidelight on Liu's personality and allows an amusing interplay between him and the Prince.

A master of parallel prose, Pu Songling could not always resist the temptation to display his virtuoso talent with densely allusive prose passages, but he almost always placed them at the end, detached from the narrative itself.[88] Such passages are often inserted for ironical effect, to demonstrate the comic discrepancy between the elevated diction and the themes it is used to describe, which include homosexuality, the subjugation of husbands by jealous wives, and the perils of over-indulgence in alcohol.[89] At times, Pu seems to be offering a tongue-in-cheek tribute to convention: a crime and detection story, "Yanzhi" (401), and a tale of injustice in the underworld, "Xi Fangping" (398), both end with a judicial verdict couched in the most euphuistic language, sardonically imitating the format of the late-Ming gong'an 公案 (court-case) genre. The playful self-indulgence of these pieces stands in contrast to the serious intent of earlier virtuoso writing.

Poetry and prose set-pieces aside, Pu's language can still be distinguished from the Jian deng manner, which favours the use of balanced periods and contrived parallelism in dialogue, and generally shies away from the inclusion of utterances of a colloquial nature. Pu, on the other hand, avoided this kind of artificial phrasing, preferring instead a supple, smooth-flowing narrative style somewhat akin to traditional biographical writing, in which the primary aim was to relate action and convey character rather than to cultivate stylistic refinement and taste.[90] In this durable linguistic surface, Pu then embedded occasional allusions and archaic

expressions, used in a refreshingly inventive fashion, and introduced colloquial expressions into dialogue to simulate an earthy vernacular exchange. The effect achieved is not one of affectation but of bold spontaneity informed by exceptional erudition. Pu's method has been well summarized by Feng Zhenluan, the traditional commentator most sensitive to matters of style:

> Recent authors of informal literature always try to excel in diction, importing an abundance of flowery phrases so as to exhibit their talent, smearing on classical allusions so as to display their scholarship. Liaozhai, in rough attire and unkempt appearance, inserts now and again one or two archaic phrases, and embellishes the tales somewhat with one or two archaic words, just as the biographies of Shi ji occasionally cite ancient proverbs or current expressions as well as old books from before the Qin and Han. As the varying shades contrast, dripping with bright colour, the more natural and spontaneous the work appears, without the slightest suggestion that this is some poor man's son contriving to make a fool of himself, like a pauper pretending to be rich. It is for this reason that the work merits admiration.[91]

The distinctive language of Liaozhai was plainly shaped by a different set of literary values from that which inspired the Classical tale of the early Ming period. Pu's work may have been influenced rather by its more immediate antecedents: late-Ming authors such as Song Maocheng and other writers active in the early Qing. Although Song included a certain amount of elevated diction and rhetorical flourish in "Fuqing nong zhuan", his other tales, notably "Zhushan" and "Liu Dongshan", are written in a vigorous, unaffected style with a tendency towards colloquial usage in dialogue which enhances the animated, straightforward narrative.[92] Economical but lively writing also characterizes the tales by early Qing authors anthologized in Yu Chu xinzhi. Using this kind of language as the basis, the individual author could, if he chose, lend variety and piquancy to his story by restrained and selective allusion, as Li Yu does in his "Qinhuai jian'er zhuan",

for example.[93] Pu Songling's extraordinary ability to draw words and phrases from a wide range of classical texts and incorporate them with seemingly effortless ease and congruity into his tales, sustaining this achievement through a work of such extensive scale, gives Liaozhai a richer linguistic texture than is usually found elsewhere. But in rejecting the studied artifice of the Jian deng tale in favour of a more natural and flexible style of narrative prose, Pu's immediate predecessors may have played a part in laying a foundation for his success.

'Liaozhai' and the Vernacular Tradition

Our discussion so far has been concerned exclusively with the relationship between Liaozhai and its antecedents in the genre of fiction to which it belongs: the Classical tale and anecdote. Suggestions have been made that Pu Songling was also influenced by the rich tradition of stories and novels in vernacular Chinese, which developed rapidly during the period under consideration, 1500-1700. It is surmised, for example, that the impact of vernacular fiction can be observed in Pu's use of colloquial idiom in snatches of dialogue, and particularly in occasional passages where vernacular language is sustained through a whole conversation.[94] Such assumptions, which have not been subjected to thorough scrutiny, merit further consideration here.

There can be no doubt that Pu Songling had read widely in vernacular fiction and was familiar with the major works, as scattered references in Liaozhai testify. In the tale "The Island of Immortals" (275), after a conceited poet recites the couplet,

> On my whole body, only whiskers and eyebrows remain.
> A small drink can make the ache in one's innards dissolve.

a mischievous young girl provides a mocking commentary, saying, "The first line is Pilgrim Sun leaving Fiery Cloud Cave, the second is Zhu Bajie crossing Child-and-Mother River". (7.949-950) Pu Songling is here alluding to episodes in chapters 41 and 53 of the sixteenth century novel, Xiyou ji 西游記.[95] Another vernacular classic is referred to in "Summer Snow" (307):

> The practice of calling the wife of an official taitai 太太 has been followed for only a few years. In the past, only the mothers of officials were eligible for this form of address; the only wives to be described in this manner were Lin 林 and Qiao 喬 in a lewd history, and the custom was found nowhere else. (8.1058)

Lady Lin and Lady Qiao are characters who appear in the novel Jin Ping Mei 金瓶梅, the celebrated "lewd history", as Pu characterizes it.[96]

In "Nie Zheng" (248), Pu Songling remarks: "I have heard it said in an informal history that [Jing Ke's 荆軻] grave was upturned by the ghosts of Yang 羊 and Zuo 左." (6.845) Pu appears to be referring to a story that was originally included in the sixteenth century collection Liushijia xiaoshuo 六十家小說, and in the popular anthology Jingu qiguan 今古奇觀, under the title "Yang Jiao'ai she ming quan jiao 羊角哀捨命全交".[97]

Pu Songling was himself of course an accomplished author of vernacular literature, including plays, narrative ballads, and songs. His enthusiastic interest in vernacular fiction is frequently reflected in these works. The echoes of Shuihu zhuan 水滸傳 which one scholar has detected in the story "Cui Meng" (327) are even more conspicuous in Pu's vernacular play, Monan qu 磨難曲.[98] Qiangu kuai 千古快 is a creative reworking of an episode from chapter 50 of Sanguo yanyi 三國演義, in which Cao Cao 曹操 is captured by Guan Yu 關羽.[99]

Liu Jieping has offered the further speculation that Pu had read the seventeenth century novel Xingshi yinyuan zhuan, noting similarities between it and Pu's play, Rang du zhou 禳妒咒.[100]

Given Pu's fascination with the vernacular medium, it is understandable perhaps that some have concluded that his use of colloquial language in Liaozhai was in some way a response to the vernacular tradition. Such an assessment, however, requires qualification. Even from the early stages of its development, the Classical tale possessed the capacity to include colloquial speech in passages of dialogue, thereby introducing a down-to-earth immediacy to a scene which served to individualize character. The combination of the elegant diction of conventional Classical Chinese with vernacular idiom enhanced the artistic effect of a tale and became a standard device of the Classical author during the rise of the chuanqi genre in the Tang period. As Qian Zhongshu has noted in connection with a tale written by Niu Sengru 牛僧孺(780-848), colloquial speech tended to be particularly favoured in the portrayal of female characters.[101] In placing colloquial expressions into the mouths of his heroines and other women - matchmakers, jealous wives, high-spirited girls, and so on,[102] Pu Songling was applying a technique which had become a regular aspect of the writer's craft long before the advent of vernacular fiction. What appears to distinguish Pu's use of language is simply the extent to which the vernacular is employed: the length of some colloquial dialogues exceeds the norm which earlier Classical tales seem to have set. This difference may be explained partly by the increasing acceptance of the vernacular as a respectable medium by the educated reader in the early Qing, and partly by Pu Songling's own uninhibited interest and proficiency in writing the vernacular language.

The real points of contact between the vernacular tradition and Liaozhai lie not so much in language as in thematic concerns and descriptive approaches. As noted by Patrick Hanan, the characteristic features of vernacular fiction include "the relatively humble social level of the life with which it deals; its preference for detailed, particularizing narrative; and its distinct emphasis on either comedy, satire, and ribaldry or on straightforward moral didacticism."[103] In some respects, Pu Songling's stories come closer to reproducing these features than do many Classical tales. Here, I am thinking particularly of the lengthy Liaozhai tales that deal with marital or family problems, bringing household crises to life through explicit description and comic exaggeration, and which possess a strong moral orientation. The kinship between such stories and the world of vernacular fiction is indicated by the success with which these Liaozhai tales were recast in vernacular form, first by Pu Songling himself, and later by the anonymous author of Xing meng pianyan 醒夢駢言.[104]

In this kind of story, Pu eschews the customary ambiguity of the Classical tale, and achieves quite precise definition through the use of denotative detail. As we have seen, some other seventeenth century Classical authors had obtained rather similar effects, but the satirical or humorous tone is new. Scenes of domestic conflict, in particular, may serve to illustrate this point. The following extract describes just two incidents in an extensive catalogue of torments that the shrew Jiangcheng 江城 inflicts on her hapless husband:

> One day, when he was talking to the maid, Jiangcheng suspected that he had some private understanding with her, so she crammed a wine jar over the maid's head and beat her. When she had finished, she tied up both the young man and the maid, and with embroidery scissors she cut out lumps of flesh from their bellies and then stuck them

> into each other's wound. Afterwards she loosened their bonds and told them to bandage themselves. After a month, the inserted gobbets of flesh had actually bonded together with the surrounding tissue. Jiangcheng would often stamp cakes into the dusty ground with her bare feet, then bawl at her husband to pick them up and eat them. There was no end to the tortures that she inflicted. (6.861)

A minor scene in another story describes the difficulty that an official named Wang Taichang 王太常 and his wife encounter in attempting to discipline their mentally retarded teenage son, Yuanfeng, and their irrepressible daughter-in-law, Xiaocui. In a passage too lengthy to quote here, Pu Songling devotes lavish detail on the recreational diversions and mundane crises in the Wang household.[105] It is passages like this which make one wonder whether Hanan's distinctions between the narrative method of Classical tale and vernacular story begin to lose their critical edge in the case of Liaozhai. Comparing Song Maocheng's "Zhushan" to its vernacular offspring, Hanan has commented: "The tale is spare and direct; virtually every piece of information is necessary to the plot. The story, however, is prodigal with information, most of it only tangentially related to the action."[106] In Pu's fiction, these boundaries sometimes show signs of breaking down.

In his keen observation of the interaction between women and between husbands and wives, Pu Songling also shares the preoccupations of sixteenth and seventeenth century vernacular fiction. The tensions between wives, concubines and maids which formed one of the main areas of attention in Jin Ping Mei are monitored with equal acuity by the author of Liaozhai. In their spiteful egotism and wanton cruelty, Liaozhai women are sometimes reminiscent of characters in the novel like Pan Jinlian 潘金蓮 and Chunmei 春梅. Sun Qi's 孫麒 third wife, for instance: "In appearance, she turned out to be as beautiful as promised, but her haughtiness

was even more conspicuous: she displayed contempt for many of the clothes and appurtenances offered her, and would often destroy them or throw them away." (8.1112) An Dacheng's 安大成 mother vents her hostility to her daughter-in-law by the insidiously indirect means familiar to us from Pan Jinlian's behaviour: "His mother still remained discontented and cursed everything around her, her true target always being Shanhu 珊瑚."[107]

In their aggressive impulse to dominate utterly their husbands and homes, Pu's women occasionally recall characters in the colloquial short story, as well as the shrews in Xingshi yinyuan zhuan, Xue Sujie 薛素姐 and Tong Jijie 童寄姐. As portrayed by Pu, the cunning and malicious Jin shi 金氏,for example, bears comparison with jealous women in the vernacular world. Herself unable to bear children, she vigorously resists all attempts to undermine her monopolistic control over her husband. She torments the first concubine to death, then adopts underhand methods to prevent the purchase of a replacement. When her husband Chai Tingbin 柴廷賓 finally succeeds in purchasing a girl from the Lin 林 family, her response is ingeniously conceived and devastatingly effective, driving the girl to suicide with her pretended concern for the concubine's education.[108]

In their unrestrained sexuality and hunger for physical satisfaction, Liaozhai women also express instincts which had become a feature of female characterization in Jin Ping Mei. Qiaoniang 巧娘, for example, dies of sexual frustration after being married to a young man who was born with deformed genitals and was unable to have an erection. As a ghost, she attempts to seduce another young man in her eager search for sexual fulfilment, and sheds tears of bitter disappointment when her groping hand finds evidence that he too is impotent.[109] Shen shi attempts suicide when

she finds herself married to an old merchant who is unable to satisfy her sexual needs.[110] The sexual factor also aggravates Jiangcheng's antagonism to her husband:

> He was as terrified of her as if she were a tiger or wolf, and even if, on occasions, she favoured him with an affectionate expression, in bed he still so quaked with fear that he was unable to demonstrate his virility. She slapped his cheeks and derisively dismissed him. From then on she was all the more disgusted with him, and held him in contempt as a creature less than human. (6.858)

Pu Songling's interest in the hostilities and alliances which develop among the women of a large, established family may also have been encouraged by the precedents for such subject matter in the vernacular tradition. Pu's most extensive exploration of this theme is found in the story "Fourth Lady Hu" (278). The heroine is the fourth daughter of a high-ranking official, who has been married by him to a gifted but penniless scholar, Cheng Xiaosi. Her mother, a concubine, had died when she was a child, and her elder brothers and sisters had all married into eminent clans, factors which intensify her isolation:

> Originally, prior to Fourth Lady's betrothal, a witch who possessed knowledge of people's future status in life came to inspect all the children, but issued no flattering predictions. Only when Fourth Lady came before her did she exclaim, "This really is a distinguished lady!" Now that she had married Cheng, her sisters all mockingly addressed her as "Distinguished Lady". She, however, maintained her dignity and reserve just as though she had never heard these remarks. Gradually this mode of address was adopted by maidservants young and old, who followed suit in their references to her.
>
> Fourth Lady had a maid named Cassia, who grew extremely indignant and asked loudly: "How do you know that my master is not going to become a distinguished official?"
>
> Overhearing this comment, Second Sister replied scornfully, "If Cheng becomes a distinguished official, you can gouge my eyeballs out!"
>
> Cassia, becoming angry, then said, "I'm just afraid that when the time comes, you'll be reluctant to part with them!"
>
> Second Sister's maid Spring Scent broke in, "If Second

Lady goes back on her word, I'll offer my eyes in place of hers."

All the more enraged, Cassia struck the palm of her hand to formalize the vow, crying, "You're going to be blind, no doubt about it!" Second Sister, angered by her impertinence, immediately slapped her across the face. Cassia howled and made a scene.

When the matriarch heard about his incident, she declined to commit herself one way or the other, and simply smiled condescendingly. Cassia agitatedly laid her grievance before Fourth Lady, who was weaving at the time. Fourth Lady neither showed any anger nor said a word, but carried on spinning as before.

When the patriarch's birthday came round, all the sons-in-law attended, and birthday presents filled the courtyard. First Brother's Wife jeered at Fourth Lady, saying, "What gift have you presented?"

"A mouth supported by two shoulders!" suggested Second Brother's Wife. Fourth Lady was unruffled, and displayed no signs of shame and embarrassment. Seeing how witless she seemed to be in all circumstances, everyone made fun of her with ever greater abandon. The only exception was Li shi 李氏, the patriarch's favourite concubine and Third Sister's mother, who always treated her with great civility and frequently lavished solicitude upon her. (7.962-963)

In such tales as this, Pu Songling depicts scenes of domestic conflict that one might associate more readily with the vernacular than the Classical tradition. In Pu's hands, the Classical tale deals not simply with "experiences of private importance, which make no impact on the community", but also with the kind of "socially significant conflict" which tends to characterize the vernacular story or novel.[111] To some degree, therefore, Pu's work represents a creative response to the success of vernacular fiction, as he imported into his stories subject matter which hitherto had been largely monopolized by the vernacular.

It is commonly acknowledged that when a vernacular story and a Classical tale share the same stuff-material, "it is always the story that, as the more popular form, is the more derivative; there is hardly a single known case of a tale based on a story."[112] We therefore cannot expect to find more specific instances of the influence of vernacular fiction than Pu's constructive attempt to come to terms, in his general orientation, with the world of vernacular fiction. Nevertheless, on

occasions one does encounter in Liaozhai echoes of particular vernacular stories, and without necessarily suggesting any close relationship between them, it might be worth considering a couple of specimen examples.

If, as seems likely, Pu had read the anthology Jingu qiguan, he would have been familiar with the stories known in English translation as "The Pearl-sewn Shirt", "The Beggar Chief's Daughter", and "The Courtesan's Jewel Box".[113] In the first of these, there is an interesting verbal parallel with Pu Songling's "Nie Xiaoqian". When the go-between engaged by the merchant, Chen Dalang 陳大郎, to facilitate his seduction of Wang Sanqiao 王三巧, catches her first sight of the beautiful young woman, her mental reaction is as follows: "Truly a heavenly creature! Now wonder Chen Dalang has fallen head over heels: if I were a man, I would lose my senses too."[114] In Pu's tale, a woman of similar age to Feng Menglong's go-between and, like her, responsible for engineering illicit sexual liaisons, make an almost identical remark upon the arrival of the heroine: "Young lady, you really are a beauty out of some picture: if I were a man, you would steal my soul away too." (2.161) One wonders whether Pu owed anything to the vernacular story for his conception of this remark.

Both "The Beggar Chief's Daughter" and "The Courtesan's Jewel Box" are vernacular versions of Classical tales, and it is a moot point whether or not Pu's work should be more properly compared with those Classical sources.[115] "The Beggar Chief's Daughter", however, is a far more developed and detailed story than the short anecdote from which it derives, and seems more prone to have aroused Pu Songling's attention. Given the popularity of Jingu qiguan, it appears reasonable to assume that Pu was familiar with the vernacular stories, and discussion will

proceed on that basis.

In both "The Beggar Chief's Daughter" and "The Courtesan's Jewel Box" the theme is love betrayed. In the first story, a young wife is thrown overboard by her husband, who is ashamed of her humble social origins. Rescued, she is later reunited with him, but only after administering a beating and denouncing his faithless ingratitude. In the latter story, a young man is persuaded to sell his ex-courtesan lover to a rich merchant, but she commits suicide after casting a fortune of jewellery into the river and berating her lover and the merchant. Her lover goes mad, and the merchant wastes away, haunted by the woman's ghost.

Pu's tale "Yun Cuixian" (217) combines elements from both stories. Cuixian marries a penniless good-for-nothing, Liang Youcai 梁有才, who later decides to sell her on the advice of a friend. She agrees, but asks that she first be allowed to visit her mother's home to say goodbye. There, after discovering what great wealth she in fact possesses, the husband is verbally abused, beaten severely, and then abandoned. Reduced again to poverty, he is forced to become a beggar, and eventually dies in prison.

Pu Songling's reworking of the betrayal theme appears to have been designed to correct certain weaknesses or eliminate certain ambiguities which are present in its fictional forerunners. The problem with "The Beggar Chief's Daughter" is that the beating inflicted on the fickle husband hardly seems adequate punishment for his attempted uxoricide, and the couple's reconciliation lacks credibility. In "The Courtesan's Jewel Box", the young man Li is not entirely contemptible, nor is the courtesan Du Shiniang wholly praiseworthy. Li's predicament deserves some sympathy: he owes an obligation to his father, whom he fears, and

the money gained from the sale of Shiniang would demonstrate his filial loyalty. Shiniang, though intended as an heroic figure, does not merit unreserved admiration: she failed to recognize the fundamental flaws in Li's character, and her injured self-esteem prefers to wallow in self-dramatizing despair than to take measures to dissuade Li from his proposed scheme.

"Yun Cuixian" by contrast presents a very clear-cut case of cynical male self-interest oppressing a blameless woman and receiving merciless retribution for this treachery. Liang Youcai possesses no redeeming features and no extenuating circumstances excuse his conduct. He has no family ties, no conflict of loyalties. From the start, his shameless lechery, hypocrisy, and deceit are clearly displayed. His motives in selling Cuixian are the most ignoble imaginable: he requires further funds to support his gambling activities. Thus, whereas Li was swayed by the moral suasion in the suggestion, "If you have a thousand taels of silver to take home to your father, . . . peace will then be restored in your family",[116] Liang is attracted by these vile blandishments: "Once you have a thousand taels of silver in your possession, would you lack finances to cover your drinking and gambling?" (6.750) Liang goes further than Li in his cold-blooded methods of disposal of his wife: he plans to sell her into a brothel as a prostitute in order to maximize his profits. Li's concern, on the other hand, was not primarily mercenary, and he could assume that the salt merchant would take care of her.

Just as the faithless lover's image is utterly blackened in Pu's characterization of Liang Youcai, the wronged wife conversely is portrayed in more positive terms. Yun Cuixian is gifted with remarkable insight and self-possession; from the very beginning she recognizes Liang for what he

is: unscrupulous, shallow, and unreliable. She does not elect to marry him, but is forced into it by her mother. Thus she is absolved of all responsibility for her plight, and to a greater degree than Du Shiniang is the victim of manipulations by others. Cuixian astutely anticipates Liang's plan to sell her and wrests back the initiative by proposing that she be sold to a rich man. Like Shiniang, she conceals from her husband the secret about her own abundant wealth, but, unlike Shiniang, she offers a convincing explanation for her suppression of this information: as she identified him as an unreliable individual destined to be denied a prosperous livelihood, she deliberately kept him in the dark to prevent him from getting his hands on her fortune. For this reason she does not permit him to visit her family home until the climactic episode on the eve of her induction into a brothel.

This confrontation scene is far more tautly narrated than its counterpart in "The Beggar Chief's Daughter", as the fury and resentment that have been pent up inside Cuixian during the preceding scenes are released in a series of ragged outbursts that mount to a peak of menace and physical violence, unrelieved by the comic moments which neutralize the tension in the vernacular story. The ferocity of Cuixian's verbal assault also contrasts with Jin Yunu's 金玉奴 restrained language: she begins by making vicious references to Liang's body odour and inattention to personal hygiene, and claims that sleeping with him made her nauseous. Her tongue-lashing is accompanied by bodily violence, as the maidservants grab any weapon to hand in the angry passion and blood lust of the moment, stabbing his arms and legs with sharp hairpins and scissors, instruments with a greater capacity to inflict pain than the thin bamboo sticks with which Yunu's husband Mo Ji 莫稽 was beaten in a pre-arranged, stage-managed fashion in Feng's story.

Whereas the retribution visited upon Li and the merchant in "The

Courtesan's Jewel Box" takes a somewhat perfunctory and contrived form, the interlinked deaths of Liang Youcai and his gambler friend follow an irresistible logic. Forced to sell his house, Liang lives in a cave and stays alive by begging by the roadside. One day he chances upon his former crony and stabs him to death with a knife he has been carrying around specifically for this purpose. Arrested, he dies of hunger and cold in prison. It is psychologically realistic and morally appropriate that the tempter thus dies by the hand of the tempted, as Liang wreaks bitter vengeance on the man responsible for his downfall.

What emerges from this discussion is how inventively and radically Pu Songling has managed to transform a traditional kind of story, even while retaining some of its characteristic features. As there is never any real love between Cuixian and Liang Youcai, this is no tragic or pathetic tale of love betrayed, but something far more bitingly satirical. The selfishness and lack of principle which form only part of the psychological makeup of Li and Mo Ji are magnified to enormous proportions in the person of Liang Youcai, who acts like a monstrous lampoon of his counterparts in the vernacular stories. With romantic attachment removed from the story, sentimentality and passionate self-sacrifice are also made redundant, and Jin Yunu's uncomfortable reunion with her husband and Du Shiniang's anguished repudiation of life are alike rendered unnecessary. Stripped of all romantic trimmings, Pu's tale presents a dark, uncompromising view of the destruction of a marriage, which is doomed from the start by the moral bankruptcy of the male character. "Yun Cuixian" thus demonstrates the truth of W. L. Idema's observation that whereas the vernacular story tends to "retell an old and well-known tale", the Classical tale prefers to "tell a new story, however imitatively."[117]

3. The Sources of 'Liaozhai zhiyi'

In order to understand fully the process by which Pu Songling composed his stories, scholars have frequently directed their attention to the sources upon which the author drew. Some studies have been motivated by a desire to demonstrate the close affinity between Liaozhai and popular folklore, to assert the author's debt to the broad culture of the masses.[118] Other articles have presented a discussion of Pu Songling's techniques in adapting, remoulding, and embellishing elements borrowed from elsewhere.[119] Thus, it has become a major aspect of academic endeavour to trace the origins of plots, themes, or motifs that appear in Liaozhai.

So far, however, the identification and analysis of sources have often been of a rather rudimentary nature, and enlightening conclusions have been precluded by clumsy and imprecise methods of classification. Liaozhai stories are commonly grouped in three categories: entries that derived their subject matter from folk tales, current in Pu's day or recorded by other writers; items supplied by Pu's friends and associates; and pieces that were Pu's own creative compositions.[120] Although it may be helpful, in general terms, to think of Liaozhai receiving input from these three sources, it is questionable whether much can be learned by attempting to differentiate stories along these lines. In one story, the informant perhaps is named, in another, no source is acknowledged, but this distinction need have little significance, as the stories may well both have roots in the long folklore tradition. Obviously, the degree of creativity differs from one tale to another, but even the most inventive stories may well draw upon the rich fund of Chinese folk beliefs.

One example may suffice to expose the limitations of the common approach to the question of sources. The first few words of "Three Lives" (26) inform

us that the story was related to Pu's cousin, Pu Zhaochang, by a scholar named Liu 劉 , with whom he graduated in the provincial examinations of 1621.[121] At first glance, then, the material was supplied to the author by another member of his family, and little more need be said. On close inspection, however, the story emerges as a veritable patchwork of traditional plots and motifs.

Liu's tale can be summarized as follows. After a life of frequent misdeeds as a member of the gentry, Liu was taken to meet the king of the underworld. He deliberately avoided drinking the memory-erasing tea which he was offered. He was punished by being reborn as a horse, but, in protest against the callous treatment to which he was subjected, he starved himself to death. As a second punitive measure, he was sentenced to life as a dog. He was beaten to death after biting his master, and, as further retribution, became a snake in his next life. Eventually, he had himself run over by a cart, and as consolation for this undeserved death, was reborn as provincial graduate Liu. In the light of his personal experience as a horse, Liu often urges people not to inflict pain on their mounts.

Two analogues to the tale can be found in Qian Xiyan's Kuai yuan. In the first, a licentiate guilty of bad behaviour is reborn as a pig. He provokes his owner to kill him, and is reborn as a snake. Again he engineers his death, and returns to human form.[122] In a second anecdote, a man suffers terribly from rough handling during his life as a horse, and when restored to human existence, makes a point of protecting his horses from discomfort.[123] The Liaozhai story combines the major elements in these two late-Ming anecdotes, and includes motifs found elsewhere. During his life as a dog, Liu is strongly attracted by the smell of urine, even though he knows it is unclean: a rather similar passage can be found in Mi deng yinhua.[124] The

refusal to consume the underworld tea is another familiar motif.[125]

In pointing out these parallels, it is not my intention to challenge the story's derivation as outlined by the author, or to suggest that Pu actually composed the story by amalgamating these various elements in earlier tales. The motif of the man who remembers the pain he suffered as a horse has a very long history, going back at least as far as the tenth century,[126] and no doubt was developed and elaborated over a long period of oral transmission. My point rather is to demonstrate the inadequacy of the conventional wisdom which regards the Liaozhai story deriving from a named individual as belonging to a class of its own.

Furthermore, one must question whether critics are correct in accepting at face-value the author's claims to have received tales from particular sources. Here, Pu Songling's work invites comparison with earlier collections in the anecdotal tradition. Authors of tales of the supernatural had always been keen to convey the impression that they were faithfully recording incidents of which they or their informants had personal knowledge. Hong Mai, for instance, punctiliously noted the names of his informants, and in the preface to one of his collections, stressed the pains he had taken to confirm the veracity of his accounts.[127] There was a marked reluctance to invent details about characters, so that an anecdote might well begin: "A native of Langye 琅 邪 , surnamed Wang 王 , whose name is forgotten, lived in Qiantang 錢 塘."[128] As originality was not an objective, authors were entitled to write a precis of existing records: "Zheng 鄭 himself wrote an account over forty pages long. This is an abridged version."[129] Or borrow wholesale from other writers: "Wu Lao 吳 潦 brought out the notes recorded by his father years ago, and I copied out a third of them to make three juan, so as to complete

this collection."[130]

At times, Pu Songling presents himself as an orthodox exponent of the unassertive, conscientious approach to his material, but on occasions he is simply adopting this guise to disarm the reader. At one extreme, attribution of a tale to a named source seems to be quite genuine. Two short anecdotes (112 and 124) end: "Recorded by Bi Zaiji". By using the word "recorded" (ji 記 or zhi 志), rather than the more common "told" (yan 言), Pu indicates that Bi actually wrote down the story, and he himself is only transcribing it. As both stories are short, and standard zhiguai fare, there seems no reason to disbelieve Pu's ascription. As Pu's employer from many years, Bi could well have happily contributed items from his notebooks to supplement Pu's collection. A number of other short items are no doubt also based, as the author indicates, on oral accounts by friends.

In some cases, however, one suspects that an informant's name is supplied as a device to lend an air of authenticity to a largely fictitious narrative. The long, sensual tale of a man's love for a ghost and a fox, "Qiaoniang" (75), for example, ends: "Weng Zixia 翁紫霞 of Gaoyou 高郵 heard this during a stay in Guangdong. The place-name has dropped out, and I do not know how it ended."[131] By informing the reader of the source of his information, and by conceding the limits of his knowledge, Pu Songling projects an image of the sober, responsible narrator which offsets the flights of fancy in the story itself, and undermines the reader's conviction that the work is purely imaginary.

The romance of Scholar Shang and two fox sisters closes with this remark: "Scholar Shang was a relative of my friend, Li Wenyu 李文玉 , who personally witnessed the incident." (2.204) Here again, as the

commentator, Feng Zhenluan, has noticed, the concluding note forges a link between fiction and reality: "Liaozhai likes to write this kind of thing to disconcert people. Is it actually fact, then? Li Wenyu surely cannot have been invented." (2.204) Similar devices are employed elsewhere, in "Lianxiang" (69), where Pu asserts that his story is a condensed version of a longer biography,[132] and other places. Thus, by observing some of the outward conventions of the anecdotal tradition, Pu Songling slyly enhances the tantalizing ambiguity of some of his stories.

It should now be becoming clear that considerable diversity exists among the body of stories whose derivation is indicated by the author, so wide a diversity, indeed, that it can hardly be considered a coherent body of stories. Two more examples display further variations.

In "A Dream of Foxes" (178), the friend that Pu named as source was probably more accurately his collaborator in a story to which Pu himself made a large contribution. Here, Pu notes that the tale was recounted by Bi Yi'an 畢怡庵 (a nephew of Bi Jiyou) as they sat together on January 16, 1683. The Liaozhai story as it stands, however, gives the impression of a light-hearted venture developed jointly: Though credited to Bi, it makes a number of jokes at his expense, and was perhaps inspired as much by Pu's invention as by his friend's.

One of the longest stories in Liaozhai, "Ma Jiefu" (212), provides another instance of interaction between Pu Songling and a friend. It narrates the saga of a hen-pecked husband, Yang Wanshi 楊萬石, who allows himself and his family to be cruelly mistreated by his wife, until they are delivered by the happy intervention of a fox, Ma Jiefu. The story ends with the utter humiliation and degradation of the vicious wife.

A comment follows: "I did not know how this affair concluded. The last few lines were written by Bi Gongquan 畢公權 to complete it." (6.729) Gongquan is the zi of Bi Shichi (1649-1687), a talented young man who passed top of the list in the Shandong provincial examination of 1678.[133] One is inclined to accept the attribution of the conclusion to Bi Shichi, as readers, who included Bi's relatives and friends, would have been able to check the truth of this ascription. But Pu may well be disingenuous in professing ignorance of the story's ending and implying that Bi had fuller information. It is difficult to believe that Bi would have possessed, independently of Pu, knowledge of this involved story, which bears the hallmarks of Pu's own creative talent.

A more likely explanation is that Bi, having read the author's version, felt that the story needed a stronger ending, and offered to supply an extra section of his own devising. Pu's original tale probably ended with the description of the virago being tortured by her second husband, a butcher, and the comment: "When this point was reached, it dawned on her at last that this was how she had treated other people in the past." (6.729) The story could well have concluded there, with this grim proof of retribution for her earlier crimes. The lines that follow neatly emphasise how fully the tables have been turned: Yang's concubine, persecuted by the wife in the early part of the story, now humiliates her in turn; Yang's nephew, another victim of her cruelty, now has her mistreated by a gang of beggars. This, I suggest, was the intensified ending supplied by Bi Shichi.

To sum up our findings so far, it seems that, in respect to sources, the contents of the collection do not submit readily to simple categorization. Pu Songling's stories extend across a wide spectrum, from brief items borrowed from associates to lengthy flights of fancy by the author, with traditional

themes and motifs likely to appear at any time. More can be learned by discussion of individual entries than by attempting a comprehensive classification. It is this approach, therefore, that we will follow as we trace the origins of Liaozhai stories.

It does seem necessary, however, to distinguish, in broad terms, two kinds of tales: those which possess certain similarities with stories by other writers, but were not directly based on those written analogues; and those which appear consciously to have borrowed or reworked material that the author had read. This distinction will be helpful as we correct some misconceptions about Pu's use of sources. It is often erroneously assumed that certain Liaozhai tales are adaptations of work by other writers, when in fact a much looser relationship exists. One such case is the story "Stealing Peaches" (13). Here, Pu Songling describes a scene he claims to have witnessed on a visit to Jinan in his youth. A magician agreed to fetch some peaches for four local officials, and tossing a rope into the air, where it hung vertically, seemingly suspended from the heavens, had his son climb up. Some time later, a large peach came tumbling down from the clouds, soon followed by the dismembered body of the boy. After the magician received a compensatory gift from the officials, the boy, miraculously reconstituted, returned to life.

Pu's story bears a strong similarity to the tale, "Heluo ren huanshu" 河洛人幻術, which recounts an incident that, according to Wang Tonggui, was witnessed by his father in 1528.[134] Some scholars have therefore concluded that Pu's tale was based on this earlier account. Evidence, however, suggests on the contrary that this astounding feat was a stock-in-trade of magicians in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and that Pu's eye-witness claim should be taken seriously. "Toutao xiao'er" 偷桃小兒,

by Qian Xiyan, and "Pantao yan" 蟠桃宴 by Song Maocheng, both describe similar tricks performed to entertain the official, Hang Huai 杭淮 (1462-1538).[135] Wang Zhaoyun, on a visit to Beijing, saw the same basic technique employed.[136] The theft of peaches from heaven was probably an elaboration of the original rope-trick, whose history stretches back to the eighth century.[137] In short, it is likely that the Liaozhai tale was based on real-life incident rather than any particular written source. The same holds true for "Ventriloquism" (77). Judging from the frequency of accounts in anecdotal collections, ventriloquism was a flourishing art in Pu Songling's day, and Pu's vivid enaction of one performance probably owed nothing to other descriptions.[138]

Misleading speculations have also been made about the origins of "Zhang Cheng" (73). Pu's story of a man's indefatigable quest for his lost brother and the reunion of a family torn asunder by a Manchu raid at the end of the Ming period, bears a certain superficial resemblance to Zhou Lianggong's 周亮工 moving account of the comradeship between two friends as they search for their abducted wives.[139] For this reason, it has been suggested that Pu Songling was, to some degree, rewriting and enlarging upon Zhou's story.[140] Such a proposition, however, quite ignores the social realities of the mid-seventeenth century, when countless families were tragically separated during attacks launched by rebel armies or Manchu troops. Some relatives were never seen again, others were painstakingly traced and ransomed by their loved ones, or rediscovered by stunning coincidence.[141] The tales by Pu Songling and Zhou Lianggong were just two instances of widespread phenomena.

Familiarity with work by other authors in the early Qing helps to counteract the tendency to see Liaozhai in isolation. One observes frequent parallels between entries in Liaozhai that concern the social

conditions of the day, and references by his contemporaries. In "Two stories about separations in upheavals" (236), Pu Songling describes a scene where women captives are put on show in the market in Beijing, "with price signs attached, like selling cattle and horses". (6.810) Confirmation is provided by a visitor to the capital, who noted:

> Along the avenue inside the Shuncheng Gate 順承門, there is a horse and mule market, a cattle market, and a sheep market, and also a market for buying people.142

Both of Pu's tales concern miraculous reunions. The second of the two bears some resemblance to a story quoted by Zhao Jishi. According to Zhao's account, a young bachelor in Beijing was given a woman bought in the market, but when he learned her age, he decided to treat her as a mother instead of as a wife. She then helped him to purchase another woman, who turned out to be her very own daughter.[143] The Liaozhai tale, slightly more elaborate, records a similar quirk of fate.

Zhang Zhen 張貞, another Shandong writer, relates in one of his stories the arduous process by which one Zhang Yulun 張玉綸, whose parents had been captured in 1642 and taken to the north-east as slaves, finally secured their release twenty-four years later.[144] There is an obvious parallel here with Pu Songling's "Qiu Daniang" (404), in which Qiu Zhong 仇仲, kidnapped by rebels and later sold to their Manchu overlords, is ransomed by his son for a thousand taels, the original asking price for Zhang Yulun's father. However, here, as in the cases referred to above, it would be unwarrantable to infer that Pu was drawing his materials from contemporary compilations rather than from social circumstances familiar to him.

Perhaps the most extreme, and implausible, assertion of Pu Songling's

reliance on written text has come from Ma Yau-woon, in his discussion of court-case stories in Liaozhai. Struck by Pu's frequent references to officials who, historical sources confirm, were active in the early Qing, Ma has come to the conclusion that the author must have undertaken "a painstaking research, . . . thorough research of public records"[145] in order to incorporate these factual details in his stories. The image of Pu Songling sitting at his desk, thumbing through a recent issue of Jinshen quanshu 搢紳全書 in search of suitable candidates for characters in his stories, is very difficult to visualize. Pu had no need to consult reference books: the names of presiding officials in the Shandong area, and the careers of local degree-holders who were assigned to posts in other areas, would have been widely known, and stories about successful cases they had solved would circulate readily.

Tales of the supernatural, although differing in substance from more mundane incident, enjoyed wide currency in the seventeenth century, and here again we should be careful not to assume too eagerly that Pu Songling was using and adapting the recorded analogues of which we have knowledge. Let us consider the case of "Wang Liulang" (12), which, as Ye Dejun 葉德均 was first to point out, bears a resemblance to "Chenggong ci" 成公祠, an entry in Zhang Hong's 張泓 Diannan yijiu lu 滇南憶舊錄.[146] Both tales chronicle the friendship between a fisherman and the ghost of a drowned man, an identifiable theme in Chinese folklore.[147] Recently, Wang Fenling 汪玢玲 has offered the following appraisal: "if we compare 'Wang Liulang' with 'Chenggong ci', we can see how the author [Pu Songling] respected the original work, and also, on its foundation, refined the plot and deepened the central topic."[148] This comment is problematical. Zhang Hong's work was composed sometime after 1745, when the author was serving

as an official in Yunnan, so Pu could not possibly have read Zhang's account. The episode that Zhang described took place in Zhenjiang 鎮江, at some unspecified time, and the shrine was later established in memory of the event. It cannot, therefore, be ruled out that some version of this story was circulating in Pu Songling's day. But then, as we have said, the theme was a common one: an analogue can be found in Shen Zhou's 沈周 Shitian zaji 石田雜記, set in the years 1480-81, and another in Shuo ting, set in the mid-fifteenth century.[149]

In examining the differences between "Wang Liulang" and "The Chenggong Shrine", Wang Fenling notes that in the latter story, the ghost declines to drown his chosen replacements on two occasions: first he takes pity on a filial son, and then on a pregnant woman. In Pu's tale, only one such incident takes place, when the ghost refuses to drown a mother and her child. One can attribute this discrepancy, however, as easily to regional variations of the folktale as to authorial revision. Zhang's version concerns a Zhenjiang fisherman whose ghost friend is eventually given a job in neighbouring Guazhou 瓜州. The Shuo ting story, which shares "The Chenggong Shrine's" repetition of incident, is also set in Jiangnan: the friends meet in Suzhou, and the ghost then takes up an appointment in Wuxi 無錫. Pu's tale, on the other hand, is set in his own native district of Zichuan, and this change of location could well account for the story's distinguishing features.

Indeed, the regional orientation in Liaozhai as a whole is very conspicuous. As one would expect from a writer who so rarely ventured out of his home territory, many of his stories had local connections. It is no coincidence that the anecdotal collection which contains the largest number of items analogous to Liaozhai was written by a contemporary whose home was just one county away. Anecdotes with content similar, and titles sometimes

identical, to a dozen Liaozhai entries can be found in Wang Shizhen's Chibei outan, mainly in the "Tan yi" 談異 section of that work.[150] Wang had read part of Pu Songling's anthology, and one of his anecdotes is a condensed version of a Liaozhai story, as he himself indicated.[151] On the whole, however, the correspondences between the two collections do not appear to be the product of mutual borrowing, for narrative variants suggest that the authors were drawing on independent sources.

Pu Songling says he heard the story of Shao Shimei 邵士梅 (jinshi 1659) from Gao Heng's son, who became a metropolitan graduate in 1661. The corresponding tale recounted by Wang Shizhen differs in a number of details, and ends with a note that Shao himself recited the story to him.[152] Another of Wang's anecdotes involves an official named Yang Fu 楊富. Liaozhai relates a similar episode, but refers to the official, incorrectly, as Yang Fu 楊輔, and adds a second incident, which also contains historical inaccuracies.[153]

In the examples given above, we have outlined the difficulties of establishing anything other than an analogous relationship between Liaozhai material and similar subject matter found elsewhere. Provided, however, that we do not make extravagant claims for their interconnections, definite insights can be gained by judicious comparison of Liaozhai items with their analogues. In the following section, we shall present some specimen cases.

Although no one has drawn attention to this before, there is one anecdote in Liaozhai which exists in a rather different form in Pu Songling's prose works. By examining how he handles the material in the two versions, one can observe, in a modest way, several features of the narrative method in Liaozhai.

In a commemorative piece celebrating the erection of a shrine to the white-robed Guanyin in a local market town, Pu described an instance of a childless couple in their seventies who were rewarded for their devotion to the deity by the birth of a son.[154] Another account of the same incident appears in Liaozhai as "Jin Yongnian" (183).

It is impossible to tell which tale was written first, but the contrast between them is intriguing. In the first version, the wife is given explicit reasons why she was originally destined to have no children, and the divine mechanism by which her pregnancy is facilitated receives mention. The passage is designed purely to stress the rewards of religious faith and the merciful powers of Guanyin. The Liaozhai anecdote is organized differently. Here, the old man and his wife are distinguished from each other by the individual detail of their ages. Within the miniature frame of the story, the author lightly sketches the character of the wife, by quoting her down-to-earth, somewhat testy response to the old man's far-fetched dream experience. In keeping with the practically oriented, rather agnostic tenor of the book, Jin Yongnian's unexpected good fortune is attributed not to his piety, but to his record of fair trading. We can therefore see how, when incorporating this anecdote in his collection, Pu Songling slanted it in favour of pragmatic morality and highlighted a momentary clash of temperaments. The contrast with the other version gives us a glimpse of Pu's manipulation of detail to serve his ends.

Other material, hitherto unnoticed, sheds further light on Pu Songling's methods of composition in Liaozhai. The following entry is found in the biographies of virtuous women in the Zichuan gazetteer:

> Li shi 李氏 was the wife of Guo An 郭安. An was murdered by an enemy. Li shi went and lay down by the body, wailing and weeping, her blood and tears drying together, as she vowed to take her own life.

She lodged a charge against the culprit. On the day that the magistrate carried out the post-mortem, she immediately tried to kill herself by jumping off Six Dragons Bridge, but her mother-in-law forcibly led her home, endeavouring to calm and soothe her by every possible means, and urging her to save her unborn son and keep the family line intact. Still she refused to listen, and after two days she poisoned herself, but without fatal effect. Two days later she hanged herself, again without success. In the end, she died after fasting for six days. She was eighteen years old at the time, which was the twenty-seventh day of the first month of the fifth year of the Shunzhi period [February 20, 1648]. Xu Yangtian 徐養恬 wrote her biography.[155]

Pu Songling approaches the incident from a completely different angle in his story "Guo An" (373), from an angle which exposes to ridicule the magistrate in charge of the case:

> One of Sun Wuli's 孫五粒 servants was sleeping alone in a room, when he dimly sensed himself being led away by someone. He arrived at a palace hall, where he saw Yama seated above him. Yama looked at him, and said, "There has been a mistake, this is the wrong man." So he was sent out, and escorted back home. When he returned, he was utterly terrified, and moved to another room to spend the night. Later on, a steward named Guo An, seeing that the bed was empty, chose to sleep there. Another domestic, Li Lu 李祿, had a grudge against the first servant, and for a long time had thirsted to kill him. That night he entered the bedroom, knife in hand, felt the recumbent body, and, thinking it was the servant, murdered him.
>
> Guo's father begged for justice from the court. At the time, Chen Qishan 陳其善 was district magistrate, and he did not take the matter seriously. Guo senior cried out in grief, "He was the only son I had! Who is going to support me now?" Chen thereupon assigned Li Lu to act as his son. Guo withdrew, still nursing his grievance.
>
> What is remarkable about this case is not the servant's meeting with ghosts, but Chen's judicial verdict.
>
> In one of the western districts of Jinan prefecture, the wife of a murder victim laid a charge against the guilty party. The magistrate was incensed, and immediately had the culprit seized and brought before him. Pounding the desk, he roundly abused the criminal, "What a happily married couple, and now you make the wife a widow! So I will give her you as husband, and make your own wife observe widowhood." Thus he passed a judgment to have the two united in marriage.
>
> Such brilliant decisions as these could be made only by the top rank of graduates, beyond the reach of men in other fields. But then Chen too managed it, which shows there's talent everywhere! (9.1247)

It is evident that the Liaozhai tale has some factual basis. Chen Qishan, a holder of the gongsheng degree (hence the sardonic remark at the end), was

magistrate of Zichuan from 1647 to 1652,[156] and would have officiated at the trial of Guo An's murderer. It is unfortunate that Xu Yangtian's biography of Li shi has not survived, for it might have provided more information about the circumstances of her husband's death, and about the magistrate's handling of the case. However, the unshakeable determination with which the woman is said to have pursued her self-destruction, despite the moral obligation to ensure the continuation of the family line with the birth of her son, suggests that the extraordinary decision by Chen Qishan to which Pu alludes might actually have been made.

If we assume the gazetteer account to be accurate as far as it goes, and Guo An to have indeed been killed by an enemy of his own, and not in error, then the first half of Pu's story - the servant's visit to the underworld, the swapping of beds - may well be a fictional passage introduced by the author. What is its purpose? The servant's experience does import some supernatural atmosphere into the tale, but it is a very conventional motif, and here treated in a cursory manner. Its main function, it seems, is to provide Pu Songling with the opportunity to deliver his damning "what is remarkable about this case" commentary, which reminds the reader of the truth of his prefatory remarks in Liaozhai:

> Though people are not beyond the reach of culture, sometimes more remarkable events occur than in the lands of those who crop their hair; though our eyelashes veil our eyes, phenomena stranger than the nation of flying heads may be observed.[157]

Pu makes no references to Guo An's widow at all, but provides only the information necessary to tell the story and achieve the desired effect.

A comparison of Liaozhai tales with stories by other writers using similar subject matter sets in relief some distinctive features of Pu Songling's narrative art. "Tang gong" (95) is a good example. Here,

Pu tells the story of the miraculous return to life of Tang Pin 湯 聘 (jinshi 1661), which enjoyed wide currency in the late seventeenth century.[158] Like other authors, Pu relates how the divine authorities decide that Tang merits a longer life, and how the help of the Buddha is enlisted to make whole again his already decaying body. Tang's filial piety, and his fatal disregard of a divine warning, features which introduce a conventionally didactic tone in the other texts, receive no mention from Pu Songling, however. Instead, he adopts a creative and original approach, exposing the unpleasant consequences of wrongdoing with a graphic description of Tang's sensations as death overtakes him.[159]

It is curious that this passage has never attracted comment from modern critics, apart from the Chinese scholar who thinks the whole story "has no significance".[160] In fact, as traditional commentators like Feng Zhenluan perceived, Pu's stunning account of a man's dying moments was extremely bold for his day. Although making use of popular stories, like the tale of Tang Pin, and traditional motifs, like the departure of the human soul to the underworld, the imaginative powers of the author create something quite individual out of these materials.

Writers of the classical tale varied in their approach to commentary: some rarely contributed remarks of their own to the stories they were telling, whilst others preferred to draw an explicit lesson. The latter approach was strongly favoured in the early Qing, and most pronounced, perhaps, in the work of Xu Fang. Pu Songling at times shared his fellow authors' interest in making an orthodox didactic point, but often he attempted by more subtle means to encourage the reader himself to ponder the meaning of an incident, and draw his own conclusions. Here again the handling of analogous stories proves a useful yardstick.

The exploits of loyal dogs were frequently recounted in anecdotal collections. Pu Songling wrote two stories on the subject, both entitled "A Faithful Dog" (192 and 375). The second of these contains elements similar to those in tales by Xu Fang with the same title.[161] A dog, rescued from a butcher by a passing merchant, saves his new master from drowning after an attack by robbers. It then tracks down the criminals and enables the merchant to recover his property. For both writers, the moral implications were obvious. In Pu's words, "Alas! But a dog, and thus to repay a favour. All the ungrateful individuals in the world would be put to shame by this creature!" (9.1255) Xu Fang made the same point in an appraisal of his dog's actions, suggesting they could not easily be matched by men.[162] Here, then, Pu Songling was making a fairly standard response to an exemplary display of loyalty.

Other examples reveal a wider gap between Pu and other authors. "The Wine Insect" (175) is centred around an item of folklore with a long history in China, that of the squirming, fleshy creature which dwells in the organs of the wine addict, and which is vomited out when its host is deprived of alcohol.[163] In this tale, a priest offers to cure a wine addict of an illness which he has diagnosed as having been caused by the wine insect. The man is tied up securely with cord, and a pitcher full of fine wine is placed just beyond his reach. Racked by thirst, and tantalized by the aroma of the wine, the man eventually coughs up an insect, which tumbles into the pitcher. Thereafter, he becomes a firm teetotaller.

This basic narrative is found also in a story by Xu Fang, "Guai bing (san)" 怪病三.[164] The conclusion drawn by the two authors differ considerably, however. In Xu's version, the man's fondness for wine has caused a physical decline, from which he is saved by the extraction of the

parasite. In his appraisal of the episode, Xu Fang stresses the medical skills of the priest and the harmful effects of wine on man's constitution and moral standards.

The Liaozhai tale, by contrast, is open to various interpretations, and Pu Songling avoids straightforward commentary. At the start of the story, despite his heavy consumption of wine, the drinker is plump and healthy, and his household prosperous. Paradoxically, after the removal of the wine insect, he grows thin, and his finances decline to the point of economic hardship. In his remarks, the Historian of the Strange considers possible explanations for this strange change of fortune. Perhaps, he speculates, there was some pre-ordained principle governing the relationship between wine consumption and economic status. Alternatively, the insect might be viewed as the source of the man's health and happiness, not as an illness needing to be cured. The priest's diagnosis was simply deception, undertaken so that the priest could enjoy the benefits of the insect for himself. "Is this so, or is it not?", Pu's comment ends.[165] With such remarks, Pu Songling left room for the reader to make up his own mind, and refrained from over-assertive moralizing.

"Adultery with a dog" (19) is another story that deals with subject-matter to which other anecdotal collections have referred.[166] During her husband's long absence, a woman uses the household dog to satisfy her sexual cravings. On the husband's return, he is killed by the dog, and the wife is seized and punished. Pu's account includes a vivid example of the greed of clerks, a class of people which, as we have seen, he particularly detested. The two clerks responsible for escorting the woman and the dog into detention collect bribes from curious onlookers, and by arranging public displays of the dog coupling with the woman, make a good

profit. In his final comment, the author encourages the reader to look beyond this specific case of bestiality to a sober reflection on human behaviour in a larger context:

> Alas! In the vastness of heaven and earth, really anything can happen. When it comes to wearing a human face but coupling with beasts, is just one woman alone involved? (1.49)

By such comments as these, Pu Songling endows his work with richer meaning and introduces a personalized view, transcending the conventional limits of the anecdotal genre.

In considering the relationship of Liaozhai to orally transmitted stories, we can make no more than tentative conclusions, handicapped as we are by our ignorance of the exact form in which a particular tale was known to Pu Songling, and the full extent of his revision and adaptation when his version was written.

More extensive discussion is conceivable only in those cases where it seems likely that a story told by Pu Songling drew some of its ingredients from a specific narrative. Such earlier works hardly qualify as sources in the sense that the term has been applied to the Classical tales from which many vernacular stories derive, for we find none of the close textual correspondences evident in those genre translations. Pu Songling's method of borrowing differs fundamentally from that observed in the vernacular collections of Feng Menglong and Ling Mengchu 凌濛初 (1580-1644): one never encounters straightforward adaptations which adhere in most particulars to the plot of their models. Nevertheless, it does seem possible to discern a certain umbilical link between some earlier works and Liaozhai entries, not simply because of similarities in theme, but also on account of occasional verbal echoes within Liaozhai tales which

remind the reader of their original prototypes, and the apparent familiarity with such antecedents demonstrated in allusions elsewhere in Liaozhai.

Readily available and widely read in Pu's day, Tang chuanqi contained a wealth of character types and plot situations to which an author could draw allusion or, if he wished, adapt for his own purposes. In various places in Liaozhai, Pu Songling, in the guise of the Historian of the Strange, calls the reader's attention to parallels or correspondences between his characters and personalities from earlier tales. Thus a faithless man is denounced in the final comment as another Li Yi 李益, the inconstant lover of "Huo Xiaoyu zhuan" 霍小玉傳.[167] Allusions to Tang fiction are sometimes less conventional. Of an immensely strong and righteous peasant woman it is said: "In her audacity and self-assurance, she is no different from a sword-wielding immortal of old. Could it be, too, that her husband is the mirror-polishing type?" (9.1243) In fact, the farmer's wife possesses none of the supernatural gifts of the "sword-wielding immortal", Nie Yinniang 聶隱娘,[168] and her heroic exploits are of a much more mundane nature. The quality that the two women do share is an assertive personality, and it is this common trait of character which the comparison effectively highlights.

As a variation, Pu's characters themselves sometimes declare a kinship with their ancestors in the world of fiction. In "Zhicheng" (432), for instance, an unsuccessful examination candidate finds himself sharing a boat with a bevy of beautiful women passengers as he travels home across Lake Dongting 洞庭. After making advances to one of them, he is sentenced to death by a regal figure on board, to whom he then addresses this appeal:

> I have heard that the Prince of Dongting was surnamed Liu, I too have the surname Liu; long ago the Prince of Dongting failed the examinations, and now I too have failed; the Prince of Dongting became an immortal after his chance meeting with the dragon's daughter, and now I am to die after tipsily teasing one maid-in-waiting: why such a gulf between good fortune and disaster! (11.1511-1512)

Thus, Pu's fictional hero claims a justification for clemency in the precedent of the Tang story, "Liu Yi" 柳毅.[169] In a similar manner, the hero and heroine of "Xiangyu" see a parallel between their own predicament and that of the lovers in "Liu shi zhuan" 柳氏傳 and "Wushuang zhuan" 無雙傳.[170]

Although these and other allusions to chuanqi may be encountered from time to time in Pu's stories, it is important to note that by comparison with, say, Jian deng xinhua, Liaozhai's debt to the Tang exemplars is fairly limited. The echoes of Tang fiction which, as Kondō Haruo has shown,[171] resound so regularly in Qu You's work, are heard much less frequently in Liaozhai. This observation applies not only to allusions but to adapted plots also. By affirming, in his brief remarks about the origins of the stuff-material in Liaozhai, that Pu Songling modelled a number of his tales on Tang chuanqi,[172] Lu Xun may have given a misleading impression that Pu's fiction is heavily indebted to the medieval exemplars. Although the connections between the two are worth pursuing in discussion, we should always bear in mind the modest extent of visible influence on Pu's collection as a whole.[173] In the pages that follow, we consider the three tales which appear to maintain the clearest links with Tang chuanqi. All three are built around dream experiences, and the first derives explicitly from a Tang story.

"Yellow Millet Continued" (149), as the title indicates, drew its inspiration from the famous Tang story, "Zhenzhongji" 枕中記.[174]

In conception and emphasis, however, it differs considerably from the earlier tale. At the beginning of "Zhenzhong ji", a young man named Lu 盧 expresses dissatisfaction with his humble status, and announces his ambition to be distinguished and wealthy. In his dream, despite his worthy achievements as a government official, he is repeatedly slandered by jealous colleagues, and suffers demotion and imprisonment. Eventually restored to high favour, he is unable to retire and enjoy the deserved comforts of old age. This dream, which is over in less than the time it takes to boil a pot of millet, banishes the young man's illusions, persuading him of the ephemerality of success and the instability of power.

"Yellow Millet Continued", on the other hand, does not so much stress the futility of human aspirations as the inevitability of punishment for evildoers. Pu Songling's dreamer, the new metropolitan graduate Zeng 曾, is not the naive idealist of the Tang story, but a cynical opportunist, whose commitment is to personal gain, not public service. The effect of the dream is to demonstrate to him the dreadful repercussions of such an attitude. In order to convey the moral lesson of the wages of sin, Zeng's dream is much more prolonged and far more intense than Lu's imaginary life.

As an immediate consequence of his harrowing fantasy, Zeng's outlook is totally transformed:

> Zeng arrived, brimming with confidence, but then found himself returning, deflated. His ambition to become a high official lost its force from this point on. He retired into the mountains, and it is not known what became of him. (4.526-527)

But the dream has a larger significance, over and above that of puncturing the ego of a complacent jinshi graduate: it graphically displays the inexorable application of a moral principle. As Pu Songling sums it up

in his commentary: "To bring good fortune on the virtuous and disaster on the wicked, such is the regular way of Heaven." (4.527) After the trauma of his nightmare, it is natural that Zeng should abandon all worldly aspirations, but the shedding of illusions is not the keynote of the Liaozhai story, as it is in the Tang prototype. It is Zeng's ignoble anticipations which are chastised, rather than career aspirations as such. Whereas the Tang dream is characterized by rapid shifts of fortune, which indicate the hollowness of social achievement, just two trends dominate Zeng's experience, his meteoric rise, and his rapid decline into ever intensifying bouts of agony.

"Princess Lotus Bloom" (195), as Liaozhai's traditional commentators observed,[175] adopts the framework invented by Li Gongzuo 李公佐 (fl. early ninth century), of a man's adventures during a dream visit to an insect kingdom.[176] A playful adaptation of the Tang original, Pu's story of a man's visit to a beehive world concentrates on his marriage to the King's daughter and the tragi-comic invasion of the hive by a predatory snake. In the most memorable scene, the newly-wed bridegroom confides to the princess his suspicion that their blissful wedding-night is all just a dream. Stifling a giggle, she responds, "It is obvious that you and I are together, how could it possibly be a dream?" (5.675) Still unconvinced, her husband busies himself the next morning taking her waist and foot measurements, as a way of recording tangible evidence of her existence. Thus, although making a familiar fantasy experience the subject of his story, Pu Songling makes due allowance for the literary sophistication of his audience by suggesting that the hero is as sceptical of the dream's reality as the reader would be.

Much time has passed since Lu Xun first pointed out a connection

between "The Scholar of Fengyang" (58) and Tang fiction,[177] but their relationship has never been fully explored. Three Tang stories describe a dream shared by both husband and wife: "San meng ji" 三夢記,[178] and also "Dugu Xiashu"獨孤遐叔[179] and "Zhang Sheng"張生,[180] which are usually considered to be imitations of "San meng ji". Popular as this motif was during the Tang period, it does not appear in late Ming and early Qing collections of tales, and indications suggest that Pu Songling had the Tang stories in mind when he composed "The Scholar of Fengyang".

The story is told in its simplest form in "San meng ji". A local official is on his way home from work late at night (in "Dugu Xiashu" a scholar approaches home after a two year absence, in "Zhang Sheng" after a five year absence). Stopping at a roadside temple, he sees over ten men and women dining together, his wife among them. Prevented from entering by the locked door, he throws a tile at his wife, and the group vanishes. He then returns home, to be told by his wife that she dreamt she was dining in a temple, when a tile was thrown and she awoke.

In "Dugu Xiashu", it is suggested that the dream has psychological origins, a consequence of "inner anxiety" (you fen 幽憤), presumably the husband's eagerness to be home, and the wife's longing for his return. In the wife's case, her dream can be interpreted as a yearning for male company, but also a sense of her own vulnerability without her husband's support. On the husband's side, he is fearful of illicit liaisons that his wife may have undertaken during his absence, and conscious also of his wife's helplessness. Such, at least, are the implications of the Tang stories, though specific details vary from one version to another. In "San meng ji", the husband's motive in throwing the tile appears mainly to be jealousy, because his wife appears to be fully enjoying the party,

and frustration, because he is unable to intervene. In "Dugu Xiashu", the wife seems to be attending the feast against her will, a reluctant participant whose mind is taken up with thoughts of her husband. In this case, the husband is impelled more by a protective instinct, a desire to stop further jokes being made at her expense. In "Zhang Sheng", the wife at first is seen conversing happily with her male companions, but later she grows upset by the endless series of toasts and song requests. It is the men's relentless demands which finally provoke the husband to action, throwing tiles which first hit one of the importunate guests, and then his wife.

Whereas, in all these stories, the dream is narrated from the husband's point of view, in "The Scholar of Fengyang" the fantasy is experienced primarily by the wife. In terms of psychological realism, this change of emphasis is clearly justified: the husband, travelling far afield, with new places to see and people to meet, would fall less easy prey to the jealous pangs and obsessive anxiety which afflict his hapless wife. As a study of subconscious anxiety, "The Scholar of Fengyang" is a more coherent and penetrating work than its Tang predecessors. The wife's dream gives the reader a clear insight into her mental state: her acute sense of insecurity, lack of self-confidence, and fear of her husband's infidelities, as she experiences in quick succession rejection, humiliation, the disintegration of her marriage, and the death of her husband.

Pu Songling's story itself combines images from the Tang stories with new elements and altered contexts. As the story opens, the scholar's wife, like Dugu Xiashu, lies in sleepless agitation on a moonlit night. Her mind is filled with longing for her husband, from whom she has received no news since his departure ten months before. A beautiful lady appears

suddenly, and offers to escort her to meet her husband. The assertive confidence of the visitor soon establishes a kind of psychological superiority over the wife. She lends the wife a pair of slippers, without which she could not keep up. When they join the husband, the lady replies to a question he asks his wife, before she has time to respond.

Events develop in a manner which robs the wife's reunion with her husband of any anticipated pleasure. The couple are invited by the lady to her home, which is conveniently located nearby, and a celebratory feast is laid out for them. This dinner, however, like those in the Tang tales, actively involves only one of the pair. In this case, it is the wife who watches helplessly from the side, as her husband grows ever more intimate with the hostess. As in "Dugu Xiashu", there is a boisterous exchange of toasts and light-hearted conversation, with "their shoes and slippers mixed up" (lüxi jiaocuo 履舄交錯).[181] As the scholar casts lustful glances at the lady and tempts her with flirtatious innuendo, a barrier of non-communication divides him from his wife as effectively as the temple wall in "San meng ji".

In "Dugu Xiashu" and "Zhang Sheng", the wife is urged to sing, as the price of avoiding drinking forfeits, and in song she laments her separation from her husband. Pu Songling recasts this scene to telling effect. As the scholar and the lady grow more and more uninhibited, the hostess insists that he consume a large horn of wine. He counters with a request for a song, as a condition for compliance. Her song is similar in content to those sung by the wife in the Tang stories, but in the present circumstances, as the wife gazes in silent misery at her husband's display of inconstancy, and in view of what is yet to come, the song serves as a mocking commentary on the wife's misplaced devotion. At the same

time, coming from the mouth of the lady, the seductively intoned lyrics of sexual frustration and feverish desire are calculated to inflame the scholar's burgeoning lusts still further.

Pu Songling now prolongs and intensifies the eavesdropper's anguish to a point far beyond where the Tang authors chose to end it:

> Soon after, the beautiful lady retired, pretending to be drunk. The scholar also rose, and followed her out. A long time passed, and they did not return. The maids grew tired, and lay down to sleep under the veranda. The wife sat all alone, disconsolate in her utter isolation. The bitterness and rancour in her heart could hardly be endured. She longed to escape back home, but the night was dark, and she could not remember the way. Wavering irresolutely, she got to her feet, and went to spy on her hostess. No sooner did she approach her window, than the sound of "sundered clouds and pounding rain" could dimly be heard. As she listened again, she could hear her husband describing in lavish detail her own accustomed positions when making love to him. When she heard this, her hands trembled and her head swam. So unbearable was the pain, she felt that all she could do was to run outside and throw herself into a ditch and die. (2.189)

Pu Songling might have been tempted to bring the nightmare to a close at this juncture: the wife could throw a missile at the copulating couple, for example, and then be startled back into consciousness. Instead, a further twist is added to the story, which sheds yet more light on the wife's state of mind and permits a surprise ending, to avoid the predictability from which an imitation might suffer. The wife's younger brother, Sanlang 三郎, suddenly appears on the scene. Informed of the situation, he grows incensed, and taking the matter into his own hands, he hurls a large rock through the window. Seconds later, they hear a horrified shriek from inside: her husband's skull was cracked open by the force of the blow:

> When the wife heard this, she was shocked and burst into tears, saying to her brother, "I never asked you to kill him! Now what am I to do!" Sanlang glared back at her, and replied, "It was you, sobbing away, who dragged me here, then no sooner do I avenge your grievance than you defend your old man and turn on your own brother. Well, I'm not

> used to being an errand-boy for silly women!" With this, he turned to go. She tugged his sleeve, saying, "If you don't take me with you, where can I go?" Sanlang thrust his sister aside, shoving her to the ground, as he rapidly made his way off. (2.189-190)

It is after this clash with her brother, which expresses the wife's contradictory impulses of a desire for vengeance and a lingering dependence, that the wife abruptly awakes from her dream. As in the Tang stories, her husband returns the very next day, and the couple find that they have had identical dreams. This comes as no surprise to the reader familiar with the Tang prototypes, but the finishing touch does. The scholar's brother-in-law comes over to welcome him back, and mentions that the night before he had dreamt the scholar was on his way home. "It was lucky I was not killed by the big rock", the scholar says jokingly. Stunned by this reply, the brother-in-law reveals that he dreamt the whole rock-throwing incident as well. Thus, all three dreams coincide.

One reason for the success of "The Scholar of Fengyang" as a piece of fiction is that Pu Songling more or less abandons the attempt made by the Tang stories to make the dream an intelligible reflection of the mental anxieties of both husband and wife. Pu's scholar might well fantasize about a passionate liaison with an enchanting beauty, but his wife would almost certainly be excluded from consideration (as she is in so many such fantasies in Liaozhai). His brother-in-law's dream seems a random fancy of the imagination, not an expression of deeply rooted preoccupations. Every detail, however, of the wife's dream makes perfect sense in psychological terms. By contrast, the Tang stories, which make more effort to explain why the dream is shared by man and wife, do not provide such clear definition on the inner feelings of either individual.

In our review of earlier source studies, we pointed out the dangers

of assuming that similarities in subject-matters necessarily indicate that material derives directly from another Ming or early Qing collection. Unlike the Tang chuanqi considered above, which were an established part of the literary heritage and invited imitation on that basis, contemporary anecdotes were more often connected with a folklore tradition that was transmitted orally as well as in published works. Thus, although in the course of our reading of seventeenth century Classical tales a number of intriguing parallels have come to light, we decline to speculate that one particular text as such influenced Pu's composition of any individual entry in Liaozhai. Thus, the corpus of literature closest in time and richest in its correspondences with motifs in Pu's collection tends to inhibit comparative discussion of the kind we have attempted above.

In a couple of instances, however, we have good grounds for noting a specific connection. At the end of "Old Glutton" (103), Pu explicitly acknowledges the similarity of his story to a late-Ming tale: "This is perhaps like the affair of Liu Dongshan."[182] Even here it is doubtful whether Pu necessarily drew his inspiration from Song Maocheng's tale, and one probably should more properly regard the association as an analogous relationship, rather as Pu indicates. Pu's hero, Xing De 邢德, certainly bears a likeness to Liu Dongshan: he possesses the ability to fire off arrows in rapid succession, he pays a business trip to the capital at the end of the year, and he comes to grief on the way back when he underestimates the strength of another traveller. In other respects, Pu's tale follows its own path. Xing De is not a retired sheriff, robbed of his own honest gains, but a part-time highwayman with few scruples, relieved of silver that he himself stole. The second

encounter between the humiliated hero and his vanquisher, which takes up half the story in "Liu Dongshan", is entirely absent, and Pu Songling pays proportionately more attention to the dramatic incidents in which Xing De's complacency is punished: two separate hostile confrontations take place, and in each case the fight takes a bizarre form, as Xing De's arrows are caught between the toes and fingers or inside the mouths of his two adversaries, with no apparent ill effects. In Pu's story, the hero, chastened by his experience, becomes a reformed character and upstanding citizen, who often relates his story as a lesson to others. To Pu, the moral rehabilitation of a misguided person is always a matter of keen concern, and his tale, a more unified and coherent piece of work than Song's, ends on a positive note.

Elsewhere, some passages in "The Cricket" (137) may possibly be indebted to a late-Ming guide to Beijing, Dijing jingwu lüe 帝京景物略. In 1684, Pu Songling came across a copy of this book in the Bi family library. Attracted by its brilliant descriptions, but thinking the work overlong, Pu excised the poems and abridged the text, reducing the number of sections from 129 to 77, "to suit the armchair traveller".[183] He possibly also incorporated details from the guidebook into the Liaozhai tale, which is contained in the "Liu Haishi" volume, and was probably written in the 1680s. "The Cricket" tells the story of a man's misfortunes and eventual triumph when required by the local authorities to catch a fighting cricket. For such a topic, the discussion of crickets in Dijing jingwu lüe's section on Hujiacun 胡家村 would have furnished much helpful data. In relating the procedure followed when hunting crickets, Pu Songling appears to have borrowed some phrases wholesale from Dijing jingwu lüe.[184] A number of other technical details from the

guidebook - the different varieties of cricket, the insect's diet - may also have been requisitioned to enhance the air of realism and authenticity in the story.[185]

Our examination of Liaozhai's relationship to casual oral storytelling, contemporary anecdotal literature, and classical chuanqi fiction leads us to the conclusion that earlier studies have generally underestimated the difficulty of defining with real authority the process by which individual stories in Liaozhai came to be written. In recent decades, much effort has been devoted to the identification of the sources of the vernacular story, and this has sometimes been richly rewarded: as Patrick Hanan has shown, there is much to be learned from a comparative reading of a vernacular short story and the source material from which it is adapted.[186] But in the case of a collection with such strong ties to the orally transmitted folktale, it is often too ambitious to attempt similar comparisons, as such discussion may rapidly veer off into speculation.

The acknowledgement of the limits that circumscribe our research into the origins of Liaozhai stories should not, however, discourage us from further investigation of the Classical tales and anecdotes that were written in such profusion during the century or more that led up to Pu Songling's creation of Liaozhai. Indeed, one lesson that has emerged from this study is the importance of familiarity with those earlier collections. Scholars cognizant of one parallel theme or analogous motif have been readily tempted to claim these as Pu's sources, when wider reading would uncover half a dozen such examples in other work of the period, and lead to a fuller awareness of the fluid and complex process of transmission. Much more has yet to be done in the way of assembling

analogous materials and building up a picture of the development of motifs and circulation of popular strange tales during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The true value of such an undertaking will lie in its illumination of the broad context of folk tales out of which Pu Songling's work emerged, rather than the identification of particular written "sources", which can seldom be positively established.

CONCLUSION

In this thesis we have examined three distinct aspects of Pu Songling's Liaozhai zhiyi. Our main findings have already been outlined in the individual chapters, but it will be helpful to summarize them briefly here.

Although new evidence may yet appear which will compel us to revise our reconstruction of the original format of Liaozhai, our comparative survey of the extant manuscripts and editions leads us to the conclusion that the collection in its original and complete form consisted of eight volumes. Our study of dating enables us to isolate and scrutinize two sets of stories which, there is good reason to believe, were written twenty or more years apart. The benefits of this approach are quite evident: essential features which have escaped the notice of readers attempting to grapple with the collection as a whole are clearly exposed to view. The concentration of horror stories in the first volume, the particularization and intensification of social comment and the increasing interest in complex triangular relationships in the last volume: such features as these have been highlighted here for the first time. Although neither the date of composition nor the serial order of the individual volumes can be determined with certainty, this need not preclude the conception of a broad time scheme in Pu's work, for in any case it is general trends and shifts rather than minute stages of transition which can be effectively monitored. A sense of chronological progression enhances our appreciation of Liaozhai as a literary work, allowing us to observe certain tendencies in ascendancy and decline or remaining fairly constant throughout. It introduces an

element of dynamic change and developing shape that has been sorely lacking in past studies, which have tended to treat the collection as a static and amorphous entity.

In our second chapter, we have probed into the process by which social realities and personal experiences supplied Pu's tales with some of their characteristic situations, and considered how Pu's stories in turn conferred form upon these raw materials. We have seen how the menace and insecurity of the times left their imprint on Liaozhai in the bleak warnings issued by foxes, the mournful complaints of ghosts, and the ever-present danger of outlaw depradations. Although the literary form in which he chose to allude to the painful events of the Manchu takeover was highly individual, Pu was by no means unique in his determination to record the havoc and suffering of his place and time, for he was one of many intellectuals trying to come to terms with a deeply disturbing period of history. Far from exceptional, too, was Pu's response to the system of civil examinations. Our study of biographical and ancillary materials leads us to the conclusion that Pu Songling probably did not abandon his attempts to secure the juren degree until his mid-sixties, and that institutional rather than personal factors were largely responsible for his repeated humiliations. This point has an important bearing on our assessment of the Liaozhai tales concerned with examination failure. Critics who in the past have conceded that Pu's criticisms of the examination system fall short of utter repudiation have occasionally reproached the author for the "limitations" of his thought. Our analysis, by giving due attention to pass quotas and success rates, allows us to take a more measured view of Pu's varied reactions and to see a practical justification for the fatalism which permeates Pu's stories on this theme. Through our survey of other prominent elements in Pu Songling's personal experience we can observe that these too had an impact on Pu's

fiction, providing further illustration and elucidation of the subtle and sympathetic interplay between life and literature.

Our review of the publication and composition of Classical tales in the period 1500 to 1700 reveals a literary scene of considerable activity and diversity. Certainly there was much that was simply repackaged, but the widespread circulation of earlier xiaoshuo encouraged interest and discussion, and original and sometimes highly creative tales were also written. Past studies unmindful of the richness of these antecedents have endeavoured to explain Pu's involvement with the Classical tale by suggesting that social and political pressures forced him to resort to this medium of expression. A firmer grasp of literary history may help to lay to rest this old notion, enabling us, as it does, to trace a continuity between Liaozhai and what had come before. The Jian deng collections, so often regarded as paving the way for Liaozhai, have a certain value as a contrasting foil to Pu's work, but the disparities between them convince us that much more significance should be attached to the late-Ming tale, which in spirit and style has much more in common with Liaozhai。 The influence of vernacular fiction, insofar as it can be detected, is not a factor affecting Liaozhai's colloquially-tinged dialogue, but may have had a bearing on Pu's subject matter and descriptive method. Our study of sources has demonstrated that to categorize neatly the derivations of Liaozhai tales is an exercise of only limited value. A story ascribed to a particular informant may well have close links with traditional plots and motifs found elsewhere, or it may equally well be largely an imaginative work on the author's part. Other examples we have examined should increase awareness of the problem of confusing analogues with sources. Recurrent social phenomena or common folklore may produce an ostensible

similarity between tales, but such correspondences should not tempt us into unwarranted assumptions about the circumstances of a story's composition. Analogues, which are an interesting topic of study in themselves and help to clarify the popular origins of stuff-material in Liaozhai, may be used for purposes of comparison, not regarding them as sources as such, but as useful yardsticks for gauging certain features of Pu's art.

Though our subjects of enquiry and methods of analysis have differed from chapter to chapter, none of the three areas of study is entirely self-contained: the topics are complementary, and illuminate each other at the same time as they individually further our understanding of Pu Songling's tales. For example, a study of earlier anecdotal literature confirms the traditional, even conventional nature of the subject matter in the early stories of the first volume. The evidence of an increasingly outspoken opposition to administrative abuses which is found in Pu's prose works provides a useful sidelight on the socially committed stance in the final volume of Liaozhai。 The fact that many of Pu's tales originated in casual storytelling and underwent little revision by the author explains why changes from volume to volume are on a modest scale. We have seen, too, how traditional motifs are in Pu's hands twisted into new shapes to accord with the contemporary context. In some respects, all three approaches jointly enrich our understanding. Pu's portrayal of women, for instance, may have been partly influenced by his own private experience and partly by popular trends in vernacular fiction, but it was subject to growth also: his interest in tensions between competing women developed over a period of years. Again, the purposeful piece of moral fiction designed to convey a certain lesson was in some respects an extempore response to local injustices of the day, but it had literary

precedents in the works of late-Ming authors, and it took time to establish itself as a major component of Liaozhai zhiyi。 Thus the various perspectives presented in this dissertation together offer a range of vantage points which allow us to see Pu Songling's Liaozhai zhiyi in a balanced and rounded fashion.

ABBREVIATIONS

BJ	Beijing Library.
BJ Catalogue	Beijing Tushuguan shanben shumu 北京圖書館善本書目. Beijing, 1959.
DMB	Dictionary of Ming Biography: 1368-1644. L. Carrington Goodrich and Chaoying Fang, ed. 2 vols. New York, 1976.
ECCP	Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period (1644-1912). Arthur W. Hummel, ed. Reprint of 1943-44 edition, Taibei, 1975.
Liaozhai	Liaozhai zhiyi (huijiao huizhu huiping ben) 聊齋志異會校會注會評本. Zhang Youhe 張友鶴, ed. Reprint of 1962 edition, Shanghai, 1978.
NCL	National Central Library, Taibei.
NCL Catalogue	Guoli Zhongyang Tushuguan shanben shumu 國立中央圖書館善本書目. Revised edition, 4 vols. Taibei, 1967.
NK	Naikaku Bunko, Tokyo.
NK Catalogue	Naikaku Bunko Kanseki burui mokuroku 內閣文庫漢籍分類目錄. Tokyo, 1956.
NLB	National Library of Beiping (now in Taibei) 國立北平圖書館.
PJK	Pu Songling yanjiu jikan 蒲松齡研究集刊.
PSLJ	Pu Songling ji 蒲松齡集. Lu Dahuang 路大荒, ed. 2 vols. Beijing, 1962.
SJ	Liaozhai biannian shiji xuanzhu 聊齋編年詩集選注. In Liu Jieping 劉階平, ed., Liaozhai quanji xuanzhu 聊齋全集選注, 2 vols. (Taibei, 1975), vol. 1.
SK	Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao 四庫全書總目提要. 4 vols. Shanghai, 1936.
TPGJ	Taiping guangji 太平廣記. Reprint of 1961 edition, Beijing, 1981.
WJ	Liaozhai wenji xuanzhu 聊齋文集選注. In Liaozhai quanji xuanzhu, vol. 2.

NOTES

Upon their first appearance in the notes, bibliographical information is given for all titles except rare or little-known Ming and Qing editions and manuscripts. Full details about these works are presented in the List of Works Cited. In the case of Chinese and Japanese books and articles not included in the List of Works Cited, Chinese characters are incorporated in the first citation. The List of Works Cited supplies characters for all other titles and names romanized in the notes.

INTRODUCTION

1. Maeno Naoaki gives a useful summary of Japanese scholarship in his article, "Liaozhai zhiyi yanjiu zai Riben" 聊齋志異研究在日本, in PJK 1 (1980), 290-302.

2. An overview of the development of Pu Songling studies in China is provided by Meng Guanglai 孟廣來 et al., "Pu Songling yanjiu de huigu yu zhanwang" 蒲松齡研究的回顧與展望, in PJK 2 (1981), 419-454.

3. A number of scholars have pointed out that Pu Songling ji occasionally ascribes to Pu work by other writers, omits work of which he was the author, and attributes erroneous dates of composition to some of his poetry. See, for example, Yuan Shishuo, "Chudu Pu Songling ji suo kandao de" 初讀蒲松齡集所看到的, in "Wenxue yichan" 文學遺產 no. 449, Guangming ribao 光明日報, Feb. 3, 1963; Fujita Yūken, "Ryōsai zokukyō kō" 聊齋俗曲考, in Geibun kenkyū 藝文研究 18 (1964), 29-30; 42, nn. 6, 7; Liu Jieping, "Xuanzhu tiyao" 選注提要 pp. 5-6, in SJ; Guan Dedong, Liaozhai liqu xuan (Jinan, 1980), p. 18; Luo Wei 駱偉, "Tantan Liaozhai wenji gaoben ji qi yipian" 談談聊齋文集稿本及其佚篇 in Wenxian 文獻 10 (Dec. 1981), 66-68. We may add that two works by Tang Menglai have been mistakenly included in Pu Songling ji: "Jin di shuo" 禁鑼說 (PSLJ, I, 316-318) is found in Tang Menglai, Zhihetang wen hou 文後 ji, B.10a-13b, in Zhihetang ji, and "Qianliang bijiao shuo" 錢糧比較說 (PSLJ, I, 318-319) is found in Zhihetang

wenji 1.81a-82b, in Zhihetang ji. Other examples will be noted elsewhere, when appropriate.

4. See Lan Ling 藍翎, "Lüe tan Liaozhai zhiyi zai Zhongguo xiaoshuo shi shang de diwei" 略談聊齋志異在中國小說史上的地位, in Wen shi zhe 文史哲 141 (1980, no. 6), 3-5.

I. THE TEXTUAL TRANSMISSION OF LIAOZHAI ZHIYI

1. See, for example, Yang Liu, Liaozhai zhiyi yanjiu (Nanjing, 1958), pp. 15-16; Fujita Yūken, "Kaisetsu" 解說, in Ryōsai shii 聊齋志異 (Chūgoku koten bungaku zenshū 中國古典文學全集 21, Tokyo 1958), I, 431; Maeno Naoaki, "Shindai shikaishō kaidai", in his Chūgoku shōsetsu shikō (Tokyo, 1975), p. 286.

2. Jaroslav Průšek, "Liao-chai chih-i by P'u Sung-ling: an inquiry into the circumstances under which the collection arose", in his Chinese History and Literature (Dordecht, 1970), pp. 92-108. This study originally appeared in Søren Egerod and Else Glahn, ed., Studia Serica Bernhard Karlgren Dedicata (Copenhagen, 1959).

3. Zhang Peiheng, "Xin xu", pp. 8-19, in Liaozhai; "Liaozhai zhiyi xiezuo niandai kao", in PJK 1 (1980), 183-197.

4. Arguments in favour of Zhang's conclusions can be found in Zheng Yunbo 鄭雲波, "Liaozhai zhiyi chengshu shijian zhiyi" 聊齋志異成書時間質疑, in Xuzhou Shifan Xueyuan xuebao 徐州師範學院學報 (1980, no. 3), 43-47, and in Lao Hong, "'Pu Liuquan xiansheng nianpu' bianyi", in Wenxue yichan (1980, no. 1), 106-108. Doubts are cast by Li Houji 李厚基, "Pu Songling de shengping yu zhuzuo" 蒲松齡的生平與著作, in Tianjin Shiyuan xuebao 天津師院學報 (1979, no. 1), 63, and by Yuan Shishuo, "Zhuxuezhai he Zhuxuezhai chaoben Liaozhai zhiyi", in PJK 1 (1980), 150-153.

5. A photolithographic reprint was published in Beijing in 1955, entitled Liaozhai zhiyi (hereafter, Pu MS. reprint).

6. A photolithographic reprint was published in Shanghai in 1974, with the title Zhuxuezhai chaoben Liaozhai zhiyi.

7. A copy is preserved in the British Library, but it lacks much of the prefatory material. I have used a photolithographic reprint published in Taibei in 1956.

8. Pu Lide, "Shu Liaozhai zhiyi Jinan Zhu ke juan hou" 書聊齋志異濟南朱刻卷後, in Donggu wenji.

9. Pu Lide, "Liaozhai zhiyi juan hou ba" 聊齋志異卷後跋, in Donggu wenji. The postface was published in Zhao Qigao's printed edition with its date altered to 1740: see Liaozhai, "Geben xu ba tici" 各本序跋題辭, p. 32.

10. Se Pu Lide's petition to Magistrate Tang, "Chenglan zhuanzhe ken en hu xi cheng" 呈覽撰者懇恩護惜呈, in Donggu wenji. The detail about the number of stories and juan is found in the Donggu wenji version of the postface, but omitted from the Zhao edition version.

11. See Hu Dingsheng's 胡定生 preface, reprinted in Liu Jieping, ed., Liaozhai zhiyi yigao jizhu 聊齋志異遺稿輯注, p. 74, incorporated in Liu's Liaozhai quanji xuanzhu, vol. 1.

12. Yang Renkai, Liaozhai zhiyi yuangao yanjiu (Shenyang, 1958), pp. 25-26. Note that Yang is mistaken in referring (p. 26) to Yuan Jinkai's reprint as comprising ten items. For a list of its contents, see Ye Dejun, "Liaozhai zhiyi jiwai yiwen kao" 聊齋志異集外遺文考, in Wen shi zazhi 文史雜志 6.1 (Suzhou, 1948), 19-20.

13. For Pu Ruo's obituary, see "Ji fu wen" 祭父文, in PSLJ, II, 1811, and for Zhang's inscription, "Liuquan Pu xiansheng mubiao" 柳泉蒲先生墓表, in PSLJ, II, 1805.

14. Pu MS. reprint, p. 690, according to the superimposed pagination.

15. Fujita Yūken, "Kōhōn Ryōsai shii hōkan ki" 稿本聊齋志異校勘記, in Geibun kenkyū 藝文研究 6 (1956), 16-64.

16. Pu MS. reprint, pp. 277-370.

17. Ibid., p. 331.

18. Wang's poem, "Xi shu Pu sheng Liaozhai zhiyi juan hou" 戲書蒲生聊齋志異卷後, is found in his collection of poetry arranged chronologically from 1684 to 1694, Can wei ji, 1.9a. It was written either in 1688 or 1689. As it is immediately followed by a poem dated the eleventh month of 1689, the latter date is the more likely.

19. Liaozhai, "Geben xu ba tici", pp. 34-35.

20. See Yuan Shishuo's article, "Pu Songling yu Zhu Xiang", to appear in a forthcoming issue of PJK.

21. See Pu Lide, "Shu Liaozhai zhiyi Jinan Zhu ke juanhou".

22. Zhu's letters are to be found in unpaginated appendices to two manuscript copies of Pu's prose and poetry entitled Liaozhai shiwen ji 聊齋詩文集, one preserved in China (Zhongshan University), the other in Japan (Keiō University). Yuan Shishuo refers to the former in his "Pu Songling yu Zhu Xiang". I have used a photostat of the latter, which is listed in Keiō Gijuku Daigaku Chūgoku Bungaku Kenkyū-shitsu, comp., "Keiō Gijuku Daigaku shozō Ryōsai kankei shiryō mokuroku", in Geibun kenkyū 4 (Feb. 1955), 127.

23. For the dating of the correspondence, see Yuan Shishuo, "Pu Songling yu Zhu Xiang".

24. Pu Lide, "Shu Liaozhai zhiyi Jinan Zhu ke juanhou".

25. Lu Dahuang, "Tantan Jinan Zhu shi ben Liaozhai" 談談齋南朱氏本聊齋, reprinted in Lu's Pu Songling nianpu (Jinan, 1980), pp. 153-156.

26. Yuan Shishuo, "Zhuxuezhai", pp. 137-140.

27. Liaozhai, "Geben xu ba tici", p. 30.

28. Yuan's identification of the author of the postface with either Zuochen or Youcun raises several questions. If the Zhang MS. derives from the brothers' copy, why does it not contain the postface that Pu Lide wrote for that copy? Why does Pu Lide's postface anticipate that the Zhu brothers will publish the work, when the Master of the Dianchun Pavilion regards the project of copying the manuscript as purely a private interest which he pursues for his own satisfaction? And why does Pu Lide refer to the transcription as being a joint effort on the part of the two brothers, when the Master's remarks suggest that he alone has been responsible? On the other hand, if Yuan is correct in his calculations that Zhu Chongxun was born about 1693 and Zhang Zuozhe about 1696 (see Yuan Shishuo, "Zhuxuezhai", pp. 140, 144), then shixiong 世兄 would not be the natural way to refer to Zhang Zuozhe if Zhu Chongxun was the author of the postface, as Lu Dahuang suggested.

29. See "Duan xu" 段序 and "Liaozhai zhiyi yigao liyan" 聊齋志異遺稿例言 in Liaozhai, "Geben xu ba tici", pp. 24, 29; Zhang Youhe, "Houji" 後記, in Liaozhai, p. 1724.

30. Background detail is presented by Yuan Shishuo, "Zhuxuezhai", pp. 133-143.

31. The text of 14 of these titles has been lost: see Yuan Shishuo, "Zhuxuezhai", pp. 147-148.

32. In the Pu MS., "Carpenter Feng" (413), the first story in juan 11 of the Zhang MS., follows "Ren Xiu" (419); "The Marquis of Yangwu" (168), the first story in juan 5 of the Zhang MS., precedes "The Alcoholic" (167); and "Magistrate of Lu" (211), the first story in juan 6, changes positions with "Kuixing" (213).

33. Zhang Youhe, "Houji", in Liaozhai, p. 1722.

34. Zhang Peiheng, "Xin xu", pp. 10-11.

35. Ibid., p. 11.

36. Ibid., pp. 12-13.

37. Ibid., pp. 12-13.

38. Ren Duxing, "Yihan butong xunchang de Liaozhai zhiyi jiuchao", in PJK 1 (1980), 175.

39. Ren Duxing, pp. 176-182. I have used a photocopy made by Shandong University. A further eleven tales survive in a separate fragment, but these are written in a different hand and appear to have no connection with the rest of the manuscript: see Ren Duxing, pp. 175-176.

40. The first volume of the Pu MS. contains a total of 64 entries, but the additional item, "The Great Fish of the Sea" (54), was marked for deletion by the author. It is omitted from the Kangxi MS., as it is from all other extant texts。 Cf. Yuan Shishuo, "Zhuxuezhai", p. 148.

41. Note that items 493 and 494, which do not appear in the Kangxi MS., are also absent from the Zhu MS. They were attached to the end of juan 12 of the variorum edition by Zhang Youhe, who could not determine where they belonged: see "Hou ji", in Liaozhai, pp. 1734-1735. The evidence of the Zhu MS. and Kangxi MS. therefore suggests that "One official" (492) was the final entry in the reconstructed ce, "The King".

42. "Bianyan" 弁言 in Liaozhai "Geben xu ba tici", p. 8. See also Lu Jian 盧堅, "Tantan Liaozhai zhiyi de diyici keben" 談談《聊齋志異》的第一次刻本, in Ming Qing xiaoshuo yanjiu lunwen ji 明清小說研

究論文集 (Beijing, 1959), pp. 71-82.

43. Zheng held office in Shandong, as prefect of Dengzhou from 1739 to 1741, and as prefect of Yanzhou from 1748 to 1755. See Dengzhou fuzhi (1881), 25.13a; Yanzhou fuzhi 兗州府志 (1768), 12.11b. We may note, however, that the Zheng family possessed a copy of Liaozhai even before that time. In 1730, Zheng Fangkun's elder brother Fangcheng 方城 (jinshi 1733) showed a manuscript of Liaozhai to another Fujian scholar, Li Shixian 李時憲, then sitting the metropolitan examination in Beijing. See the preface dated 1767 by Li Shixian, in the 1767 reprint of the Zhao edition (British Library).

44. "Qingben ke Liaozhai zhiyi liyan" 青本刻聊齋志異例言, in Liaozhai "Geben xu ba tici", p. 28.

45. Liaozhai, Ibid., p. 28; Bao Tingbo, "Qingben ke Liaozhai zhiyi ji shi" 青本刻聊齋志異紀事, in "Geben xu ba tici", p. 25; Yu Ji, "tici", in "Geben xu ba tici", pp. 37-38.

46. "Qingben ke Liaozhai zhiyi liyan" in "Geben xu ba tici", p. 28.

47. See, in particular, Yang Renkai, pp. 48-58.

48. See, for example, Lin Mingjun 林名均, "Liaozhai zhiyi suo biaoxian de minzu sixiang 聊齋志異所表現的民族思想", in Ming Qing xiaoshuo yanjiu lunwen ji, 58-65; and Yang Renkai, pp. 5-9.

49. See Zhang Youhe, "Houji", in Liaozhai, pp. 1723-1724. Note that Feng Zhenluan's commentary was written as early as 1818 but not incorporated in a published edition until the late 19th century.

50. A description of the Huang Yanxi MS. is given by Lin Mingjun, "Chengdu Liu shi suocang xieben Liaozhai zhiyi 成都劉氏所藏寫本聊齋志異", Renjianshi 人間世, 22 (Feb. 1935), 36-39; he discusses it further in "Liaozhai zhiyi suo biaoxian de minzu sixiang", pp. 48-49. Proof that three of the titles included were not written by Pu Songling is furnished by Ma Tailai 馬泰來, "'Bosi ren' zuozhe fei Pu Songling"《波斯人》作者非蒲松齡, in Zhonghua wenshi luncong 中華文史論叢 13 (1980, no.1), 295-296; and by Allan Barr, "'Zhuzui daoren' 'Zhang mu' zuozhe yi fei Pu Songling"《猪嘴道人》《張牧》作者亦非蒲松齡, in Zhonghua wenshi luncong 16 (1980, no.4), 318. I have used a photocopy of the Huang Yanxi MS. made by Shandong University.

51. Soon after its discovery, the manuscript was discussed by Du Xing 杜荇, "Xin faxian de ershisi juan chaoben Liaozhai zhiyi chujiao houji" 新發現的二十四卷聊齋志異初校後記, in Wen shi zhe 文史哲 (1963, no.4), 74-79. No further studies were published until the appearance of an article by Meng Fanhai, "Tan Ershisi juan chaoben Liaozhai zhiyi", in PJK 1 (1980), 157-173.

52. Jinan fuzhi (1841), 31.6b.

53. Although the Zhang MS. lists more stories in its table of contents, in terms of number of stories actually contained, the Zhang MS. and the 24 juan manuscript of Liaozhai tally exactly: see Meng Fanhai, pp. 160-161.

54. See Meng Fanhai, p. 171.

55. Meng Fanhai, p. 172.

56. Chen Naiqian 陳乃乾 criticizes Wang's editorial policies in his article, "Tan Wang Jinfan ke shiba juan ben Liaozhai zhiyi" 談王金範刻十八卷本聊齋志異, in Wenwu 文物 (1963, no.3), 1-6. Zhang Youhe evidently held the Wang edition in low regard (see "Houji", Liaozhai, p. 1723), for he chose not to include even Wang's preface in his compilation of bibliographical materials, "Geben xu ba tici". Only the late Hu Shiying has felt it merited further attention: see his "Huijiao ben Liaozhai zhiyi jiao buji" 會校本《聊齋志異》校補記, in Wenxian 文獻 6 (1980, no.4), 79-95. I have not had access to the Wang Jinfan edition in its entirety: I have seen only photographs of the prefatory materials, supplied by Shandong University.

57. Průšek, p. 93.

58. DMB, II, 1443.

59. See Chu Renhuo, "Jia ji yin" 甲集引 (dated January 13, 1691) and Zhang Chao 張潮, "Yu ji xu" 餘集序 (dated 1703), in Jianhu ji (Baixiang Shuwu edn., 1926).

60. Liaozhai, "Zi zhi" 自誌, pp. 1-2.

61. Zhang Peiheng, "Xiezuo niandai kao", p. 184.

62. Průšek, p. 93.

63. Chang Chun-shu and Chang Hsüeh-lun, "The World of P'u Sung-ling's Liao-chai chih-i: Literature and the Intelligentsia during the Ming-Ch'ing

Dynastic Transition", in Journal of the Institute of Chinese Studies of the Chinese University of Hong Kong 6.2 (1973), 405.

64. "Tang xu" 唐序, in Liaozhai, "Geben xu ba tici", p. 5.

65. "Gan fen" 感憤, in PSLJ, I, 475. Pu Songling's poetry and prose is divided into juan by PSLJ's modern editor, but the remainder of his work is not. In order to be consistent throughout, I shall cite simply volume and page number. This poem is also found in SJ, 1.31. As SJ and WJ are often now more readily accessible than PSLJ, and also provide helpful annotation, I will hereafter provide, wherever possible, references to SJ and WJ when citing PSLJ.

66. The variant reading is given in Yang Liu, p. 22. Zhao's reference to the original title of Pu's is found in "Qing ben ke Liaozhai zhiyi li yan", in Liaozhai "Geben xu ba tici", p. 27.

67. "Du zuo huai ren" 獨坐懷人, in PSLJ, I, 483 (SJ, 1.40).

68. Průšek, p. 141; Chang Chun-shu, p. 420; Zhang Peiheng, "Xiezuo niandai kao", p. 184.

69. On this basis, Zhang determines the starting date for the first ce of Liaozhai stories. See his "Xiezuo niandai kao", p. 196.

70. "Ci yun da Wang Sikou Ruanting xiansheng jianzeng" 次韻答王司寇阮亭先生見贈, in PSLJ, I, 543 (SJ, 2.118).

71. Maeno Naoaki, "Shindai shikaishō kaidai", p. 287; Zheng Yunbo, quoted in "Liaozhai zhiyi yanjiu zhong de zhengming wenti" «聊齋志異» 研究中的爭鳴問題, Wen shi zhe 文史哲, 141 (1980, no.6), 30; Lao Hong, p. 107.

72. See Yuan Shishuo, "Pu Songling yu Wang Shizhen", in Wen shi zhe 141 (1980, no.6), 24-25.

73. Wang's preface to Chibei outan, dated 1691, with its explicit description of the length and arrangement of the work, gives clear indications it was written after the compilation had reached its final form: see "Chibei outan xu", in Chibei outan (Beijing, 1982), p. 6. According to the chronology written by Wang himself, Chibei outan was completed in the winter of 1689-90. See Wang Shizhen, "Yuyang Shanren nianpu" appended to his Yuyang shanren jinghua lu xunzuan (Sibu beiyao edn.), B.5b.

74. Chibei outan, 26 ("Tan yi" 談異 7).626.

75. The second couplet of the poem "Pu Liuxian guo fang hua jiu" 蒲留仙過訪話舊, in Zhu Xiang's collection Guanjialou shi 觀稼樓詩, 1.11a, in Jinan Zhu shi shiwen huibian, a Qing collection of works by various members of the Zhu family.

76. Yuan Shishuo, "Pu Songling yu Zhu Xiang". My photocopy of Zhu's letters does not include this letter.

77. See Liaozhai shiwen ji appendix and Yuan Shishuo, "Pu Songling yu Zhu Xiang".

78. Yuan Shishuo, "Pu Songling yu Zhu Xiang".

79. "Ji fu wen", in PSLJ, II, 1811 (SJ appendix, p. 305).

80. Cf. Zhang Peiheng, "Xiezuo niandai kao", pp. 184-197. Zhang does not always specifically date each volume, as I have done, but the chronological scheme outlined is the natural time sequence implicit in his conclusions.

81. Průšek, p. 131; Maeno Naoaki, Ho Shōrei den (Tokyo, 1976), pp. 74-75.

82. Zhang Peiheng, "Xin xu", pp. 14-16, and "Xiezuo niandai kao", pp. 191-193.

83. See Bi Jiyou's preface to the posthumous collection of Yuan's poetry, Dunhaotang shiji.

84. Lu Dahuang, "Pu Liuquan xiansheng nianpu" 蒲柳泉先生年譜 in PSLJ, II, 1775.

85. Ibid., p. 1783.

86. Zhang Peiheng, "Xiezuo niandai kao", p. 193-194.

87. Ibid., p. 193.

88. Dong Ne 董訥 (jinshi, 1667) is referred to in this story as shidu 侍讀, a post he held until 1682, when he was promoted to director of education in Shuntian. See Shuntian fuzhi 順天府志(1885), 89.10a. Zhang Peiheng mentions the story in "Xin xu", p. 13.

89. Zhang Peiheng, "Xin xu", p. 16; "Xiezuo niandai kao", p. 194.

90. Wang Shizhen became president of the Board of Punishments in December 1699: see "Yuyang shanren nianpu", B.11a.

91. Zhang Peiheng, "Xiezuo niandai kao", p.189.

92. Zhong Yuntai 鍾運泰 became magistrate of Zhangqiu in 1684:

see Zhangqiu xianzhi 章丘縣志(1833), 7.36a.

93. See Yuan Shishuo, "Pu Songling yu Zhu Xiang".

94. Zhang Peiheng, "Xin xu", pp. 14-16.

95. Zhang refers to the story in Liaozhai, "Xin xu", p. 15. Note that the character involved is said to have been born after his mother was abducted by Manchu troops during disorders in Shandong. These could have taken place as early as 1638, when a Manchu force raided the province (see, for example, Tan Qian, Guo que, Beijing 1958 edn., p. 5824 ff.).

96. Zhang Peiheng ("Xin xu", p. 15), basing his view on the remarks of the nineteenth-century author, Wang Peixun, contends that Wang Shizhen read Liaozhai in the order they were listed in a table of contents. It is by no means clear that this was actually the case: only about thirty tales append comments by Wang, and correspondence between the two men suggests that Wang read only selections of the work, and not necessarily in the order in which they were written. For some discussion of this issue, see Yuan Shishuo, "Pu Songling yu Wang Shizhen", pp. 24-25; Lao Hong, p. 108.

97. Pu Songling's friend, Qiu Xingsu 丘行素, referred to in this tale as gongshi 貢士, attained the suigong 歲貢 degree in 1689, according to Lü Zhan'en's note, Liaozhai, 5.598. Confirmation appears to be provided in Jinan fuzhi, 43.13b, where Qiu is listed in a chronologically arranged list of Zichuan suigongsheng. Although his own year of selection is omitted, he is placed between senior licentiates of 1687 and 1691.

98. Li Siyi was a juren of 1681. See Changshan xianzhi 長山縣志 (1886 edn., repr. Taibei, 1975), 6.7b (p. 368). As this is his status in the story, we can set an earlier limit of 1681. For the later limit, cf. n.87.

99. Yu Chenglong 于成龍, described here as governor (zhongcheng 中丞), became governor of Zhili in 1680. See ECCP, p. 937.

100. Li Jilin 李季霖 is said to be witness to the events described, during his term of office in Yuanjiang 元江. Li Hongyin 鴻霪 (zi, Jilin, jinshi 1664) became magistrate of Yuanjiang in 1688: see Jinan fuzhi, 55.47a.

101. The subject of one of the two supplementary anecdotes, Geng Songsheng 耿崧生, is said to be a jinshi of Zhangqiu. Only one scholar

from Zhangqiu surnamed Geng attained the jinshi degree in the late Ming and early Qing: Geng Wenjie 耿文傑, a metropolitan graduate of 1682. See Zhangqiu xianzhi, 8.77b. I assume that Songsheng is his zi.

102. Zhao Fengyuan 趙豐原, denoted as juren, attained this degree in 1681. Fengyuan is his zi, his ming is Yujing 于京. See Jinan fuzhi, 42.25b.

103. Zhu Yusan 朱裔三 xueshi 學使 is mentioned in this anecdote. Zhu Wen 朱雯 (hao, Yusan) took up the position of director of education in Jinan in 1691: see Jinan fuzhi, 29.10a.

104. Zhu Xiang, who provided material for a secondary anecdote, did not meet Pu until after his return to Jinan from Guangdong in 1693. This year sets an earlier limit not only for this tale, but for Liaozhai entries 448, 452, 462 (source material derived from Zhu Xiang), 475 and 481 (supplied by Zhu's friend, Wu Changrong).

105. Zhang Mei 張嵋 (zi, Shinian 石年), who plays a role in this and a subsequent story (446), became magistrate of Zichuan in 1686. See Zichuan xianzhi (1776), 4.23a.

106. In the first line of the story (Liaozhai, 12.1645), the Zhao edition's version, "周生者,時邑侯之幕客", is preferable to the Zhang MS. reading. The editor of the Zhang MS. may have been puzzled by the phrase "時邑侯", and for that reason altered it to "淄邑". In fact, Shi 時 is the surname of an official who served as magistrate in Zichuan from 1694-1698: see Zichuan xianzhi (1776), 4.25a.

107. Guo Xiu 郭琇 (hao, Huaye 華野), with whom Pu's comment on this story is concerned, was appointed governor-general of Huguang in 1699. See ECCP, pp. 436-437.

108. Shi Yuecong 石曰琮 (zi, Zongyu 宗玉), magistrate in this story, was a jinshi of 1691. See Changshan xianzhi, 6.3b (p. 360).

109. Zhang Peiheng, "Xiezuo niandai kao", p. 189.

110. See Zhang Peiheng, "Xin xu", pp. 11-12. Yuan Shishuo, from a different vantage point, makes rather similar remarks to my own in his article, "Zhuxuezhai", pp. 150-153.

111. An item in Duan Chengshi's Youyang zazu, juan 13, "Shi xi" 尸穸 section, that begins "Chushi Zheng Binyu yan . . ." 處士鄭賓于言,

concerns a reactivated corpse, also of a man's wife who has recently died. The anecdote is numbered 525 in Fang Nansheng's punctuated and collated edition of Youyang zazu (Beijing, 1981), Qianji 前集, 13.125. The story "Shi jue" 屍蹶, in Wang Zhaoyun's late-Ming collection, Shu shi xiantan, p. 49a, has a similar basic plot to Pu's tale.

112. Liaozhai, 1.5-6.

113. A friend of Pu's is said to have been so carried away by the portrayal of Qingfeng that he began to fantasize about meeting her. See Liaozhai, 5.618.

114. Liaozhai, 1.112.

115. Liaozhai, 1.87-88.

116. Liaozhai, 1.89.

117. Liaozhai, 11.1491.

118. Liaozhai, 12.1704.

119. Liaozhai, 12.1661.

120. See ECCP, pp. 248, 267-268.

121. Gao Zhixi, "Yufu tan" 圉夫嘆, in Qiangshutang shiji, 1.6b.

122. Gambling is implicitly condemned in a number of Liaozhai stories. It is criticized particularly sharply in "The Gambling Charm", Liaozhai 3.419-421. See also paragraph 3 of "Xunliang zhengyao" 循良政要, in PSLJ, I, 287 (WJ, 5.184).

123. See paragraph 11 of "Xunliang zhengyao", in PSLJ, I, 289 (WJ, 5.187).

124. Liaozhai, 11.1536-1537.

125. See Feng Zhenluan's commentary, Liaozhai, 11.1538.

126. Jin Tuo 晉駝, "Liaozhai zhiyi mengdong zhuangtai de zichan jieji minzhu yaoqiu"«聊齋志異»萌動狀態的資產階級民主要求, in PJK 1 (1980), 54.

127. "Yanfa lun" 鹽法論, in PSLJ I, 309-310 (WJ, 5.178-179).

128. Liaozhai, 11.1561.

129. "Yanfa lun", in PSLJ, I, 310 (WJ, 5.179).

130. Liaozhai, 11.1574.

131. Dan's commentary is found in Liaozhai, 12.1637.

132. Liaozhai, 12.1697: 愛之不啻己出. Cf. Liaozhai, 11.1519: 和愛之過於己出.

133. Liaozhai, 12.1683.

134. Liaozhai, 12.1687.

135. Liaozhai, 11.1550.

136. Liaozhai, 11.1550.

137. Liaozhai, 11.1551.

138. Liaozhai, 11.1552.

139. Liaozhai, 11.1503.

140. Liaozhai, 11.1503.

141. The story is found in Jiuyue qianji, 11.8a-12b. It is translated and discussed by Patrick Hanan in his article, "The Making of 'The Pearl-sewn Shirt' and 'The Courtesan's Jewel Box'", in Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies 33 (1973), 128-139.

142. Liaozhai, 11.1496.

143. The original anecdote recording the romance between Chen Miaochang and Pan Facheng is quoted by Hu Shiying in his Huaben xiaoshuo gailun, 2 vols. (Beijing, 1980), II, 523. Hu also notes adaptations of the story in drama and fiction, and reprints a Ming version of the romance, "Zhang Yuhu su nuzhenguan" 張于湖宿女貞觀.

144. "Xunliang zhengyao", which is found in PSLJ, I, 286-291 (WJ, 5.183-189), can be dated to 1698 or later, because the first paragraph refers to Shao 邵 , magistrate of Qingcheng 青城, who, as Liu Jieping notes (WJ, 5.189), took office in 1698. Other critiques of administrative policy include "Jiuhuang jice shang Buzheng Si" 救荒急策上布政司 , in PSLJ, I, 303-307 (WJ, 5.169-174), written in response to the great famine of 1703-1704, and "Zi yi liubi" 淄邑流弊, in PSLJ, I, 307-309 (WJ, 5.174-176), which refers to the price of tribute grain in 1709.

II. BIOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND TO LIAOZHAI ZHIYI

1. See Liu Jieping, Pu Liuxian zhuan (Taibei, 1970); Maeno Naoaki, Ho Shōrei den; Lu Dahuang, "Pu Liuquan xiansheng nianpu", in PSLJ, II, 1745-1801; Zhang Jingqiao 張景樵, Pu Songling nianpu (Taibei, 1970). Luo Hong points out some of the limitations of Lu Dahuang's nianpu in his "'Pu Liuquan xiansheng nianpu' bianyi", pp. 108-109.

2. Jonathan Spence's discussion of Pu Songling's work in his The Death of Woman Wang (repr. Harmondsworth, 1979) is intended simply to supplement his account of the main events in the book, which are set elsewhere in Shandong.

3. This summary is based on personal observation, and on Hou Renzhi 侯仁之, Lishi dilixue de lilun yu shijian 歷史地理學的理論與實踐 (Shanghai, 1979), pp. 336-338.

4. Pu Songling composed a number of inscriptions or appeals for funds in public works constructions, which provide more details on local conditions. See, for example, "Longquan qiao bei" 龍泉橋碑, in PSLJ, I, 44-45 (WJ, 3.126-127); "Wangcun mu xiulu xu" 王村募修路序, PSLJ, I, 68-69 (WJ, 2.88-89).

5. Lu Dahuang, "Pu Liuquan xiansheng nianpu", in PSLJ, II, 1746.

6. "Dai ren shou Tan gong wen" 代人壽譚公文, PSLJ, I, 97. The official Tan referred to is magistrate Tan Xiang 襄, who took office in Zichuan in 1712; see Zichuan xianzhi (1776), 4.25b.

7. Tang Menglai, Zhihetang wenji, 12.8b.

8. See "Kangxi sishisan nian jizai qianpian" 康熙四十三年記災前篇, PSLJ, I, 47-49 (WJ, 5.162-165); "Qiuzai jilüe houpian" 秋災記略後篇, PSLJ, I, 49-52 (WJ, 5.165-169); "Jiuhuang jice shang Buzheng Si", PSLJ, I, 303-307 (WJ, 5.169-174).

9. An early example is an episode in the Tang story, "Ren shi zhuan" 任氏傳: see Wang Meng'ou 王夢鷗, Tangren xiaoshuo yanjiu erji 唐人小說研究二集 (Taibei, 1973), pp. 189-190. For a Ming story, see Cai Yu's 蔡羽 "Liaoyang haishen zhuan" 遼陽海神傳, first published in Gujin shuohai, reprinted in Xue Hongji et al., ed., Ming Qing wenyan xiaoshuo xuan (Changsha, 1981), pp. 173-174.

10. Liaozhai, 2.218. Cf. Liaozhai, 3.382.

11. Zichuan xianzhi (1776), 1.38a-44a.

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12. See "Shang yi hou Zhang Shinian Mei shu" 上邑侯張石年嵋書 in PSLJ, I, 132 (WJ, 1.14); "Guxiang shuwu cuncao xu" 古香書屋存草序, in PSLJ, I, 63 (WJ, 2.73).

13. Zichuan xianzhi (1776), 3.60a.

14. Guo que, p. 5928.

15. Jiang Liangqi 蔣良騏, Donghua lu 東華錄 (Beijing, 1980) pp. 42-43, 57-58. Cf. Spence, pp. 6-7.

16. See Zichuan xianzhi (1776) 3.60a, and Pu shi shipu. According to the genealogy, the name of the cousin who died in the fighting was Pu Sanli 蒲三理. Other relatives involved included Pu Rui 蒲瑞 and Pu Zhaochang 蒲兆昌.

17. See Tang Menglai, "Zichuan Tan shi Gao shi gu fu shuang lie zhuan" 涪川譚氏高氏姑婦雙烈傳, in Zhihetang wenji, 6.22a-23a; Gao Heng, "Yimen sanyi zhuan" 一門三義傳, in Qiyunge ji, 12.22a-25a; Zichuan xianzhi (1776), 6.12b.

18. Zichuan xianzhi (1776) 6.86a-88a; Qing shi liezhuan (Shanghai, 1928) 79.25a-26b; Tan Qian, Beiyou lu (Beijing, 1981 reprint of 1960 edn.) pp. 325, 354-355.

19. Zhang Duqing, "Houzhai zizhu nianpu", in Kunlun shanfang ji, entry under Shunzhi year 4 (1647); see also Gao Heng, "Yimen sanyi zhuan", 12.25a.

20. See Pu Songling's biographical notes on Pu Chu and Pu Zhaoxing in Pu shi shipu; biography of Pu Pan 槃, Songling's father, in Zichuan xianzhi (1920), 10.26a.

21. Wang Peixun, Xiangyuan yijiu lu, 4.1a.

22. See Zhang Duqing, "Houzhai zizhu nianpu" entries under Shunzhi year 5 (1648) and year 6 (1649).

23. Late in life, Pu appealed for Zhang Tairui's martyrdom to be given official recognition: see his "Qing biao yimen sanlie cheng" 請表一門三烈呈, PSLJ, I, 203. His poem of 1703, "Yuan taijun kujie shi" 袁太君苦節詩, in PSLJ, I, 585-586 (SJ, 4.175-176) recalls the death of an innocent man in the massacre of 1647: see the note by Wang Peixun to Zhang Duqing's poem "Xia hou jiefu xing" 夏侯節婦行, in Kunlun shanfang ji.

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24. Dengzhou fuzhi (1881), 13.17a-18b.

25. See "Tang taishi ming zuo sheng zhi" 唐太史命作生誌, PSLJ, I, 249-250 (WJ, 4.150). The governor-general at the time was named Zu Zepu 祖澤溥 (for his biography, see Jinan fuzhi, 37.2a), hence Pu's allusion in that piece to Zu Ti 祖逖 (zi, Shiya 士雅).

26. See "Jiu huang jice shang Buzheng Si", PSLJ, I, 306 (WJ, 5.173). Pu makes a similar point in one of his stories: see Liaozhai, 11.1527.

27. Liaozhai, 2.273-274. The troubles to which Pu referred were the revolt of Wang Fuchen 王輔臣, whose forces seized large areas of Shaanxi and Gansu in 1675, before eventual defeat by government armies. See Wang's biography in ECCP, pp. 816-817.

28. Liaozhai, 3.412-413. For a biography of Jiang Xiang, see ECCP, p. 138.

29. See Liaozhai, 11.1558. The tale makes a reference to the magistrate of Licheng 歷城, Han Chengxuan 韓承宣, who died defending the city from the Manchu assault, which occurred on Chongzhen 12/1/2. For Han's biography, see Jinan fuzhi, 36.7b-8a.

30. Liaozhai, 1.76-77. Wang Haodi 王皞迪, a character in the story, was a nephew of Pu Songling's employer, Bi Jiyou: see Xiangyuan yijiu lu, 1.54b.

31. Liaozhai, 4.477. The reference to the "jade blood" of the massacre victims is an allusion to the story of the Zhou dynasty martyr Chang Hong 萇弘 whose loyal counsels were ignored, and whose blood changed into jade after his death. See A Concordance to Chuang Tzu, Harvard-Yenching Institute Sinological Index Series Supplement No. 20 (Cambridge, Mass., 1956) chapter 26, "Wai wu" 外物, p. 73. The image later became attached to those who died for a just cause, or, as in this case, those who despite their innocence were put to death.

32. Liaozhai, 4.481. The "Sunny Terrace" (yang tai 陽臺) here has two levels of meaning: on the one hand, it is conventional poetic metaphor for the location of a romantic tryst, on the other, it is linked to the specific context of a liaison with a man from the world of the living, customarily designated as yang.

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33. Liaozhai, 4.482-483. The "half-circle pendant worn at Dongshan" 東山 (Liaozhai, 4.483) recalls an episode recorded in Zuo zhuan 左傳 in which Duke Xian 獻 of Jin 晉, who had contracted an aversion to his faithful eldest son Shensheng, despatched him on a military campaign to Dongshan, giving him a half-circle pendant as an indication that he did not expect him to return. See Chunqiu jingzhuan yinde 春秋經傳引得, Harvard-Yenching Supplement no. 11 (Taibei repr. 1966), "Min gong" 閔公 II.8 (p. 84).

34. For references to abduction and rape, see Liaozhai, 2.247, 6.784, 6.810-811, 11.1527-1528; to the penalties for concealing fugitives, Liaozhai, 10.1396; to harsh treatment for suspected accessories to banditry, Liaozhai, 1.88, 8.1160; to casualties during the suppression of the rebellion of Wu Sangui, Liaozhai, 8.1139; to the ghosts of the Jinan massacre of 1639, Liaozhai, 12.1664-1665.

35. For a bibliography on this debate, which became a much laboured topic of discussion in mainland China in the late 1950s, see Chang Chun-shu and Chang Hsüeh-lun, "The World of P'u Sung-ling's Liao-chai chih-i", p. 414, n. 60. The issue has recently been reopened: see "Liaozhai zhiyi yanjiu zhong de zhengming wenti", pp. 30-32。

36. For a representative, and influential, statement of this view, see Yang Liu, Liaozhai zhiyi yanjiu, pp. 19-20, 61-80.

37. L. Carrington Goodrich, The Literary Inquisition of Ch'ien-lung (Baltimore, 1935), p. 20.

38. See, for example, Zhou Lianggong's story, "Shu Qi Sanlang shi" 書戚三郎事, in his Laigutang ji (photolithographic reprint of Kangxi edn., Shanghai, 1979), 18.9b-16a, which describes the massacre of civilians in the city of Jiangyin by Manchu troops, and the subsequent enslavement of women captives; Wu Jiaji's poem, "Guo bing xing" 過兵行, in Yang Jiqing 楊積慶, ed., Wu Jiaji shi jianjiao 吳嘉紀詩箋校 (Shanghai, 1980) pp. 453-454, which relates to mistreatment of the Han population in the Yangzhou area by Manchu troops; and many poems in the anthology by Deng Zhicheng 鄧之誠, ed., Qingshi jishi chubian 清詩紀事初編, 2 vols. (Hong Kong, 1976 reprint), notably Shi Runzhang's "Shang liu tian xing" 上留田行 and "Xianxialing jian Min fu bei xing zhe" 仙霞嶺見閔婦北行者, I, 581, Sun Zhiwei's 孫枝蔚 "Qiuhu xing" 秋胡行 and "Nan fu ci" 難婦詞, I, 170-171, Li Guosong's 李國宋

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"Da bing yao" 大兵謠, I, 525, and Ding Yaokang's 丁耀亢 "Bu tao xing" 捕逃行, II, 685.

39. Liaozhai, 6.826. For a biography of Zuo Maodi (hao Luoshi 蘿石), see ECCP, p.762.

40. Gu Yanwu, "Zichuan xing" 淄川行, in Tinglin shiwen ji 亭林詩文集 (Sibu congkan edn.), 1.11b. Credit for noticing this poem belongs to Xie Guozhen 謝國楨: see his article "Liaozhai zhiyi suo sheji de Qing chu nongmin qiyi shiji buzheng" 聊齋志異所涉及的清初農民起義事跡補證, in Zhongguo nongmin zhanzheng shi luncong 中國農民戰爭史論叢 1 (1979), 449.

41. For the anecdote about Hong Chengzhou, whose biography may be found in ECCP, pp.358-360, see Liaozhai, 8.1047。 The story to which this anecdote is attached, "Sanchao yuanlao", mocks an ex-Ming official who submits to the authority of rebels, a man whose career, in other words, shows strong parallels with that of Sun Zhixie. It is possible that the story "Luocha haishi" is an elaborate satire on opportunists such as Sun. The tale depicts an imaginary land where the uglier a man's physical appearance, the higher the office he is likely to attain. When the handsome visitor, Ma Ji 馬驥, is urged to disfigure himself so as to please the prime minister and thereby secure an influential post, Ma exclaims in horror, "How can one alter one's appearance simply to win fame and fortune!" (4.457)

42. "Jiu huang jice shang Buzheng Si", PSLJ, I, 306 (WJ, 5.173).

43. "Kangxi sishisan nian jizai qianpian", PSLJ, I, 48 (WJ, 5.164).

44. Liaozhai, "Geben xu ba tici", p. 31. For an explanation of how Gao's postface, signed Nancun 南邨, came to be included in the Zhang MS., see Yuan Shishuo, "Zhuxuezhai", pp. 155-156.

45. Pu Ruo, "Liuquan gong xingshu" 柳泉公行述, in PSLJ II, 1807 (SJ appendix, p. 308).

46. See Pu Songling's comment at the end of "Judicial Verdicts" (374), in which Fei Yizhi appears centrally, Liaozhai 9.1254.

47. See Lu Dahuang, "Pu Liuquan xiansheng nianpu" in PSLJ, II, 1752-1753.

48. Gao Mingge asserts erroneously that Pu Songling could not have

participated in the provincial examination until after he became a stipend student, in his "Pu Songling de yisheng", PJK 2 (1981), 213, 229 (although he appears to contradict himself on p. 234). In fact, he has simply misunderstood the extract from Shang Yanliu's Qingdai keju kaoshi shulu which he quotes on page 213.

49. See the entries for the Kangxi period in Zhang Duqing, "Houzhai zizhu nianpu".

50. "Xingxuan rike xu" 醒軒日課序, in PSLJ, I, 64-65 (WJ, 2.66-67). Yuan Shishuo, in his "Pu Songling yu Zhang Duqing", Liuquan 2 (1980, no. 2), 89, quotes poems by Zhang which he claims were written in 1666, after Pu's failure in the examination of that year. He does not give reasons, however, for dating the poems to 1666.

51. "Tong Anqiu Li Wenyi fan Daming Hu" 同安邱李文貽泛大明湖, PSLJ, I, 513-514 (SJ, 2.78).

52. Cf. Pu's postscript to "Young Scholar Ye", Liaozhai, 1.84; "Da Jiang dong qu (ji Wang Rushui)" 大江東去寄王如水, in PSLJ, I, 702. (Liu Jieping, Liaozhai ciji xuanzhu 聊齋詞集選注, p. 17, in Liaozhai quanji xuanzhu, vol. 2).

53. See the poems, "Bao bing" 抱病, "Sishi" 四十, and "Bing zhong" 病中, in PSLJ, I, 516 (SJ, 2.81-82).

54. Lu Dahuang, "Pu Liuquan xiansheng nianpu", PSLJ, II, 1770. Yuan Shishuo, in "Pu Songling yu Zhang Duqing", p. 89, describes the sui examination as an annual affair. This is incorrect. See Ichisada Miyazaki (Conrad Schirokauer, tr.), China's Examination Hell (New Haven and London, 1981), pp. 34-36, for a description.

55. Lu Dahuang, "Pu Liuquan xiansheng nianpu", PSLJ, II, 1774.

56. Ibid., pp. 1778-1779.

57. "Shu Liu shi xingshi" 述劉氏行實, in PSLJ, I, 253 (SJ appendix p. 304).

58. Pu Ruo, "Liuquan gong xingshu", in PSLJ, II, 1808 (SJ appendix, p. 309).

59. Zhang Yuan, "Liuquan Pu xiansheng mubiao", in PSLJ, II, 1804.

60. Maeno, Ho Shōrei den, pp. 145-149. The poems referred to here are "Meng Wang Rushui" 夢王如水 and "Ke di" 客邸, in PSLJ, I, 578,

580-581, (SJ 4.166, 4.168-169). Note that Maeno's view appears to some extent to be developed from Fujita Yūken, "Ryōsai shii kenkyū josetsu" in Geibun kenkyū 3 (1954), 57-59.

61. Gao Mingge, p. 231, quoting "Ji Ziting" 寄紫庭, in PSLJ, I, 579 (SJ, 4.167).

62. Gao Mingge, pp. 232-234.

63. Maeno, Ho Shōrei den, pp. 145-146.

64. Gao Mingge, p. 232.

65. See the entries for Kangxi years 30-45, in "Houzhai zizhu nianpu".

66. For references, see notes 14 and 15.

67. See the biographical summary which precedes Zhang's poems in Lu Jianzeng, comp., Guochao Shanzuo shichao, 43.1a.

68. See the poem "Lixia yin" 歷下吟, in PSLJ, I, 618-619 (SJ, 4.213-215).

69. See "Pu Liuquan xiansheng nianpu", in PSLJ, II, 1791; "Shang Kunpu Huang da zongshi qi"上崑圃黃大宗師啓 and " You cheng Kunpu Huang da zongshi" 又呈崑圃黃大宗師, PSLJ, I, 192-194 (WJ, 1.44-46). Huang Shulin (hao Kunpu) was provincial director of education from 1708 to 1712. See Qian Shifu,Qingdai zhiguan nianbiao, 4 vols. (Beijing 1980), IV, 2632-2634.

70. Lu Dahuang,"Pu Liuquan xianzheng nianpu", in PSLJ, II, 1797.

71. See Wang Qishu's 汪啟淑 remarks in his Shuicao qingxia lu 水曹清暇錄, quoted by Wang Liqi, ed., Yuan Ming Qing sandai jinhui xiaoshuo xiqu shiliao (rev. edn., Shanghai, 1981), p. 379. Wang Qishu's work was published in the Qianlong period: see Xie Guozhen, Ming Qing biji tancong 明清筆記談叢 (Shanghai, 1981 reprint), p. 85.

72. Maeno, Ho Shōrei den, pp. 41-77.

73. Xiangyuan yijiu lu, 1.25b.

74. Yuan Shishuo, "Pu Songling yu Zhang Duqing", p. 90.

75. Shi Runzhang, "Yu wei gongyue" 豫闈公約, in Xueyutang wai ji (Siku quanshu zhenben sanji series, Taibei, 1972), 2.9a.

76. Shi Runzhang, "Yu wei gongyue", 2.9b.

77. Lu Dahuang,"Pu Liuquan xiansheng nianpu", in PSLJ, II, 1763.

78. Yuan Shishuo, "Pu Songling yu Zhang Duqing", p. 91.

79. Maeno, Ho Shōrei den, pp. 67-69; Gao Mingge, pp. 235-236.

80. See Maeno, Ho Shōrei den, pp. 69-74, for a general discussion, and p. 73 for a translation of Pu's explanatory note to "Yeyu sifu qu" 夜雨思夫曲. This and other songs described by Maeno are not found in PSLJ. They are included in an unpublished collection compiled by Hirai Masao 平井雅尾, "Liaozhai xiaoqu ji" 聊齋小曲集, see "Keiō Gijuku Daigaku shozō Ryōsai kankei shiryō mokuroku" p. 131.

81. Maeno, Ho Shōrei den, pp. 76-77; Gao Mingge, p. 236.

82. Gao Mingge, pp. 235-237.

83. Maeno, Ho Shōrei den, pp. 43-58.

84. E.g. Yang Liu, p. 54; Marlon K. Hom, "The Continuation of tradition: a study of Liaozhai zhiyi by Pu Songling (1640-1715)", unpublished Ph.D. thesis (Univ. of Washington, 1979), pp. 348-352, 360-362.

85. For jinshi graduates in Zichuan in the Ming period, see Zichuan xianzhi (1776) 5.4a-7a. For the academic achievements of the Bi family, see Bi Ziyan, "Zixi Bi shi shipu xu" 淄西畢氏世譜序 in his Shiyinyuan canggao 石隱園藏稿 (Siku quanshu zhenben wuji 四庫全書珍本五集 Taibei, 1974) 2.42a. See also Zichuan xianzhi, 6.26b-30b, 6.61b-63b, for biographical details on Bi Ziyan and Bi Zisu. Bi Ziyan was the father of Pu Songling's employer for many years, Bi Jiyou (1623-1693).

86. Zichuan xianzhi (1776), 6.30b.

87. For Pu Shengwen, see Zichuan xianzhi (1776), 5.5a; for Pu Shengchi, Zichuan xianzhi, 5.23b, and [Chongxiu] Wuji xianzhi 重修無極縣志 (1936), 6.14b.

88. Zichuan xianzhi (1776), 5.15a.

89. Zichuan xianzhi (1776), 5.16b-5.17a.

90. Pu Nianzu 蒲念祖 attained the juren degree in 1702: Zichuan xianzhi (1776), 5.19a.

91. Shandong tongzhi (1736) 15 ("Xuanju" 選舉 2).1ab. For a general description of changes in examination quotas in the early Qing period, see Ho Ping-ti, The Ladder of Success in Imperial China:

Aspects of Social Mobility, 1368-1911 (Second impression, New York, 1967) pp. 176-186. Cf. the size of graduating classes in the last three Ming reign periods, in Shandong tongzhi 15 ("Xuanju" 1).11b-14a; for Pu Rui's class, see Shandong tongzhi 15 ("Xuanju" 2).37-40a.

92. Shandong tongzhi 15 ("Xuanju" 2).1b-2b, cf. Wang Dezhao 王德昭, "Qingdai de keju rushi yu zhengfu" 清代的科舉入仕與政府 in Journal of the Institute of Chinese Studies of the Chinese University of Hong Kong 12 (1981), 6.

93. For the 30:1 ratio, see Wang Dezhao, p. 5. Wang Shizhen gives the figures in his "Sichuan xiangshi lu xu" 四川鄉試録序 in Yuyang shanren wenlüe, 1.1b.

94. Zhao Zhixin 趙執信, "Shanxi xiangshi lu xu" 山西鄉試録序, in Yishan wenji 飴山文集 (Sibu beiyao edn.), 2.1a.

95. Shi Runzhang, "Yu wei gongyue", 2.10a.

96. Shang Yanliu, Qingdai keju kaoshi shulu (Beijing, 1958), p. 22. Cf. Liaozhai 7.963, 8.1082, 9.1256, for references to this examination.

97. See "Qiu keshi guang e cheng" 求科試廣額呈 and "You tou xuexian cheng" 又投學憲呈, PSLJ, I, 210-211.

98. Shi Runzhang points out what a small proportion of papers were read by the chief examiner in his "Yu wei gongyue", 2.11a. See also "Yu wei gongyue", 2.9b-10a, for discussion of other defects in the marking procedure. Ye Mengzhu also describes a case of negligence by an examiner, in his Yue shi bian (Shanghai, 1981), 2.46.

99. Yue shi bian, 2.46.

100. See entry under Kangxi year 41 in "Houzhai zizhu nianpu".

101. Shang Yanliu, pp. 293-294. Shang goes on to detail some specific cases of misconduct by provincial directors of education in the Yongzheng and Qianlong periods: see pp. 294-295.

102. Shang Yanliu, p. 299. Cf. the measures proposed by Dong Ne in 1687, designed to avert collusion in the Shuntian examination, in Yue shi bian, 2.47-48.

103. Shang Yanliu, pp. 299-303.

104. Yue shi bian, 2.47, 2.51. Qin Songling 秦松齡 was chief examiner in 1684, Yang Dahe 楊大鶴 in 1687.

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105. Shang Yanliu, pp. 306-309.

106. Shang Yanliu, p. 299.

107. Shang Yanliu, pp. 303-304.

108. Yue shi bian, 2.48-51.

109. Shang Yanliu, p. 309.

110. Shang Yanliu, pp. 309-310.

111. Shandong tongzhi, 15 ("Xuanju" 2).2a. For more details, see Ho Ping-ti, pp. 185-186.

112. Zichuan xianzhi (1776), 6.98a; Guochao Shanzuo shichao, 33.19b.

113. Zichuan xianzhi (1920), 9.86a. Yuan's zi was Yushan 愚山. Pu Songling wrote two prefaces for him: "Yuan Yushan Shifu kao xu" 袁愚山師服考序, in PSLJ, I, 65-66 (WJ, 2.70); and "Gongmen xiuxing lu zhuiyan" 公門修行録贅言, PSLJ, I, 314-315 (WJ, 5.196-197).

114. Guochao Shanzuo shichao, 49.11a.

115. Zichuan Bi shi shipu 淄川畢氏世譜 (Jiaqing edn., preface by Bi Daijian 畢岱熥 dated 1807), p. 34b.

116. See Yang Liu, pp. 53-61; Zhongguo Kexueyuan Wenxue Yanjiusuo 中國科學院文學研究所, ed., Zhongguo wenxue shi 中國文學史 3 vols. (Beijing, 1962), III, 1041-1043; cf. Chang Chun-shu and Chang Hsüeh-lun, pp. 412-414; Hom, pp. 348-368.

117. Liaozhai, 11.1453.

118. Liaozhai, 10.1351.

119. Liaozhai, 1.81.

120. Liaozhai, 7.964.

121. Liaozhai, 6.776.

122. Liaozhai, 6.820.

123. Liaozhai, 10.1352.

124. Liaozhai, 10.1330.

125. Liaozhai, 10.1361.

126. Liaozhai, 9.1239.

127. Shang Yanliu, p. 309.

128. Ai Nanying, "Ying shi wen zixu" 應試文自敘, in Shang Yanliu, p. 323.

129. Ibid., p. 323.

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130. Liaozhai, 9.1173.

131. Points of contact between Pu Songling's ideas and those of the seventeenth century thinkers have been discerned by such writers as Yang Liu, in Liaozhai zhiyi yanjiu, p. 66, the Chinese department of Beijing University, in its "Pu Songling he tade Liaozhai zhiyi" 蒲松齡和他的聊齋志異, in Zhang Youhe, ed., Liaozhai zhiyi xuan 聊齋志異選 (Beijing, 1978 repr.), pp. 377-378, and Paul S. Ropp, Dissent in Early Modern China: Ju-lin wai-shih and Ch'ing Social Criticism (Ann Arbor, 1981), pp. 91-100.

132. Ropp notes a similarity of an extract from Gu Yanwu's Rizhi lu 日知錄 to this passage of Pu's, translating the former on p. 96, the latter on p. 99.

133. Willard J. Peterson, Bitter Gourd: Fang I-chih and the Impetus for Intellectual Change (New Haven and London, 1979), p. 53. Peterson quotes Gui's references to fate on pp. 53-54. For Gui's original remarks, see Gui Youguang, Zhenchuan xiansheng ji 震川先生集(Sibu congkan edn.), 4.6a-b.

134. Liaozhai, 4.541.

135. Yang Shicong, Yutang huiji 玉堂薈記, Taiwan wenxian congkan 臺灣文獻叢刊 series, no. 257 (Taibei, 1968), p. 93.

136. See the entries in Zhang's "Houzhai zizhu nianpu" under Kangxi year 17 (1678), year 20 (1681), year 41 (1702).

137. "Shi du" 試牘, in PSLJ, I, 593-594 (SJ, 4.184).

138. "Shi hou shi Chi, Hu, Yun" 試後示麎,勞,罔, in PSLJ, I, 575 (SJ, 4.161).

139. A fairly early example is the story "Liu Yaoju" 劉堯舉, in Hong Mai, Yijian ding zhi 夷堅丁志 17.683, in Yijian zhi, 4 vols., (Beijing, 1981), vol. 2. An analogous episode is found in Liaozhai, 4.514-515, and another instance is found in Liaozhai, 3.424. See also Wang Shizhen's anecdote, "Zhao Tinglong" 趙廷鑨, in Chibei outan, 24.590. For a collection of anecdotes relating examination success to moral cultivation, written by another Qing author, see Qian Yong 錢泳, Lüyuan conghua 履園叢話 (Beijing, 1979) 13.335-340.

140. See Dong Yue, Xiyou bu (Guangdong, 1981) ch.4, pp. 20-21.

Notes to II. Biographical background

141. Wu's criticisms of the examination system are discussed at length by Ropp, pp. 100-113.

142. Notice how Tao Wangsan 陶望三 comes to grief as a result of the coordinated efforts of local gentry in Liaozhai, 6.775-776; how the Wang family, relatives of a high official, intimidate local administrators in Liaozhai, 8.1112-1115; or how a president of a board has an innocent man arrested in Liaozhai, 11.1577. See also Pu's observations on the grasping hangers-on who attach themselves to a magistrate's yamen in Liaozhai, 6.719-720.

143. Průšek, "Liao-chai chih-i by P'u Sung-ling", p. 106.

144. See Miao Quanji 繆全吉, Qingdai mufu renshi zhidu 清代幕府人事制度 (Taibei, 1971), pp. 126, 195.

145. Baoying xianzhi 寶應縣志 (1932), 10.17b; Qing shi liezhuan, 74.21ab.

146. "Wen Sun Shubai yi hegong wu daliao" 聞孫樹百以河工忤大僚, in PSLJ, I, 461 (SJ, 1.13).

147. See the official documents assembled under the title "Shunzhi nianjian de yidi" 順治年間的驛遞, in Qingdai dang'an shiliao congbian 清代檔案史料叢編 series 7 (Beijing, 1981), 1-160.

148. See, for example, "Ni qing bobu yizhan shang xunfu shu" 擬請撥補驛站上巡撫書, in PSLJ, I, 130; "Da Li Yueling" 答李樂陵, in PSLJ, I, 163; and "Ji Hu Boping" 寄胡伯平, in PSLJ, I, 182.

149. See "Shiliu ri yu Rugao ling" 十六日與如皋令, in PSLJ, I, 152; "Shi yue ershijiu ri yu Chen Xinghua shu" 十月二十九日與陳興化書, in PSLJ, I, 154-155.

150. "Shi yue chu ba ri da Han Wuxian" 十月初八日答韓吳縣, in PSLJ, I, 156-157; "Chu si ri da Xinghua Chen qiu yinjie qi" 初四日答興化陳求印結啓, in PSLJ, I, 176.

151. See "Dai Wang shidu Fuzheng yu Buzheng Si He shu" 代王待讀敷政與布政司何書, in PSLJ, I, 148-150. The magistrate Ma 馬 referred to in the letter is Ma Zhende 馬真德, who held office from 1668 to 1679 (see Zichuan xianzhi [1776], 4.23a). For Wang's degree, see Zichuan xianzhi, 5.18a。 No financial commissioner surnamed He served

in Shandong during Pu's lifetime. It seems likely that the official concerned was He Yuxiu 何毓秀, provincial judge (ancha shi 按察使) of Shandong from 1666 to 1679. See Qian Shifu, Qingdai zhiguan nianbiao, III, 1993-2000.

152. "Dai Wang shidu Fuzheng", pp. 149-150.

153. "Shang Gao sikou Niandong xiansheng"上高司寇念東先生, in PSLJ, I, 136-137 (WJ, 1.15-16). Wang Peixun tells us that Pu also wrote a verse commentary in colloquial language, entitled "Duzhang ci" 督丈詞, which described the mismanagement of the land survey in amusing detail: see Xiangyuan yijiu lu, 1.73a. This work does not appear to have survived.

154. Pu Ruo, "Liuquan gong xingshu", in PSLJ, II, 1809 (SJ appendix, p. 310).

155. "Shang Sun jijian shu" 上孫給諫書, in PSLJ, I, 128 (WJ, 1.10).

156. Zhang Yuan, "Liuquan Pu xiansheng mubiao", in PSLJ, II, 1804.

157. Pu Songling refers, for example, to cases of servants fleeing from their masters' homes after their misdeeds were discovered, and then using the influence of their new owner to resist the old: see "Shang Sun jijian shu", PSLJ, I, 127 (WJ, 1.9). Cf. Liaozhai, 4.470-471, where a servant attempts to rape his master's daughter-in-law, then takes refuge at the home of powerful gentry, on whose authority he depends as he insults his former master.

158. Pu Ruo recalled that his father disliked seeing officials, and responded to overtures from magistrates and provincial officials with great reluctance: see "Liuquan gong xingshu", in PSLJ, II, 1809 (SJ appendix, p. 310). See also Pu's letter, "Yu Li Ximei" 與李希梅, in PSLJ, I, 147 (WJ 1.30). Although poems and prose writings addressed to or commissioned by magistrates in office in Zichuan from 1678 onwards may be found in Pu's collected works, they do not indicate close or regular contacts with officialdom. According to a letter he wrote to Yang Wanchun 楊萬春 (jinshi 1694), Pu preferred to keep his distance even from officials who had been his friends prior to their appointments: see "Yu Yang Songnian Wanchun shu, ji Wuyang" 與楊松年萬春書寄舞陽, in PSLJ, I, 137 (WJ, 1.23).

159. For details on Fei Yizhi, see Zichuan xianzhi (1776), 4.22b. A pair of anecdotes involving Fei is found in Liaozhai, 9.1249-1254. Shi Runzhang cracks a complex criminal case in Liaozhai, 10.1372-1374.

160. Pu Songling makes frequent reference to Zhang Mei in his prose works. Of particular importance is his letter, "Shang yihou Zhang Shinian Mei shu" 上邑侯張石年嵋書, in PSLJ, I, 132-133 (WJ 1.13-14). In this, he makes recommendations for contemporary administration in response to an invitation by Zhang Mei.

161. See Pu Ruo, "Liuquan gong xingshu", in PSLJ, II, 1809 (SJ appendix p. 310) and note 20.

162. For the preface, see "Guxiang shuwu cuncao xu" in PSLJ, I, 62-63 (WJ, 1.72-73). For the commissioned letters, see "Wei yihou Zhang Shinian shang Gongchang fu zhifu shu" 為邑侯張石年上鞏昌府知府書 and "You xiaoqi" 又小啓, in PSLJ, I, 189-190 (WJ, 1.53-55).

163. Liaozhai, 11.1562.

164. "Shang yihou Zhang Shinian Mei shu", PSLJ, I, 133 (WJ, 1.14). For a summary of the commonly held opinion of yamen clerks, see Ch'ü T'ung-tsu, Local Government in China under the Ch'ing (Stanford, 1962), pp. 53-55, 70-73. For further outspoken condemnation of clerks by Pu Songling, see his "Gongmen xiuxing lu zhuiyan", in PSLJ, I, 314-315 (WJ, 5.196-197).

165. "You shi (dai Sun Hui)" 又示代孫蕙, in PSLJ, I, 200.

166. "Yu Sun Yaowen zhuan shi Wu xian gong" 與孫父文轉示吳縣公, in PSLJ, I, 140 (WJ, 1.25). For Pu's petitions and letters pertaining to the tribute grain administration, see Lin Xiaojun 林小軍, comp., "Xinjian Pu Songling de Liaozhai chenggao" 新見蒲松齡的《聊齋呈稿》, in Wenxian 文獻 5 (1980, no. 3), 89-96; "Yu Li Ximei", in PSLJ, I, 147-148 (WJ, 1.30-31); "Yu Wang sikou" 與王司寇, in PSLJ, I, 139 (WJ, 1.38-39); "Yu Zhang Yi gong tong shang Tan Wujing Zaisheng jinshi" 與張益公同上譚無競再生進士, in PSLJ, I, 140-141 (WJ, 1.37-38).

167. See Maeno, Ho Shōrei den, p. 72, where a note attached to Pu's

"Xinhun yan qu" 新婚宴曲 is quoted, referring to the author teaching in Wangcun in 1667, without, however, naming his employer.

168. I follow here Liu Jieping's conclusions in Pu Liuxian zhuan, pp. 45-47.

169. See the preface to "Chuoran tang huishi fu" 綽然堂會食賦 in PSLJ, I, 30 (WJ, 3.119), which refers to a time when there were two teachers and six students of varying ages. For Pu's approach to teaching, see Pu Ruo, "Liuquan gong xingshu", in PSLJ, II, 1808-9 (SJ appendix, p. 310).

170. See, particularly, Průšek, pp. 105-108.

171. PSLJ, II, 803-806.

172. Xuejiu zichao is found in PSLJ appendix, II, 1738-1742, and in Liu Jieping, ed., Liaozhai tongsu xiqu xuanzhu 聊齋通俗戲曲選注, pp. 75-87, in Liaozhai quanji xuanzhu, vol. 2. In the view of Lu Dahuang, Pu's authorship of this work could not be established for certain: see his "Liaozhai quanji zhong de Xingshi yinyuan yu Guci ji de zuozhe wenti" 聊齋全集中的《醒世姻緣》與《鼓詞集》的作者問題, reprinted in Pu Songling nianpu, p. 97. Cf. Liu Jieping's introduction to Liaozhai tongsu xiqu xuanzhu, pp. 12-13. Recently, Guan Dedong has reasserted Pu's authorship, apparently because of his faith in the authenticity of the manuscript versions he used. See Guan's Liaozhai liqu xuan (Jinan, 1980), pp. 14, 18, "Qianyan" 前言, pp. 5-6.

173. Liaozhai, 1.57-62.

174. Liaozhai, 7.962-967.

175. See Xuejiu zichao, in PSLJ appendix, II, 1738-1739, in Liu, Liaozhai tongsu xiqu xuanzhu, p. 77.

176. "Jie yingchou wen", in PSLJ, I, 302-303 (WJ, 5.205-207).

177. "Zupu xu" 族譜序, in PSLJ, I, 59 (WJ, 2.77-78).

178. "Shu Liu shi xingshi", in PSLJ, I, 252 (SJ appendix, p. 303).

179. Hu Shi "Xingshi yinyuan zhuan kaozheng"醒世姻緣傳考證, in Hu Shi wencun 胡適文存, 4 vols. (Taibei, 1953), IV, 368-369.

180. In recent years, several articles have presented evidence extremely damaging to the credibility of Hu's hypothesis that Pu Songling wrote Xingshi yinyuan zhuan。 These include Lu Dahuang, "Liaozhai quanji

zhong de Xingshi yinyuan yu Guci ji de zuozhe wenti", reprinted in Pu Songling nianpu, pp. 98-103 (originally published in 1955); Wang Sucun 王素存, "Xingshi yinyuan zuozhe Xizhou sheng kao" 醒世姻緣作者西周生考, in Dalu zazhi 大陸雜志 17.3 (1958), 7-9; Wang Shouyi 王守義, "Xingshi yinyuan de chengshu niandai" 醒世姻緣的成書年代, in "Wenxue yichan" no. 365, Guangming ribao, May 28, 1961; Liu Jieping, "Xingshi yinyuan zhuan zuozhe Xizhou sheng kaoyi" 醒世姻緣傳作者西周生考異, in Shumu jikan 書目季刊 10.2 (Sept. 1976) 3-10; and Jin Xingyao 金性堯, "Xingshi yinyuan zhuan zuozhe fei Pu Songling shuo" 醒世姻緣傳作者非蒲松齡說, in Zhonghua wenshi luncong 16 (1980, no. 4), 307-317. The only reply to such studies is that offered by Xu Beiwen 徐北文, "Xingshi yinyuan zhuan jianlun" 醒世姻緣傳簡論, in Xingshi yinyuan zhuan (Jinan, 1980), pp. 5-12, but he does not give a convincing defence of Hu Shi's view. On the evidence available to us at present, we must regard the case for authorship by Pu Songling as unproven.

181. For Pu's letter, "Yu Wang Luzhan" 與王鹿瞻, see PSLJ, I, 134 (WJ, 1.17). For Hu Shi's discussion, see "Xingshi yinyuan zhuan kaozheng", pp. 369-370.

182. "Shu Liu shi xingshi", in PSLJ, I, 252 (SJ appendix, p. 303).

183. Liaozhai, 5.714, 9.1292.

184. "Shu Liu shi xingshi", in PSLJ, I, 252 (SJ appendix, p. 303).

185. Pu Ruo, "Liuquan gong xingshu", in PSLJ, II, 1808 (SJ appendix, p. 309).

186. "Yu nei" 語內, in PSLJ, I, 622 (SJ, 4.218).

187. Tian Zechang, "Pu Songling he Chen Shuqing" 蒲松齡和陳淑卿, in PJK 1 (1980), 264-280. Tian's argument is underminded by careless slips, such as the claim (p. 267) that Zichuan was under the jurisdiction of Laizhou 萊州 prefecture.

188. For Sun's interest in beautiful women, see Xiangyuan yijiu lu, 2.15a. Pu Songling makes reference to Sun's female companions in such poems as "Shubai yan geji shan pipa, xi zeng" 樹百宴歌妓善琵琶,戲贈, in PSLJ, I, 471 (SJ, 1.26).

189. These eleven poems are found in the manuscript collection of Pu's poetry, Liaozhai oucun cao, described by Yuan Shishuo, et al, in their "Dui Liaozhai oucun cao de kaocha" 對《聊齋偶存草》的考察, PJK 1 (1980), 229-248. They appear in the rare second impression of Pu Songling ji, I, 672. Only the first poem of the sequence, entitled "Zeng ji" 贈妓, is included in the first printing of PSLJ, I, 672 (SJ supplement, p. 283). Cf. the quatrain composed by the hero for the courtesan, Xihou 細侯, in Liaozhai, 6.791.

190. The following two poems date from 1671: "Ting Qingxia yin shi" 聽青霞吟詩 and "You chang ju" 又長句, in PSLJ, I, 463 (SJ, 1.16). The poem "Sun jijian Gu ji gong shi, zuo ci xi zeng" 孫給諫顧姬工詩, 作此戲贈, in PSLJ, I, 523-524 (SJ, 2.92), dates from 1682.

191. "Wei Qingxia xuan Tang shi jueju baishou" 為青霞選唐詩絕句百首, in PSLJ, I, 673 (SJ supplement, p. 283). Although this poem is placed by Lu Dahuang and Liu Jieping among the undated verse, it is found in a manuscript of poems limited to the time period 1670-1671, and therefore belongs chronologically with the poems "Ting Qingxia yin shi" and "You chang ju", referred to in note 14. See Allan Barr, "Tan Ting qiusheng guan chaoshu Liaozhai wengao Liaozhai shicao" 談《聽秋聲館鈔書聊齋文稿,聊齋詩草》, to appear in PJK 4.

192. "Xi Shi sandie: xi jian Sun jijian" 西施三疊: 戲簡孫給諫 in PSLJ, I, 703, in Liu Jieping, Liaozhai ciji xuanzhu, p. 15. Cf. Liaozhai women: fingering sash, 1.115; blushing, 2.226; doing both, 5.612。

193. In his "Xi shi sandie", Pu wrote, "of the hundred poems by Tang authors, she especially liked Longbiao's 龍標 'Spring Grievance in the West Palace'." Longbiao was the zi of Wang Changling. For the original poem by Wang, see Li Guosheng 李國勝, Wang Changling shi jiaozhu 王昌齡詩校注 (Taibei, 1973), p. 164. Pu made another allusion to Qingxia's fondness for the poem in his "You chang ju", in PSLJ, I, 463 (SJ, 1.16).

194. "Shang Qingxia" 傷青霞, in PSLJ, I, 676 (SJ supplement, p. 287). Cf. Zhang Duqing, "Wan Sun huangmen gu ji Gu Qingxia" 輓孫黃門故姬顧青霞, in Kunlun shanfang ji.

III. THE LITERARY ANTECEDENTS OF LIAOZHAI ZHIYI

1. Lu Xun, Zhongguo xiaoshuo shilüe, in Lu Xun quanji, 20 vols. (Shanghai, 1938), IX, 359-360.

2. Ibid., pp. 354-355.

3. Ibid., p. 359. Ji Yun's comments are quoted by Sheng Shiyan 盛時彥 in his colophon at the end of juan 4 of Gu wang ting zhi 姑妄聽之, in Yuewei caotang biji 閱微草堂筆記 (Shanghai, 1980), 18.472.

4. Hu Yinglin, Shaoshi shanfang bicong (Shanghai, 1958), p. 374.

5. Maeno Naoaki, "Shindai shikaishō kaidai", pp. 261-291, discusses titles written in the Shunzhi and Kangxi periods.

6. See Xue Hongji et al., ed., Ming Qing wenyan xiaoshuo xuan.

7. See Ye Dejun, "Liaozhai zhiyi de benshi" in his Xiqu xiaoshuo congkao, 2 vols. (Beijing, 1979), II, 594, and Hom, "The Continuation of Tradition", p. 99. n. 47, both referring to Pu's story "Stealing peaches" (13).

8. Tian's preface is reprinted in the appendix to Yijian zhi, IV, 1833-1835.

9. E.g. [Chongkan huhai xinwen] Yijian xuzhi houji 重刊湖海新聞夷堅續志後集 (BJ; cf. BJ Catalogue, 5.4a), published by Xue Xuru 薛詡汝 of Jiangyin 江陰, which includes stories of Ming date.

10. Zhong Xing, "Yin" 引, in [Xinding zengbu] Yijian zhi 新訂增補夷堅志 (BJ; cf. BJ Catalogue, 5.4a). The contents of this edition differ slightly from the 51 juan edition. It was published by Zhong Renjie 鍾人傑 of Qiantang 錢塘.

11. Tan's preface, describing the defects of the manuscript, is to be found on p. 2 (following "Taiping guangji biao" 太平廣記表) of TPGJ. For Feng's preface to the abridged edition, see Zhuang Wei 莊葳 and Guo Qunyi 郭群一, "Feng Menglong de 'Taiping guangji chao xiaoyin'" 馮夢龍的《太平廣記小引》, In Xuelin manlu 學林漫錄 2 (Beijing, 1981), 182-183.

12. See NCL Catalogue, II, 670.

13. See NCL Catalogue, II, 673.

Notes to III. Literary Antecedents

14. Beijing Library possesses a 1511 edition published by the Yang family's 楊氏 Qingjiang tang 清江堂 (cf. BJ Catalogue, 8.60a), and another published by Huang Zhengwei 黃正位 of Xin'an 新安 (BJ Catalogue, 8.60a), active in the Wanli period (cf. n. 17). A ban on works like Jian deng xinhua had been instituted in 1442: see Wang Liqi, Yuan Ming Qing sandai xiaoshuo xiqu shiliao, p. 15. But it is unclear how long or how effectively this prohibition prevailed. An edition of Jian deng yuhua was published in 1487 by the Shuanggui tang 雙桂堂: see NK Catalogue, p. 290b.

15. See Akiyoshi Kukio 秋吉久紀夫, "Futatabi Sentō sōwa ni tsuite" 再び剪燈叢話について, in Bungei to shisō 文藝と思想 44 (1980), 7-17.

16. Shaoshi shanfang bicong, p. 476. See also the fifth paragraph of Hu's "Du Yijian zhi" 讀夷堅志, reprinted in the appendix to Yijian zhi, IV, 1825.

17. See Ye Dejun, "Yu chu zhi de bianzhe" 虞初志的編者 in Xiqu xiaoshuo congkao, II, 516-519。 On p. 518, he refers to an edition published by Yuan Jiong 袁褧 (1495-1560). The Naikaku Bunko also possesses a Jiajing edition (NK Catalogue, p. 286a), as well as one collated by Huang Zhengwei, published in 1606 (NK Catalogue, p. 286b). Other extant editions include condensed versions published by Fengqiao bieshu 鳳橋別墅(See BJ Catalogue, 8.59a and 8.59b).

18. Wang Zhideng, "Yu Chu zhi xu" in Yu Chu zhi (7 juan edition).

19. See Ou Daren, "Yu Chu zhi xu", ibid.

20. See Tang's preface, "Dian jiao Yu Chu zhi xu" 點校虞初志序 , p. 1a, ibid.

21. Xu Shuofang 徐朔方, editor of Tang Xianzu ji: shiwen ji 湯顯祖集：詩文集 (Shanghai, 1962), 50.1504, points out that the preface ascribed to Tang is dated 1618, two years after his death. There is no preface at all to connect Yanyi bian with Wang Shizhen.

22. For a description of Guang Yanyi bian, see Sun Kaidi 孫楷第 , Riben Dongjing suo jian Zhongguo xiaoshuo shumu 日本東京所見中國小說書目 (Beijing, 1958), p. 121.

23. The term tongsu leishu was first used by Sun Kaidi, pp. 127-140.

Notes to III. Literary antecedents

For a recent study of the textual history of these works, see Otsuka Hidetaka, "Mindai kōki ni okeru bungen shōsetsu no kankō ni tsuite", in Tōyō bunka 61 (1981), 45-97. See also Liu Wenying 柳文英, "Mingdai de chuanqi xiaoshuo" 明代的傳奇小說, in "Wenxue yichan" no. 197, Guangming ribao, 23 Feb., 1958.

24. For a study of the growth of this genre of fiction, see Itō Sōhei 伊藤漱平, "Formation of the Chiao-hung chi: its change and dissemination", in Acta Asiatica 32 (1977), 73-95, particularly pp. 83-94. Note the critical views of Zhongqing liji 鍾情麗集 expressed by Shen Defu 沈德符, Tao Fu 陶輔 and Zhang Zhichun 張志淳, quoted by Ye Dejun, in his "Du Mingdai chuanqiwen qizhong" 讀明代傳奇文七種, Xiqu xiaoshuo congkao, II, 536-537. See Sun Kaidi, pp. 126-127, for the introduction of the term shiwen xiaoshuo.

25. Gao Ru 高儒 listed six titles of these long romantic tales in his Baichuan shuzhi 百川書志 (Shanghai, 1957), p. 90, noting that they are books which will help to keep you awake.

26. For the connection of Heke sanzhi to Shuo fu, see Chang Bide 昌彼德, "Shuo fu kao" 說郛考, in Bulletin, China Council for East Asian Studies (1962), 27. The preface to Heke sanzhi is signed "Binghua jushi" 冰華居士, who has been identified as Pan Zhiheng 潘之恆 by Wang Liqi, in his Lidai xiaohua ji (Shanghai, 1981 reprint), p. 245. Pan died before 1626 (see the preface to Gen shi by his son, Pan Biliang). But the preface to Heke sanzhi describes a work that does not appear to correspond in content with the edition to which the preface is attached. It is possible that the preface has been transposed from some other work. Such was the case with Jian deng conghua: the original preface by Yu Chunxi to the 1593 edition of Jian deng xinhua was later borrowed and attached to two re-edited compilations of the same title. For discussion of these subsequent editions of Jian deng conghua and their possible relationship to Shuo fu, see Ogawa Tamaki 小川環樹, "Sentō sōwa ni tsuite" 剪燈叢話について in Bunka 文化 7.6 (1940), pp. 2-4; Akiyoshi, pp. 1-12; Otsuka, pp. 68-84。

27. The compiler's fanli 凡例 to Xiafang sou yi is signed "Zuolin jushi" 柞林居士, not known to be a pseudonym used by

Yuan Zhongdao. Yuan's involvement in the compilation has yet to be confirmed.

28. The postface to Zhui yu chubian (BJ) by Shi Lian's son, Yanbao 埏寶, dated 1677, explains that the work was completed in 1633, but is only now being published. Shi Yanbao served as a district magistrate in the early Qing: see Yue shi bian, 5.123.

29. The postface to this edition, signed by Lü Qianzi 履謙子, indicates it is a reprint of an earlier edition. Its contents are identical to that of the edition described by Zhao Jingshen 趙景深, "Jianxia zhuan" in his Zhongguo xiaoshuo congkao 中國小說叢考 (Jinan, 1980), pp. 65-68, except that it also includes an appendix comprising three stories, the last of which is of Ming date.

30. For a discussion of the origins of Lüchuang nüshi, see Otsuka, pp. 84-86.

31. SK, 144.3005 mentions that Mei also compiled Cai shen ji and Cai huan ji. Note, however, that Huang Yuji (1629-1691), in his Qianqingtang shumu (Shiyuan congshu edn.), 12.24b, lists Cai shen ji, but not Cai huan ji。 He refers instead to a work entitled Cai yao ji 才妖記.

32. For a description of these works, see Patrick Hanan, The Chinese Vernacular Story (Cambridge, Mass., and London, 1981) pp. 83-84, 95-97.

33. In Tao Fu's preface to Huaying ji, dated 1523, he says that his work was inspired by the two Jian deng collections and Xiaopin ji, and written during his mature years, after which it was laid aside "for thirty or forty years". However, a story in juan 3, "Youting wumeng" 郵亭午夢, was clearly not written before the very end of the fifteenth century, as it describes events of the period 1471-1498. It therefore seems likely that Tao's "thirty or forty years" were an exaggeration.

34. Bing zhu qingtan does not appear to be extant. For a brief description of the work, see Baichuan shuzhi, p. 89. Zhou Li was also the author of Huhai qiwen 湖海奇聞 (see Baichuan shuzhi, p. 89) and Jing xin congshuo 警心叢說 (see Qianqingtang shumu, 12.18b).

Notes to III. Literary antecedents

For other details about Zhou Li, see Liu Xiuye 劉修業, Gudian xiaoshuo xiqu congkao 古典小說戲曲叢考 (Beijing, 1958), p. 66. I am grateful to Professor Piet van der Loon for drawing my attention to this latter reference.

35. Full title of the work: Yuanhu zhiyu xuechuang tanyi 鴛湖志餘雪窗談異. For a brief description, and an excerpt from the work, see Xue Hongji, pp. 164-167. The location of the surviving edition of the work has not been revealed.

36. Namely, "Bianliang guaiwu zhi" 汴梁怪物志, in Bipo congcuo, p. 67b, and "Taoyuan fangyin lu" 桃源訪隱錄, Bipo congcuo, p. 12b.

37. See Mei's note at the end of "Teng Mu zuiyou Jujingyuan ji" 滕穆醉遊聚景園記, in Cai gui ji (Taibei, 1977), 10.144.

38. Shaoshi shanfang bicong, pp. 486, 569.

39. See Wang's colophon to Qingsuo gaoyi (Shanghai, 1958), p. 232. Though Wang's criticisms took Qingsuo gaoyi as their main target, he was denigrating Jian deng xinhua at the same time.

40. Some confusion exists over both the title and the size of this work. SK 144.2998 quotes a source that claims Zhu wrote several hundred juan of zhiguai, but regards the claim sceptically. Qianqingtang shumu 12.18a lists the work, Yuguai bian 語怪編, with the alternative title, Zhishan zhiguai lu 支山志怪錄, as a collection of 40 juan, consisting of 4 bian, each comprising 10 juan。 Although this edition does not appear to have survived, evidence suggests that the original work was produced in serial form, by bian。 Zhao Yongxian 趙用賢, ed., Zhao Dingyu shumu 趙定宇書目 (Shanghai, 1957) p. 49 lists a Zhiguai erbian 志怪二編. The Wanli compilation, Yanxia xiaoshuo, includes a collection by Zhu entitled Yuguai sibian 語怪四編(1 juan), with the author's preface dated 1513. The fullest edition extant today is Zhuzi zhiguai lu, which was re-edited by the author's great-grandson, Zhu Shilian, and published in 1612.

41. "Zhiguai lu zixu" 志怪錄自序, in Zhuzi zhiguai lu. For a biography of Zhu Yunming, see DMB, I, 392-397.

42. See Yang Yi's preface (dated 1532) to Gaopo yizuan.

43. "Juanjuan zhuan" 娟娟傳, in Gaopo yizuan juan 2 (reprinted in Xue Hongji, pp. 155-160), is an example of an extended romantic story.

44. "Dongxiao ji", in Gengsi bian, 10 juan edn. in Jilu huibian (Yuan Ming Shanben congshu shizhong reprint) 2.1a-5b, "Dongxiao ji" was reprinted in Yanyi bian, juan 2, and also in Qing shi leilüe, juan 19.

45. For Lu Cai's part in editing Tan zuan, see DMB, II, 1323. For two fiction titles attributed to him, see Qianqingtang shumu, 12.19a, and for another, SK, 144.3000.

46. See Lu Yanzhi's preface to Shuo ting.

47. E.g. the untitled story about the woman abducted by monkeys in Shuo ting 3.8b was reprinted in Qing shi leilüe, 23.9b-10a, the item about Zhang Luo'er 張羅兒 in Shuo ting 3.13b appears again in Zhui yu chubian, 2.23b.

48. Macheng xianzhi qianbian 麻城縣志前編 (1935), 9.71b.

49. An extant edition of Shuopu shiyu (2 juan) has not yet been located. It and the first four titles were collected together at some time to form Jing zuo xinshu 鷩座新書 (see Qianqingtang shumu, 12.26a). Wuyi jiahua, also inaccessible to me, is listed by Xu Bo's 徐焯 Xu shi Hongyulou shumu 徐氏紅雨樓書目 (Shanghai, 1957), p. 318, as 6 juan.

50. The preface to Huhai sou qi by Yang Qiyuan mentions having been shown Hui zhu xintan, Baizui suoyan, Shuopu shiyu, and Shu shi xiantan. As Yang died in 1599, this would seem to indicate that these five collections were already finished. However, tales dated after 1599 appear occasionally in these works, so evidently more writing was done. Dates in the last collection, Wang shi Qingxiang yu, go up to about 1612.

51. See Wang's fanli in Huhai sou qi.

52. Qian Qianyi, Liechao shiji xiaozhuan 列朝詩集小傳, (Shanghai, 1959) Dingji 丁集, C.632-633.

53. Qian Xiyan's preface to Kuai yuan, p. 3b. For similar remarks by Hu Yinglin, see Shaoshi shanfang bicong, pp. 375, 486.

54. Details about the author's life can be gleaned from the references to having heard a story in his youth from Yang Quan 楊銓 (1507-1575): see Tongxia tingran, 4.16b. For allusions to his examination career, see 4.8b, 16.1a.

55. "Laiyan" in Tongxia tingran, 7.1a, "Chunxiao", 17.14a.

56. For details on Jiang, see Taoyuan xianzhi 桃源縣志(1892 edn., Taibei repr., 1970), 8.9a; Yuan Hongdao gives his appraisal of Jiang's poetry in "Xuetaoge ji xu" 雪濤閣集序, in Qian Bocheng 錢伯城, ed., Yuan Hongdao ji jianjiao 袁宏道集箋校 (Shanghai, 1981), 18.709-711. For a posthumous tribute to Jiang by Yuan Hongdao, see the preface to his series of poems "Ku Jiang Jinzhi" 哭江進之, in Yuan Hongdao ji jianjiao, 34.1091-1092.

57. "Er tan yin" 耳譚引, in Xuetaoge quanji, 8.40a.

58. "Xiao lin yin" 笑林引, in Xuetaoge quanji, 8.57b.

59. Juan 14 of Xuetaoge quanji comprises 52 xiaoshuo items, but some of these are badly damaged. The full text of the story referred to here, "Cui ke" 催科, is reprinted in Wang Liqi, Lidai xiaohua ji, p. 240.

60. See Wang Liqi, Lidai xiaohua ji, pp. 231-237, 245-266.

61. The first three stories are grouped under the heading bai 稗 in juan 11 of Jiuyue qianji. "Fuqing nong zhuan" is found among the biographies in Jiuyue ji, 5.31b-38a. For more biographical details and further discussion of his work, see Patrick Hanan, "The Making of 'The Pearl-sewn Shirt' and 'The Courtesan's Jewel Box'", pp. 124-153, and Wang Liqi, "Jiuyue ji - zuizao shouru xiaoshuo zuopin de wenji" 《九籥集》—最早收入小說作品的文集, in Shehui kexue zhanxian 社會科學戰綫 (1981, no.1), 305-308.

62. Tu Lien-che 杜聯喆 quotes two examples in "Mingren xiaoshuo ji dangdai qiwen benshi juli" 明人小說記當代奇聞本事舉例, in Tsing-hua hsüeh-pao 清華學報 7.2 (1969), 171-174.

63. See Zhang Chao's preface, dated 1683, in Yu Chu xinzhi. It is not clear when this compilation was completed and published. Although Zhang's postface is dated 1700, juan 17 of the work includes Sun Jiagan's 孫嘉淦 Nanyou ji, which was written in 1721 (see ECCP, p. 672). For a review of biographical details and a list of Zhang's works, see Goyama Kiwamu 合山究, "Shōhin bungaku to Chō Chō" 小品文學と張潮, in Bungaku ronshū 文學論輯 24 (1977), 6-10.

64. For an introduction to the individual titles contained in this work, see Maeno, "Shindai shikaishō kaidai", pp. 261-278.

65. The only edition of Gu sheng to which I have had access to is that incorporated in Biji xiaoshuo daguan xubian (Taibei, 1962 reprint). Note however that Maeno Naoaki refers to a Qing edition published under the imprint of Niu Xiu's studio, Linye tang 臨野堂. See Maeno, "Shindai shikaishō kaidai", p. 273, where he also supplies biographical details.

66. SK, 144.3006.

67. See Liaozhai 3.360.

68. In Liaozhai 3.322 there is an allusion to a man who dreams of a yellow eel. The anecdote is found in Er tan leizeng 37.6a, under the title "Meng shan shi" 夢鱣詩. In Liaozhai 9.1281 there is a reference to yin chou 淫籌, the towels that Yan Shifan is alleged to have tossed beneath his bed to mark each new sexual conquest. The original anecdote recounting this incident is found in Qing shi leilüe, 5.14b.

69. The commentary of the Historian of Love appears irregularly in Qing shi leilüe. Patrick Hanan suggests that it was not written by Feng Menglong: see his The Chinese Vernacular Story, p. 96. Huang's commentary is attached to the tale "Bu Zhang Ling Cui Ying he zhuan" 補張靈崔瑩合傳, in Yu Chu xinzhi 13.169.

70. "Zuozhe tici" 作者題詞, p. 1, in Tang Xianzu, Mudan ting (Beijing 1978 reprint of 1963 edn.). In the first four lines of the translation I follow Cyril Birch, tr., The Peony Pavilion (Bloomington, Indiana, 1980), "Introduction", p. ix.

71. See Feng's "Qing shi xu" 情史叙 1a-3a, written under the pseudonym Long Ziyou 龍子猶, in Qing shi leilüe。 For a valuable discussion of Feng's ideas about qing and their origins, see Hanan, The Chinese Vernacular Short Story, pp. 78-80, 95-97.

72. See Li Zhi, "Tongxin shuo" 童心説, in his Fen shu 焚書 (Beijing 1975 reprint of 1960 edn.), 3.98-99. This essay is discussed and translated in part by Wm. Theodore de Bary, "Individualism and Humanitarianism in Late Ming Thought", in Wm. Theodore de Bary and the Conference on Ming Thought, ed., Self and Society in Ming Thought (New York and London, 1970), pp. 195-197.

73. See Tongxia tingran, 14.2b. Some views by other late Ming

writers are briefly summarized by Hanan, The Chinese Vernacular Story, p. 221, n. 13.

74. Liaozhai, 11.1456.

75. See de Bary, pp. 213-220.

76. The story is found in Xu Yanyi bian, 4.10b-12b, and also in Wu Dazhen, ed., Guang Yanyi bian, 8.10b-12b. It is reprinted in Xue Hongxun, pp. 231-233, under the title "Liu Yaoju" 劉堯舉.

77。 Xu Yan yi bian 4.11ab, Guang Yanyi bian 8.11ab.

78. See Liaozhai, 12.1632.

79. See "Zhu shan", in Song Maocheng, Jiuyue qianji, 11.8a-12b. Song's tale is translated by Patrick Hanan in his article, "The Making of 'The Pearl-sewn Shirt' and 'The Courtesan's Jewel Box'", 124-153, the seduction scene on pp. 130-131.

80. See Liaozhai, 12.1712.

81. "Laiyan", in Tongxia tingran, 7.2b-3a.

82. Shuxi Yisou, Guo xu zhi, p. 6b, in Jizai huibian (Beijing, 1878).

83. Cai Yu's story is found in Gujin shuohai, "Shuo yuan" 說淵 16 ("Biezhuan" 別傳 16). 1a-17a.

84. Zhou Yi 周夷, "Qianyan" 前言 in Jian deng xinhua wai erzhong (Shanghai, 1957), p. 1. Cf. Imamura Yoshio 今村與志雄, "Kaisetsu" 解說 in Sentō shinwa 剪燈新話 (Chūgoku koten bungaku zenshū 中國古典文學全集 20, Tokyo, 1958), p. 346.

85. One may note similarities, for example, between the detail of the yaksha that eats the brains of corpses in Qu You's "Taixu sifa zhuan" 太虛司法傳, in Jian deng xinhua, 4.94, and the monster who dines on a similar diet in Liaozhai, 1.70; or between the attack by boatmen on a couple in Li Zhen's "Furong ping ji" 芙蓉屏記, in Jian deng yuhua, 4.262, and a similar episode in Liaozhai, 3.383-384.

86. I.e. the poems in "Lin Siniang", Liaozhai, 2.288-289, and in "Gongsun Jiuniang", Liaozhai, 4.481.

87. See Jian deng xinhua, 1.11. Kondō Haruo 近藤春雄 briefly reviews the virtuoso tendencies in Jian deng xinhua and relates them to Qu You's personal circumstances in his "Sentō shinwa no sekai" 剪燈新話の世界, Setsurin 說林, 25 (1977), 46-48, 53-54.

88. The only real exception to the rule is the memorial to the throne submitted by Bao Longtu 包龍圖 in Liaozhai 4.521-522.

89. See the "Xiao pan" 笑判 at the end of "Huang Jiulang", Liaozhai 3.321-323; "Miaoyin jing xuyan" 妙音經續言at the end of "Ma Jiefu", Liaozhai 6.729-736; and "Jiu ren fu" 酒人賦 at the end of "Bada Wang", Liaozhai 6.872-875.

90. Feng Zhenluan was the first to draw this comparison with biography: see his "Du Liaozhai zashuo" 讀聊齋雜說, in Liaozhai, "Geben xu ba tici", p. 14.

91. Feng Zhenluan, "Du Liaozhai zashuo", p. 17. The subject of Liaozhai's language and style has been largely neglected by modern scholars. Yang Liu devotes some attention to the topic in his Liaozhai zhiyi yanjiu, pp. 81-94. Further discussion can be found in Maeno Naoaki, "Ryōsai shii no gengo" 聊齋志異の言語, in Chūgoku no hachi dai shōsetsu 中國の八大小説(Tokyo, 1965), pp. 457-465; and in Liu Wenzhong 劉文忠, "Liaozhai zhiyi de yuyan tilian" 聊齋志異的語言提煉, in PJK 2 (1981), 191-206.

92. Hanan points out the lyrical style that occasionally surfaces in "The Faithless Lover" in his article, "The Making of 'The Pearl-sewn Shirt' and 'The Courtesan's Jewel Box'", pp. 147-148.

93. See Yu Chu xinzhi, 5.59-61.

94. See Yang Liu, pp. 81-82, 88-89; Hom, "The Continuation of Tradition", pp. 11-12. One scholar has suggested that Pu Songling was influenced by the vernacular fiction of Li Yu: see Abe Yasunori 阿部泰記, "Ryōsai shii: Shinsho no gūi shōsetsu" 聊齋志異——清初の寓意小説, in Chūgoku bungaku ronshū 中國文學論集 6 (1977), 22-31. The similarities in the authors' outlook on which Abe bases his view are of a rather superficial nature, however.

95. See Wu Cheng'en, Xiyou ji (Hong Kong 1972 reprint of Beijing 1954 edn.) p. 472 for the first episode. Both Tripitaka and Zhu Bajie become pregnant after drinking water from Child-and-Mother River on p. 610. Later, on p. 618, a mouthful of water from Abortion Stream successfully terminates the pregnancy.

96. See Jin Ping Mei cihua 金瓶梅詞話, photolithographic reprint of late-Ming edn. (Tokyo, 1963), 69.2b and 41.10b for first

appearance of these women. I am indebted to Dr. Glen Dudbridge for identifying the source to which Pu alluded.

97. In Liushijia xiaoshuo, the story was entitled "Yang Jiao'ai si zhan Jing Ke" 羊角哀死戰荆軻: see Tan Zhengbi 譚正璧, ed., Qingping shantang huaben 清平山堂話本(Shanghai, 1957) pp. 272-275. For the other versions, see Feng Menglong, Gujin xiaoshuo (Beijing 1979 reprint of 1958 edn.), pp. 114-120, and Jingu qiguan (Beijing 1979 reprint of 1957 edn.), pp. 211-217. We can deduce from Pu's use of the term "informal history" (yeshi 野史) that he meant a vernacular text: he uses the same expression to describe the books that the young men of the Bi household read aloud for their grandmother, to keep her entertained in the evenings. See "Bi mu Wang taijun muzhiming" 畢母王太君墓誌銘, in PSLJ, I, 251 (WJ, 4.153).

98. See Spence, The Death of Woman Wang, p. 154, for the reference to Shuihu zhuan in connection with "Cui Meng". In Monan qu, the rebel chief Ren Yi 任義 bears a strong resemblance to the heroes of Shuihu zhuan: in two separate episodes in the early part of the play he rescues the innocent victims of government persecution and punishes the people's oppressors (PSLJ, II, 1378-1381, 1436-1439), and in the latter part of the play he triumphantly repels two attacks by government troops on the bandit stronghold, accepts an amnesty, and successfully leads a campaign against invaders from the north (PSLJ, II, 1506-1536).

99. Qiangu kuai is found in Guan Dedong, ed., Liaozhai liqu xuan, pp. 19-46, and, under the title Kuai qu 快曲, in PSLJ, II, 1112-1131. The episode on which it is based can be found in Luo Guanzhong 羅貫中, Sanguo yanyi (Beijing, 1959), pp. 397-402.

100. See Liu Jieping, Qing chu guci liqu xuan 清初鼓詞俚曲選 (Taibei, 1968), "Bianxuan tiyao" 編選提要, pp. 17-18.

101. Qian Zhongshu, Guanzhui bian, II, 784.

102. See Liu Wenzhong, pp. 203-205.

103. Hanan, The Chinese Vernacular Story, p. 16.

104. Of the six Liaozhai tales rewritten by Pu Songling as vernacular liqu, four centre around domestic conflicts: "Shanhu" (407) provided the material for Gu fu qu 姑婦曲, in PSLJ, II, 850-880; "Zhang Cheng" (73)

for Cibei qu 慈悲曲, in PSLJ, II, 881-921; "Qiu Daniang" (404) for Fan yan yang 翻魘殃, in PSLJ, II, 922-1004; and "Jiangcheng" (252) for Rang du zhou 禳妒咒, in PSLJ, II, 1135-1265. "Shanhu", "Zhang Cheng" and "Qiu Daniang" are among the twelve tales selected for vernacular adaptation by the author of Xing meng pianyan。 For a description of this Qing work, and a list of its contents, see Hu Shiying, Huaben xiaoshuo gailun, II, 646-647. Other major Liaozhai tales of domestic life, taken up by neither Pu nor the author of Xing meng pianyan, include "Ma Jiefu" (212), "Shao nu" (258), "Fourth Lady Hu" (278), "Lu Wubing" (323), and "Chen Xijiu" (337).

105. See Liaozhai, 7.1001-1002.

106. Hanan, The Chinese Vernacular Story, p. 107.

107. Liaozhai, 10.1409. Cf. the opening scene in chapter 60 of Jin Ping Mei cihua, where Pan Jinlian expresses her antagonism to Li Ping'er under the pretence of cursing her maids.

108. See Liaozhai, 7.883-884. Cf. the mistreatment of Shi Yuexiang 石月香 by the wife of Jia Chang 賈昌 in the first story in Feng Menglong's Xingshi hengyan 醒世恒言 (Hong Kong 1965 reprint of Beijing 1956 edn.), pp. 5-6: Jia Chang's wife uses the pretext of tardiness in completing a needlework assignment to abuse the girl.

109. Liaozhai, 2.257-260.

110. Liaozhai, 11.1567.

111. Hanan, The Chinese Vernacular Story, p. 25.

112. Ibid., p. 24.

113. "Jiang Xingge chonghui zhenzhu shan" 蔣興哥重會珍珠衫, originally published as Gujin xiaoshuo, no. 1, was reprinted in Jingu qiguan, and has been translated under the title "The Pearl-sewn Shirt" in Cyril Birch, Stories from a Ming Collection: Translations of Chinese Short Stories Published in the Seventeenth Century (Bloomington and London, 1958). "Jin Yunu bangda boqing lang" 金玉奴棒打薄情郎, which originally appeared as Gujin xiaoshuo, no. 27, is translated as "The Beggar Chief's Daughter", and "Du Shiniang nu chen baibao xiang" 杜十娘怒沉百寶箱 (Feng Menglong's Jingshi tongyan 警世通言, no. 32) as "The Courtesan's Jewel Box" by Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang, The Courtesan's Jewel Box: Chinese Stories of the Xth-XVIIth Centuries (Beijing, 1957).

114. Feng Menglong, Gujin xiaoshuo, p. 11; Jingu qiguan, p. 426.

115. The sources of "The Beggar Chief's Daughter" are usefully brought together by Tan Zhengbi, ed., Sanyan Liangpai ziliao 三言兩拍資料, 2 vols. (Shanghai, 1980), I, 150-151. For a discussion of the origins of "The Courtesan's Jewel Box", see Hanan, "The Making of 'The Pearl-sewn Shirt' and 'The Courtesan's Jewel Box'", pp. 124-128, 139-152.

116. Feng Menglong, Jingshi tongyan (Beijing, 1956), p. 496; Jingu qiguan, pp. 74-75.

117. W.L. Idema, "Storytelling and the Short Story in China", in Chinese Vernacular Fiction: the Formative Period (Leiden, 1974), p. 54.

118. This tendency is particularly pronounced in Wang Fenling, "Pu Songling yu minjian wenxue", in PJK 2 (1981), 311-362. For earlier studies of sources, see Fujita Yūken, "Ryōsai mindan kō", in Geibun kenkyū 27 (1968), 293-316; Ye Dejun, "Liaozhai zhiyi de benshi", pp. 591-595; Hom, "The Continuation of Tradition", pp. 36-106.

119. This is Nie Shiqiao's stated purpose in his "Liaozhai zhiyi benshi pangzheng", in PJK 1 (1980), 303-365.

120. First introduced by Yang Liu, in his Liaozhai zhiyi yanjiu pp. 21-28, this method of classification has been followed by Hom, pp. 36-65. Wang Fenling (p. 323) divides the stories into two main categories: those which derive from folklore, and those which are entirely the creative work of the author, further subdividing the first group into oral and written sources. What we consider to be written sources might well have been orally transmitted tales in Pu Songling's day, so this categorization also presents problems.

121. Pu in fact refers to Zhaochang by his zi, Wenbi 文貢. A brief biographical sketch of this cousin, written by Pu Songling, is found in Pu shi shipu.

122. "Liu zhihui zi ji sansheng shi" 劉指揮子記三生事, in Kuai yuan, 8.4b.

123. "Wan shilang sanshi lunhui" 萬侍郎三世輪迴, in Kuai yuan, 8.8a.

124. "Gui Qian menggan lu" 桂遷夢感録, in Mi deng yinhua, 1.322.

125. "Kang jinshi suyin" 康進士夙因, in Nuogao guangzhi, p. 21b.

126. See "Liu Sanfu" 劉三復, ascribed to Beimeng suoyan 北夢瑣言, in TPGJ, 387.3088-3089. Qian Zhongshu noted this analogue in his Guanzhui bian, II, 798.

127. "Yijian zhigeng xu" 夷堅支庚序, in Yijian zhi, III, 1135.

128. "Langye ren" 琅邪人, ascribed to Youming lu 幽明錄, in TPGJ, 383.3051.

129. "Zheng Jie" 鄭潔, from Boyi ji 博異記, in TPGJ, 380.3029.

130. Condensed translation of "Yijian shigeng xu", in Yijian zhi, III, 1135.

131. Liaozhai, 2.263-264. Feng Zhenluan is mistaken in suggesting in his note (2.263) that Gao Zixia (i.e. Gao Heng) was the person involved. In Liaozhai, Gao Heng is always referred to by his regular hao as Gao Niandong 念東: see Liaozhai 5.691, 5.693, or by his official title as Gao shaozai 少宰: see Liaozhai 8.1151.

132. Liaozhai, 2.231, discussed by Zhang Peiheng in his "Liaozhai zhiyi xiezuo niandai kao", p. 186.

133. See Zichuan xianzhi (1776), 6.95b, for further biographical details.

134. Er tan (15 juan edn.), 13.4a。 This anecdote was later copied by Chu Renhuo into his Jianhu ji, but he changed the title, and altered the final remark, thereby suggesting that Wang Tonggui himself had witnessed the incident. See Nie Shiqiao, p. 349.

135. Kuai yuan, 2.29a; Jiuyue ji, 10.15b.

136. "Huanshu" 幻術, in Huhai sou qi, p. 12a.

137. See "Jiaxing shengji" 嘉興繩技, from Yuanhua ji 原化記, in TPGJ 193.1449, discussed by Qian Zhongshu in Guanzhui bian, II, 704. See also R.H. van Gulik, "The Mango trick in China; an essay on Taoist magic", in Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan III, 3rd series (1954), 117-175.

138. For records of other ventriloquist exhibitions in contemporary collections, see "Kou ji" 口技 by Dongxuan zhuren in Shuyi ji C.3b; Niu Xiu's "Xiang sheng" 象聲, in Gusheng xubian, 3.4b; Lin Cihuan 林嗣環, "Qiushengshi zixu" 秋聲詩自序, in Yu Chu xinzhi, 1.7.

139. "Shu Qi Sanlang shi", in Zhou Lianggong, Laigutang ji, 18.9b-16a.

140. See Nie Shiqiao, p. 317. He refers to Zhou Lianggong's Yinshuwu shuying 因樹屋書影, in which the story also appears.

141. See, for example, Lu Ciyun 陸次雲, "Baowu sheng zhuan" 寶婺生傳, in Yu Chu xinzhi 9.114; Shi Runzhang's "Fuping tusi" 浮萍兎絲, quoted in Beiyou lu, p. 401.

142. "Ren shi" 人市, in Beiyou lu, p. 386.

143. Zhao Jishi, quoting a work entitled Meichuang xiaoshi 梅牕小史, in Jiyuan ji suo ji, 10.28b.

144. Zhang Zhen, "Zhang Yulun", in his Quqiu ermeng lu, Bingji 丙集, p. 4b.

145. Ma Yau-woon, "Kung-an fiction", in T'oung Pao 65 (1979), 239.

146. See Ye Dejun, "Liaozhai zhiyi de benshi", p. 594. Zhang's story is found in Diannan yijiu lu (Congshu jicheng edn.), p. 12. Zhang Hong was also the author of Diannan xinyu 滇南新語 (Congshu jicheng edn.), in which he tells us he first took office in Yunnan in 1741 (see p. 12). In 1745, he was transferred to Jianchuan 劍川 (Diannan xinyu, p. 23, cf. Diannan yijiu lu p. 21).

147. See Wolfram Eberhard, Typen chinesischer Volksmärchen (Helsinki, 1937) p. 191; Fujita Yūken, "Ryōsai mindan kō", pp. 308-309; and Sawada Mizuho 澤田瑞惠, "Kikyūdai" 鬼求代, in Kishu dangi 鬼趣談義 (Tokyo, 1976), pp. 118-124. I am grateful to Dr. Glen Dudbridge for drawing my attention to this reference.

148. Wang Fenling, pp. 321-322. Wang erroneously places the Chenggong Shrine in Yunnan (p. 321).

149. Shen Zhou, Shitian zaji (Congshu jicheng edn.), p. 23; Lu Yanzhi, Shuo ting, 2.6a.

150. The Liaozhai entries with their corresponding Chibei outan equivalents are as follows:

Liaozhai	Chibei outan
"He shi" 齰石 (2.137)	"Dan shi" 啖石 (20.487)
"Lin Siniang" 林四娘 (2.286)	"Lin Siniang" (21.512)

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"Wugu dafu" 五穀大夫
(3.427)
"Qie ji zei" 妾擊賊
(4.507)
"Xiao liequan" 小獵犬
(4.529)
"Yangwu hou" 楊武侯
(5.589)
"Chi zi" 赤字
(7.926)
"Nan sheng zi" 男生子
(8.1037)
"Jiang taishi" 蔣太史
(8.1149)
"Shao Shimei" 邵士梅
(8.1151)

"Zhang gongshi" 張貢士
(9.1189)
"Wang zhe" 王者
(11.1489)

"Wugu dafu"
(26.624)
"Xian qie" 賢妾
(26.624)
"Xiao liequan"
(26.625)
"Xue Zhongwu" 蔣忠武
(8.184)
"Tianshang chi zi" 天上赤字
(26.625)
"Nanzi shengzi" 男子生子
(24.571)
"Jiang Huchen" 蔣虎臣
(8.178)
"Ji qiansheng" 記前生 and
"Shao jinshi sanshi yin" 邵進士三世姻 (20.480 and 24.582)
"Xintou xiaoren" 心頭小人
(26.625)
"Jian xia" 劍俠
(23.564)

151. See Chibei outan, 26.626, note appended to "Xiao liequan".

152. Liaozhai, 8.1151, cf. Chibei outan, 24.582.

153. See Liaozhai, 8.1037, Chibei outan 24.571. For biographical details on Yang Fu 楊富, see Qingshi liezhuan, 80.13b. According to this account, Yang was executed by Dong Weiguo 董衛國, governor of Jiangxi, not by governor Cai 蔡 of Fujian, as Pu suggested. In fact, there was no governor Cai: see Qian Shifu, Qingdai zhiguan nianbiao, II, 1531-43.

154. "Yanshenzhen Bao'en Si mu xiu Baiyi Dian shu" 顏神鎮報恩寺募修白衣殿疏, in PSLJ, I, 110.

155. Zichuan xianzhi (1687), 6.36a.

156. Zichuan xianzhi (1687), 4.22a。

157. "Liaozhai zizhi", p. 2, in Liaozhai. Ma Yau-woon makes unduly heavy weather of interpreting "Guo An", and misunderstands the commentators: see his "Kung-an fiction", p. 231.

158. One version can be found among excerpts from Lu Ciyun's Beishu qishu 北墅奇書, in Yu Chu xinzhi, 10.128; another, entitled "Tang Pin zaisheng" 湯聘再生, in Xu Yue's Jianwen lu (Shuo ling edn.), p. 25b. See also Feng Zhenluan's note in Liaozhai, 3.328.

159. Liaozhai, 3.326.

160. Nie Shiqiao, p. 364.

161. Nuogao guangzhi, pp. 45a-48b.

162. Nuogao guangzhi, p. 48b.

163. Cf. "Jiu chong", in Yijian ding zhi, 16.672. The motif of regurgitating a malignant creature when tormented by thirst is found also in Huang Yu's 黃瑜 "Gu tu huoyu" 蠱吐活魚, in Shuanghuai suichao 雙槐歲鈔 (Congshu jicheng edn.) 5.81, although here the wine insect is not involved. For a translation of the Shuanghuai suichao story, see H.Y. Feng and J.K. Shryock, "The Black Magic in China Known as 'Ku'", in Journal of the American Oriental Society 55 (1935), 12.

164. Nuogao guangzhi, p. 52b.

165. Liaozhai, 5.608.

166. Cf. "Gou jian" 狗姦 in Zhuzi zhiguai lu, 3.11b; "Quan jian" in Dong Han, Chunxiang zhuibi (Shuo ling edn.), A.42a。

167. Liaozhai, 5.644-645 and 5.715; cf. "Huo Xiaoyu zhuan", in TPGJ 487.4006-4011.

168. See "Nie Yinniang", in TPGJ 194.1456-1459. In this tale, the heroine selects her own husband, a man with no other skill than polishing mirrors. In another allusion to this story, the snake-killing bird in "The Avian Knight" (309) is compared to the formidable assassin Miaoshou Kongkong Er 妙手空空兒, who is mentioned in TPGJ 194.1458: see Liaozhai, 8.1062.

169. Cf. "Liu Yi", in TPGJ 419.3410-3417.

170. Liaozhai, 11.1548-1550; cf. "Liu shi zhuan", in TPGJ 485.3995-3997, and "Wushuang zhuan", in TPGJ 486.4001-4005.

171. See Kondō Haruo, "Sentō shinwa to Tōdai shōsetsu" 剪燈新話と唐代小説, in Setsurin 23 (1974), 55-60.

172. See Lu Xun, Zhongguo xiaoshuo shilüe, p. 355, and his "Zhongguo xiaoshuo de lishi de bianqian" 中國小說的歷史的變遷 (Hong Kong,

1957), pp. 36-37.

173. Fujita Yūken has also presented criticisms of Lu Xun's emphasis on literary imitation in his articles "Ryōsai shii kenkyū josetsu", p. 52, and "Ryōsai mindan kō", p. 295. While he is surely correct in emphasizing the folktale ancestry of many Liaozhai stories, he goes too far, in my view, in rejecting the suggestion that the occasional item may derive from specific literary antecedents.

174. Commonly known under the title of "Zhenzhong ji", as in the anthology Wenyuan yinghua 文苑英華 (Beijing, 1966) 833.7b-10a, the tale is entitled "Lü Weng" 呂翁 in TPGJ 82.526-528.

175. See Feng Zhenluan's note, Liaozhai 5.673, and He Shouqi's note, Liaozhai 5.677.

176. See "Chunyu Fen" 淳于棼, in TPGJ 475.3910-3915.

177. See Lu Xun, Zhongguo xiaoshuo shilüe, p. 355.

178. Bai Xingjian 白行簡, "San meng ji" 三夢記, in Wang Pijiang 汪辟疆, ed., Tangren xiaoshuo 唐人小說 (Shanghai 1978 reprint of 1959 edn.), pp. 108-110. Bai's authorship has been questioned by Fang Shiming 方詩銘, "'San meng ji' bianwei" 三夢記辨偽, in Wenshi zazhi 文史雜志 6:1 (Suzhou, 1948), 4-6; and by Huang Yongnian 黃永年, "'San meng ji' bianwei", quoted in Bian Xiaoxuan 卞孝萱, Yuan Zhen nianpu 元稹年譜 (Jinan, 1980), pp. 546-548.

179. "Dugu Xiashu", which derives from Xue Yusi's 薛漁思 Hedong ji 河東記, is included in TPGJ 281.2244-2245. See Wang Meng'ou 王夢鷗, Tangren xiaoshuo yanjiu siji 唐人小說研究四集 (Taibei, 1978) p. 93, for a brief discussion of the relationship of "Dugu Xiashu" and "Zhang Sheng" to "San meng ji", but note that his reference to Youyang zazu is incorrect: the relevant item is found in Youyang zazu, Qianji, 8.85.

180. "Zhang Sheng", from Li Mei's 李玫 Zuan yi ji 纂異記, in TPGJ 282.2250-2251.

181. Lüxi jiaocuo, which is found in "Dugu Xiashu" p. 2244 and Liaozhai 2.188, is one of several expressions common to both stories. (Cf. "Dugu Xiashu" p. 2244, ren chu ji dai 人畜既殆, and Liaozhai 2.187, ren chu xiang dang ju dai 人畜想當俱殆). The phrase lüxi jiaocuo, which originated in "Huaji liezhuan" 滑稽列傳,

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Shi ji (Beijing 1972 reprint of 1959 edn.) 126(liezhuan 66).3199, is used by Pu Songling elsewhere (e.g. Liaozhai 6.873, 9.1180), and one should perhaps not insist that its inclusion here was a deliberate echo of "Dugu Xiashu".

182. Liaozhai, 3.360.

183. "Dijing jingwu xuanlüe xiaoyin" 帝京景物選略小引, in PSLJ, I, 53 (WJ, 2.75).

184. Liu Tong 劉侗 and Yu Yizheng 于奕正, Dijing jingwu lüe (Beijing, 1980 repr. of 1963 edn.) 3.122:
遊閒人提竹筒,過籠,銅絲罩,諧藂草處,缺牆頹處,…… 側聽徐行,若有遺亡,跡聲所縷發而穴斯得。乃捻以尖草,不出,灌以筒水,躍出矣。 "The Cricket", Liaozhai 4.484-486:
提竹筒銅絲籠,於敗堵叢草處,…… 側聽徐行,似尋針芥。…… 遽撲之,入石穴中。捻以尖草,不出;以筒水灌之,始出。

185. Varieties of cricket named in Liaozhai, and their origins in Dijing jingwu lüe, are set out below:

	Liaozhai	Dijing jingwu lüe
qingxiang jinchi 青項金翅	4.486, col. 3-4	3.122, col. 7
tu gou 土狗	4.487, col. 9	3.122, col. 9
meihua chi 梅花翅	"	"
xieke qing 蠏殼青	4.487, col. 11	3.122, col. 8
hudie 蝴蝶	4.488, col. 12	3.122, col. 9
Tanglang 螳螂	"	"
you li ta 油利撻	"	3.122, col. 8

Cf. items in the cricket's diet:

Xie bai, li huang 蠏白栗黃	4.486. col. 6	3.122, col. 10

Note also the similarity in the cricket's signal of triumph:

Liaozhai, 4.488, col. 5: qiaoran jinming, si bao zhu zhi
翹然矜鳴，似報主知
Dijing, 3.123, col. 1: qiaoran changming, yi bao qi zhu
翹然長鳴，以報其主。

186. See Patrick Hanan, The Chinese Short Story: Studies in Dating, Authorship, and Composition (Cambridge, Mass., 1973), pp. 92-97, 135-148, 174-199; and more particularly, his "The Making of 'The Pearl-sewn Shirt' and 'The Courtesan's Jewel Box'", pp. 134-139, 147-153, and The Chinese Vernacular Story, pp. 28-164, passim.

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Titles are arranged according to romanized syllables rather than romanized combinations. Thus Huaying ji precedes Huang Ming cilin renwu kao, and Jiyuan ji suo ji precedes Jiuyue ji.

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Qianqingtang shumu 千 頃 堂 書 目 . By Huang Yuji 黃 虞 稷 (1629-1691). In Shiyuan congshu 適 園 叢 書 .

Qiangshutang shiji 强 恕 堂 詩 集 . By Gao Zhixi 高 之 騄 (fl. early Qing). 8 juan. 1738 edition published by the author's son, Gao Zhaoshou 肇 授 . (Shandong Provincial Library.)

Qing ni lianhua ji 青 泥 蓮 花 記 . Comp. Mei Dingzuo 梅 鼎 祚 (1549-1618). Preface dated 1600. Lithographic edition, Beijing, 1910.

Qing shi leilüe 情 史 類 略 . Comp. Zhanzhan waishi 詹 詹 外 史 (pseud.). 24 juan. Preface by Feng Menglong 馮 夢 龍 (1574-1646). 1784 edition published by Laohui xiantang 老 會 賢 堂 of Guangzhou. (British Library.)

Qing shi liezhuan 清 史 列 傳 . Shanghai, 1928.

Quqiu ermeng lu 渠 丘 耳 夢 錄 . By Zhang Zhen 張 貞 (1637-after 1709). 4 juan. Preface dated 1709. Early-Qing edition published by Bo Mingyuan 柏 明 遠 of Jiangning 江 寧 . (BJ.)

Shandong tongzhi 山 東 通 志 . 1736 edition.

Shanghai Tushuguan shanben shumu 上 海 圖 書 館 善 本 書 目 . Shanghai, 1957.

Shaoshi shanfang bicong 少 室 山 房 筆 叢 . By Hu Yinglin 胡 應 麟 (1551-1602). Shanghai, 1958.

Shu shi xiantan 漱 石 閒 談 . See Huhai sou qi.

Shuyi ji 述 異 記 . By Dongxuan zhuren 東 軒 主 人 (pseud.). Preface dated 1701. In Shuo ling.

Shuo ling 說 鈴 . Comp. Wu Zhenfang 吳 震 方 (jinshi 1679). Preface by Xu Zhuo 徐 倬 (jinshi 1673) dated 1705. 1799 edition.

Shuo ting 說 聽 . By Lu Yanzhi 陸 延 枝 . 4 juan. Preface dated 1556. Postface by author's nephew Wang Yusheng 王 禹 聲 dated 1591. In Yanxia xiaoshuo.

Tongxia tingran 桐 下 听 然 . By Kua'e zhai zhuren 夸 蛾 齋 主 人 (pseud., fl. late Ming). 22 juan. Preface by Chen Yuansu 陳 元 素 dated 1629. Chongzhen edition published by Deshou tang 德 壽 堂 . (Shanghai

Library; cf. Shanghai Tushuguan shanben shumu, 3.22a.)

[Xinke] Wang shi Qingxiang yu 新刻王氏青箱餘. By Wang Zhaoyun 王兆雲 (fl. 1600). 10 juan. Preface by Tang Xianzu 湯顯祖 (1550-1616). 1617 edition, published by Li Shaoquan 李少泉 under the imprint of Jukui lou 聚奎樓. (NLB microfilm; cf. NCL Catalogue, II, 672.)

Xidi shumu 西諦書目. Beijing, 1963.

Xiafang sou yi 霞房搜異. Comp. Yuan Zhongdao 袁中道(1570-1624). 2 juan. Preface by Huang Daozhou 黃道周 (1585-1646). Postface by Qiao Yunjiang 喬雲將 dated 1627. Late-Ming edition. (NK Microfilm; cf. NK Catalogue, p. 287b.)

[Xinjuan] Xianyuan jishi 新鐫仙媛紀事. Comp. Yang Erzeng 楊爾曾 (fl. Wanli period). 9 juan. 1602 edition published by the Yang family of Qiantang 錢塘 under the imprint of Caoxuan ju 草玄居. (NLB microfilm; cf. NCL Catalogue, II, 837.)

Xiangyuan yijiu lu 鄉園憶舊録. By Wang Peixun 王培荀 (juren 1821), 6 juan. Preface dated 1845. Qing edition. (Shanghai Library.)

Xiaopin ji 效顰集. By Zhao Bi 趙弼 (postface dated 1428). Beijing, 1957.

Xingshi yinyuan zhuan 醒世姻緣傳. By Xi Zhou sheng 西周生(pseud.). 3 vols. Jinan, 1980.

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Xuetaoge quanji 雪濤閣全集. By Jiang Yingke 江盈科 (1556-1605). 14 juan. Preface dated 1600. Wanli edition published in Beijing. (Shanghai Library; cf. Shanghai Tushuguan shanben shumu, 4.22a.)

Xueyutang waiji 學餘堂外集. By Shi Runzhang 施閏章(1619-1683). In Siku quanshu zhenben sanji 四庫全書珍本三集.

[Xinke Xu Bibu] Yanshan conglu 新刻徐比部燕山叢録. By Xu Changzuo 徐昌祚 (fl. Wanli period). Preface dated 1602. Ming edition. (BJ.)

Yanxia xiaoshuo 煙霞小説. Wanli edition. (BJ; cf. BJ Catalogue, 5.55b.)

[Xinjuan Yumingtang pidian Wang Yanzhou xiansheng] Yanyi bian 新鐫王茗堂批點王弇洲先生豔異編. 40 juan. With Xu Yanyi bian (19 juan). Ming edition. (NCL microfilm; cf. NCL Catalogue, II, 672.)

Yijian zhi 夷堅志. By Hong Mai 洪邁 (1123-1202). 4 vols. Beijing, 1981.

[Xinbian fenlei] Yijian zhi 新編分類夷堅志. 51 juan. Edited by Ye Zurong 葉祖榮 of Jian'an 建安. Preface by Tian Rucheng 田汝成 (jinshi 1526) dated 1546. Published by Hong Pian 洪楩 in Hangzhou under the imprint of Qingpingshantang 清平山堂. (BJ; cf. BJ Catalogue, 5.4a.)

[Xinke] Yijian zhi 新刻夷堅志. 10 juan. Wanli edition published by Tang Sheng 唐晟. (NLB microfilm; cf. NCL Catalogue, II, 670.)

Yi lin 異林. By Xu Zhenqing 徐禎卿 (1479-1511). 1 juan. In Yanxia xiaoshuo.

Youyang zazu 酉陽雜俎. By Duan Chengshi 段成式 (c.803-863). Ed. Fang Nansheng 方南生. Beijing, 1981.

Yu Chu xinzhi 虞初新志. Comp. Zhang Chao 張潮 (c.1650-after 1703). Shanghai, 1935.

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Yuyang shanren wenlüe 漁洋山人文略. By Wang Shizhen. 14 juan. Preface by Zhang Yunzhang 張雲章 dated 1695. In Yuyang sanshiliu zhong.

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INDEX TO ENTRIES IN LIAOZHAI ZHIYI

This index serves two purposes: it functions as a glossary of Chinese characters for the story titles translated in this dissertation, and it provides a system of cross-reference between the variorum edition of Liaozhai, the Pu MS., the Zhang MS., and the Zhao edition.

The entries in Liaozhai are listed according to the order in which they appear in Liaozhai zhiyi (huijiao huizhu huiping ben), edited by Zhang Youhe (Shanghai 1978 reprint). The titles appear in the third column, preceded by a serial number to which reference is commonly made in the body of this thesis. The first column supplies the page number on which each title is found in the variorum edition.

The contents of Liaozhai are set out in eight two-page units, each corresponding to one of the original volumes of the Pu MS., viz.

"The City God Examination"	(extant)
"A Certain Gentleman"	(reconstructed)
"Liu Haishi"	(extant)
"Yatou"	(extant)
"The Giant"	(reconstructed)
"The Avian Knight"	(reconstructed)
"Princess Yunluo"	(extant)
"The King"	(reconstructed)

The location of each entry in the Zhang MS. is shown in the second column: first is listed the number of the Zhang MS. juan in which the entry appears, then the number of the entry within that juan.

The position of the entries as found in the Zhao edition is shown on the far right. In the interests of clarity, items in juan 13-16 are arranged in a separate column from those in juan 1-12. The sixteen juan Zheng MS., on which the Zhao edition was based, appears to have been formed by the bipartition of the eight volumes of the Pu MS. An asterisk preceding an entry number indicates that this title probably headed a new juan when the eight volumes were divided in two.

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505	4/18	145. 雨錢	14/2
507	4/19	146. 妾擊賊	14/4
509	4/20	147. 驅怪	13/36
512	4/21	148. 姊妹易嫁	3/17

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518	4/22	149. 續黃粱	5/2
528	4/23	150. 龍取水	
529	4/24	151. 小獵犬	5/3
532	4/25	152. 暮鬼	14/58
535	4/26	153. 辛十四娘	5/4
548	4/27	154. 白蓮教	5/5
550	4/28	155. 雙燈	14/3
552	4/29	156. 捉鬼射狐	14/5
554	4/30	157. 蹇償債	13/35
556	4/31	158. 頭滾	14/59
557	4/32	159. 鬼作筵	14/6
559	4/33	160. 胡四相公	5/6
564	4/34	161. 念袂	15/1
575	4/35	162. 蛙曲	2/18
576	4/36	163. 鼠戲	2/19
577	4/37	164. 泥書生	13/34
578	4/38	165. 土地夫人	
579	4/39	166. 寒月芙蕖	14/8
582	4/40	167. 酒狂	14/10
589	5/1	168. 陽武侯	14/9
591	5/2	169. 趙城虎	2/20
593	5/3	170. 螳螂捕蛇	
594	5/4	171. 武技	14/11
597	5/5	172. 小人	2/21
598	5/6	173. 秦生	13/37

600	5/7	174. 鴉頭	7/14
607	5/8	175. 酒蟲	14/38
609	5/9	176. 木雕美人	9/16
610	5/10	177. 封三娘	8/1
618	5/11	178. 狐夢	8/2
623	5/12	179. 布客	15/4
625	5/13	180. 農人	15/5
627	5/14	181. 章阿端	8/3
632	5/15	182. 傅飥媪	
633	5/16	183. 金永年	9/17
634	5/17	184. 花姑子	8/4
642	5/18	185。武孝廉	15/2
646	5/19	186. 西湖主	8/5
656	5/20	187. 孝子	9/18
657	5/21	188. 獅子	9/19
658	5/22	189. 閻王	15/3
661	5/23	190. 土偶	15/7
663	5/24	191. 長治女子	15/6
666	5/25	192. 義犬	14/39
667	5/26	193. 鄱陽神	10/15
668	5/27	194. 伍秋月	8/6
673	5/28	195. 蓮花公主	8/7
678	5/29	196. 綠衣女	8/8
680	5/30	197. 黎氏	15/8
682	5/31	198. 荷花三娘子	8/9
687	5/32	199. 鴛鴦	13/40
688	5/33	200. 柳氏子	15/9
691	5/34	201. 上仙	15/10
693	5/35	202. 侯靜山	15/11
695	5/36	203. 錢流	10/16
696	5/37	204. 郭生	15/12
699	5/38	205. 金生色	8/10
704	5/39	206. 彭海秋	8/11
710	5/40	*207. 堪輿	16/5
712	5/41	208. 竇氏	16/6

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716	5/42	209. 梁彥	2/22
717	5/43	210. 龍肉	14/61
719	6/1	211. 潞令	15/27
721	6/2	212. 馬介甫	10/7
737	6/3	213. 魁星	
738	6/4	214. 庫將軍	11/21
739	6/5	215. 絳妃	16/41
747	6/6	216. 河間生	15/28
748	6/7	217. 雲墓仙	10/8
755	6/8	218. 跳神	11/17
757	6/9	219. 鐵布衫法	11/18
758	6/10	220. 大力將軍	5/16
764	6/11	221. 白蓮教	
766	6/12	222. 顏氏	10/9
770	6/13	223. 杜翁	15/29
772	6/14	224. 小謝	10/10
780	6/15	225. 縊鬼	
782	6/16	226. 吳門畫工	
784	6/17	227. 林氏	15/30
788	6/18	228. 胡大姑	15/32
791	6/19	229. 細侯	16/1
795	6/20	230. 狼三則	15/33
797	6/21	231. 美人首	11/19
798	6/22	232. 劉亮采	16/7
300	6/23	233. 蕙芳	10/11
804	6/24	234. 山神	11/20
805	6/25	235. 蕭七	10/12
310	6/26	236. 亂離二則	
812	6/27	257. 蓑蛇	12/16
314	6/28	238. 雷公	
815	6/29	239. 菱角	11/1
319	6/30	240. 餓鬼	16/8
822	6/31	241. 考弊司	16/9
326	6/32	242. 閻羅	

829	6/33	243. 大人	14/22
831	6/34	244. 向杲	7/3
834	6/35	245. 董公子	14/24
837	6/36	246。周三	14/34
839	6/37	247. 鵠異	7/5
844	6/38	248。聶政	8/17
847	6/39	249。冷生	14/25
849	6/40	250。狐懲淫	14/26
852	6/41	251. 山市	14/27
854	6/42	252。江城	7/6
865	6/43	253. 孫生	14/28
868	6/44	254. 八大王	7/4
876	6/45	255. 戲縊	3/23
877	7/1	256. 羅祖	9/14
879	7/2	257。劉姓	14/35
883	7/3	258。邵女	7/7
895	7/4	259. 鞏仙	7/8
902	7/5	260。二商	8/18
906	7/6	261. 沂水秀才	14/29
907	7/7	262。梅女	7/9
914	7/8	263. 郭秀才	7/10
916	7/9	264。死僧	14/30
917	7/10	265。阿英	7/11
924	7/11	266. 橘樹	9/15
926	7/12	267. 赤字	
927	7/13	268. 牛成章	7/12
929	7/14	269. 青娥	7/13
938	7/15	270。鏡聽	14/32
940	7/16	271. 牛瘟	14/33
942	7/17	272。金姑夫	14/37
944	7/18	*273. 梓潼令	9/20
945	7/19	274. 鬼津	
946	7/20	275. 仙人島	8/13
957	7/21	276 閻羅薨	15/16
960	7/22	277。顛道人	15/17
962	7/23	278. 胡四娘	8/14

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968	7/24	279. 僧術	8/15
970	7/25	280. 祿數	8/19
971	7/26	281. 柳生	8/16
975	7/27	282. 寃獄	9/10
980	7/28	283. 鬼令	15/18
981	7/29	284. 甄后	9/2
985	7/30	285. 宦娘	9/3
991	7/31	286. 阿繡	9/4
999	7/32	287. 楊疤眼	10/17
1000	7/33	288. 小墨	9/5
1009	7/34	289. 金和尚	4/16
1015	7/35	290. 龍戲蛛	10/18
1016	7/36	291. 商婦	
1017	7/37	292. 閻羅宴	15/19
1018	7/38	293. 役鬼	10/19
1019	7/39	294. 細柳	9/6
1027	8/1	295. 畫馬	15/20
1029	8/2	296. 局詐	13/38
1035	8/3	297. 放蝶	15/21
1037	8/4	298. 男生子	
1038	8/5	299. 鍾生	9/7
1044	8/6	300. 鬼妻	15/22
1046	8/7	301. 黃將軍	
1047	8/8	302. 三朝元老	10/20
1049	8/9	303. 醫術	15/23
1051	8/10	304. 藏蝨	
1052	8/11	305. 夢狼	9/8
1057	8/12	306. 夜明	10/21
1058	8/13	307. 夏雪	15/24
1060	8/14	308. 化男	

1061	8/15	309. 禽 俠	16/18
1063	8/16	310。鴻	16/19
1064	8/17	311. 象	16/20
1065	8/18	312. 負 尸	12/21
1066	8/19	313. 紫 花 和 尚	16/21
1067	8/20	314. 周 克 昌	10/14
1069	8/21	315. 嫦 娥	11/12
1080	8/22	316。鞠 藥 如	12/22
1081	8/23	317. 褚 生	11/13
1086	8/24	318. 盜 户	12/23
1088	8/25	319. 某 乙	16/22
1090	8/26	320. 霍 女	11/14
1098	8/27	321. 司 文 郎	12/1
1107	8/28	322. 醜 狐	16/23
1110	8/29	323. 呂 無 病	12/2
1119	8/30	324. 錢 卜 巫	16/24
1123	8/31	325. 姚 安	16/25
1125	8/32	326. 采 薇 翁	16/26
1127	8/33	327. 崔 猛	12/3
1135	8/34	328。詩 讖	16/27
1138	8/35	329. 鹿 啣 草	
1139	8/36	330. 小 棺	
1141	8/37	*331. 邢 子 儀	11/2
1145	8/38	332. 李 生	16/10
1146	8/39	333. 陸 押 官	11/3
1149	8/40	334. 蔣 太 史	16/11
1151	8/41	335. 邵 士 梅	15/13
1154	8/42	336. 顧 生	10/13
1156	8/43	337. 陳 錫 九	11/4
1165	9/1	338. 邵 臨 淄	15/14
1166	9/2	339. 于 去 惡	11/5
1174	9/3	340. 狂 生	12/17
1176	9/4	341. 澂 俗	
1177	9/5	342. 鳳 仙	11/6
1185	9/6	343. 佟 客	11/7

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1188	9/7	344. 遼陽軍	
1189	9/8	345. 張貢士	15/41
1191	9/9	346. 愛奴	11/8
1197	9/10	347. 單父宰	15/15
1198	9/11	348. 孫必振	12/18
1199	9/12	349. 邑人	16/12
1200	9/13	350. 元寶	
1201	9/14	351. 研石	
1202	9/15	352. 武夷	
1203	9/16	353. 大鼠	15/31
1204	9/17	354. 張不量	12/19
1205	9/18	355. 牧豎	16/15
1206	9/19	356. 富翁	
1207	9/20	357. 王司馬	
1209	9/21	358. 岳神	14/40
1210	9/22	359. 小梅	11/9
1217	9/23	360. 藥僧	15/34
1218	9/24	361. 于中丞	16/13
1220	9/25	362. 皂隸	
1221	9/26	363. 績女	11/10
1225	9/27	364. 紅毛氈	12/20
1226	9/28	365. 抽腸	
1227	9/29	366. 張鴻漸	11/11
1235	9/30	367. 太醫	15/35
1237	9/31	368. 牛飛	14/31
1238	9/32	369. 王子安	16/14
1241	9/33	370. 刁姓	
1243	9/34	371. 農婦	15/36
1245	9/35	372. 金陵乙	16/16
1247	9/36	373. 郭安	15/37
1249	9/37	374. 折獄	16/17
1255	9/38	375. 義犬	15/39
1256	9/39	376. 楊大洪	15/40
1258	9/40	377. 查牙山洞	15/38
1261	9/41	378. 安期島	12/4
1263	9/42	379. 沅俗	

1264	9/43	380. 雲蘿公主	9/1
1276	9/44	381. 鳥語	10/22
1278	9/45	382. 天宮	9/9
1283	9/46	383. 喬女	10/6
1288	9/47	384。蛤	
1289	9/48	385。劉夫人	9/11
1296	9/49	386。陵縣狐	
1299	10/1	387。王貨郎	16/4
1300	10/2	388. 疲龍	
1301	10/3	389. 真生	16/2
1305	10/4	390. 布商	11/15
1307	10/5	391。彭二挣	11/16
1308	10/6	392. 何仙	15/26
1311		393. 牛同人	
1312	10/7	394. 神女	9/12
1322	10/8	395. 湘裙	9/13
1330	10/9	396. 三生	10/2
1333	10/10	397。長亭	10/3
1341	10/11	398. 席方平	10/4
1349	10/12	399. 素秋	10/5
1359	10/13	400. 賈奉雉	10/1
1367	10/14	401. 臙脂	14/1
1380	10/15	*402。阿纖	4/1
1387	10/16	403. 瑞雲	4/2
1391	10/17	404。仇大娘	5/7
1403	10/18	405. 曹操冢	13/39
1404	10/19	406. 龍飛相公	4/3

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1409	10/20	407。珊 瑚	4/4
1417	10/21	408. 五 通	4/5
1421	10/22	409。又	4/6
1426	10/23	410. 申 氏	4/7
1431	10/24	411。恆 娘	4/8
1436	10/25	412。葛 巾	4/9
1445	11/1	413. 馮 木 匠	13/32
1446	11/2	414。黃 英	4/10
1453	11/3	415. 書 癡	4/11
1459	11/4	416. 齊 天 大 聖	4/12
1464	11/5	417. 青 蛙 神	4/13
1469	11/6	418. 又	13/31
1473	11/7	419。任 秀	2/13
1476	11/8	420。晚 霞	4/14
1482	11/9	421。白 秋 練	4/15

1489	11/10	422. 王者	3/6
1492	11/11	423. 某甲	14/52
1493	11/12	424. 衢州三怪	14/53
1494	11/13	425. 拆樓人	14/54
1495	11/14	426. 大蝎	14/55
1496	11/15	427. 陳雲棲	3/7
1505	11/16	428. 司札吏	13/22
1507	11/17	429. 蚰蜒	15/25
1508	11/18	430. 司訓	13/23
1510	11/19	431. 黑鬼	14/56
1511	11/20	432. 織成	3/8
1516	11/21	433. 竹青	3/9
1521	11/22	434. 段氏	13/24
1525	11/23	435. 狐女	13/25
1527	11/24	436. 張氏婦	
1529	11/25	437. 于子游	
1530	11/26	438. 男妾	13/27
1531	11/27	439. 汪可受	13/28
1533	11/28	440. 牛犢	
1535	11/29	441. 王大	13/26
1540	11/30	442. 樂仲	3/10
1548	11/31	443. 香玉	3/11
1556	11/32	444. 三仙	2/17
1558	11/33	445. 鬼隸	
1559	11/34	446. 王十	13/29
1564	11/35	447. 大男	3/12
1571	11/36	448。外國人	
1572	11/37	449. 韋公子	13/42
1575	11/38	450. 石清虛	3/13
1580	11/39	451. 曾友于	3/14
1588	11/40	452. 嘉平公子	3/15
1593	12/1	453. 二班	13/30
1596	12/2	454. 車夫	14/57
1597	12/3	455. 乩仙	13/33
1598	12/4	456. 苗生	3/16
1602	12/5	457. 蠍客	

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*458. 杜小雷 13/43
459. 毛大福 16/28
460. 雹神 16/29
461. 李八缸 16/30
462. 老龍缸户 16/31
463. 青城婦
464. 鴉鳥
465. 古瓶 13/44
466. 元少先生 16/32
467. 薛慰娘 12/5
468. 田子成 12/6
469. 王桂菴 12/7
470. 寄生附 12/8
471. 周生 16/33
472. 褚遂良 12/9
473. 劉全 16/34
474. 土化兔
475. 鳥使
476. 姬生 5/15
477. 果報 14/60
478. 公孫夏 12/10
479. 韓方 16/35
480. 紉針 12/11
481. 桓侯 12/12
482. 粉蝶 12/13
483. 李檀斯
484. 錦瑟 12/14
485. 太原獄 16/36
486. 新鄭訟 16/37
487. 李象先
488. 房文淑 12/15
489. 秦檜 13/45
490. 浙東生 16/38
491. 博興女 16/39
492. 一員官 16/40
493. 丐仙 15/42
494. 人妖 13/41