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A Preliminary Comparison of the Two Recensions of *Jinpingmei*

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THE sixteenth century novel *Jinpingmei* 金瓶梅 is known to have three major recensions: the *Jinpingmei cihua* 金瓶梅詞話, the *xiuxiang* text (the illustrated text) 繡像本 or the so-called Chongzhen text 崇禎本, and the *diyì qishū* 第一奇書 editions with the commentary of Zhang Zhupo 張竹坡 (1670–1698).¹ Textually the last two editions are practically identical, but the *cihua* text and the *xiuxiang* text differ drastically. *Jinpingmei* scholars hold different opinions about these two recensions. Scholars who interpret the differences between the two recensions as an aesthetically purposive revision often judge the *xiuxiang* text favorably, and argue that the revision must have been

I am indebted to the suggestions provided by Patrick Hanan, Wai-ye Li, the anonymous reader, and, last but not the least, Stephen Owen. I am solely responsible for the remaining flaws.

¹ Designated by Patrick Hanan as the A, B, and C editions in “The Text of the Chin P’ing Mei,” *Asia Major*, 9.1 (1962): 1–57. In this paper, all the citations are based on the following editions: (1) for the *cihua* recension, the 1988 photolithographic reprint of the *Jinpingmei cihua* (Beijing: Wenxue guji kanxingshe), which has a preface by Nongzhuke of Dongwu 東吳弄珠客 dated 1617, and was discovered in Shanxi 山西 in 1932 (referred to as A.1 by Hanan, pp. 2–4); (2) for the *xiuxiang* recension, the 1988 photolithographic reprint of *Xinke xiuxiang piping Jinpingmei* 新刻繡像批評金瓶梅 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe) with Nongzhuke’s preface (undated) and an anonymous commentary, which is currently in the collection of Beijing University Library (referred to as B.2 by Hanan, pp. 6–7); (3) for Zhang Zhupo’s edition, *Gaohetang piping diyì qishū Jinpingmei* 皋鶴堂批評第一奇書金瓶梅, with a preface dated 1695 by Xie Yi 謝頤, 24 vols.

done by a sophisticated member of the late-Ming literati class. Liu Hui 劉輝, for instance, describes the *xiuxiang* recension in the following terms: “The novel was completely transformed in the rewriting: the chantefable quality of the *cihua* text was greatly reduced, irrelevant characters were removed and unnecessary details were excised, with the result that the development of the plot line became more tightly controlled and the style more concise, thus more in keeping with the aesthetic standards of a novel. The revision also repaired the obvious holes in the *cihua* text and improved its structure.”² Huang Lin 黃霖 speculates: “Judging from the way the chapter titles, the introductory poems of each chapter, and the first chapter have been altered, I think that whoever was responsible for the Chongzhen text was no minor author and must have been a highly accomplished literary person.”³

The contrary point of view, which regards the *xiuxiang* text as far inferior, is no less strongly defended. Shi Zhecun 施蟄存, a well-known modern writer, expressed this opinion in a 1935 colophon for a reprinting of *Jinpingmei cihua*: “It is not that the old edition (*jiuben* 舊本) is poor, but when compared with the *cihua* text, it seems to be crude and not as detailed in its portrayal. . . . If one reads the old edition again afterwards, one feels as if looking at flowers in the fog. Why? Because all the low-brow parts have been changed into something elegant, all the wordy parts into something terse and neat. Thus all the good things about the *cihua* have been turned undesirable.”⁴ Since “elegant” (*wenya* 文雅) or “terse and neat” (*jianjing* 簡淨) are usually considered positive values, the reader might suspect irony. This author, however, intends no irony. Any ambiguity we might perceive did not exist in the eyes of Shi’s contemporaries: the May Fourth generation of Chinese intellectuals characteristically elevated “low-brow” (*bili* 鄙俚) over “elegant,” and “wordy” (*tuota* 拖沓) over “terse and neat.”⁵ On this side of the Pacific

² Liu Hui, “Jinpingmei banben kao” 金瓶梅版本考, in *Jinpingmei lunji* 金瓶梅論集 (Beijing: Renmin wenzue chubanshe, 1986), pp. 237–38.

³ Huang Lin, “Guanyu Jinpingmei Chongzhenben de ruogan wenti” 關於金瓶梅崇禎本的若干問題, *Jinpingmei yanjiu* 金瓶梅研究 1 (1990): 80.

⁴ Shi’s colophon has been reprinted in *Jinpingmei ziliao huibian* 金瓶梅資料匯編, ed. Zhu Yixuan 朱一玄 (Tianjin: Nankai daxue chubanshe, 1984), pp. 172–73. The “old edition” refers to Zhang Zhupo’s edition, which was the standard edition for most of the Qing Dynasty.

⁵ For example, compare Shi’s approving use of the word *bili* with the negative use of the

Ocean and more than half a century later, David Roy also disapproves of the *xiuxiang* text, considering it “an inferior recension of the text,” edited by someone who “did not understand certain significant features of the author’s techniques, especially in the use of quoted material, for much of the poetry incorporated in the original edition is either deleted or replaced with new material that is often less relevant to the context.”⁶ As Andrew Plaks summarizes in his *The Four Masterworks of the Ming Novel*: “In view of the virtually uncontested critical judgment that the *Tz’u-hua* is the superior text for purposes of study and translation, the Ch’ung-chen text has been dismissed as a commercial abridgement, a kind of footnote to the development of the novel from its original form into the Chang Chu-p’o critical edition.”⁷

Such a division of opinion concerning the two *Jinpingmei* recensions represents two opposite kinds of aesthetic value. Both, however, share the assumption that the *cihua* text not only predates the *xiuxiang* text but also provides the textual basis for the latter. The relationship between the two recensions has been a subject of heated

term in *Wanli yehuo bian* 萬歷野獲編 by Shen Defu 沈德符 (1578–1642), one of the earliest people to write about *Jinpingmei*: “However, the original text was short of Chapters 53 to 57; a search was made for them everywhere, but they could not be found. Some ignoramus supplied them, so that the work could be printed. Leaving out of consideration their utter triviality and vulgarity, as well as their occasional use of Soochow words, the chapters he supplied do not even fit in with the novel’s sequences” 然原本實少五十三回至五十七回，遍覓不得，有陋儒補以入刻，無論膚淺鄙俚，時作吳語，即前後血脈亦絕不貫串 (Hanan’s translation, in “The Text,” p. 47). *Wanli yehuo bian* (Taipei: Weiwen tushu chubanshe, 1976), p. 1721.

⁶ “Introduction,” *The Plum in the Golden Vase or Chin Ping Mei* (Volume One: The Gathering), trans. David Roy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. xx–xxi. Also see David L. Rolston’s similarly disapproving comments on the changes effected in the *xiuxiang* edition in his *Traditional Chinese Fiction and Fiction Commentary: Reading and Writing Between the Lines* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), pp. 64–65. He argues that the production of the *xiuxiang* version was due to two reasons: a desire to lower the printing cost and a failure to understand the importance of the quoted material.

⁷ *The Four Masterworks of the Ming Novel* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), p. 66. In a footnote (#43) to this remark Plaks explains that “Hanan (“The Text,” pp. 12ff.) characterizes this edition as a commercial abridgement of the *Tz’u-hua* text.” However, besides the reason of economy (“the shorter the novel, the more cheaply it can be produced”), Hanan also conjectures that “an additional motive was probably at work; some of the excisions may have been designed to make the novel more acceptable to the contemporary reader” (“The Text,” p. 14).

debate even to this day. Until new evidence emerges, it seems to be a problem that cannot be easily settled.⁸

In this paper, however, it is not my intention to add to the discussions of the dating of the two recensions or their “kinship.” Instead, I shall compare some major differences between the two recensions, and explore their implications. Comparing *Jinpingmei* with *Shuihu zhuan*, Hanan claims: “. . . although the *Chin P'ing Mei* follows the text of the *Shui-hu chuan* fairly closely, the author has constantly subordinated it to his purpose. . . . The characters taken over from the *Shui-hu chuan* have sometimes been differently con-

⁸ On the relationship of the two recensions of *Jinpingmei*, see Zheng Zhenduo's 鄭振鐸 pioneering article, “Tan *Jinpingmei cihua*” 談金瓶梅詞話, first published under the pseudonym Guo Yuanxin 郭源新 in *Wenxue* 文學, 1.1 (1933): 165–76, and reprinted in *Jinpingmei lunji*, pp. 1–18. Hanan's “The Text” is a detailed study of all three recensions of *Jinpingmei*. He reviews the differences between the *cihua* and *xiuxiang* editions, focusing on the opening chapter and Chapters 53 to 57 (pp. 11–39). Zhu Xing 朱星 gives a brief comparison between the *cihua* text and the *xiuxiang* text in the first chapter of his *Jinpingmei kaozheng* 金瓶梅考證; he also provides a table illustrating the evolution process of the various *Jinpingmei* editions (Tianjin: Baihua wenyi chubanshe, 1980, pp. 9–13). Liu Hui expresses doubt about the dating of the so-called *xiuxiang* text to the Chongzhen years in his article “*Jinpingmei banben kao*.” Andrew Plaks goes one step further and questions the relative dating of the *cihua* text and the *xiuxiang* text: “Since the same preface used to fix the date of the *Tz'u-hua* text at 1617 is also printed in the Ch'ung-chen text, there remains very little ground for insisting on the chronological priority of the former. This is especially true in view of the fact that the earliest known exemplars of both of these texts bear full titles describing them as ‘newly reprinted’ (*hsin-k'z* 新刻). At the very least, this raises the possibility that neither of these two texts represents an approximation of the *ur*-text of the novel; thus any simple comparison of the examples we have cannot prove the order of filiation” (*The Four Masterworks*, p. 66). In his paper “The Chongzhen Commentary on the *Jin Ping Mei*: Gems amidst the Dross,” *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews*, 8.1 and 2 (1986): 19–30, Plaks further speculates that the original text of the *xiuxiang* edition may even be traced to the years of the novel's initial composition. Wang Rumei 王汝梅 offers a critique of Plaks's viewpoint in his preface to a modern edition of the *xiuxiang* text (*Xinke xiuxiang piping Jinpingmei*, coll. by Qi Yan 齊煙 and Rumei 汝梅, Hong Kong & Jinan: Sianlian shudian and Qilu shushe, 1990, pp. 8–12) and vehemently argues for a “parent and child” kinship between the *cihua* text and the *xiuxiang* text. Also see his book *Jinpingmei tansuo* 金瓶梅探索 (Changchun: Jilin daxue chubanshe, 1990), pp. 45–56. However, there remain some problems concerning the evidence used by Wang Rumei and other supporters of the “parent and child” theory, for which there are as yet no satisfactory answers. In a more recent book-length study *Jinpingmei yu Beijing* 金瓶梅與北京 (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui chubanshe, 1996), Ding Lang 丁朗 argues for the theory of a “sibling” relationship between the extant *cihua* and *xiuxiang* recensions, for which he provides some very interesting textual evidence: for instance, a dialogue that only exists in the *cihua* recension (Ch. 55) referring back to a detail that can only be found in Ch. 54 of the *xiuxiang* recension (pp. 4–6).

ceived. There are differences in narrative techniques, and more fundamental differences in the novelist's approach to his work."⁹ Such an assertion is valid not only when one compares *Shuihu zhuan* and *Jinpingmei*, but may be extended to the comparison between *Jinpingmei*'s two recensions, which show a series of divergences in terms of conceptual framework, narrative style, and characterization. The *cihua* recension is clearly grounded in a social vision and ethic that we recognize in some way as "Confucian," whether or not we tie the values in the text to one particular school of Confucianism. The *xiuxiang* recension's divergences from the *cihua* often soften the strictness of moral judgment, leaving room for compassion, for mercy, and for a discovery of the emptiness of the passions; in short, both in the details of representation and the larger restructuring of the narrative we see Buddhist values, broadly defined, playing a large role in the ideological background of the novel. I will argue that, no less than the *cihua* recension, the *xiuxiang* text is a self-conscious, fully-intentional, and well-thought-out literary construct.

The *cihua* recension, having been completely eclipsed by the *xiuxiang* recension throughout the Qing, was uncovered at a fortuitous time: the May Fourth ideology exalted "literature of the common people" and favored "low-brow" over "refined,"¹⁰ which led directly to the conclusion that the less polished *cihua* text must be closer to the *ur-text*, and that the *xiuxiang* text must be a later version, revised to suit the taste of a more elite readership, or to lower the printing costs, or both.¹¹ The reception history of the two recensions of *Jinpingmei* is a fine illustration of how the judgment of a literary text is largely the function of a particular historical period. Recognition of the historical contingency of judgment leaves room for us to prefer

⁹ "Sources of the *Chin Ping Mei*," *AM*, 10.1 (1963): 26.

¹⁰ The suggestion that *Jinpingmei cihua* was a product of the collective wisdom of "folk artists" (e.g. professional storytellers) over a period of many years, first raised by Pan Kaipei 潘開沛 in 1954, is very much the result of such May Fourth ideology and the Marxist literary theory then predominant in China. See "*Jinpingmei de chansheng he zuozhe*" 金瓶梅的產生和作者, *Guangming Ribao* 光明日報, August 29, 1954. This hypothesis has acquired many followers since then. See Plaks, *The Four Masterworks*, pp. 69–70.

¹¹ The first person who made this hugely influential judgment, Zheng Zhenduo, was a champion of "folk literature" and, like his contemporaries, believed in a Darwinian sort of evolution of literature from "primitive artlessness" to "cultured refinement." *Jinpingmei lunji*, pp. 14–16.

one version (or like both equally) without feeling the necessity to argue for the “superiority” of one recension while proving the “inferiority” of the other.

A BOOK OF AUTUMN

Many *Jinpingmei* scholars have noticed how the different opening of the *xiuxiang* text changes the structural design of the novel: while the *cihua* text starts with Wu Song’s 武松 killing of the tiger, the *xiuxiang* text begins with a description of Ximen Qing 西門慶 and his sworn brotherhood, thus shifting the emphasis from Wu Song, the tiger-slaying hero, to the real “hero” of *Jinpingmei*.¹² Even in the so-called prologue sections of Chapter 1, in which the narrator introduces the book’s primary concerns, we already see a striking difference: starting with a *ci* 詞 lyric by the Song poet Zhuo Tian 卓田 (fl. ca. 1200), the *cihua* text warns the reader about the danger of qingse 情色 (sexual passions, or “passion and beauty” as rendered by David Roy),¹³ whereas the *xiuxiang* text opens with a *yuefu* 樂府 poem by the Tang woman poet Cheng Changwen 程長文, entitled “Copper Bird Terrace” 銅雀臺 (*Tongque tai*).¹⁴ Copper Bird Terrace

¹² Zheng Zhenduo suggests that the *xiuxiang* text is obviously influenced by the conventions of drama, according to which the male leading role appears before the female leading role (*Jinpingmei lunji*, p. 15). He may have been inspired by a remark in Zhang Zhupo’s *Jinpingmei dufa* 金瓶梅讀法 48: “Nowadays when people write a play they always introduce the roster of major characters in the first few scenes. How much the more one might expect this to be true of the *Chin Ping Mei*, which is one of the most extraordinary books in the world?” *Gaohetang Jinpingmei*, vol. 1, *Dufa*, 20b; trans. David Roy, in *How to Read the Chinese Novel*, ed. David L. Rolston (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 229. Andrew Plaks rightly observes: “The openings of both of these recensions retain the same aesthetic function—that of breaking the narrative ice while explicitly raising some of the fundamental issues to be addressed in the book” (*The Four Masterworks*, p. 77).

¹³ *Jinpingmei cihua*, 2.47. Roy, 1.12.

¹⁴ Cheng Changwen’s poem is recorded in two Song anthologies: *Wenyuan yinghua* 文苑英華 (completed in 987), *juan* 204 (rpt., Taipei: Xinwenfeng chuban gongsi, 1979), p. 1013; and *Yuefu shiji* 樂府詩集, ed. Guo Maoqian 郭茂倩 (ca. 11th century), *juan* 31 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1991), p. 461. Also see vol. 11 of *Quan Tang shi* 全唐詩 (Taipei: Minglun chubanshe, 1971), p. 8997. There are a few variants in Cheng’s poem. The one change presumably made by the *xiuxiang* author to better suit the content of the novel is to replace “monarch” (*junwang* 君王) with “splendor” (*haohua* 豪華) in the first line: “After the monarch is gone, no one comes by” 君王去後行人絕. The last line of the poem, however, gives clear indication of the poem’s subject matter despite the substitution, as it mentions the Western Tomb, where Cao Cao was buried.

was built in 210 by Cao Cao 曹操 (155–220), who ordered that his concubines should take up residence on the Terrace after his death and play music, sing, and dance in front of his spirit tablet twice a month. This became a favorite poetic topic starting in the fifth century, and Cheng Changwen's poem makes use of many conventional images of the "Copper Bird Terrace" poems by poets of the Southern Dynasties (420–589), in particular a poem by Jiang Yan 江淹 (444–505).¹⁵ Opening the novel with Cheng's poem foreshadows the aftermath of Ximen Qing's death: just as Cao Cao commanded that his palace ladies remain together to honor his memory, on his deathbed Ximen Qing makes a request that his wives stay together; though one after another they leave the household after he dies. Whether gratified or not, such a desire is essentially hollow, for the women themselves would eventually be swept away, as the last couplet of the poem tells us directly: "Those who sang and danced then would not come back, / but had turned into today's ashes of the Western Tomb" 當時歌舞人不回，化爲今日西陵灰. Cheng's poem ends on a note of the vanity of worldly desires and splendor, and the prose prologue of the *xiuxiang* text proceeds to highlight the futility of the four common vices—wine, sex, greed and wrath (*jiu se cai qi* 酒色財氣). The didactic message in the preamble of either recension would hardly be unfamiliar to a reader acquainted with classical Chinese literature: many poems and stories deal with the fatal obsession with sexual passion; as for the peril of the four vices, Sun Shuyu 孫述宇 has pointed out how the structure of the novel shows the influence of Yuan deliverance plays, such as *Yellow Millet Dream* (*Huangliang meng* 黃梁夢) by Ma Zhiyuan 馬政遠 (ca. 1250–1321), in which the Daoist immortal Zhongli Quan 鍾離權 lectures

¹⁵ *Yuefu shiji*, p. 457. Cao Cao's last wish must have been part of the general knowledge of Ming readers, probably less because of the long poetic tradition than because of the description in Chapter 78 of the popular novel, *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (*Sanguozhi yanyi* 三國志演義). Thus, the *Jinpingmei* scholar Wei Ziyun's 魏子雲 argument, that the *xiuxiang* author must have deliberately replaced the opening lyric of the *cihua* recension to avoid political overtones evoked by the *cihua* lyric's reference to the Han emperor Liu Bang 劉邦 (256–195 B.C.) and his rival Xiang Yu 項羽 (232–202 B.C.), does not hold, for Cao Cao, a target of satire on account of his attachment to "passion and beauty" (*qingse*), was as much a ruler as Liu Bang and Xiang Yu. In other words, it is not possible to determine the chronological priority of the *cihua* recension on such a basis. See Wei Ziyun, *Jinpingmei de wenshi yu yanbian* 金瓶梅的問世與演變 (Taipei: Shibao wenhua chuban gongsi, 1981), pp. 81–150.

on the evil of “wine, sex, greed and wrath,”¹⁶ and these four vices are also what the founder of Quanzhen Daoism 全真道教, Wang Chongyang 王重陽 (1112–1170), had warned against as the fundamental limitations of a human being.¹⁷ Yet, it is worth noting that the preambles of the two recensions present the reader with two quite distinct kinds of conventional wisdom: the moralizing of the *cihua* text is solidly set within the framework of the social world, as it asks the reader to be “upright men and virtuous women” (*duan-shi shunü* 端士淑女 and avoid excess so as to be spared from “the calamity of unnatural death” (*shashen zhi huo* 殺身之禍). The *xiuxiang* text also advises against greed and sexual passions, but for a somewhat different reason: it is not just that they may lead a person to a bad end, but, more importantly, the inevitability of death makes money and sex futile.¹⁸ After dwelling at some length on the true nature of money and sex, the *xiuxiang* narrator concludes: “Only two lines from the Diamond Sutra say it well: ‘Life is like a dream, a bubble; it is like lightening, and also like the morning dew.’ From this we see that when a person is alive, he cannot afford lacking either (money or sex); but when life comes to an end, he shall have use for neither” 只有那金剛經上兩句說得好。他說道：‘如夢幻泡影，如電復如露。’見得人生在世，一件也少不得；到了那結果時，一件也用不著。¹⁹

In contrast with the *cihua* recension’s instruction in proper moral conduct in human society, the *xiuxiang* text continues its warning on the vanity of sex and money by advising the reader to renounce the world and take Buddhist vows. This foreshadows the fate of Ximen Qing’s heir (and reincarnation) Xiaoge 孝哥 in the final chap-

¹⁶ *Jinpingmei de yishu* 金瓶梅的藝術 (Taipei: Shibao wenhua chuban gongsi, 1978), pp. 112–13. *The Yellow Millet Dream* is included in *Yuanqu xuan jiaozhu* 元曲選校注, ed. Wang Xueqi 王學奇 (Shijiazhuang: Hebei Renmin chubanshe, 1994), pp. 2014–44.

¹⁷ See Wilt L. Idema, “Skulls and Skeletons in Art and on Stage,” in *Conflict and Accommodation in Early Modern East Asia*, eds. Leonard Blussé and Harriet T. Zurndorfer (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1993), pp. 202–13.

¹⁸ *Jinpingmei cihua*, 2.51; Roy, 1.16. Indira Suh Satyendra, in her Ph.D. dissertation, “Toward a Poetics of the Chinese Novel: A Study of the Prefatory Poems in the ‘Chin P’ing Mei tz’u-hua’,” comes to a similar conclusion regarding the different tones of the two opening lyrics: “Where the B narrator suggests freeing oneself from desires, the *tz’u-hua* hopes that one will keep them in check. . . . Where the B edition believes in transcendence and emptiness, the *tz’u-hua* recommends engagement with society. . . .” University of Chicago, 1989), p. 28.

¹⁹ *Xinke xiuxiang piping Jinpingmei*, Ch. 1, 3a–b.

ter: led away by the old monk Pujing 普靜, Xiaoge becomes Pujing's disciple and is given a new name, Mingwu 明悟 (Bright Enlightenment). Within the context of the *cihua* text Xiaoge's conversion to Buddhism (hence the termination of Ximen Qing's family line) is no more than a punishment for Ximen Qing's dissolute life (and an opportunity for him to redeem his sins); in the *xiuxiang* text Xiaoge's destiny takes on an additional meaning: it is the long-deferred fulfillment of the narrator's initial exhortation.²⁰ Moreover, the suffering and wasted desire in the intervening chapters lends a force and depth to this solution that was missing in the conventionally pious Buddhist formulations at the beginning of the novel. The narrator's preamble in the *xiuxiang* text therefore turns out to be something more than just a customary way of breaking the narrative ice: it sets up the larger conceptual structure of the novel.

²⁰ Chapter 84 deserves special mentioning, for its divergences in the two recensions exemplify, among other things, the different narrative emphases of the two texts. This chapter relates Wu Yueniang's visit to the temple on Mount Tai, where she is harassed by a local bully Yin Tianxi 殷天錫. During her escape, she encounters the old monk Pujing in a grotto, who offers Yueniang, her brother, and the two servants a shelter for the night. In the morning, when Yueniang thanks him, he declines the gift of a bolt of cloth and asks to have Yueniang's son, Xiaoge, for his disciple. Since Xiaoge is still an infant, the old monk says he will claim him fifteen years later. Yueniang agrees and resumes her journey home. Chapter 84 of the *xiuxiang* text ends here, but in the *cihua* recension, Yueniang has yet another adventure: she is waylaid by the bandit chief Wang Ying 王英, who wants to marry her; fortunately Song Jiang 宋江 intervenes and she is freed. Wang Ying, Song Jiang, and even the villain Yin Tianxi are all *Shuihu zhuan* characters. Concluding the chapter with Pujing's request for Xiaoge as his disciple not only keeps the narrative from slipping into a "footnote" to *Shuihu zhuan* but, more importantly, accentuates the importance of Wu Yueniang's promise. In the same chapter, a few other divergences which lend weight to the motif of Buddhist redemption in the *xiuxiang* recension are also worth mentioning: (1) The Daoist Shi Bocai 石伯才 at the temple on Mount Tai has two disciples, who are said to be his helpers by day and lovers by night. In the *cihua* recension, there is an "aside" on the part of the narrator, starting with "Gentle reader take note" (*kanguan tingshuo* 看官聽說). What follows is a warning about sending one's children to Buddhist or Daoist temples as disciples, because nine out of ten will become the victim of the sexual depravity of their masters. This admonition, which would have created a problematic tension with Pujing's request for Xiaoge as a disciple, is not found in the *xiuxiang* recension. (2) After Yueniang takes leave of Pujing, the narrator of the *cihua* recension offers yet another "aside:" "Gentle reader take note: Yueniang should not have promised her son to the Master that day, for fifteen years later, in the chaos of the war, when Yueniang and her son Xiaoge were on their way to He'nan to seek refuge with Yun Lishou, they encountered the Master again, and Xiaoge shaved off his hair and became a monk at Yongfu Temple." The *cihua* narrator thus summarizes the ending of *Jinpingmei*, as well as gently reproves Yueniang for her agreement with the monk. This "aside" again does not appear in the *xiuxiang* recension.

Many of the differences between the two recensions in the story proper follow from these two distinct ideological positions, stated so clearly in the two versions of the prologue. This contrast is further underlined when we consider how the first part of Chapter 1 in the *xiuxiang* recension contributes to one of the most important themes of *Jinpingmei*: death. *Jinpingmei* is a novel intensely concerned with the power and pathos of death: never before had any Chinese narrative represented death and decay in such detail (devoting, for instance, eight chapters to the death of Guange 官哥 and his mother Li Ping'er 李瓶兒, Ximen Qing's sixth wife). The force of death in the novel is no less present in the eager evasion of, and passionate indifference to death, on the part of the living.²¹ *Jinpingmei* is certainly a very sensual novel in the sense that it attends to every minute detail of physical reality; and yet, the sensual world of *Jinpingmei* is extremely fragile, darkened by the shadow of death from beginning to end.

The opening section of the *cihua* text relates how Wu Song kills the tiger on his way home and encounters Wu Da 武大 (Wu the Elder), his elder brother who sells pancakes. The rest of the chapter basically follows *Shuihu zhuan* in narrating how Wu Song moves in with his brother and sister-in-law Pan Jinlian 潘金蓮 at the latter's invitation, how Pan Jinlian fails to seduce Wu Song, and how Wu Song moves out. Ximen Qing does not make his appearance till in Chapter 2. The *xiuxiang* text, however, starts with the introduction of Ximen Qing and his family and friends. After a lengthy description of Ximen Qing's background, we come to the "text proper" (*zhengwen* 正文), which begins with Ximen's chatting with his wife Wu Yueniang 吳月娘: "One day, while Ximen Qing was sitting around at leisure, he said to Wu Yueniang: 'Today is the twenty-fifth day of the ninth month. The third day of next month will be the gathering date for me and my brothers.'"²² For a novel

²¹ *Jinpingmei*'s source novel, *Shuihu zhuan*, is filled with stories of violence. In it we see characters killed almost in every chapter, but it does not dwell on the phenomenon of death, nor does it describe in detail the slow decline of a young life. Moreover, the *Shuihu zhuan* heroes react to death in a stoic way: for example, Lin Chong 林沖, one of the few *Shuihu zhuan* heroes who has something resembling a romantic relationship with his wife, bursts into tears upon hearing of her suicide, and then promptly gets over it (Ch. 20).

²² *Xinke xiuxiang piping Jinpingmei*, Ch. 1, 7a.

that pays such attention to dates and the description of day-to-day reality, it is significant that Ximen Qing's first remark—and indeed the very first remark by any character in this novel—indicates clearly the date on which the novel commences. In a novel that, moreover, pays such close attention to the symbolic meanings of seasons and festivals,²³ we should note that the novel opens with autumn, a season of maturation and decay. In both recensions the novel ends with the season of autumn: the cold breeze that blows over the monk Pujing, who is praying for the ghosts, is the “metal wind” (*jin feng* 金風), a traditional reference to the autumn wind.²⁴

The shadow of death always hovers over the characters of *Jinpingmei*. If the *cihua* text begins with an image of superhuman heroism and violence (Wu Song punching a tiger to death with bare hands), then the opening chapter of the *xiuxiang* text focuses on the mundane world, while skillfully bringing out the threatening power of death in the light-hearted bantering of Ximen Qing and his friends. Ximen Qing's conversation with his wife is interrupted by the visit of Ximen's best friends, Ying Bojue 應伯爵 and Xie Xida 謝希大, who, while commenting on the beauty of the young courtesan Li Guijie 李桂姐 and discussing how they should celebrate their gathering, report the death of Bu Zhidao 卜志道, one of Ximen Qing's nine “good friends.” The indifferent reaction of the three friends to the death of their “fellow brother”—a perfunctory sigh and a discussion about who should “fill in” the blank left by the dead, so that the number of “ten” brothers may be kept unchanged—not only foretells what will happen to Ximen Qing himself (as Zhang Zhupo points out in his commentary), but also anticipates the fate of Hua Zixu 花子虛, the candidate who “fills in” Bu Zhidao's position. We may compare this with Wu Song's reaction to the death of his real brother Wu Da: from “bursting into tears” (Chapter 9), he proceeds to single-minded revenge. The one touch of genius here, however, is Ximen Qing's response: “I heard that he'd been sick, but who could have known he would die in no more than a few days

²³ Andrew Plaks gives a detailed analysis of the author's careful manipulation of seasonal changes in the novel as a structural device in *The Four Masterworks*, pp. 80–85.

²⁴ Autumn belongs to “metal” (jin 金) in the sequence of the Five Phases. The first illustration in the *xiuxiang* text clearly shows a autumnal landscape, as the trees are painted with bare branches.

like this. Some days ago he gave me a golden Sichuan fan, and I was just thinking about returning the favor—never could I imagine he had already become one of the departed.”²⁵ While in the *cihua* text this fan is connected with Bu Zhidao (a name not previously mentioned) only in Chapter 8, the *xiuxiang* text explicitly links it with Bu Zhidao at the very beginning of the novel.

Contemporary Southern plays (*chuanqi* 傳奇) often took their titles from objects that circulated within the play and came to be invested with complex significance. The early appearance in the novel of such a “special” object, the gift of a now dead friend, is an invitation to readers to pay attention to it and track its history. This “golden” or “gold-flecked Sichuan fan” (*zhenjin* 真金 or *sajin Chuan shan'er* 洒金川扇兒) does turn out to be an important prop in the early part of the novel.²⁶ In both recensions Ximen Qing’s affair with Pan Jinlian is punctuated by the fan. On that fatal day in the third month when Pan Jinlian first encounters Ximen Qing, the Ximen Qing seen through the eyes of Pan Jinlian is “swaying a gold-specked Sichuan fan” (Chapter 2); the next appearance of the fan occurs in Chapter 3, when Ximen Qing comes to the teashop with Old Woman Wang 王婆 and succeeds in seducing Pan Jinlian. In Chapter 8, when Ximen Qing is finally dragged to Jinlian’s place by Old Woman Wang after an absence of two months, Jinlian is at once angry, resentful, and burning with jealousy. She first examines the gold hairpin he is wearing (a hairpin which belongs to Meng Yulou 孟玉樓); then she snatches the fan from his hand: “a fine gold-flecked Szechwan fan, with red slats and a gold hinge-joint,” with “traces of tooth-marks” all over it.²⁷ Suspecting it is a gift from some sweetheart because of the tooth-marks, Jinlian tears the fan apart. Ximen Qing claims that the fan was given to him by his friend Bu Zhidao, and that he has been using it for only three days. This may very well be just another lie, like his explanation for the replacement of Jinlian’s hairpin with Meng Yulou’s; but in any case, this is the last we see of this “gold-flecked Sichuan fan.”

As soon as a fan is mentioned, any premodern Chinese reader

²⁵ *Xinke xiuxiang piping Jinpingmei*, Ch. 1, 9a.

²⁶ Zhang Zhupo gives a lengthy discussion of the function of the fan in the opening commentary on Chapter 3. *Gaohetang Jinpingmei*, 3.2a–4a.

²⁷ Roy, 1.159; *Jinpingmei cihua*, 3.224–25; *Xinke xiuxiang piping Jinpingmei*, Ch. 8, 7b.

would recall the song of the round fan attributed to Lady Ban 班婕妤 (first century B.C.). In this poem the fan becomes the figure of a woman: “I always fear that autumn will come, / and cold wind will snatch away the summer heat. / Then I will be cast away and put in the box, / our shared love will be severed midway.”²⁸ Lady Ban’s poem forever associated the fan with seasonality; yet we realize that Bu Zhidao gave Ximen Qing the fan in autumn, judging from Ximen Qing’s account of the gift as having been presented to him “some days ago” (*qian ri* 前日) in the context of the precise date of the opening scene. The fan, therefore, is an unseasonable gift, something to be put away soon after it is presented. While I do not want to go so far as to suggest that it foreshadows the fate of the many mistresses of Ximen Qing, the fan certainly takes on a certain shadow of darkness because of the early death of a character whose name puns not only on “having no idea” (*bu zhidao* 不知道) but also on “not knowing the Way” (*buzhi dao*). If we continue to see this fan in Ximen Qing’s encounters with Pan Jinlian, we recognize it less as a seasonably functional implement than as a fashionable accouterment and a signifier of the means of cooling passion’s heat until the heat itself cools and dissipates.

Another significant difference in the opening section of the *xiuxiang* text, a difference that also bears on the theme of death and doom, occurs in the case of yet another secondary character, Zhuo Diu’er 卓丟兒. In the *cihua* text, Zhuo Diu’er is mentioned four times, each time briefly and perfunctorily: in Chapter 2, when she is introduced as an ex-courtesan and Ximen Qing’s third wife; in Chapter 3, when Ximen Qing says she is sick; in Chapter 6, where she is reported dead, and in Chapter 7, when the matchmaker Auntie Xue 薛嫂 proposes to Ximen Qing that the widow Meng Yulou would be the best person to replace (*ding* 頂) the deceased Zhuo Diu’er, very much in the same way that Hua Zixu “fills in” (*bu* 補) for Bu Zhidao. This last appearance of Zhuo Diu’er in the *cihua* text coincides with the *xiuxiang* text; in the *xiuxiang* recension, however, she had been given a larger role, which makes her death more significant.

²⁸ Lu Qinli 遼欽立, ed., *Xiangin Han Wei Jin Nanbeichao shi* 先秦漢魏晉南北朝詩 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1995), pp. 116-17.

In Chapter 1 of the *xiuxiang* text, Zhuo Diu'er is described as having a slim build and a weak constitution, which prepares the reader for her early death. Wu Yueniang twice uses Zhuo Diu'er's poor health as an excuse to persuade Ximen Qing to drink less and come home early. In the same chapter, Ximen Qing is going to summon a doctor to diagnose Zhuo's illness, when he is interrupted by the visit of Ying Bojue, who brings him the news of the tiger-slaying and invites Ximen Qing to come and watch the parade. Honey-tongued as ever, Ying Bojue's first remark on coming into Ximen's sitting-room is an inquiry after Zhuo Diu'er's health. But their conversation promptly changes direction, and Ximen Qing is easily persuaded to go out and watch the parade, and never gets around to summoning the doctor.

In Chapter 2 of the *xiuxiang* text, the narrator informs us that on the spring day when Ximen Qing first saw Pan Jinlian, he was strolling on the street because "his third wife Zhuo the Second had died and her funeral service was just over, and he was feeling rather down. . . . and he was going to look for Ying Bojue so that they could go somewhere together to have fun and divert himself."²⁹ The diversion he finds is Pan Jinlian. Just as in the *cihua* text, Zhuo Diu'er's death is mentioned in the conversation between Ximen Qing and Old Woman Wang in Chapter 3; but in Chapter 6, when in the *cihua* text Ximen Qing uses Zhuo Diu'er's funeral service as a credible excuse for his two-day absence from Jinlian's house, the *xiuxiang* text has him say ambiguously: "I was preoccupied in the past two days" 這兩天有些事. We might let this go as an unimportant detail, and yet, Jinlian's question—"Did you find yourself another sweetheart?" (noted by Zhang Zhupo as a "transition passage" [*guowen* 過文] for Meng Yulou³⁰)—and the coincidence of Ximen Qing spending two days negotiating his marriage with Meng Yulou (Zhuo Diu'er's "replacement") in the next chapter (which could be a narrative flashback) cannot but strike a careful reader as portentous.³¹

Zhuo Diu'er's personal name means "one who is lost" or "cast

²⁹ *Xinke xiuxiang piping Jinpingmei*, Ch.2, 12b-13a.

³⁰ *Gaohetang Jinpingmei*, 6.1a.

³¹ *Xinke xiuxiang piping Jinpingmei*, Ch. 6, 6a.

away.” In some sense she is a narrative “throw-away,” the mere name of a person removed from the novel before she has a chance to appear. Yet like Bu Zhidao, her death opens a vacancy to be filled by another, suggesting something of the impermanence of particular persons in human relationships. Her very name anticipates the end of Ximen Qing’s other wives who, except for Wu Yueniang, one after another leave his house (*diukai shou* 丟開手) after his death. Zhuo Diu’er in particular foreshadows Li Ping’er in terms of poor health, slow decay, and an early death. Comparing Ximen Qing’s response to the illnesses of these two women, we see more clearly how deeply he is attached to Ping’er. Even Ying Bojue’s reaction shows a striking difference: in the case of Li Ping’er, he is eager to stay around and help out. Thus the more detailed portrayal of Zhuo Diu’er in the *xiuxiang* text weaves her name and fate together with those of the other women characters.

To introduce Ximen Qing and his friends and family at the very beginning of the *xiuxiang* recension is, therefore, not just a device to bring out the major characters, as in the opening scenes of a play; it serves a variety of narrative and artistic functions, one of the most significant of which is raising the specter of death. If the enumeration of Ximen Qing’s family members, servants, and friends evokes many more living people than in the first chapter of the *chihua* text, it also foregrounds death and loss. The dead tiger’s resemblance to a “brocade bag” is a prominent image in the middle of Chapter 1 of the *xiuxiang* text, both separating and connecting the worlds of Ximen Qing and Pan Jinlian described in the two halves of the chapter. In both recensions, the tiger is the ultimate symbol of the (sexual) voraciousness, death, and violence which permeate the whole novel. In the *xiuxiang* text, the symbolic importance of the tiger is underlined in various ways. Noticing a painted tiger on the wall of the Temple of the Jade Emperor where the ten friends swear their brotherhood, Ying Bojue jokes how he and the other brothers are tigers that “eat off” the wealthy Ximen Qing (punning on *chi ni* 吃你); this, in turn, draws out a report about the existence of a real tiger on Jingyang Ridge 景陽岡 (the one later slain by Wu Song), which further draws out a joke about how a stingy man in the mouth of a tiger asks his son, coming to rescue him, not to destroy the tiger-skin. Everyone laughs at Ying Bojue’s jokes, and the reader

perhaps laughs no less. If, however, we consider how down to the very last chapter of the book these sworn brothers one after another betray Ximen Qing, Ying Bojue's light-hearted bantering suddenly takes on a darker meaning. Finally, it is none other than Ying Bojue who later in Chapter 1 of the *xiuxiang* text informs Ximen Qing of the news of Wu Song's slaying of the tiger, and it is again Ying Bojue who tells Ximen Qing the tiger-slaying story—a playful parody of the vivid description of the tiger-killing in the source novel *Shuihu zhuan*, which is taken over in total by the *cihua* text.³²

In the *xiuxiang* text, how Wu Song kills the tiger becomes a mere story in the mouth of a character who jokingly compares himself to a “tiger.” The savagery of the tiger-slaying depicted in the *cihua* text in the detailed prose narration and a poem of thirty lines is conveyed in a more economical and implicit way: in the account of Ying Bojue and in an encomium of Wu Song's physical appearance, which emphasizes his tall and strong build, bright eyes, bludgeon-like fists, his “jacket reeking of blood,” and “a piece of red brocade,” apparently put on him by the hunters as a sign of honor and glory. Watching Wu Song riding down the street on a white horse in the parade, Ximen Qing cannot help feeling chilled. Biting his nails nervously, he says with a combination of awe and admiration: “Look at this man—how could he even manage to touch the tiger if he did not have an immense reservoir of strength like a bull's!”³³ In the *xiuxiang* text, Ximen Qing's remark is almost exactly the same as Jinlian's unspoken thought upon seeing Wu Song: “His body seemed to be possessed of boundless strength. Were this not so, how

³² In contrast with the long description of Wu Song's feat on Jingyang Ridge in the *cihua* text, Ying Bojue's relation of the tiger-slaying story in the *xiuxiang* recension takes no more than a few lines: “Bojue said: ‘Big brother, no wonder you don't believe it—just listen to me, and I will give you a full account.’ Thereupon he started telling Ximen Qing, aided with plenty of gesticulations, all about how that man named Wu Song and numbering the second in the Wu family was hiding at the residence of Master Chai, how he later fell sick, how, upon recovery, he decided to look for his elder brother, how he was crossing Jingyang Ridge when he encountered the tiger, and how he killed the tiger with his bare hands. Bojue related the whole story in such great detail that it was as if he had seen it with his own eyes, or as if he had slaughtered the tiger himself. After he finished, Ximen Qing shook his head and said: ‘If it is so, let's eat first and then go watch the parade together.’” *Ibid.*, Ch. 1, 19b.

³³ *Ibid.*, Ch. 1, 20a. Note that the *cihua* text does not contain this remark by Ximen Qing, as he has never seen Wu Song in the parade.

could he have overcome the tiger?”³⁴ This thought already links her inextricably with Ximen Qing, albeit through the unlikely character of Wu Song, whose brutal slaying of the tiger foreshadows the tragic finale of Jinlian’s life. In the bloody color of Wu Song’s jacket—the first explicit depiction of clothes in a novel that celebrates clothes down to the last detail—we already smell a pungent odor of blood and death.

The *xiuxiang* text represents the tiger first in a painting; then in a pun (“eating you off”), a piece of news, and a joke; then in a “real” story told by Ying Bojue; and finally, as a heavy “brocade bag” seen through Ximen Qing’s own eyes. This increasing “realization” of the tiger (from a mere image to the “real thing”) mirrors a reversed process in the figuration of the novel: since Wu Song’s tiger-slaying is related by Ying Bojue, we have a narrator telling a story about a fictional character telling a story about a fictional hero. The receding reflections of “reality” not only embody the writing of a novel but also symbolize the emptiness of emptiness, the ultimate vanity of all things: it is an artistic confirmation of the Buddhist conceptual framework laid out by the narrator at the very beginning of the *xiuxiang* recension of *Jinpingmei*.

A DARK REFLECTION ON “BROTHERHOOD”

The four “masterworks” of the Ming novel, *Shuihu zhuan*, *Sanguozhi yanyi*, *Xiyou ji*, and *Jinpingmei*, are all concerned to a certain degree with “male bonding.” *Shuihu zhuan* and *Sanguozhi yanyi* provide Chinese readers with the two most well-known examples of sworn brotherhood. In *Xiyou ji*, Monkey’s relationship with Pigsy and Sandy is also one of brotherhood (*shi xiongdi* 師兄弟, i.e. the brotherhood that results from sharing the same teacher), manifesting all the facets of sibling rivalry and brotherly affection and loyalty. *Jinpingmei*, the latest of these four “masterworks,” explores the issues of real and imagined brotherhood with a more critical eye. Various pairs of brothers by blood are depicted in *Jinpingmei*, and their

³⁴ Roy, 1.32; *Jinpingmei cihua*, 2.72; *Xinke xiuxiang piping Jinpingmei*, Ch. 1, 26a. There is a slight textual variance between the *cihua* text and the *xiuxiang* version as the latter makes it more explicit that this observation is Jinlian’s thought.

relationships with each other form an intricate web of parallels and contrasts: we have, for instance, Wu Da and Wu Song, Han Daoguo 韓道國 and Han Er 韓二 (or Han Erdaogui 韓二搗鬼), Hua Da 花大 (Hua Ziyou 花子由) and Hua Er 花二 (Hua Zixu),³⁵ and even Ying Bojue (Ying Er 應二) has an elder brother Ying the Elder 應大, who remains in the background but whose relation with Bojue is suggestively represented (Chapters. 67, 97). In this light, the formation of the sworn brotherhood in the opening section of the *xiuxiang* text, rather than being an irrelevant detail intended as a mere burlesque, takes on a special meaning. By explicitly making Ximen Qing's relationship with his nine friends one of "sworn brothers," the author of the *xiuxiang* text foregrounds the issue of male relationships.³⁶ We should note that in the other three Ming novels the portrayal of brotherhood offers mostly positive role models for male readers. The loyalty and affection shown to one another among the one hundred and eight sworn brothers in the *Shuihu zhuan*, despite occasional conflicts, is a good example of praiseworthy male bonding. Liu Bei 劉備, Guan Yu 關羽, and Zhang Fei 張飛 in *Sanguo* are described as "limbs of the same body" (*shouzu* 手足), and despite its heavy price (Liu Bei suffers a serious military setback in an attempt to avenge the death of Guan Yu), their brotherly love itself is never undermined. In contrast, brotherhood (real or sworn) depicted in *Jinpingmei* is often marked by betrayal, malice, and deception. Han Er, for example, carries on an adulterous affair with his sister-in-law; Hua Zixu is sued by his three brothers in Chapter 14 because of a dispute over family inheritance, and this lawsuit indirectly leads to his death. Ying Bojue complains to Ximen Qing that his more prosperous elder brother does not care about Ying Bojue's financial hardship (Chapter 67); the complaint is substantiated in Chapter 97 where Ying Bojue's daughter, left in her uncle's care after her father's death, has her marriage prospects limited by her uncle's refusal to provide an adequate dowry. The author seems to be con-

³⁵ Hua Zixu is the second of four brothers, but Hua the Third and Hua the Fourth are not as conspicuous in the novel as Hua the Elder.

³⁶ In the *cihua* recension, Ximen Qing's relationship with his nine friends is introduced in Ch. 10 and again in Ch. 11. Although Ximen Qing is referred to as "big brother" (*dage* 大哥) in both places, the *cihua* text does not make the sworn brotherhood as explicit as in the *xiuxiang* recension, nor does it contain any description of the elaborate brotherhood-forming ceremony that we find in Chapter 1 of the *xiuxiang* recension.

sciously parodying not just the opening scene of *Sanguo* as Plaks points out,³⁷ but also the very idea of male bonding as lauded in historical romances and heroic fiction in general.³⁸

In the *cihua* recension, the title of the first chapter, “On Jingyang Ridge Wu Song Slays the Tiger; Pan Jinlian Detests Her Husband and Flaunts Her Charms” 景陽崗武松打虎，潘金蓮嫌夫賣風月, sets up an interesting relationship between Wu Song, Pan Jinlian, Wu Da, and the slain tiger. In the prologue, Pan Jinlian’s parallel with the tiger is made explicit in the phrase “a beautiful woman who is embodied in a tiger” (*huzhong meinü* 虎中美女).³⁹ The rough parallelism of the chapter title, however, also puts Wu Song and Pan Jinlian in corresponding positions, and Jinlian’s posture in the murder of Wu Da—sitting astride his body and pressing down the quilt so that he can neither shout for help nor move—uncannily recalls Wu Song’s maneuvers in slaying the tiger. Jinlian, the most famous *femme fatale* in Chinese literature, is therefore “embodied” in both the tiger and the tiger-slaying hero.

The title of Chapter 1 is completely different in the *xiuxiang* text: “Ximen Qing Fervently Forms Sworn Brotherhood with Ten Friends; Wu the Second Coolly Encounters His Real Brother and Sister-in-law” 西門慶熱結十兄弟，武二郎冷遇親哥嫂. Instead of the figuration of the woman as tiger/tiger-slaying hero, we have, in the antithesis of “heat” and “cold,” an explicit indication of one of the book’s major themes, as “heat and cold” (*yanliang* 炎涼) denotes the mutability of human relationships with changing fortunes.⁴⁰ Besides the opposition between heat and cold, the contrast between the two

³⁷ *The Four Masterworks*, p. 77. In the oath the ten brothers swear, they explicitly refer to the brotherhood of Liu Bei, Guan Yu, and Zhang Fei in *Sanguo* as their model.

³⁸ In the conflict-ridden relationships between Ximen Qing’s women, we see a mirror image of the problematic male bonding in *Jinpingmei*, especially as Ximen Qing’s wives customarily call each other “sister.” One noticeable detail is how Wu Yueniang addresses Li Ping’er: as the wife of Hua Er, Ping’er is called Hua Erniang 花二娘; after she marries Ximen Qing, she becomes the sixth wife (*liuniang* 六娘), but instead of calling her liujie 六姐 (as the third wife Yulou is called *sanjie* 三姐 and the fifth wife Jinlian *wujie* 五姐), Yueniang often uses *dajie* 大姐, the appellation reserved for the principal wife, to refer to Ping’er. This reminds us of the brotherhood-forming scene in the *xiuxiang* text, in which Ying Bojue insists that wealth and power, instead of age, should be the standard by which they decide the order of brothers, thus Ximen Qing, despite being much younger than Bojue, becomes the big brother.

³⁹ Roy, 1.16.

⁴⁰ See Plaks’s analysis of the “cold and heat” imagery in the novel. *The Four Masterworks*, pp. 81–85.

kinds of brotherhood is even more important. The “hot” sworn brotherhood is set up in the first chapter only to be subverted and satirized in the remainder of the novel, which peels away the true nature of the brotherhood layer by layer, as Ximen Qing first betrays Hua Zixu, and then one after another the remaining brothers betray Ximen Qing. The perfidious treachery of the sworn brothers culminates in the threatening dream-vision of Wu Yueniang in the last chapter, in which the seventh brother Yun Lishou 雲理守 (雪離守 in the *cihua* text) kills Ximen Qing’s sole heir Xiaoge and forces himself on Yueniang. The structural symmetry and thematic consistency of the *xiuxiang* text are thus reinforced.⁴¹

The irony implicit in the title of Chapter 1 in the *xiuxiang* text occurs on both an obvious and a more latent level. On the one hand, the sworn brotherhood, formed in apparent warmth (*re* 熱) and with a great deal of ado (the ritual, the oath, and the banquet), is marked by emotional coldness underneath. On the other hand, we see a pair of real brothers whose encounter of each other is curiously described as rather “cool” or “apathetic” (*lengyu* 冷遇). In what sense may Wu Song’s encounter with his brother and sister-in-law be termed as “cool”? The wording may be partly explained by the need for parallelism (*re* and *leng*) and partly by the intended contrast with the superficial warmth of the sworn brotherhood: just as the “heat” of the sworn brothers covers up a true apathy, Wu Song’s violent reaction to Wu Da’s murder later takes hot feelings (*re*) to the extreme. In this opening chapter, however, Wu Song reacts coldly to his real sister-in-law Pan Jinlian’s seductive charms, while Ximen Qing’s warm praise of Hua Zixu’s wife and his suggestion that Zixu should become a sworn brother point to less honorable motives and foreshadow events to come.

The phrase *lengyu* becomes more important if we compare Jinlian and Wu Da’s attitudes towards Wu Song; particularly so if we consider the different versions of the encounter recorded in *Shuihu zhuan* and *Jinpingmei* (whose two recensions are essentially identical in this place). In *Shuihu zhuan*, the elder brother is more articulate about how he missed Wu Song; and although it is Pan Jinlian who asks

⁴¹ The first part of Ch. 100 shows the fate of a pair of real brothers: Han Daoguo and Han the Second, who are reunited in Huzhou 湖州. This will be discussed in more detail later.

Wu Song to move in with them, Wu Da eagerly chimes in: “Your sister-in-law is absolutely right. Brother, why don’t you move in with us? This will show those people who try to bully me.” To this Wu Song answers, “Since brother and sister-in-law say so, I’ll go get my luggage tonight” 既是哥哥嫂嫂恁地說時，今晚有些行李，便取了來。⁴²

In *Jinpingmei*, Wu Da is silent about Wu Song’s moving in. What he says in *Shuihu zhuan* is now put into Jinlian’s mouth: “To show those people who try to bully us—that would be a good thing to do.” But while Jinlian still speaks in terms of “us,” Wu Song only acknowledges Pan Jinlian herself: “Since sister-in-law is so kind to me, I’ll go get my luggage tonight” 既是嫂嫂厚意，今晚有行李便取來。⁴³ Granted that these are minor textual alterations, we should nonetheless recognize the importance of such details: they not only matter in themselves, but become even more significant in their accumulation. In this case, the brothers’ relationship is rendered more complicated than the simple brotherly love portrayed in *Shuihu zhuan*.

The most telling reconfiguration of the brothers’ relationship occurs in the addition of one minor character in *Jinpingmei*: Wu Da’s little daughter by his previous wife, Ying’er 迎兒. With no independent story of her own in the novel, Ying’er at first seems quite superfluous and does not contribute to the advancing of the plot line in any way. Looking more closely, we see that Ying’er is like a mirror which, though empty and uninteresting in itself, foregrounds attributes of other characters. With her, Wu Da’s family finds its perfect counterpart in the structure and experiences of the family of Han Daoguo, one of Ximen Qing’s managers, who prospers because

⁴² See Ch. 24 of *Shuihu quanzhuan* 水滸全傳 (Beijing: Renmin wenzue chubanshe, 1954), p. 359. This is a modern edition of *Shuihu zhuan* collated by Zheng Zhenduo, Wang Liqi 王利器, and Wu Xiaoling 吳曉鈴. It is based on *Zhongyi shuihu zhuan* 忠義水滸傳 (with the Tiandu waichen 天都外臣 preface dated 1589), using seven other editions for collation, which include the preserved fragments of the Marquis of Wuding 武定侯 (Guo Xun 郭勛, 1475–1542) edition, the Rongyu tang 容與堂 edition (published in 1610), the Jiezi yuan 芥子園 edition, the Zhong Xing (鍾惺, 1574–1624) commentary edition, the Yuan Wuya 袁無涯 or Yang Dingjian 楊定見 edition (published in 1614), and, finally, Jin Shengtan’s 金聖嘆’s (1608–1661) Guanhua tang 貫華堂 edition (published in 1644, abridged by Jin and with his commentary). All variants are noted. See Zheng Zhenduo’s preface, pp. 1–7.

⁴³ *Xinke xiuxiang piping Jinpingmei*, Ch. 1, 28a. The *cihua* text has “my sister-in-law” (*wu sao* 吾嫂) for “sister-in-law.” 2.76.

of his wife's affair with Ximen Qing. Before becoming Ximen Qing's mistress, Han Daoguo's wife Wang Liu'er 王六兒 is involved with her brother-in-law Han the Second. Han Daoguo apparently knows this but does not seem to mind. Wang Liu'er and Han Daoguo have a daughter Han Aijie 韓愛姐, who is married off to the housekeeper of the powerful grand councilor Cai Jing 蔡京 as a concubine. At the end of the novel, after being freed from Cai's household upon his undoing, Aijie falls in love with Ximen Qing's former son-in-law Chen Jingji 陳敬濟 (陳經濟 in the *cihua* recension) and takes a vow of chastity after Chen is murdered. As Han Daoguo lives off his wife's affair with Ximen Qing without discomfort, Wu Da once also quietly accepted Jinlian's affair with the rich old Mr. Zhang 張大戶 as well as Zhang's subsequent financial assistance. We are also told that among Ximen Qing's women, Wang Liu'er, like Pan Jinlian (also the "sixth," Liu'er, in her family), is sexually active and has strong desires. Wang Liu'er and Pan Liu'er are the last two women who make love to Ximen Qing on that fatal snowy night.⁴⁴

Despite these similarities in the early parts of the novel, the ultimate fates of the two families prove so different that we are compelled to reflect more seriously on the cliché that "character is destiny." In this context the addition of Ying'er to Wu Da's family becomes striking; Pan Jinlian's and Wu Song's treatment of Ying'er differs sharply from the way Aijie is treated by her mother and uncle. While Ying'er is often beaten and cursed by Pan Jinlian, Wang Liu'er's natural attachment to her daughter is portrayed in a sympathetic and touching way (Chapters 37 and 99). One may dismiss Jinlian as the stereotype of the cruel step-mother, but Wu Song is Ying'er's uncle by blood. After he comes back from his exile, Wu Song fetches Ying'er back from the neighbor who is looking after her. Using an uncle's responsibility to care for her as a pretext for marrying Jinlian ("If sister-in-law agrees to marry me and care for Ying'er, we'll find her a husband and all live as one family, so as not to become a laughing-stock in the eyes of the world"), Wu Song

⁴⁴ Zhang Zhupo points out in his "How to Read *Jinpingmei*:" "Lewd language is used more often by P'an Chin-lien and Wang Liu-erh than by anyone else. . . . It follows that when Wang Liu-erh and P'an Chin-lien both get a crack at him on the same day, it is the death of Hsi-men Ch'ing." *Gaohetang Jinpingmei*, vol. 1, *Dufa* #51, 21b-22a. Plaks's translation, *How to Read the Chinese Novel*, p. 231.

wins Jinlian's trust; then on his wedding night he kills Jinlian and Old Woman Wang right in front of a terrified Ying'er. Locking her up in the room along with the dead bodies despite her plea: "Uncle, I am afraid!" Wu Song then leaps over into Old Woman Wang's courtyard, wraps up the silver he has paid for Jinlian's redemption and whatever jewelry he can find, and goes off to Liangshan 梁山 to become a bandit (Chapter 87). In the next chapter, we are told by yet another younger brother depicted in the novel (Yang the Second 楊二郎) that his uncle Yao the Second 姚二郎, the neighbor who brought up Ying'er during Wu Song's exile, reclaimed Ying'er from the county jail and married her off. Nowhere else do we see the failure of Wu Song in his brotherly duty towards Wu Da so clearly as in his desertion of his niece. As Sun Shuyu says, "If Wu Song, besides his vainglorious egotism, felt some genuine brotherly affection for Wu Da, he should have considered making arrangements for his niece's future, which should have been a top priority for him in addition to taking revenge for his deceased brother. But taking care of a niece requires delicacy and patience . . . in a word, it is not the kind of virtue promoted by the heroes of the Liangshan."⁴⁵ Lest the reader feels that Sun Shuyu is applying moral standards outside the fictional world of the novel, we must reiterate that Wu Song himself invoked his responsibility to his niece—though only as a pretext to lure Pan Jinlian into his trap.

Wu Song's treatment of Ying'er plays counterpoint to the way Han the Second treats Aijie. In the final chapter, Aijie is journeying to Huzhou to look for her parents when she encounters Han the Second on the way. They fall weeping into each other's arms, and Han the Second decides to escort Aijie to Huzhou. Days later, they arrive in Huzhou, where the Han family is reunited. After Han Daoguo dies, Han the Second formally marries Wang Liu'er, and the couple lives off the property left by Mr. He 何官人, Wang Liu'er's lover, who passed away leaving no male heir.

In the *xiuxiang* text, Aijie's accidental encounter with her uncle is singled out from among the many events of the last chapter in the chapter title: "Han Aijie Runs into Erdaogui on her Way; Master Pujing Redeems Xiaoge'er by a Vision" 韓愛姐路遇二搗鬼, 普靜師幻度

⁴⁵ *Jinpingmei de yishu*, pp. 66–67.

孝哥兒. Such redirection of attention is striking when compared with the title of the last chapter in the *cihua* text: “Han Aijie Goes to Huzhou to Seek Her Father; Master Pujing Redeems All the Wrongful Ghosts” 韓愛姐湖州尋父，普靜師荐拔群冤. As Zhang Zhupo points out, “It is indeed another meeting under cold circumstances” (*lengyu* 冷遇),⁴⁶ directly echoing the title of Chapter 1 of the *xiuxiang* recension. Han the Second, however, is no paragon of virtue in the easy sense that we might take Wu Song to be. The “heroic” Wu Song resists an affair with his sister-in-law, while Han the Second happily carries on an affair with his. Han the Second is no hero: he bluffs about punishing Ximen Qing as an adulterer and ends up being beaten; as for his physical prowess, Wang Liu'er easily knocks him down and beats him with a cudgel (Chapter 39). But Han the Second has one virtue: on recognizing his niece he shows that he truly cares. His demonstration of caring begins with bursting into tears; it proceeds to giving Aijie a bowl of rice, and finally progresses to accompanying her, a girl hampered by bound feet, on a long journey, through war and chaos, to a family reunion. Wu Song is indeed one kind of hero, the macho (*haohan* 好漢) sort; but there is something cold about his toughness and calm scheming, something we admire and yet feel chilled by. Any hint of a lingering sense of mercy or weakness seems to have completely disappeared over the years of exile. As Hanan observes, in *Jinpingmei* “the macabre feeling which surrounds his act of vengeance is increased,” and “the only Wu Sung we read of is the implacable avenger.”⁴⁷ If Wu Song is in some ways superhuman in his strength, resolve, and recititude, then towards the end of the novel he becomes almost sub-

⁴⁶ *Gaohetang Jinpingmei*, 100.9a.

⁴⁷ “Sources,” p. 27. Hanan also comments: “The author of the *Chin P'ing Mei* has . . . accentuated the macabre quality of the man's actions” by adding graphic details of the murder and inserting a “ruse”—Wu Song's offer of marriage to Jinlian—which Hanan feels is “scarcely consistent with the straightforward Wu Sung of the *Shui-hu chuan*” (p. 27). This last opinion is echoed by several Chinese critics, for example Xu Shuofang 徐朔方, “*Jinpingmei de chengshu yiji dui ta de pingjia*” 金瓶梅的成書以及對它的評價, in *Jinpingmei lunji*, p. 104. It is true that Wu Song's ruse casts him in an unfavorable light when compared with the direct and open way Wu Song kills Jinlian and Old Woman Wang in *Shuihu zhuàn*, but if we consider Wu Song's trickery of Sun Erniang 孫二娘, which is nothing short of taking sexual advantage of her, in Ch. 26 of *Shuihu zhuàn*, we would probably think twice about the characterization of Wu Song even in the source novel.

human by the one powerful single-minded emotion that consumes his whole being: hatred.

We have seen how the different opening chapter in the *xiuxiang* text presents the reader with a more perfect symmetry with the final chapter of the novel, contrasting the Wu brothers with the Han brothers, and the formation of sworn brotherhood with Yun Lishou's betrayal of their oath in Yueniang's prophetic dream. Some readers may consider such narrative and structural symmetry too contrived and thus less attractive than the *cihua* version, but it is important to pay attention to the narrative and ideological differences brought about by the transformation. By turning Ximen Qing's friends into sworn brothers and providing an elaborate description of their oath, the *xiuxiang* text ties the diverse male relationships in the novel into a coherent larger picture, brings into focus the issue of brotherhood/male friendship, and sharpens its satire of the secular world. It provides an unsentimental view of brotherhood (real or sworn, literal or figural), by which the much idealized friendship among men of righteous sentiments in the historical and heroic romances is completely subverted.

“MOST OF ALL, SUITED FOR CUDDLING”: RETOUCHING PAN JINLIAN

The most seductive textual transformation between the recensions can be seen in the characterization of the principal female protagonist of the novel, Pan Jinlian. Pan Jinlian has changed significantly in her transition from *Shuihu zhuan* to *Jinpingmei*, and the two recensions of *Jinpingmei* present us with even more sharply distinct sketches, especially in the opening chapters. Such a “retouching” of Pan Jinlian in the opening chapters of the *xiuxiang* text is not just a localized phenomenon but has deeper resonance throughout the rest of the novel, for it shows that Pan Jinlian is not an inherently “bad person” as the *cihua* text indicates, but rather a woman who sinks slowly and gradually to the depths of moral degeneration, transformed by unfortunate circumstances and experiences. In this way, the *xiuxiang* text presents the reader with a complicated character who evolves and changes through the course of the novel, calling for sympathy rather than outright condemnation. Such an approach, I will argue, accords well with the Buddhist values underlying the

xiuxiang recension. One of the foremost Buddhist virtues is compassion.

Many scholars have noticed the alterations in the portrayal of Pan Jinlian between *Shuihu zhuan* and *Jinpingmei cihua*. In *Shuihu zhuan*, she is said to have spurned her master's attempts at seduction many times, and to have been married off to Wu Da as a punishment. In *Jinpingmei*, she is deflowered by Zhang at the age of eighteen and continues to be his mistress after his jealous wife forces him to marry her off to Wu Da. Hanan observes that the Pan Jinlian of *Jinpingmei*, instead of being "an unlettered maid," is "possessed of all the arts and graces of the courtesan;"⁴⁸ Ye Guitong 葉桂桐 and Song Peixian 宋培憲 point out that Jinlian is probably the only one among Ximen Qing's six wives who is literate.⁴⁹ The most significant changes in Jinlian's characterization, however, occur not in the changed account of her personal history but in the rewriting of her manners, actions, and speech, as well as in the subtle rearrangement of words, phrases and sentences. The *cihua* text is quite different from *Shuihu zhuan*, but compared with the *xiuxiang* text, it adheres much more closely to the *Shuihu zhuan* version of Jinlian's story. I will contrast the *Shuihu zhuan* version and the *cihua* text, as well as continue my comparison of the two recensions of *Jinpingmei*.

There are two places in *Jinpingmei* where we see significant variations in Jinlian's portrayal: first in Chapter 1, and then in Chapter 3-4, when Ximen Qing seduces her in Old Woman Wang's teashop. In order to make the differences immediately clear to the reader, I arrange the relevant passages in three columns, with the *Shuihu zhuan* version at the left side, the *cihua* text in the middle, and the *xiuxiang* text at the right. The *Shuihu zhuan* translation is my own, and the *Jinpingmei* translation is based on Roy's translation with some modifications. The underlined lines in the *cihua* recension are missing in the *xiuxiang* recension.

⁴⁸ "Sources," p. 27.

⁴⁹ "Lun Pan Jinlian xingge shengcheng de wenhua yinsu" 論潘金蓮性格生成的文化因素, *Jinpingmei yanjiu* 3 (1992): 125-38.

Ever since Wu Da married that woman, there were several dissolute young scamps in Qinghe County who would often harass his household, for they saw that Wu Da was short, unsightly and did not know anything about the art of love, while adultery was foremost in this woman's mind. There is a poem testifying to it: "Jinlian is indeed a pretty woman: / when she smiles, her eyebrows arch like spring hills. / And if she meets with a romantic young man, / she will make a secret rendezvous at the drop of a hat." Ever since Pan Jinlian married Wu Da, as he was a nice and weak person, from time to time those youngsters would drop remarks like, "What a fine piece of lambchop! What a pity it ends up in the mouth of a dog!" right in front of his house. Therefore Wu Da could not live in

Ever since Jinlian had married Wu Da and had a chance to observe his guileless disposition and unsightly appearance she had taken a violent dislike to him and quarreled with him all the time. . . .⁵¹

Every day Wu Da shouldered his load of steamed wheat cakes and went out to peddle his wares, not returning until evening. His wife had little to occupy her other than the preparation of three daily meals. After eating she would make herself up and stand behind the bamboo blind that hung over the front door. From that vantage point she was in the habit of provoking attention with her brows, and sending messages with her eyes.

Now this fact was not lost on a number of dissolute young scamps in the neighborhood who were seldom up to any good. When they saw the way that Wu Da's wife was dolling herself up so slickly, engaging the breeze and disturbing the foliage, they began to make riddling allusions to her in public and drop flirtatious remarks like: "What a fine piece of lambchop! How did it end up in the mouth of a dog?"

Everyone knew that Wu Da was a man of meek dis-

Ever since Jinlian had married Wu Da and had a chance to observe his guileless disposition and unsightly appearance she had taken a violent dislike to him and quarreled with him all the time. . . .

Every day Wu Da shouldered his load of steamed wheat cakes and went out to peddle his wares, not returning until evening. After she had seen Wu Da out the door, this woman would stand inside the blind, cracking melon seeds with her teeth, and revealing her tiny golden lotuses for all to see. Such conduct attracted the aforesaid young gentlemen, who gathered on her doorstep day after day, strumming guitars, making riddling allusions to her, dropping flirtatious remarks such as "What a fine piece of lambchop! How did it end up in the mouth of a dog!" and giving voice to every indecent suggestion their imaginations could invent. As a result, Wu Da came to feel that he could no longer continue to live on that part of Amethyst Street and wanted to move somewhere else.

⁵¹ Here I omit Jinlian's lamentation over her fate and the narrator's sympathetic remarks that any woman "with good looks and natural intelligence" would feel resentful about marrying someone like Wu Da.

Qinghe any more. He moved to Yanggu County and rented a house on Amethyst Street, where he continued selling Pancakes everyday.⁵⁰

[After this passage, the narration goes back to the Wu brothers' encounter with each other.]

position but not many were aware that he had such a mismatched wife in his house, who was both romantically inclined and clever, who liked everything, adultery in particular. There is a poem that testifies to this: "Jinlian is indeed a pretty woman: / when she smiles, her eyebrows arch like spring hills. / And if she meets with a romantic young man, / she will make a secret rendezvous at the drop of a hat."

Every day, after she had seen Wu Da out the door, this woman would stand inside the blind, cracking melon seeds with her teeth, and revealing her tiny golden lotuses for all to see. Such conduct attracted the aforesaid young gentlemen, who gathered on her doorstep day after day, strumming guitars and ukuleles, and giving voice to every indecent suggestion their imaginations could invent. As a result, Wu Da came to feel that he could no longer continue to live on that part of Amethyst Street and wanted to move somewhere else.

When he raised this issue with his wife she said: When he raised this issue with his wife she said,

⁵⁰ *Shuihu quanzhuan*, p. 356. This paragraph remains the same in all the major recensions of *Shuihu zhuan* except for Jin Shengtan's *Guanhua tang* edition, which does not contain the poem. It also deletes "Ever since Pan Jinlian married Wu Da." There are another couple of minor textual changes in the *Guanhua tang* version, which only make the sentences "sound better" without changing the meaning. See the collation notes #8-10, p. 382.

“Stupid fool, you have no idea about anything! You are renting other people’s house; with shallow rooms open to the street, no wonder there are petty-minded people harassing us! We had better put together a few taels of silver and look about for a nice and decent place, so as not to be bullied by others. You are the man of the house, but you’re always so much at a loss that I end up taking the brunt of things on your account.” “But how do I have the money to rent a house?!” Wu Da said. “Phooey!” The woman said, “You idiot! Just sell my jewelry to make up the sum—what’s so difficult? It can always be replaced when we are better off.”

Upon hearing what his wife said, Wu Da pawned Jinlian’s jewelry and put together over ten taels of silver, taking a mortgage on a two-storied house. . . .⁵²

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Both *Jinpingmei* versions are more detailed than *Shuihu zhuan*. A cursory comparison between the two versions, moreover, shows what critics mean by describing the style of the *xiuxiang* text as “terse and neat.” Both expansion and diminution, however, serve purposes other than mere stylistic elaboration or pithiness in their own right. Two significant changes occur. First, we see in *Shuihu zhuan* a judgment of Pan Jinlian: “. . . adultery was foremost in this woman’s mind” 爲頭的愛偷漢子. The *cihua* text keeps this characterization

⁵² Roy, 1.28–30; *Jinpingmei cihua*, 2.68–71.

⁵³ *Xinke xiuxiang piping Jinpingmei*, Ch. 1, 24a–25b.

(“爲頭的一件，好偷漢子”). Such a statement, along with the depiction of Jinlian’s flirting “with her eyes,” presents Jinlian as a coquette who sets her mind on seducing men. The *xiuxiang* text, on the one hand, omits this description and the condemning quatrain, allowing Jinlian’s actions to speak for themselves instead of using the narrator’s moralizing statements to delineate a character; on the other hand, it reduces Jinlian’s responsibility for the youngsters’ harassment. Jinlian’s exposure of her tiny feet is preserved in the *xiuxiang* text, but showing off one’s beauty and eliciting admiration is quite different from actively engaging in seduction by making eyes to the passers-by.

Another striking change is the addition of a significant detail in *Jinpingmei*, which is preserved in both the *cihua* text and the *xiuxiang* text: Jinlian’s suggestion that she sell her jewelry to help Wu Da lease a new house. Such supportive generosity is, at the very least, incongruous with the claim made in *Shuihu zhuan* and in the *cihua* version that she is inclined to commit adultery. Thus the omission of such a claim in the *xiuxiang* text gives a more consistent portrayal, and it is the portrayal of a woman who still has some scruples. Both the anonymous commentator of the *xiuxiang* text and Zhang Zhupo acknowledge the moral decency of this act: the former remarks that “here she turns out to be quite capable of virtue” 此處亦復能賢, and the latter observes that “[Jinlian] originally is capable of doing good, which is why Old Woman Wang deserves being sliced into pieces” 本來猶可爲善, 則王婆可剛也.⁵⁴ A woman’s decision to sell personal belongings, especially her jewelry, to contribute to household expenses or her husband’s social needs (to entertain a male friend, to travel to the capital for the examination), is often a sign of wifely virtue—in the same way, her refusal to do so is considered a moral defect.⁵⁵ In this sense, Jinlian’s generous offer and her quick solution to the problem indicate both virtue and ability; it also demon-

⁵⁴ *Xinke xiuxiang piping Jinpingmei*, Ch. 1, 25b; *Gaohetang Jinpingmei*, 1.27b.

⁵⁵ One example would be the Eastern Jin minister Tao Kan’s 陶侃 (259–334) mother cutting off and selling her hair (being too poor to own any jewelry) to help her son entertain an official. See Tao Kan’s biography in *Jin shu* 晉書 66 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), p. 1768. In story No. 30 in Feng Menglong’s 馮夢龍 (1574–1646) collection *Xingshi hengyan* 醒世恒言 (1627), the wife’s stinginess brings calamity to the husband, finally costing both of them their lives (Beijing: Renmin wenzue chubanshe, 1984, pp. 652–81).

strates that she has no interest in the “dissolute young scamps” harassing their household, and that she is not as inclined to commit adultery as the narrators of *Shuihu zhuan* and the *cihua* text suggest—at least not yet.

The retouching of Pan Jinlian’s character takes a further turn in Chapters 3 to 4, the next notable divergence between the *cihua* text (which again shows a stronger adherence to the *Shuihu zhuan*) and the *xiuxiang* text: this is the famous seduction scene at Old Woman Wang’s teashop.⁵⁶ The *xiuxiang* recension has a very different image of Jinlian: more demure and reserved, and full of womanly charm. In striking contrast to the Pan Jinlian in *Shuihu zhuan*, who behaves impudently in her first meeting with Ximen Qing, the *xiuxiang* text gives us a convincing portrayal of how a woman comes to commit adultery for the first time in her life with an almost complete stranger.

In his commentary in the Guanhua tang edition of *Shuihu zhuan*, Jin Shengtan notes as many as thirty-eight “laughs” or “smiles” (*xiao* 笑) on the part of Pan Jinlian, Old Woman Wang, and Ximen Qing in Chapter 23, starting with Old Woman Wang’s derisive laughter when she sees how Jinlian’s forked stick (which she uses to put down the rolled-up blind) falls on Ximen Qing’s head. Laughter continues all the way till Ximen Qing, under the pretense of picking up a pair of dropped chopsticks, bends down to pinch Jinlian’s foot, and Jinlian starts giggling.⁵⁷ If “laughing” marks brazen wickedness in three morally corrupted characters in *Shuihu zhuan* and in the *cihua* recension, then the multiplication of occasions of Pan Jinlian’s “lowering the head” (*ditou* 低頭), from three in *Shuihu zhuan* and four in

⁵⁶ The description of the seduction scene, in which Ximen Qing sweet-talks Jinlian into going to bed with him, goes to a level of detail in the *xiuxiang* text that is quite unprecedented in classical Chinese literature. In “The Pearl-Sewn Shirt” (No. 1 of Feng Menglong’s *Gujin xiaoshuo* 古今小說), Chen Shang’s 陳商 seduction of Sanqiao’er 三巧兒 through the help of Old Woman Xue 薛婆, who plans carefully and proceeds slowly, is reminiscent of Ximen Qing’s seduction of Jinlian through the strategies Old Woman Wang, but Chen Shang and Sanqiao’er’s first love-making occurs even before the two are introduced—in a way, it is a premeditated rape, unlike Ximen Qing’s coaxing temptation of Jinlian. The *xiuxiang* text’s inventive description has been noted by critics from Zhang Zhupo to Huang Lin, who observes that Jinlian’s actions and psychological activities during this scene are portrayed more fully (Huang Lin, p. 80).

⁵⁷ *Jin Shengtan quanji* 金聖嘆全集 (Jiangsu: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1985), 1.368–81.

the *cihua* recension to twelve in the *xiuxiang* text, is a striking addition. The message conveyed by this body gesture is multifarious: apart from its practical purpose (Jinlian is sewing clothes at Old Woman Wang's), it may also show modesty and reserve, as when she sees an unknown young man approaching, or when he compliments her needlework; it may convey a sense of embarrassment, as when she apologizes to Ximen Qing for letting the forked stick fall on his head the other day ("the woman lowered her head even more"), or when Ximen Qing mockingly mentions Wu Da's nickname and his humble occupation; it may also indicate Jinlian's growing awareness of the "weirdness" of the situation and the secret fanning of her desire, when Old Woman leaves them under the excuse of getting another bottle of wine ("she just lowered her head and sat there without attempting to leave"). Finally, when she is alone with Ximen Qing and their conversation becomes increasingly flirtatious, lowering her head and her voice becomes a signal of a combination of coquetry and erotic passion on the verge of eruption. As the seduction scene approaches its culmination, we see in the *xiuxiang* text Jinlian's last attempt to resist, which is, however, indistinguishable from teasing; yet it is profoundly different from the kind of outright and active acceptance portrayed in *Shuihu zhuan* or *Jinpingmei cihua*. The underlined lines in the *cihua* version show what the *Shuihu zhuan* text does not have; the italicized part shows what is unique to the *xiuxiang* recension:

<p>The woman laughed out loud: "There's no need to make such a fuss, mister. If you've got a mind to it, I've got the will.⁵⁸ Are you actually trying to seduce me?" Ximen Qing got down on his knees with the plea: "Only you, young lady, can make a happy man of me."⁵⁹ At</p>	<p>The woman laughed out loud: "There's no need to make such a fuss, mister. If you've got a mind to it, I've got the will. Are you actually trying to seduce me?" Ximen Qing got down on both knees with the plea: "Young lady, make a happy man of me." At this the woman</p>	<p>The woman laughed out loud: "<i>Why are you making such a fuss! Now I am going to cry for help.</i>" Ximen Qing got down on both knees with the plea: "Young lady, please have pity on me!" <i>At the same time he started touching Jinlian's pants. The woman stretched her hand, saying:</i></p>
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⁵⁸ This sentence is not found in the Yuan Wuya edition, the Jiezi yuan edition, or the Guanhua tang edition of *Shuihu zhuan*.

⁵⁹ In all *Shuihu* editions, Ximen Qing refers to himself here as *xiaosheng* 小生, but in Jin

this the woman took Ximen Qing in her arms. Thereupon, right there in Old Woman Wang's room, the two of them undid their girdles, took off their clothes, and enjoyed each other on the same pillow.⁶⁰

took Ximen Qing in her arms, saying: "My only fear is that Mother Wang may come back and catch us in the act." "It doesn't matter." said Ximen Qing, "she's already in on it." Thereupon, right there in Old Woman Wang's room, the two of them undid their girdles, took off their clothes, and enjoyed each other on the same pillow.⁶¹

"You wicked rascal, how sticky you are! I am really going to slap you, you know." Ximen Qing chuckled: "Even if you, my lady, beat me to death, it would be like heaven to me." Thereupon he took Jinlian to Old Woman Wang's bed without waiting for another word from her, where they undid their girdles, took off their clothes and enjoyed each other on the same pillow.⁶²

Jin Shengtan points out in his commentary on the *Shuihu zhuan* version: "Notice that it is the woman who takes Ximen Qing in her arms: this is 'the style of the *Chunqiu Annals*' (*Chunqiu bifa* 春秋筆法)."⁶³ The *xiuxiang* author may have never read Jin Shengtan's commentary, but the changes in the *xiuxiang* text are consistent in making Jinlian a much less brazen figure.

Several other details in the *xiuxiang* text contribute to the new image of Pan Jinlian. In contrast to *Shuihu zhuan* or the *cihua* text, she almost never takes the initiative in her interactions with Ximen Qing: she only responds to his questions. In *Shuihu zhuan* and the *cihua* text, she asks Ximen Qing how long ago his previous wife passed away, which shows an active interest in his marital situation; in the *xiuxiang* text, the question is put into the mouth of Old Woman Wang, while Jinlian is merely listening, so that Old Woman Wang

Shengtan's Guanhua tang version, he refers to himself as *xiaoren* 小人. Both are modest terms of self-reference, but the difference is that *xiaosheng* may also be used by a literary scholar, which by no means fits the profile of Ximen Qing. Both *Jinpingmei* recensions use *xiaoren*.

⁶⁰ *Shuihu quanzhuan*, p. 379. In the Guanhua tang edition, the phrase "enjoyed each other on the same pillow" 共枕同歡 becomes "there was nothing they would not do" 無所不至, a term with a pejorative connotation.

⁶¹ Roy, 1.83; *Jinpingmei cihua*, 2.136-37.

⁶² *Xinke xiuxiang piping Jinpingmei*, Ch. 4, 2b-3a.

⁶³ *Jin Shengtan quanji*, 1.382. "The style of the *Chunqiu Annals*" refers to implicit criticism, or more broadly, "the encoding of a hidden and deeper meaning beneath the surface level of the text." *How to Read the Chinese Novel*, p. 76.

is indirectly conveying the information to Jinlian without her actively seeking it. In *Shuihu zhuan*, Ximen Qing offers Jinlian a toast, which Jinlian accepts with a laugh, “Thank you, sir, for being so kind.” In the *cihua* text, Jinlian refuses under the pretence that she has no capacity for wine, but acknowledges Ximen Qing’s kindness. In the *xiuxiang* text, Ximen Qing decorously asks Old Woman Wang, the nominal host, to invite Jinlian to drink, who then declines using the same excuse. Here the textual transformation brings out a more demure Pan Jinlian as well as a more life-like situation: Pan Jinlian and Ximen Qing are portrayed as observing social etiquette at the beginning of their little party, when sobriety still reigns, unfamiliarity has not yet been overcome, and the lovers-to-be have yet to go through all the steps of the dance of seduction.⁶⁴

In *Shuihu zhuan*, when Old Woman Wang “catches” them after their love-making and makes as if she is going to inform Wu Da, Jinlian grabs her skirt and asks her to spare them. The old woman’s condition for her silence is that Jinlian should meet Ximen Qing every day (to which Jinlian promptly agrees), and Ximen Qing offers the old woman the promised monetary reward. Then the three of them resume drinking, until Jinlian says: “That wretch Wu Da is about to come home. I’d better go back” 武大那廝將歸來，奴自回去。 The *cihua* text adds one detail here: the old woman insists that the two exchange some love token as assurance that they will both keep their word. Thereupon Ximen Qing gives Jinlian a hairpin, while Jinlian gives him her handkerchief. The *xiuxiang* text shows three interesting differences: (1) When Jinlian asks for Old Woman Wang’s forgiveness, she “blushed and lowered her head,” and at the old woman’s request that she should come everyday, “the woman was so ashamed that she could not say a word. Old Woman Wang

⁶⁴ A similar incident happens when Ximen Qing later asks Jinlian how old she is. In the *cihua* text, Jinlian gives a detailed answer: “I am twenty-four. I was born in the year of the dragon, on the ninth day of the first month, at two o’clock in the morning.” In the *xiuxiang* text, Jinlian lowers her head and simply replies: “I am twenty-four.” The exchange of information concerning one’s exact time of birth (year, month, day and hour) is essential in discussions of marriage alliances (so that a fortune-teller can divine if the two people are compatible), which seems to be why Jinlian gives such a detailed answer; but it also makes her sound so eager that it almost verges on caricature. The *xiuxiang* text, on the other hand, represents Jinlian as much more decorous.

urged her: ‘What is this? Answer me quickly!’ The woman turned her head away and said in a low voice: ‘All right, I’ll come then.’” (2) The sentence “That wretch Wu Da is about to come home” is deleted, which considerably softens Jinlian’s image; (3) She at first refuses to produce anything as love token, “but Old Woman Wang grabbed her sleeve, snatched a white silk Hangzhou handkerchief out of it, and tossed it to Ximen Qing.”⁶⁵ The three divergences are all consistent with the *xiuxiang* portrayal of Jinlian as in large measure a victim manipulated by Old Woman Wang, and her sense of shame calls for sympathy rather than condemnation. Old Woman Wang’s responsibility for Jinlian’s fall is proportionally increased; she is represented as a complete villain who has neither conscience nor remorse. The third point of divergence has particular resonance. In Chapter 28 Chen Jingji, hoping to seduce a Jinlian now married to Ximen Qing, has gained possession of her shoe, left in the garden after a stormy sexual encounter with Ximen Qing. Chen Jingji asks to “exchange” the shoe for the handkerchief in her sleeve. Jinlian replies that she would rather give Chen Jingji some handkerchief other than the one she is currently using, a handkerchief with which Ximen Qing is all too familiar. When Chen Jingji insists that he wants only the one in Jinlian’s sleeve, she acquiesces with a smile and tosses her handkerchief at him, along with its silver accessories. A seven-character quatrain punning on “shoe” (*xie* 鞋) and “harmony” or “matching” (*xie* 諧), a quatrain given only in the *xiuxiang* text, confirms the erotic implications of Jinlian and Jingji’s “exchange.”⁶⁶ This scene appears in both recensions. In the *cihua* it becomes the mere repetition of the exchange of love gifts on the part of a woman who has always had adultery on the top of her mind. In the context of the *xiuxiang* recension, in which the earlier handkerchief is snatched away rather than freely given, Jinlian’s smiling gift of her handkerchief to Chen Jingji shows how far she has gone from the still partially innocent woman at the beginning of the novel.

In the *cihua* text, verses beginning a chapter are an important means of conveying moral lessons and expressing ethical judgements on the characters’ actions. The *xiuxiang* text, however, chooses a set

⁶⁵ *Xinke xiuxiang piping Jinpingmei*, Ch. 4, 4a.

⁶⁶ *Jinpingmei cihua*, 7.732-33; *Xinke xiuxiang piping Jinpingmei*, Ch. 28, 7b-8a.

of opening verses very different in tone.⁶⁷ Instead of didactic poems, the opening verses in the *xiuxiang* recension are often lyrics or songs focusing on the feelings of the main characters or highlighting the romantic aspect of some event. Sometimes the tone of the opening lyric or song forms a sharp, ironic contrast with the actual activities described in the chapter. For instance, the opening verse of Chapters 21 of the *xiuxiang* recension is a famous lyric written to the tune pattern *Shaonian you* 少年游 by the Northern Song poet Zhou Bangyan 周邦彦 (1056–1121).⁶⁸ It describes a tender bedroom scene, in which the woman, obviously a courtesan, asks the man to stay for the night rather than to go away in the cold weather. At the end of Chapter 20, Ximen Qing discovered, to his great chagrin, that he had been cheated by his courtesan-mistress Li Guijie; and after wreaking havoc in the brothel, he came home late at night through snow. This forms a rather comic contrast with the situation described in the lyric. Then, as Chapter 21 begins, Ximen Qing makes another discovery upon coming home: his wife Wu Yueniang, alienated from him for several months because of the Li Ping'er incident, is praying to heaven in the snow on his behalf. Much moved by the prayer he overhears, Ximen Qing is reconciled with Wu Yueniang and sleeps with her that night. And yet, if the courtesan in the lyric speaks in a gentle “low voice” and begs the man to stay, Wu Yueniang keeps reprimanding Ximen Qing for his earlier offence and even tries to drive him out of her room: her rough language and stiff manners, in light of the opening lyric, create an ironic, humorous effect. In contrast, the opening poem of the same chapter in the *cihua* recension is a straightforward demonstration of the repentance of the husband and the value of a good wife.⁶⁹ Another notable example of the ironic interplay between the open-

⁶⁷ Indira Suh Satyendra offers detailed comparisons of many prefatory poems in the two recensions in her Ph.D. dissertation (see Note 17). I agree with her statement that “a different aesthetic or structural principle was at work in the manipulation of these poems” in the *xiuxiang* recension (p. 37), but contrary to her conclusion that the *xiuxiang* recension “discourages the possibility for a dialogue between the poem and the text” (p. 33), I argue that the kind of “dialogue” between the opening verses and the content of a chapter in the *xiuxiang* recension is of a different order: it is generally more implicit and indirect, inviting the reader’s active participation in the production of meaning.

⁶⁸ *Xinke xiuxiang piping Jinpingmei*, Ch. 21, 1a.

⁶⁹ *Jinpingmei cihua*, 5.539; Roy, 2.3.

ing verse and the content of a chapter may be found in Chapter 25 of the *xiuxiang* recension : a song lyric to the tune pattern *Dian jiangchun* 點絳脣, alternatively attributed to Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037–1101) or Li Qingzhao 李清照 (1084–1151?), describes how a young woman, after playing on the swing, shyly hurries away when a (male) guest arrives, whereas the first part of Chapter 25 depicts how Wu Yueniang and the other women of the Ximen household entertain themselves with the swing in the garden during Ximen Qing's absence.⁷⁰ Among the group of women is Ximen Qing's son-in-law, Chen Jingji, who is asked by Wu Yueniang to help push the swing. Yueniang is often criticized by the commentators for allowing Chen Jingji to mix freely with Ximen Qing's wives, which leads to his affair with Pan Jinlian. Thus, by contrasting the swing scene in the novel with the opening lyric, the author implicitly satirizes the inappropriateness of Yueniang's behavior. In contrast, the opening poem in the *cihua* recension criticizes Chen Jingji's joining the women's swing party in a more direct and grave manner. The last couplet states: "How laughable that the domestic doe should breed domestic doom; / The women's quarters, from this time on, know no behavioral norms."⁷¹

Such counterpoint between lyric and narrative generally enriches the representation and foregrounds the boundary between the "poetic" and the "prosaic" realms. The world of classical Chinese love poetry, whether *shi* (poems), *ci* (lyrics), or *qu* 曲 (songs), usually centers on one erotic movement, one glimpse into the lovers' intimate realm, one fragment in time and space; but when such a composition is attached to a prose narrative, it becomes contextualized and complicated in interesting and provocative ways. The choice of different kinds of verses again shows us the ideological and aesthetic divergence between the two recensions of *Jinpingmei*. Let us take a look at the verses opening Chapter 2 (to the left is the poem from the *cihua* recension while to the right is the song from the *xiuxiang* text):

⁷⁰ *Xinke xiuxiang piping Jinpingmei*, Ch.25, 1a.

⁷¹ *Jinpingmei cihua*, 6.635; Roy, 2.80.

That old man under the moon
 did not make this match well:
 Jinlian displays her charm and
 shows off her flower-like face.
 All because of a mood in the
 moonlight and beneath the
 stars,
 beside the door and outside the
 blind passion is aroused.
 Mother Wang sets up crafty
 schemes in order to gain
 profit;
 Brother Yun is hated for selling
 fruits.
 Who knows about the disaster
 lurking behind the walls—
 when blood smears the screen
 and reddens the earth!⁷²

月老姻緣配未真，
 金蓮賣俏逞花容。
 只因月下星前意，
 惹起門旁帘外心。
 王媽誘財施巧計，
 鄆哥賣果被嫌嗔。
 那知後日蕭牆禍，
 血濺屏幃滿地紅。

A face of lotus flower,
 skin of ice and snow,
 she is born a charmer; now she
 is fully grown.
 Delicately, oh so delicately,
 leaning against the door,
 she is just like the half-bloom-
 ing plum blossom
 that seems to open, and yet is
 closed.
 When they first meet beside the
 blind,
 bashfully she is about to move
 forward, but then pauses
 again.
 When next time he passes by
 her bower,
 she shall receive him with joy,
 and pleasure will abound:
 for she is suited for walk-
 ing,
 suited for standing,
 suited for sitting,
 and most of all, suited
 for cuddling.⁷³

芙蓉面，冰雪肌，
 生來娉婷年已笄，
 嬈嬈倚門餘。
 梅花半含蕊，似開還閉，
 初見簾邊，
 羞澀還留住；
 再過樓頭，
 款接多歡喜。
 行也宜，立也宜，坐又宜，
 偎傍更相宜。

⁷² *Jinpingmei cihua*, 2.87; Roy, 1.43.

⁷³ *Xinke xiuxiang piping Jinpingmei*, Ch. 2, 1a. This song is, quite ironically, written to the

The austere seven-character regulated poem of the *cihua* recension is basically a narrative poem recapitulating the sinful present and predicting the gloomy future; the song beginning the same chapter in the *xiuxiang* text starts with a close-up of a flower-like face and gleaming white, if a little chilling, skin. Even though later on Jinlian is often chafed by the fairer complexion of her rival Ping'er, this song here belongs to her, Golden Lotus, alone (with a prophetic hint of her future maid Chunmei, Spring Plum). There is no didacticism, reproach, or shadow of shame, only a celebration of Jinlian's blossoming in the first consummation of romantic passion. Somehow we are happy for her good fortune, after the decrepit Master Zhang, the unsightly Wu Da, and the ruthless Wu Song. Although her liaison with Ximen Qing soon leads to a gruesome murder and will degenerate into bouts of jealousy and rage, there is something beautiful and touching about the ardent, if illicit, desire of two good-looking young lovers just falling in love. Without this stage in their relationship, the moral deterioration of the lovers, especially that of Pan Jinlian, would have been mere ugliness, lacking the force to arouse either sympathy or fear. It would have put the reader in a position of easy moral superiority and prevented him or her from feeling any sense of empathy, leaving him or her with only a cold, narrow-minded condemnation of Pan Jinlian.

In this sense, the more sympathetic portrayal of Pan Jinlian in the *xiuxiang* text fits in with the background of Buddhist values in this recension: the reader is implicitly asked to have compassion for Pan Jinlian, who is described not as a born sinner but as a fallible person falling prey to unfortunate circumstances. In his commentary, Zhang Zhupo often praises the author of *Jinpingmei* (e.g. the *xiuxiang* text) as "a real Bodhisattva," "truly enlightened,"⁷⁴ and the

tune pattern *Xiaoshunge* 孝順歌 ("Song of Filial Piety"). It is included in *Quan Ming sanqu* 全明散曲 as the sole example of this tune pattern, and attributed to the presumed author of *Jinpingmei*, Lanling Xiaoxiaosheng 蘭陵笑笑生. See *Quan Ming sanqu*, ed. Xie Boyang 謝伯陽 (Jinan: Qilu shushe, 1994), p. 2379.

⁷⁴ *Gaohetang Jinpingmei*, vol. 1, *Dufa* #79, 26b; *How to Read the Chinese Novel*, p. 236. Zhang Zhupo, essentially a Confucian scholar, has some mixed feelings about the Buddhist messages in the *xiuxiang* text. He states: "The author of the *Chin P'ing Mei* is certainly a genius [*ts'ai-tzu* 才子], but his learning is that of a Bodhisattva, not that of a Confucian sage, for his message is that everything is empty [*k'ung* 空]. If he had taken the further step to non-emptiness he would have written a different book." See *Gaohetang Jinpingmei*, vol. 1, *Dufa* #75,

novel as “a clear example of what the Zen school calls exercising one’s powers after having attained perfect mastery.”⁷⁵ The key point here is that a Bodhisattva shows mercy for the worst sinner, as a Bodhisattva is able to become that sinner (*xianshen* 現身) and thus have empathy for him or her; by contrast, the Confucian sage, stressing that each person should hold to his or her proper position in society, has a certain moral relentlessness. If he cannot morally civilize (*jiaohua* 教化) an evil person, he educates by punishment.

Zhang Zhupo elucidates the close relationship between the principle of empathy and masterful fictional characterization in no ambiguous terms: “Once his concentration has enabled him to apprehend what he needs to know about the character, the author must be able to become that character himself [*hsien-shen* 現身] before he can speak for him. . . . The author succeeds in portraying each of his characters in his book with utter fidelity to human nature [*jen-ch’ing* 人情]. He transforms himself [*hua-shen* 化身] into a multitude of guises, representing all sorts of people in order to expound his lesson through them.”⁷⁶ In other words, the good novelist shares this essential capacity with a Bodhisattva: he can enter the fictional world just as the Bodhisattva can enter the world of the flesh, and by “becoming” his characters, he empathizes with them and has mercy for them, instead of harshly judging them or simply condemning them. Such a theory of the novel perfectly reconciles a moral philosophy (a profound understanding of and compassion for human nature) with the aesthetic (as reflected in the penetrating portrayal of human nature). The retouching of Pan Jinlian in the *xiuxiang* text, therefore, is not only consonant with the larger thematic direction of the novel but also serves to bring out the Buddhist values lying behind the *xiuxiang* recension.

26a; *How to Read the Chinese Novel*, p. 235. This is probably why he contrived his famous “Filial Piety Theory” (*kuxiao shuo* 苦孝說) (“filiality [*hsiao* 孝] has the power to transform all evils”). *Gaohetang Jinqingmei*, vol. 1, *Dufa* #76, 26b; *How to Read the Chinese Novel*, p. 235.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, *Dufa* #100, 32a; *How to Read the Chinese Novel*, p. 242.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, *Dufa* #61, 62, 24a; *How to Read the Chinese Novel*, p. 233.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

To summarize, the *xiuxiang* recension is a carefully constructed, well-orchestrated, ideologically and aesthetically consistent text. Its wide circulation, with Zhang Zhupo's commentary, during the Qing Dynasty was probably because an increasingly sophisticated fiction-reading public preferred its tighter organization, its subtler characterization, and the greater ethical complexity that followed from its more serious engagement with Buddhist values. It is not that the *xiuxiang* recension abrogated the commonplace ethics of society; rather its representational tact left open a space for competing values that loom even larger as the novel draws toward its conclusion. If the *cihua* recension repeatedly instructs the reader to restrain his desires in order to better fit into the social world, then the *xiuxiang* recension uses the numbing multiplication of transgressions to gradually undermine this very social world by exposing the emptiness beneath its sensual surfaces.

Consistent with its continuous didactic emphasis, the *cihua* text opens the novel with an exposition of the disastrous consequences of sexual passion—the tiger killed by Wu Song is an emblem of the destructive power of a wanton woman and unbridled desire. The author of the *xiuxiang* recension offers a different approach. By casting the shadow of death in the persons of Bu Zhidao and Zhuo Diu'er over the first pages of the book, he invokes a serious contemplation on the world of appearances (*se* 色) and the enclosing space of emptiness (*kong* 空), two important Buddhist concepts emphasized in the prologue. The vanity of the world of appearances is satirized more relentlessly than in the *cihua* version by the characterization of Ximen Qing's friends as "brothers," which starts a dark reflection on brotherhood maintained throughout the novel. And yet, by making the arch-femme fatale Pan Jinlian a more sympathetic figure, the author drives home a more complicated and troubling moral lesson: if the *xiuxiang* text also preaches a moral lesson like the *cihua* text does, it teaches less about the condemnation of evil than about the value of compassion.

The Buddhist framework does not necessarily exclude the Confucian messages in the *xiuxiang* recension, nor does it conflict with the author's caricature of corrupted Buddhist monks and nuns.

What it does is to endow *Jinpingmei* with a dimension that is missing in the more single-mindedly Confucian, more openly didactic *cihua* recension, and give the novel a different ideological and aesthetic focus. With the *cihua* text, for instance, one may choose, as Katherine Carlitz does, to consider Xiaoge's Buddhist discipleship as heaven's punishment of Ximen Qing rather than a religious redemption.⁷⁷ With the prologue of the *xiuxiang* recension advocating renunciation, however, the implications of Xiaoge's discipleship become more complex. While it can still be regarded as retribution for Ximen Qing's sins, it is also a serious solution in its own right, and this is how both traditional commentators, Zhang Zhupo and his anonymous colleague, understood it. This is also the solution that, a hundred years later, influenced the author of *Hongloumeng*, one of *Jinpingmei*'s most careful readers.

Xiaoge not only shaves his head and becomes a Buddhist disciple, but is also transformed into "a whiff of breeze" by and along with Pujing, the old monk with magical powers. At the end of the book, both simply fade into thin air, which is indeed the ultimate form of "emptiness." Xiaoge's evanescence in Chapter 100 and the prologue on the vanity of the world thus complete the narrative framework of the *xiuxiang* recension. In this way, the structure of the *xiuxiang* recension, as the "empty" truth of fiction, embodies the very philosophy it teaches. Its existence, encompassing both *kong* and *se*, becomes an eloquent paradox.

⁷⁷ *The Rhetoric of Chin p'ing mei* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), pp. 128–29.