



Transforming Gender & Emotion

The Butterfly Lovers Story in China and Korea

Sookia Cho

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University of Michigan Press
Ann Arbor

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Legend says that these [butterflies] are
The transformations of the souls of the couple,
The red one being Liang Shanbo and the black one being Zhu Yingtai.
This kind of butterfly is ubiquitous,
Still being called Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai.
Feng Menglong (17th-century China)

On a hot midsummer day, a little girl is crying,
Hiding under the shadow of flowers.
A yellow butterfly is flying around her and trying to sit on the edge of her hair ribbon.
The girl said, "I'm not a flower,
I dislike the flower that is withered by the cold wind after sunset.
I will not cry any more, and will fly like a butterfly."
Kim Sungon (1982, Korea)

To my friend Park Chanyoung and her family

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Introduction

Liang-Zhu: More Than Just a Love Story

In China and Korea, the felicitous union between a man and a woman has often been represented by the image of flowers and butterflies on a fresh, warm spring day. To women, especially those confined to the inner quarters, butterflies embodied imagined male lovers while they themselves were like flowers, enticing but immobile.¹ What many discussions of these themes overlook is that this common gender-specific imagery has evolved by way of a range of emotional stories that invert traditional notions of gender, continually morphing them to reflect the needs and desires of audiences in different eras and regions. In other words, against the backdrop of that single, eternal image of butterflies and flowers, multifarious narratives have arisen to address the reality of day-to-day emotions and relationships. Instead of an idealized romance, these themes are centered on the question of what constitutes an ordinary human life, specifically a happy and meaningful one.

The popular folktale of Liang Shanbo 梁山伯 and Zhu Yingtai 祝英台 (hereafter abbreviated to Liang-Zhu) weaves a tapestry of stories revolving around the romantic butterfly-and-flower image.² In the narrative, a young girl and boy share their life paths like a pair of butterflies. The butterfly no longer indicates only the male lover, but instead becomes the manifestation of the couple's liberated souls, their transformed bodies. It represents their desire for love, their hope for reunion, and their fear of separation. The narrative destabilizes the normative gendered imagery attached to the butterfly-flower image when a woman also becomes a butterfly. This image, freed of its fixed gender connotations, invites audiences into a liberated space, providing a healing matrix for

the strictures of traditional life and society. Although images of flowers in the story may still reinforce conventional gender roles through their symbolic association with concepts such as the virgin body, they also become subversive, representing a woman's strong will to overcome social obstacles and fulfill her dreams.

This book is not directly about either butterflies or flowers. Instead, it is an examination of the meaning and function of the tale of Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai, a narrative which offers unique literary and cultural tropes pertaining to gender and emotion. The Liang-Zhu tale is, at its most basic level, about the affection between two young students, a boy named Liang Shanbo and a girl named Zhu Yingtai. In the best-known twentieth-century versions, which have popularized the tale as the "Butterfly Lovers" story, the heroine Zhu Yingtai disguises herself as a man in order to leave home and study at an academy. There she falls in love with a fellow student, Liang Shanbo, who remains unaware of Zhu's true sex for most of the story. At last, Liang realizes that Zhu is actually a woman and that he has fallen in love with her. Ultimately, however, their long-anticipated love ends in human tragedy. Learning that Zhu's parents have arranged for her to marry someone else, Liang falls ill and dies. On her way to be married, Zhu commits suicide in order to be with her dead lover. But in death, the lovers are transformed into a pair of butterflies that fly into the sky, crossing the rainbow bridge—to the flower garden in Heaven, where they will reside, and their eternal happiness is promised.³ The tale has been accepted in many parts of China and Korea as the origin story of butterflies,⁴ and the tragic deaths at the end have led to the tale being labeled "the Chinese *Romeo and Juliet*."⁵

As one of the four most famous legends of China's past, Liang-Zhu has a long history and wide popularity among the Chinese, including ethnic minorities.⁶ It has been told and retold in divergent genres of oral and performance literature. The tale's origin is said to go back as far as the Eastern Jin dynasty (317–420),⁷ though we have surviving textual evidence to prove only that the tale, not yet fully developed, was narrated during the Tang dynasty and had become widespread in certain areas since the Song dynasty (960–1279).⁸ From its reputed origin in Ningbo, Zhejiang Province, the tale has spread across regions, genres, and eras. Wherever Chinese people have lived, the tale of Liang-Zhu has followed. Hundreds of versions of the tale exist today,⁹ suggesting many more that circulated orally and disappeared without ever being written down. The extant premodern Chinese versions

are largely works of folk and popular literature, written in vernacular Chinese and purportedly dating from the Ming and Qing period (1368–1911). New popular adaptations in modern cultural performance and arts, including local operas, films, musicals, and ballets, have also continually appeared, furthering the tale's long popularity in China.¹⁰

By examining the evolution of Liang-Zhu in China, we discover that the tale has attracted its audiences with a variety of themes and messages. The versions popular during Ming-Qing times, for example, appealed to local audiences with themes of love and friendship, revealed through moments of joy and sadness at meeting and parting.¹¹ They also often included themes of rebirth and afterlife, preaching religious messages on life and death. In the early and mid-twentieth century, by contrast, new versions of the tale stressed themes like free love, self-determined marriage, female education, and gender equality, which resonated with modern audiences' expectations and the new socio-political milieu in which they lived.¹² The tale also garnered support from leading intellectuals and Communist government officials such as Zhou Enlai and Mao Zedong,¹³ who lauded the tale particularly for its perceived “anti-feudal” ideas.¹⁴ Guided by this official support and by continued commercial success in opera and film, new versions of Liang-Zhu strove to appeal to the changing tastes of modern audiences.¹⁵

The success of these modern adaptations has made the tale a cultural icon for modern Chinese, galvanizing their nostalgia for an idealized Chinese past.¹⁶ Among overseas Chinese longing for their traditional culture in the twentieth century, the tale gained enormous popularity as a melodrama representing the spiritual, innocent love affair of a young couple that unfolds through beautiful stage settings and heartfelt performances.¹⁷ In particular, the glowing success of a film version, *The Love Eterne* (1963), directed by Li Han-hsiang (Li Hanxiang, 1926–96), stimulated and strengthened a sense of Chinese community or an “alternative Chinese national identity” among overseas Chinese.¹⁸ Liang-Zhu had evolved from a simplistic folktale into a popular symbol of Chineseness, loaded with powerful emotion and cultural significance.

Meanwhile, over the centuries, the Liang-Zhu tale had traveled to many other parts of Asia, reaching Indonesia, Vietnam, Malaysia, and in particular, Korea.¹⁹ The tale's history in Korea is one of the longest outside of China.²⁰ The first recorded version of the tale in Korea is a narrative poem written in Chinese included in an account by an erudite monk from the late Koryŏ

(13th–14th centuries).²¹ The first evidence of a Korean-language version did not appear until the late Chosŏn period (17th–19th centuries), when a vernacular Korean version emerged and circulated in a commercial woodblock edition. This scarcity of records and centuries-long gap between the first two written versions from premodern Korea do not, however, indicate a pause in the circulation of the tale on the peninsula. Instead, they show that ever since its arrival and its first translation into the native (spoken) Korean language, the tale resided mostly in the realm of oral/folk literature and folk religions.²² Like many other vernacular Chinese tales in Korea, it was appropriated by Korean commoners who loved it and who had seen its social and cultural value.²³ The distribution of the native Korean script in 1446, and its development as a literary language in the late Chosŏn period, provided a way for non-elite class Koreans, particularly women, to consume the tale as reading material, the form in which the native Korean fiction of Liang-Zhu emerged. Given this gradual development of Korean versions of the tale, the relatively small number of surviving Korean versions does not diminish the tale's long history among Koreans or its rich academic value.²⁴

The tale of Liang-Zhu sprouted on Korean soil or was newly imported from China by agents who ranged from professional entertainers, members of the semi-literati and the elite literati, and interpreters to religious figures, travelers, merchants, and others who heard the tale in the course of their contacts with the Chinese. Historically speaking, the tale probably reached Korea along cultural exchange routes during or even before the Tang period (618–907)—traveling predominantly by sea routes across the Yellow Sea, located between China and Korea.²⁵ During Tang-Song times, the port of Ningbo (in Zhejiang Province, China), where the Liang-Zhu tale originated, became an official and unofficial center for trade as well as cultural and religious exchange between the two countries. At the core of the religious exchange was the cult of Guanyin of the South Sea (Nanhai Guanyin 南海觀音) drawn from the Putuo Mountain near Ningbo City, a famous attraction among Chinese and Korean pilgrims since the Three Kingdoms Period of Korea (1st century BCE–7th century CE). These maritime routes must have been especially important to the early and continued transmission of popular tales like Liang-Zhu.²⁶ The importance of the maritime exchange, however, doesn't diminish the importance of exchange via land routes, which were frequently used for official communication, especially at times when there was no military conflict in the northern parts of the two countries. Ironically, the conflicts in the northern regions and the mar-

tial stability that followed may have facilitated more cultural exchange than did periods of peace. Wars and other military conflicts triggered unexpected waves of immigration which, like exchange routes such as the Silk Road, contributed to a continued influx into China and Korea of large numbers of professional entertainers from various ethnic groups, including Indians, Muslims, Khitan, Jurchen, and Mongols, migrating from the western or northern regions of China.²⁷ These professional entertainers of foreign origin were highly skilled and often bi- or multilingual. They served as a medium for the transmission and transplantation of many performing arts, including plays, acrobatics, and storytelling.²⁸ Their presence suggests one plausible way that the tale of Liang-Zhu might have traveled and been introduced continuously and widely.

This study investigates the popular Chinese folktale's remarkable capacity to evolve and multiply over the centuries and across continents. It elucidates what this phenomenon tells us about the tale, its audiences (specifically their daily values and concerns), and the literary, cultural, and religious practices that fueled its popularity. I have also included Korean versions of the tale so as to present an enriched examination of the variations and similarities in the Liang-Zhu tale and its history in a cross-cultural context, in which the beloved tale has been adapted by people with different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. This comparative approach is perhaps the most efficient way to uncover the values and meaning of Liang-Zhu, whose many versions comprise a tapestry of narratives long popular in both countries. Some comparison is fundamental to most folklore studies,²⁹ but this approach is particularly useful in highlighting the capacity of the tale as a cultural transmitter, reaching far beyond the geographical and cultural limits of its origin. It also helps us fathom the cultural distances between disparate versions, and even leads us back to forgotten or neglected characteristics and themes of the original tale.

Since the 1920s, Liang-Zhu's versatile charms have drawn the attention of academics, particularly those in the fields of folklore and drama studies.³⁰ Due to the vast quantity of historical materials generated by the wide-ranging popularity of Liang-Zhu over time, much of the research done until the 1990s focused on discovering, collecting, and recording these primary materials, as well as related historical texts and artifacts that often accompanied this intensive fieldwork. Scholars such as Qian Nanyang,³¹ Gu Jiegang,³² and Lu Gong³³ were among the first who made ardent efforts to

collect the widely scattered texts and make them available to society at the earliest stage. Despite a general decline in the study of folklore during the Cultural Revolution (1966–76),³⁴ since the 1980s scholars have continued to enrich the Liang-Zhu distribution map with newly discovered texts.³⁵

Academic work on Liang-Zhu led to a rapid increase in its modern recognition, which peaked in the late 1990s and early 2000s, when the Chinese government lobbied to have the tale registered by UNESCO as a “Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.”³⁶ One result of this national project was the publication of hundreds of articles on Liang-Zhu written by scholars from various disciplines, including anthropology, ethnic studies, history, and gender and cultural studies, in tandem with reinforced implementation of a top-down approach to collecting and preservation.³⁷ International versions of the tale, such as those that originated in Korea, were also widely sought after during this time and subsequently introduced into a broader scholarship.³⁸ As a result of this multidisciplinary academic attention and intensive government support, audiences were introduced not only to the romantic fable of Liang-Zhu, but also to multifaceted aspects of the narrative. All this attention also opened the door to using a new, comparative approach to different versions of the story.

Unfortunately, however, the intense academic and official interest in Liang-Zhu in China for the past two decades has also generated several problems. First, it has encouraged Chinese scholarship to focus on assembling archives to connect the tale to specific geographical areas or historical records. Many cities have competitively claimed the tale as their own,³⁹ and local scholars have attempted to use historical and literary accounts to prove the authenticity of their region’s version of Liang-Zhu. While this approach is intriguing, it has left other important areas neglected. The quest for historical proof has, for example, overshadowed the pressing need for a comprehensive literary analysis of Liang-Zhu.⁴⁰ The tale has been treated more as an archaeological relic pertaining to regional history and culture than as a living form of art and literature. Packaged and presented like airport art, the Liang-Zhu tradition was reduced to the tragic love story of a young couple who become butterflies. As a result, the richness of the Liang-Zhu tale as a literary and cultural text has not yet been fully addressed, and the field has remained critically marginalized. Although in recent years there have been some remarkable critical introductions and textual analyses of Liang-Zhu by scholars such as Roland Altenburger,⁴¹ Xu Duanrong,⁴² Fei-wen Liu,⁴³ and Wilt Idema,⁴⁴ a more

comprehensive study on the intriguing themes and elements of Liang-Zhu across versions has hitherto not appeared. Second, and somewhat ironically, the very reasons for Liang-Zhu's popularity in modern times—its love story and its value as cultural heritage—have resulted in neglect and sometimes even willful distortion of the tale.⁴⁵ Modern reinterpretations have amplified the role of Liang-Zhu as an icon of innocent and eternal love, gender equality, and protest against arranged marriage and other traditions. Meanwhile, themes like the tale's role as entertainment and its employment in conveying locally relevant religious lessons have been disregarded. Indeed, the Liang-Zhu tale in its various versions reveals numerous and dissident voices and values that, despite a lack of modern popularity, deserve serious critical attention. Closely examined, they attest to the rich tradition represented in the tale, and perhaps reveal the secret behind its continued survival and timeless popularity. Third, current scholarship has disregarded Liang-Zhu's potential as a bountiful source for studying the discourse between China and other cultures, most notably Korea. Importantly, neither the modern interpretations of the tale nor the academic discourse surrounding them have yet addressed the question of how and why the story has remained popular for so long outside of China. Although some studies have reported the existence of Liang-Zhu texts outside of China, few have examined what such materials tell us about the tale and its sociocultural contexts.

Meanwhile, academic interest in Korean Liang-Zhu versions has fallen within the purview of Korean oral and folklore studies or those of the relationship between Chinese and Korean literatures. Early twentieth-century scholars such as Kim T'aejun were the first generation to examine the relationship between Korean fictional narrative version and Chinese versions. Later scholars, such as Chang Chugŭn, Im Sŏkchae, and Chŏng Kyubok, dedicated themselves to tracing the tale through oral and folk literature, including shamanic narratives, and to investigating the textual relationship among different versions of Liang-Zhu within Korea.⁴⁶ Earlier Korean scholarship was hampered by lack of access to and understanding of Chinese versions as well as by an academic environment that emphasized a nationalist approach,⁴⁷ thus narrowing its scope to the geographic and national boundaries of the Korean Peninsula. The cross-cultural history of Liang-Zhu, with its significance as a comparative text revealing the exchange between China and Korea in terms of oral, non-elite literature, has therefore remained unexplored.

This book serves to deepen our critical understanding of the Liang-Zhu tale by exploring three interrelated topics: (1) its evolution into a tragic romance, (2) its intriguing gender-related issues and emotional themes of friendship and love, and (3) its engagement with both daily desires and religious ideals. Some of the primary reasons scholars have identified for Liang-Zhu's broader appeal to modern audiences include the praise of marriage for love, the contrasting characterizations of Liang and Zhu, the combination of realistic and fantastic elements, and the tale's ability to adapt to locally popular performing art genres.⁴⁸ This study builds upon and enriches the previous scholarship by focusing on the innately conflicting themes of emotional desire and relational obligation as essential factors in the tale's success. The oral transmission and performance of the tale in particular have offered subversive messages about gender transgression and the conflict between love and friendship, challenging both heterosexual and homosocial norms. By employing gender and emotion to look at the essential themes and values of the tale and the cultures that produced it, I demonstrate that the story's capacity to embody the innate conflicts of human relations and emotions is the fundamental reason the tale has continued to attract audiences across time and distance.

To illustrate disparate aspects of the Liang-Zhu narrative, this book also explores other intersectional subthemes and issues, including the aspiration for study; women's journeys; cross-dressing, lies, and gender deception; everyday ethics and Confucian virtues; folk-religious ideas and worldly blessings; the tension between love-based relationships and arranged marriages; the negation of female sexuality; the preference for male bonding over heterosexual love; death and karmic affinity; and rebirth and the butterfly transformation. Different versions of Liang-Zhu are grouped for discussion according to literary forms, characterizations, historical settings, and the form and style of the ending in each version. Through this approach, I have analyzed the topography of the multicultural, multiteria audience of the Liang-Zhu narrative.

I have also sought to expand the existing Liang-Zhu scholarship by illustrating audience engagement with the tale in both local and cross-cultural contexts. In essence, I view Liang-Zhu as a living, unfixed folk tradition that constantly reshapes itself through ongoing reciprocation and dialogues with its audience, including meta-narratives like this book. For this particular study of the versions that were popular and written down in specific contexts, however, I strategically define the Liang-Zhu tale as a cultural and lit-

erary “symbolic autobiography” of the people who enjoyed telling and hearing it, and treat each Liang-Zhu version as a metaphor contributing to that autobiography. The Liang-Zhu literature that I unravel here is, therefore, not individual art that exists separately from the semantic world of Liang-Zhu literature that I have reconstructed. Instead, the corpus of Liang-Zhu literature converges to draw, if not the whole portrait, then some dominant features inherent within the Liang-Zhu traditions of the past. This approach unravels the deep and complex world of the Liang-Zhu narrative within the context of the cultures in which each version is told—a context that, if ignored, can lead to dangerous and inaccurate generalizations.⁴⁹

I have also explored the ways and the extent to which the tale has been incorporated into different cultures in and around China, and how its evolution reveals differences within and between regions. In China, romantic representations of the tale have, over the years, been developed and adapted for performances on both community and commercial stages. In Korea, by contrast, the tale has functioned primarily at the local level, as part of shamanic rites and folklore. This difference reflects the differing social needs and condition of Korean audiences, for whom Liang-Zhu has been invoked not to entertain or to spark romance, but to release unfulfilled desire or grudges (*han*) and to bring wisdom and earthly blessings. Indigenous religious and cultural mind-sets have inarguably shaped the appropriation of the narrative. At the same time, investigating what is highlighted—or, conversely, what is discarded—in each of these different versions enhances our understanding of the literature and culture of the two countries.

The Liang-Zhu tale’s abiding presence in different cultures narrows the gap between those cultures in a way that transcends time and region. This study, being comparative in nature, envisions the tale as a catalyst for the inclusive, expansive discussion of premodern, China-centered discourse on East Asian literatures and cultures. By incorporating Korean contexts into the study, I also present here a new paradigm for examining the oral or vernacular stories that were popular in both China and Korea in premodern times. In so doing, I reposition the literary and cultural relationship between China and Korea in the domain of local and oral literature, which is a long overdue and significantly neglected approach to the fields of Chinese, Korean, and East Asian studies. With this construction, this study redefines premodern literary and cultural space in East Asia—which has until now been narrowly and geographically addressed—in accordance with a modern sense of national boundaries.

The abundance and diversity of Liang-Zhu materials pose one of the main challenges I have faced, particularly in selecting examples for discussion. For rich, relevant, original sources and related documents, I rely on the collections of original Liang-Zhu versions available in China and Korea, composed of various texts from folklore, popular songs, drama, fiction, prosimetric literature, musicals, and shamanic ritual narratives.⁵⁰ The anonymity, intertextuality, and collectivity of most Liang-Zhu versions, resulting from the tale's long life as oral and folk literature, become even more challenging when contextualizing selected versions in specific historical and cultural terms, and in relation to other types of literature. In light of this complexity, when I analyze the tale's core themes, such as gender, female education, friendship, and love, I focus primarily on versions from late imperial China (ca. 1550–1920) to mid-twentieth-century China whose dates and timelines have been fixed or estimated by previous scholarship.⁵¹ This selection of texts is appropriate in the sense that Liang-Zhu shaped its dominant tradition, the bulk of its materials and its broader audience, during this period. Yet to give the reader a sense of the great quantity of Liang-Zhu literature in different genres, and a comparative perspective among different versions, I also embrace as many relevant versions as possible from China and Korea. In addition, I incorporate supplementary materials from both premodern and modern China and Korea into the discussion of historical, cultural, and religious contexts, applying pertinent approaches drawn from folklore studies, literary studies, gender studies, anthropology, cultural studies, and religious studies to textual analyses.⁵²

In chapter 1, I sketch out the archetypal pattern of the Liang-Zhu tale, the consistent features that remain most essential in its telling, and the tale's reception among audiences. The search for the meaning(s) in the tale in its basic form, involves tracing oicotypes—that is, distinctive details within the Liang-Zhu narratives shaped during the tale's circulation in different cultural and geographical stages over time.⁵³ I also provide an overview of the evolutionary history of Liang-Zhu, from its origin as a local legend about a righteous woman to its modern incarnations as the tragic romance of the butterfly lovers. My focus, however, is on the basic elements that the tale has retained throughout its many incarnations, ensuring its continued popularity over hundreds of years and into modern times. I present the essential elements of Liang-Zhu by investigating its early storytelling, including accounts in local gazetteers from the Ningbo

area, as well as the earliest extant version, from Koryŏ Korea, to include the butterfly transformation

Chapter 2 looks at how the tale embodies the heroine Zhu Yingtai's desire for study, travel, and romantic love, investigating the underlying gender conflict that structures the narrative. The process of Zhu's becoming a student and starting her journey to the academy reveals a cultural context that discouraged female learning. By illustrating the difficulties Zhu experiences, as well as her means of acquiring the opportunity to study, this chapter demonstrates how a woman of literary talent has to negotiate social and gender norms to pursue her interests. The conflicts between personal values and traditional virtues such as trust between friends, filial piety, and virginity are discussed in depth as emotionally costly obstacles to crossing the threshold into the male world. Zhu Yingtai's strategies to leave home and study, which include telling lies and deceiving people, even her own parents, are discussed in relation to their relevant cultural connotations. A few full versions of the tale from the late Ming and Qing period (16th–19th centuries) provide the main source material for this discussion.

In chapter 3 I further investigate this gender conflict in the context of the tale's major themes of friendship and love, focusing on exploring the gap between reality and ideals that Zhu Yingtai traverses at a male-dominated educational institution. I examine the dream-come-true aspects of Zhu's life in a male space as well as the pains and risks she must endure. This, in essence, is a discussion of the existential limits of a woman's journey into a male-dominated society: the heroine's studies with a male student away from home have, in one sense, a positive outcome, but the constant challenges that spring from Zhu's lies about her identity jeopardize her academic life and co-habitation with Liang. In this chapter, I analyze the differing characters of Liang and Zhu and examine the dilemma of their relationship in terms of the unyielding gap between the ideal and the real. I demonstrate that the fundamental reason for the tragic nature of the tale is the irreconcilable juxtaposition of emotional attachment with the social-gender boundary between men and women of the era. This discussion is focused on the versions from the late Ming and Qing period, though I incorporate other versions collected or composed in modern times to show the later development of these themes.

Chapter 4 investigates the entangled relationship between Liang and Zhu within gender and emotional norms, focusing on the scene of their parting at the academy, often known as the "seeing off" or "seeing off over eighteen

li,” which dramatizes the heartrending separation that awaits the couple at the end of their journey together. By examining the labyrinth of emotions crystallized in the parting, I show how this scene has evolved to meet different and much broader audience expectations and interpretations of the relationship between Liang and Zhu within the context of Chinese parting culture. In addition, by highlighting the recurring conundrum articulated in the couple’s dialogues during the parting journey, I argue that the well-known theme of love between Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai is far more complex than is found in a simplistic, heteronormative love story; instead, the tale is a complicated tangle of heterosexual and homosocial relationships, and of spiritual and physical love. In addition, I shed light on the poetics of the parting scene, by analyzing how the parting of Liang and Zhu appealed to audiences within the sphere of the traditional mode of parting rituals. This chapter also considers other versions found in folk ballads and local operas and their modern adaptations.

Whereas the preceding chapters employ a textual analysis of the tale’s major themes, in chapter 5 I turn my attention to its locality, particularly the religious and cultural space in which the story has resided. I discuss the engagement and appropriation of the tale, focusing on the butterfly motif, the deification of Liang and Zhu, and the tale’s cross-cultural adaptations from Cheju, Korea. Like many popular stories in China, the Liang-Zhu tale has served folk beliefs and wisdoms and local cults, providing a way for the tale to travel and take up residence in different societies and cultures. I examine Liang-Zhu’s adaptation into a local Korean religious narrative as evidence of this quality. By investigating the amplification of the religious function of the tale in local cultures, I demonstrate that Liang-Zhu has not always been perceived solely as a story of love; it has also existed as a religious narrative that engages human emotions such as fear of death and the unknowable future. I argue that the complex interweaving of localized anxieties expressed by Liang-Zhu in various genres, including, at times, popular religious ritual, needs further attention.

The tragic quality of the Liang-Zhu tale is most potently felt in the unresolved gap between the hero and heroine. It is through this rift that we can see the futility of the human desire for an ideal relationship. This lack of resolution, or of “living happily ever after,” also complicates our understanding of Liang-Zhu as a traditional love story. Yet it is the very adaptability of this fundamental theme that has allowed the tale to explore a spectrum of dilemmas, sorrows, and tragedies in human relationships. Within the tale,

romantic feelings about meeting, the longing for deep friendship, sadness and fear about separation and death, and the happiness of eternal reunion all intermingle to produce a powerful and poignant saga. This inherent versatility extends far beyond the boundaries of time and region, inviting modern readers to dig deeply into the enduring and widespread popularity of the Liang-Zhu tale.

CHAPTER I

Stories in Transit

From Local Legend to Butterfly Lovers

The genesis of the Liang-Zhu tale is said to go back to a local legend of early medieval China (220–589) from the Wuyue 吳越 region.¹ The central figure of this legend is Zhu Yingtai. She was honored in Mingzhou 明州 (present-day Ningbo area) as a *yifu* 義婦 (literally, “righteous wife” or “righteous woman”). Her gravesite, known as *yifuzhong* 義婦冢 (the grave of a righteous wife), was considered a local attraction as early as the Tang period (618–907). Residents believed that Zhu Yingtai was buried there together with her school classmate Liang Shanbo. Based on these early accounts from Mingzhou, it is evident that the story of Zhu and Liang changed greatly along the path to its current popularity, evolving from the simple legend of a righteous woman of Mingzhou into the well-loved “Butterfly Lovers” story of modern representations.

The blossoming of a local legend into a widely popular love story can only have occurred after many retellings over time, interpolated with ongoing modifications that crystallized the tale’s varying and recurring themes. Indeed, due to the multitude of adaptations that have proliferated since the Song dynasty (960–1279), the world of Liang-Zhu literature has become so deep, contested, and diverse that any attempt to claim a single representative version could only misrepresent the whole. Essential to understanding Liang-Zhu’s historic value is the knowledge that the tale embodies the dissonant memories of the many people, across time and place, who were actively involved in performing, interpreting, (re)constructing, and negotiating the narrative.² It is the tale’s sustaining messages—the immanent ones created and revoked anew, depending on social and ethnographic circumstances at play within it during its performances³—that have made Liang-Zhu a relic

of intangible heritage. How, then, can we make sense of the enduring, contentious world of that heritage? In what way can the evolution of the narrative be best interpreted and reconstructed by those of us who have experienced the beautiful but tragic telling of modern adaptations? How does the past of Liang-Zhu affect the memory, identity, and life of modern people?

By identifying which core elements of the Liang-Zhu narrative appear consistently from its earliest stages of development into modern times, it is possible to trace the evolution of Liang-Zhu tales and map out the discourse of Liang-Zhu literature. In this search for the archetypal pattern of today's popular versions, I have focused on accounts and versions from the eleventh through the fourteenth centuries, which include those found in local gazetteers from Liang-Zhu–related historic sites, a narrative poem from Korea, and later dramatic, folk ballad, and prosimetric versions. Admittedly, the link between premodern and modern tellings of the Liang-Zhu story is not always visible in the historical and textual records, because the tale was initially appreciated by folk audiences rather than literati-official ones. Still, the small number of date-authenticated Liang-Zhu versions in print serve as stepping stones to connect the premodern and modern worlds of Liang-Zhu literature and their respective audiences.⁴

Through an examination of the themes that recur most often in premodern Liang-Zhu versions, it becomes clear that certain Liang-Zhu elements favored by the earliest tellers of the story played a decisive role in forming later audiences' perceptions of how Liang-Zhu literature should look. The basic themes of the early accounts, for instance—studying and being buried together—remain fundamental throughout Liang-Zhu versions, and the success of modern versions with their tragic ending is also reflected in the story's early telling. The history of modern Liang-Zhu versions, then, can best be understood when we view these later versions as an extension of the continued popularity of earlier versions, rather than as a creation of pure, modern imagination. Certainly, the constantly increasing audience for Liang-Zhu from its earliest origins into the late nineteenth century carved the way for its glory in modern times. Connecting the worlds of Liang-Zhu in this way provides us with a more open ground for enriched critical discussion. An emphasis on only the modern popular representations of the Liang-Zhu tale would neglect the important value of the unspotlighted folk versions, particularly those of distinct locality and ethnicity, which, far from being engaged in commercial commodification, have been circulated and appreciated among people of each region as part of their regional history and culture.

This search for an archetypal pattern to help us constitute and appraise the world of Liang-Zhu also enables our exploration of the variations in texts that transformed the basic scope of the early narrative into a rich and enduring storytelling tradition. Though the early versions in print form were not the direct, transparent inscription of popular oral storytelling, they can be understood as “oral-traditional texts,” mediating and integrating the distinct audiences for classical and vernacular texts by engaging with ordinary people’s lives and their literary appreciation practices, which tended to rely on memory, performance, repetition, listening, and recitation.⁵ Dominant in these Liang-Zhu versions are vestiges of the values and lore of common people in China and Korea that were shaped during their everyday lives, and that the unknown authors of Liang-Zhu tales drew on to entice and captivate fans.

The parallel but complementary relationship between the emergent Liang-Zhu materials in print form and the continued tradition of oral storytelling can be positioned within the broader context of the emergence and development of popular culture and literacy in late imperial China (ca. 1550–1920) as well as in late Chosŏn Korea (17th–19th centuries).⁶ The development of popular literature and culture has been discussed primarily in terms that prioritize and exalt the elite’s “top-to-bottom” influence in relation to infiltrating orthodox values.⁷ However, a certain level of interaction and interpenetration between elite and folk literatures and audiences is necessary in any culture, and thus the relationship cannot be described in terms of a unidirectional influence from one to the other.⁸ The integration of changing, conflicting, and complex voices of different audiences through “bottom-to-top” influence suggests that there has historically been a communicative arena, within the vast lore of Liang-Zhu, in which the tale’s value as both official record and popular lore has been negotiated. The resulting consensus has been translated into appealing forms of the tale, within which a certain unbroken thread can be observed. Tracing this thread—that is, the sustaining elements of Liang-Zhu—leads us to restore and experience this communicative space, whose breadth and depth played a key role in maintaining the steady popularity of Liang-Zhu.

From Legend to History: Zhu Yingtai, Righteous Wife

The earliest reliable, surviving record of the righteous wife version is found in the Southern Song text *Qiandao Siming tujing* 乾道四明圖經 (The Illus-

trated Classic of Siming [Ningbo] in the Qiandao reign [1165–73] period, 1169).⁹ This record was written by Zhang Jin 張津 (ca. 1130–ca. 1180), a local official of Mingzhou, the site of the story’s origin and the place where the grave of Liang and Zhu was discovered. Though very brief, the account reveals an early official perspective on the tale and its related site, “the grave of a righteous wife”:

“The grave of a righteous wife” is the place where Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai were buried together. It is located 10 *li* to the west of Yin County. Behind the Reception Hall, there still exists a shrine. The old records state that in their youth these two studied together for three years, but at first Shanbo did not realize that Yingtai was a girl. Such were his purity and simplicity. This is what is called the shared grave of righteous wife Zhu Yingtai and Liang Shanbo mentioned in *Shidao sifan zhi*.

義婦冢卽梁山伯、祝英臺同葬之地也。在縣(鄞縣)西十里，接待院之後有廟存焉。舊記謂二人少嘗同學，比及三年，而山伯初不知英臺之爲女也。其朴質如此。按十道四蕃志云，義婦祝英臺與梁山伯同冢，卽其事也。¹⁰

Zhang Jin’s account consists of three related elements: mention of the material sites, the backstory, and the verification of his account. The report of the material sites of the grave and the shrine provides us with some background information: first, that Zhu Yingtai was already honored as a righteous wife before Zhang Jin wrote the account; second, that Zhu and Liang were buried together in the same grave; and third, that the shrine existed in the area in Zhang Jin’s time. Then, based on broadly indicated “old records,” Zhang’s account introduces a basic story line, which is that Liang and Zhu studied together for three years in their youth and that Liang did not know Zhu’s sex. This bare-bones sketch ensured that the pair’s studying together (*tongxue* 同學), or sitting by the same window (*tongchuang* 同窓), and Liang’s ignorance of Zhu’s true identity would be the central parts of the Liang-Zhu story line in Zhang Jin’s time. Other elements, such as the romantic relationship between the two, Zhu’s marriage with someone else, and the butterfly transformation after their deaths, are not included.

Zhang Jin’s brief account somewhat surprisingly focuses on Liang’s character, which gives us a clue as to how he viewed the site and the related story.

Though the gravesite, as we know from its original title, was designed to honor the righteous wife Zhu Yingtai, rather than the righteous man or husband Liang Shanbo, Zhang's short synopsis reveals little about the righteous wife's achievements, instead praising Liang for his honorable personality and conduct. This focus on Liang raises a few questions: Why doesn't Zhang comment on Zhu's character? What does his attitude reveal about the Liang-Zhu tale at that time? Does such an attitude originate from Zhang's own understanding of the Liang-Zhu tale or simply reflect Liang-Zhu versions popular at that time?

Certainly, we cannot dismiss Zhang Jin's honoring of Liang as entirely Zhang's own work. As suggested by Zhang's mention of "old records," the focus on Liang's merits might have been a common phenomenon among the literati and local officials of Mingzhou. Zhang's report of the existence and location of the shrine, which seems to be dedicated to Liang, also reveals that the tendency to position Liang as the story's central figure was already widespread during Zhang Jin's lifetime.¹¹ Hence, we can infer that Zhang was influenced by a Liang-centered interpretation that focused on the honorable nature of Liang rather than Zhu.

Alternatively, Zhang Jin may not have had historical information about the righteous wife Zhu Yingtai at hand (or available in the sources he consulted), or if he did have such material, he may not have considered the available information proper for use in his official records. Given that Zhang's account also fails to provide detailed information about Liang Shanbo, and that further historical details could only have helped Zhang strengthen the historical relevance of the site, I surmise that in Zhang Jin's time, or to Zhang himself, specific historical information was not considered integral to the official narration of Liang-Zhu. It was not until the Ming period that historical information began to appear in official records of the grave in local gazetteers.¹²

Zhang's reference to the *Shidao sifan zhi* 十道四蕃志 (Records of the Ten Circuits and the Four Territories) from the Tang dynasty hints at the circulation and evolution of the Liang-Zhu tale before his own time.¹³ First, the entry of this grave in the *Shidao sifan zhi* confirms that the salutation of Zhu Yingtai as a righteous wife and her common burial with Liang Shanbo were known during the Tang dynasty. It also suggests that up until then, the historical record had spotlighted Zhu, giving her precedence over Liang. From this, it can be inferred that Zhu had been better known than Liang before Zhang Jin's time. This inference is supported by the fact that there has been a *cipai* 詞牌 (tune title of *ci* lyrics) named after Zhu Yingtai since

the Song dynasty,¹⁴ while there is no equivalent melody named after Liang Shanbo to be found. The frequent reference to that melody in musical genres such as *zaju* 雜劇 (variety play) and *chuanqi* 傳奇 (romance play) attests to the fame of Zhu Yingtai's name and thus to its earlier predominance over the name of Liang Shanbo among folk audiences.¹⁵

There are surely many meanings that cannot be adequately captured in written language, so it is the reader's role to extract the relevant messages hidden between the lines.¹⁶ The term *yifu*, originally used to refer to Zhu Yingtai, regardless of whether it is translated as "righteous wife" or "righteous woman," may have communicated different messages to different audience groups. The term "righteous" may have been broadly defined as a woman's respectful behavior in general terms, as suggested by Chen Huawen and Hu Bin, but it may also have meant a woman's "socially ideal" acts within the context of her relationship to a man.¹⁷ Zhu may have become an honored figure for adhering to gender conventions while studying with a man, or for her faithfulness in being with her classmate after death, or for her obedience to the man with whom she had her first physical—though not sexual—contact and emotional attachment. In any case, Zhu's death can be considered, in Confucian terms, the fulfillment of a virtue; Zhu shows her will to serve her classmate, a man or a husband, after death, and she tries as hard as humanly possible to do so. Yet, to a local female audience, Zhu's taking the initiative, first in study and later in death, in order to be with her classmate, would have been enough to garner praise, serving as a concrete example of a woman surpassing social, cultural, and even ontological boundaries. Historically, and even today, wielding self-determination against various obstacles has not been as feasible for most women as it has been for men. Thus Zhu's presence itself challenges local people who simply comply with the social and cultural traditions imposed, often forcibly, upon them.

While we still find it difficult to understand the context surrounding Zhu's status as a righteous wife, and of her sharing the grave with Liang, it is helpful to be reminded that the use of the term "righteous" may capture its true, gender-neutral sense—"doing good and just acts" benefiting the local people—without emphasizing any womanly virtue. In some local lore in which Liang and Zhu hail from different time periods,¹⁸ Zhu is said to be a chivalrous woman (俠女) who helps poor people but dies a virgin, and Liang is an uncorrupted official (清官) who dies unmarried. Since the two, despite their admirable works, both die young and unwed, the desire to connect them arose among audiences; essentially, those who admired Liang's

work “married” him to Zhu by burying his body in her tomb.¹⁹ This post-humous matching of Liang and Zhu also suggests that the portrayal of Zhu as a local Robin Hood archetype may have been combined with the motifs of schooling and love in a folkloric attempt to bind the two heroes together in material and narrative space.²⁰ Hence, the meaning of the gravesite, originally intended to commemorate an honorable woman whose acts remained undisclosed, was later tailored to the local people’s desire to console the souls of two heroes. In this respect, I suggest that the co-schooling motif may have been inserted specifically to sanction the two figures’ sharing of space and of their mutual benevolent wills and virtues, which guaranteed the value of the common grave. This gravesite, symbolizing “living together in the present and beyond death,” serves as a primary locus of the Liang-Zhu literature, engendering tales that enrich the story’s main themes.²¹

In Zhang Jin’s account, Liang is figured as equal to, or even higher than, Zhu, and thus the tale comes to function more as the story of Liang as commonly seen in local accounts from the same region.²² This overt admiration for Liang’s character—that is, a shift in focus from Zhu to Liang in the account of the gravesite—to some extent reflects the social reality of the Southern Song dynasty (1127–1279), which was known for a more Confucian social milieu than the Tang dynasty. To male audiences, Liang’s act, manifested in Zhang’s account that “Shanbo didn’t know that Zhu Yingtai was a girl,” is something that can be considered truly exceptional, rather than foolish. Since female sexual potency was considered threatening to a man, the ability to control one’s sexual desire was a necessary disposition for any “gentleman” to possess.²³ In this sense, Liang’s asexual behavior, one crucial sign of his noble character, has helped the Liang-Zhu tale deliver a didactic message to audiences, particularly the audiences of versions by literati such as Zhang Jin.²⁴ Such a suppression of (premarital) sexuality is maintained throughout most Liang-Zhu literature, but this version’s straightforward emphasis on Liang’s purity and simplicity contrasts strongly with popular versions, in which Liang’s ignorance of Zhu’s sexuality is often presented in a comic manner that creates a sense of suspense and humor.

Honoring Liang creates a narrative framework in which Zhu’s virtue is acknowledged primarily within the confines of her relationship with Liang; her righteous acts serve only to indirectly testify to Liang’s honorable character. In the Confucian mindset, Zhu is viewed as a woman who helps a man keep his integrity—a requisite quality for the ideal partner of such an honorable man. The privileging of Liang’s character in Zhang’s account surely

limits interpretation of Zhu's righteous acts, illustrating the decisive role of a man in defining a woman's virtue. The Chinese term *fu* (literally, "wife" or "adult woman") used in the title of righteous woman (*yifu*), though it was sometimes used merely to indicate an "adult woman" due to an insufficient lexicon for femininity, appears to mean "wife" here (as it does in the next paragraph), connoting a potential husband-and-wife relationship between Liang and Zhu. It was not unusual for a husband to speak for and represent his wife.²⁵ This focus on Liang—though it seems incongruous, given that the grave is Zhu's—thus helps us understand how a historic site can be misrepresented by a later local authority, and how this misrepresentation can affect the evolution of a related story.

Zhang Jin's mode of introducing "the grave of a righteous wife" (*yifuzhong*) continued to be used for more than a hundred years in official accounts. For example, Wang Xiangzhi's 王象之 (*jinshi* 1196; active ca. 1208–24) account in *Yudi jisheng* 輿地紀勝 (Records of Famous Places) repeats that "the grave of a righteous wife . . . is the shared grave of Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai" (義婦塚 . . . 卽梁山伯祝英臺之冢也).²⁶ Although the records of the site remained largely consistent, over time there was some change in the treatment of its title. Luo Jun 羅濬 (active ca. 1226–27), for instance, pointed out that the old title did not make sense because Zhu never married Liang: "The shared grave of Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai . . . is referred to in the old records as the grave of a righteous wife, but Yingtai was a virgin, not a wife" (梁山伯祝英臺墓 . . . 舊志稱曰義婦塚, 然英臺女而非婦也).²⁷ The doubt cast by Luo indicates the increased interest in the Liang-Zhu story among officials and the resulting efforts to provide a more consistent narrative.

To thirteenth-century local people, who were probably more familiar with contemporary Liang-Zhu storytelling than with the old legend of a righteous woman, the term "righteous wife" didn't seem relevant; the new title of "the grave of Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai" better matched their understanding of the tale. It is not surprising, then, that this new title came to be widely accepted and replaced the old one.²⁸ This change not only reduced the gap between the original title of the gravesite, named for Zhu, and the Liang-centered accounts of the story, but also addressed the attenuated attention to the righteous woman Zhu Yingtai in the official narration. During the Yuan dynasty (1271–1368), Liang-Zhu was developed into a popular story performed on stage,²⁹ and the adoption of the new title helped the official records to align better with the popular storytelling.

The shift in focus in Zhang Jin's account from Zhu to Liang, or to Liang and Zhu as an indivisible entity, can be seen as a manifestation of the desire to infuse the Liang-Zhu tale with androcentric heteronormativity. This imposed heteronormativity erased traces of the righteous and gallant Zhu Yingtai, which existed independently at least during the Tang dynasty, so as to reflect the social norms of the time. In this light, the emergence of Liang- or Liang-and-Zhu-focused Liang-Zhu tellings since the Song dynasty, if not completely inclusive, might have been a necessary threshold to cross for the perpetuation of the tale.

The Making of a Divine Hero: Liang Shanbo, Deity of Righteousness and Loyalty

Another important early Liang-Zhu account is the *Yizhongwang miaoji* 義忠王廟記 (Record of the Shrine for the King of Righteousness and Loyalty) by Li Maocheng 李茂誠 (active ca. 1101–17), a prefect of Mingzhou (知明州事). Li's account, which takes the form of an inscription dedicated to the shrine for Liang Shanbo, was written in the first year of the Dagan period (1107–10) of the Song dynasty, but it was not included in the local gazetteers of Yin County (Ningbo) until the seventeenth century.³⁰ Though this late entry into official local texts may cast doubt on the credibility of Li's account—which is one reason I present it after Zhang Jin's, which appeared several decades later—this version deserves special attention. Compared to Zhang Jin's, Li's account of Liang-Zhu is elaborate and comprehensive. As the earliest example of a religious telling of Liang-Zhu written by an official, it also reveals how the tale developed into a religious and didactic story in the area, apparently during the twelfth century.

While previous accounts concerning “the grave of a righteous wife” had focused on the virtue of righteousness (*yi* 義), Li Maocheng's record of the imperial recognition of Liang Shanbo reveals the tale's embodiment of another important Confucian virtue: loyalty (*zhong* 忠); it emphasizes Liang's virtuous and miraculous deeds. The translation of the entire text follows here:

The deity's name is Churen, his style name being Shanbo and his surname Liang. He is from the Kuaiji area. When she was pregnant, the deity's mother dreamed that the sun entered into her chest, and

her pregnancy lasted for twelve months. He was born at an auspicious time, on the first day of the third month in the *renzi* year [352] during the Yonghe reign [345–56] of Emperor Mu [r. 344–61] of the Eastern Jin dynasty [317–420]. Even as a young child, he showed an extraordinary talent and disposition. When he had grown up, he went to the academy and enjoyed studying the ancient classics. Traveling to the Qiantang area to study under a famous teacher, he met a young man on the road whose appearance was very upright and dignified, carrying bamboo boxes of books and holding a large umbrella. On a boat crossing [the river], they sat together and had a conversation. [Shanbo] asked, “Who are you?” and [this young man] answered, “My surname is Zhu, and my name is Zhen. My style name is Xinzhai.” [Shanbo] asked, “Where are you from?” [Zhu] answered, “I’m from the village of Shangyu.” [Shanbo] asked, “Where are you headed?” [Zhu] answered, “My teacher is nearby.” Sharing profound thoughts comfortably with Zhu, and happily enjoying getting to know Zhu, the deity said, “Our hometowns are connected. I am not clever, but I’d like to make friends with you. I hope that you will not consider me strange.” They thereupon went on together very pleasantly.

After having studied for three years, Zhu missed her parents and returned home early. Two years later, Shanbo also returned home. On his way, he dropped by Shangyu to visit Xinzhai [Zhu], but no one seemed to know who Xinzhai was. An old gentleman, however, told Shanbo with a smile, “I do know who you are looking for. If this person is good at writing, then it probably is the ninth daughter of the Zhu family, whose name is Yingtai.” Shanbo visited Yingtai at her home, and parted after exchanging poems and drinking wine. Shanbo was downhearted, [since only then did he] realize that Yingtai was actually a girl. Shanbo returned home and, admiring Zhu’s purity and innocence, he asked his parents to make a marriage proposal. Sadly, however, Yingtai was already engaged to a son of the Ma family, who was the head of corridor houses (*langtou*) of the town of Mao, so there was nothing he could do. The deity sighed, “One should aspire to be granted the title of marquis when one is alive, and to be offered sacrificial food when one is dead. Therefore, there is no need to discuss such a minor thing.”

Later, when Emperor Jianwen [r. 371–72] was recruiting talented

men, the commandery responded by recommending the deity and he was appointed the magistrate of the town of Mao. However, he became afflicted with a disease and fell fatally ill. He commanded his servants, “Please bury me at Jiulongxu [Nine Hill Ruins] of Qingdayuan [Pure Road Fountain] to the west of the town of Mao.” Then he closed his eyes and died. This happened in the *chen* hour [7–9 a.m.] of the sixteenth day of the eighth month, *guiyou* year [373] of the Ning kang reign [373–75]. Not long afterward, the people of the commandery buried him and set up a tomb to commemorate him.

On the *bingzi* day of late spring of *yihai* year [375], two years after his death, Zhu was on her way to the Ma family home [to get married]. As her boat traveled from the west to the region, there arose a sudden storm with swelling waves that [forced the boat to move close to the tomb and] prevented it from going forward. Startled at this, Zhu asked the boatman what had happened. The boatman explained, “There can’t be any reason other than the new grave of Magistrate Liang Shanbo. It is strange, isn’t it?” Hearing this, Yingtai left the boat to visit the grave, where she offered a dedication of wine. Deeply saddened, she wept. The earth broke open, and she was buried within it. The servants were shocked and tried to catch her skirt, but the wind was so strong that it tore away the skirt like a flying cloud. It even dropped eventually down to the western islet (*xiyu*) of Dong brook (*dongxi*). Ma requested that the local officials open the coffin, but a giant snake was protecting the tomb, and no one could do anything. The commandery made this bizarre event known to the court, and Prime Minister Xie An [320–85] suggested naming the grave *Yifu-zhong*, “the grave of a righteous wife,” and erecting a tombstone on the left bank of the [Yao] river.

In the fall of *dingyou* year [397] of Emperor An [r. 397–418], bandits led by Sun En plundered the Kuaiji area. When they reached the town of Mao, this evil clique threw the tombstone into the river. When Senior Captain (*dawei*) Liu Yu was ordered to defeat the bandits, the deity appeared to him in a dream and offered to help him. In the middle of that night, torches and candles indeed shone brightly, but the soldiers were barely visible. The bandits were defeated and retreated to the sea. Liu Yu reported this wonderful news to the court. Then, the emperor wanted to memorialize this great victory of the deity by honoring him with the title of *Yizhong shensheng wang*

[Divine and Sage King of Righteousness and Loyalty], and ordered the officials in charge of relevant matters to establish a shrine for him.

There was a shrine of King Liang in the Yue area, and on the western islet (*xiyu*), there were two Yellow Skirt (*huangqun*) temples of Kuaiji, one in the front and one in the rear. When there were famines, floods, and transmittable diseases, and when merchants and travelers encountered unexpected mishaps, as long as they prayed [to the deity], their prayers would be immediately fulfilled. The facts can be authenticated by the *Jiuyu tuzhi* [Atlas of the Nine Regions], made by the emperor's decree in the late spring of the first year of the Dagan reign [1107–110] of the Song dynasty, and by the *Shidao sifan zhi*. A record is a chronicle, and I record so as to chronicle his biography into immortality. Here I compose the following song:

In life they shared the way of their master;
 People rectify cardinal human relationships.
 In death they shared coffin and grave;
 Heaven joins them in marriage.
 His divine merit contributed to the country;
 His favors benefited the people.
 Posthumously titled “Righteous” and “Loyal,”
 He receives worship and sacrificial offerings.
 His glorious fame will not perish,
 It will be renewed every day.

神諱處仁，字山伯，姓梁氏，會稽人也。神母夢日貫懷，孕十二月，時東晉穆帝永和壬子三月一日，分瑞而生。幼聰慧有奇，長就學，篤好墳典。嘗從名師過錢塘，道逢一子，容止端偉，負笈擔簞。渡航相與坐而問曰：子為誰曰：姓祝，名貞，字信齋。曰奚自，曰上虞之鄉，曰奚適，曰師氏在邇。從容與之討論旨奧，怡然相得。神乃曰：家山相連，予不敏，攀魚附翼，望不為異。於是樂然同往。肄業三年，祝思親而先返。后二年，山伯亦歸省。之上虞，訪信齋，舉無識者。一叟笑曰：我知之矣。善屬文者，其祝氏九娘英台乎。踵門引見，詩酒而別。山伯悵然，始知其為女子也。退而慕其清白，告父母求姻，奈何已許鄞城廊頭馬氏，弗克。神喟然嘆曰：生當封侯，死當廟食，區區何足論也。后簡文帝舉賢，郡以神應召，詔為鄞令。嬰疾弗瘳，囑侍人曰：

鄮西清道源九隴墟為葬之地也。瞑目而殂，寧康癸酉八月十六日辰時也。郡人不日為之塋焉。又明年乙亥，暮春丙子，祝適馬氏，乘流西來，波濤勃興，舟航縈回莫進。駭問篙師。指曰：無他，乃山伯梁令之新塚，得非怪歟。英台遂臨塚奠，哀慟，地裂而埋葬焉。從者驚引其裙，風裂若雲飛，至董溪西嶼而墜之。馬氏言官開槨，巨蛇護塚，不果。郡以事異聞於朝，丞相謝安奏請封義婦塚，勒石江左。至安帝丁酉秋，孫恩寇會稽，及鄮，妖黨棄碑於江。大尉劉裕討之，神乃夢裕以助，夜果烽燧熒煌，兵甲隱見，賊遁入海。裕嘉奏聞，帝以神功顯雄，褒封義忠神聖王，令有司立廟焉。越有梁王祠，西嶼有前後二黃裙會稽廟，民間凡旱澇疫疠，商旅不測，禱之輒應。宋大觀元年季春，詔集九域圖誌及十道四蕃志，事實可考。夫記者，紀也，以紀其傳不朽云爾。為之詞曰：生同師道，人正其倫。死同窀穸，天合其姻。神功於國，膏澤於民。謚義謚忠，以祀以禋。名輝不朽，日新又新。³¹

According to Li's inscription, Liang Shanbo was appointed "Divine and Sage King of Righteousness and Loyalty" 義忠神聖王 during the reign of Emperor An of Eastern Jin (r. 397–418), at the request of local official Liu Yu. Liu Yu defeated the bandits with the help of the deity Liang. After the victory, he reported it to the imperial authorities, and a shrine was built to worship Liang.³²

One of the most notable features of Li's account is that it successfully establishes Liang and Zhu as historical figures through the addition of personal information. It is revealed, for example, that Liang hailed from the Kuaiji area (currently Shaoxing, Zhejiang) and was born in 352 under an unusual birth sign. Perhaps more importantly, the names of Liang and Zhu are fully introduced in this account in a formal way. Interestingly, their names refer to particular Confucian virtues: Zhu's two names ("Zhen" and "Xinzhai") represent "chastity" (*zhen*) and "trust" (*xin*), respectively, and Liang's name ("Churen") refers to "dwelling in benevolence (*ren*)," the ethical concept critical for the establishment of a virtuous personhood.³³ By conspicuously embedding Confucian virtues into the protagonists' names, Li emphasized that the two figures were exemplary of Confucianism. Li also provided the exact timeline of Liang's posthumous accomplishments—the valiant defeat of the bandits—and official recognition of them. Such an inclusion of Liang and Zhu in history creates a narrative of esteem and authority by resisting any ambiguities and inconsistencies.³⁴ The historical

space created by Li's account also functioned as a portal through which readers could easily visit and communicate with the figures and access the lessons that their life stories convey.

Further, many unknown circumstances left unexplained in Zhang Jin's account—from the first encounter of Liang and Zhu to their co-study and their parting at the academy—are filled in by Li's account with plausible information and explanations, supported by vivid dialogue. For example, for the first time the Qiantang (Hangzhou) area is given as the location of the academy where Liang and Zhu study, and the son of the Ma family is named as the man whom Zhu is engaged to marry. Li also presents two major reasons why Liang and Zhu become close so quickly: first, they both plan to study in the Hangzhou area and, second, they are from the same region. To a general audience from the 1100s—and to a modern audience as well—shared academic goals and a regional connection would certainly have seemed good reasons for the accelerated development of a close relationship and mutual affection between two students. Li also explains why and how the two characters part: Zhu leaves the academy first, due to missing her parents, and after two years, Liang also returns home. As we will see, Zhu's filial concern appears in many folk versions as her major reason for leaving the academy, although other versions posit the fear of her identity being discovered by her classmates as the direct cause for her departure (see chapters 2 and 3).

As is often the case within the inscription genre, Li's version employs supernatural phenomena to demonstrate Liang's powerful and divine character. Examples include the abnormal weather that leads to Zhu's visit to Liang's grave, the emergence of a giant snake guarding Liang and Zhu's joint coffin, and Liang's posthumous appearance and accomplishments. Whereas most of the supernatural elements are employed to emphasize a virtuous and powerful Liang, the manifestation of Liang's power on Zhu's wedding day presents a somewhat different image; his ghost is seen, essentially, as the perpetrator of Zhu's death. In this version, Zhu only comes to learn the location of Liang's grave due to unusual weather surrounding the site. When she offers her respects to Liang with a dedication of wine, she is taken into his grave. Whether Zhu's death is to be read as suicide remains dubious, but it follows logically that it is the stormy soul of Liang, a man who died in a state of unrequited love, who causes Zhu's death.

Li's narrative includes some reasons for Liang's soul to be aggrieved: Liang's soul didn't want to let Zhu marry the son of the Ma family, and Zhu

does not seem deeply concerned about Liang until she arrives at his graveside, nor does she intend to join him in death. Furthermore, the fact that Zhu does not know where Liang is buried suggests that finding his grave may be a complete surprise, rather than a long-yearned-for event. In this view, Zhu's death is driven by Liang's soul, and Zhu's righteousness is located in the act of sacrifice or martyrdom, both of which are conceptually tied to being buried alive with the dead. The powerful intervention of Liang's soul into the personal, private relationship brings a hopeful message for faithful people, and a warning message for the unfaithful. These two clandestinely conflicting images of Liang—as a deity loyal to the local people and as a vengeful soul—add savor to the Liang-Zhu tale and leave room for its later elaboration as a popular religious story.

The addition of supernatural elements to the Liang-Zhu tale illuminates the local spiritual environment in which the story developed into a religiously didactic narrative. According to Lin Fu-shih's research on the local cult of Jiang Ziwen 蔣子文, local shamanistic cults played a pivotal role in religious life in many regions of South China, including Jiangsu and Zhejiang Provinces, from ancient times.³⁵ Lin's discussion of different records of the cult, dating as far back as the early third century, also indicates that, despite the cult's shamanistic elements, the figure of Jiang Ziwen had been worshipped widely by all types of people in the region, regardless of their social class.³⁶

In Li Maocheng's time, though Confucianism was the dominant ideology, non-Confucian supernatural and shamanistic elements were tolerated in official texts as long as they could contribute to the embodiment of Confucian values and thus to the so-called public good. We can thus understand Li's inscription within the context of "popular Confucianism," to use Philip Clart's term—a practice that, in reality, necessitated an official's employment of non-Confucian elements to supplement the official, Confucian rites.³⁷ In a ritual context, such an integration of supernatural and uncanny elements into the official rites, as Wu Bing'an indicates,³⁸ can be understood as a characteristic of syncretic folk religions (*minjian xinyang* 民間信仰), in which worship of the Buddha, Daoist immortals, and Confucian sages (*shengxian* 聖賢) intertwined to serve imminent, practical purposes. The cults of particular human-gods were more often than not sponsored by local authorities as a way to promulgate the normative (Confucian) values beneficial to their governance, and Li's engagement in local worship of the loyal official Liang is no different. The supernatural and fictional elements of Li's

narrative played a crucial role in shaping a very appealing, intriguing, and memorable hagiography, quintessential for authenticating and commemorating the human deity Liang Shanbo.

It is important to mention that Li Maocheng's account is based on a Liang-centered interpretation of the raw Liang-Zhu story available to him. The adoption of a Liang-centered perspective was inevitable given that this particular text served as an inscription to Liang's shrine, but as the first full Liang-centered narrative, its significance to the broader tradition of Liang-Zhu storytelling is paramount. Furthermore, this version is distinct from Zhang Jin's account in that its sanctification of Liang reveals, and is based on, the character's inner mind. Whereas Zhang Jin's description of Liang as a man of manners is based solely on Liang's being unaware of, or simply uninterested in, the fact that Zhu is a girl, Li Maocheng divulges Liang's respectable interior by directly exposing his thoughts.

More specifically, Li's Liang-centered narration privileges public values over private concerns. The maximization of dominant Confucian social values and the minimization of private desires leave no space for Li to scrutinize Liang and Zhu's relationship at a personal level, which in turn results in the complete silencing of Zhu's voice. Her thoughts, feelings, and expectations of Liang are annulled, and she is relegated to the status of a secondary and objectified being. Private life events such as a marriage are subordinate to the supremacy of the public; Liang dismisses marriage, or desire for a woman, as "a minor thing." He ultimately proposes marriage only because he finds Zhu innocent and pure, characteristics of an ideal marriage partner according to Confucian social norms. Liang barely seems to consider their three years of study or the personal affection between them. Furthermore, Li's narrative implies that Liang's fatal illness stems from overwork as a local official, rather than from lovesickness brought about by his inability to marry Zhu, the commonly accepted reason throughout most of the Liang-Zhu literature. Out of his desire to present a model for other men to follow, Li Maocheng strongly suggests that Liang's main concern is to serve the country through his sacrificial acts. The inclusion of Liang's military accomplishments in the last part of the inscription also serves this purpose.

Li's amalgamation of historical and folkloric events, focus on the Confucian aspects of the tale, and deification of Liang transform a simple account attached to the local legend of a righteous wife into an official narrative that propagates Confucian ethical virtues while also reflecting the needs of local audiences. Yet a careful reader may still find that Li's work is not entirely

regulative and state-focused. Liang's dropping by to visit Zhu on his way home, which suggests an earlier promise between the two schoolmates to meet again, and the strength of his posthumous desire to marry Zhu can be read as indicators of the emotional, heterosexual attachment between Liang and Zhu, an attachment that goes beyond their mutual affection as classmates. But without an explicit description of their emotional attachment, the reader is left to wonder why Liang chooses Zhu over other girls introduced through a matchmaker or his parents—girls who would seem more proper by the standards of Confucian ethics—and why, if Liang so trivializes the idea of marriage, his ghost bothers to reappear and take Zhu into his grave, and to her death.

Such gaps in Li's account demonstrate the complexity of his simultaneous position as a writer, reader, and government official. It is possible that Li, as a writer, used his own imagination in crafting Liang's character,³⁹ but it seems more plausible that he selectively interpreted different sources of Liang-Zhu storytelling already popular in the area through his lens as a reader and an official. Li's narrative shares plotlines, settings, and basic character details with the Liang-Zhu account in *Xuanshi zhi*, which is known as the Tang story collection.⁴⁰ Though no direct textual relationship between the two accounts has been reported, it is very likely that both accounts originated from a certain fixed storytelling tradition for Liang-Zhu. Hence, it is reasonable to say that although Li's account shifted the focus of existing versions, Li did not ignore or modify well-known facts or plotlines of Liang-Zhu. Rather, by employing details from existing versions, Li Maocheng's inscription established a new Liang-Zhu account from the perspective of a literatus-official, which contributed to the official recognition that was instrumental to the tale's enduring popularity in the area.⁴¹

Most modern Chinese intellectuals criticize Li's account for representing feudalist and superstitious beliefs and, as such, for tarnishing the value of Liang-Zhu.⁴² Others point out that Li's version reduces the authentic voice of Zhu Yingtai and underestimates the importance of the love relationship between Liang and Zhu.⁴³ Nonetheless, this version helps us better understand early Liang-Zhu storytelling by revealing not only the manner in which the story was told in the twelfth century, but also what narrative elements were favored and expected by twelfth-century readers and how local officials reacted to the story. In contrast to the account of Zhang Jin, whose main concern was to provide a legitimate narrative for the Liang-Zhu gravesite, Li Maocheng's aim was to deliver a delicate, powerful, and

divine narrative, in which Liang ascends to the status of a perfect human-god who epitomizes the Confucian virtues of righteousness (*yi*) and loyalty (*zhong*)—a creature much more revered by locals than the mere husband of a righteous wife.

The *Sipch'osi* Version: An Early Song of Sadness and Butterfly Transformation

The key elements found in modern Liang-Zhu versions—namely, love and the butterfly transformation—are entirely missing from the official narrations discussed above. Indeed, it was not until the nineteenth century, when the story was included in local gazetteers, that a full Liang-Zhu narrative that includes these elements appeared in official texts.⁴⁴ In contrast, in popular or oral Liang-Zhu storytelling, these motifs were adopted much earlier. Though it is difficult to estimate exactly when the motifs appeared in popular storytelling for the first time, the Korean version entitled “Yang Sanbaek Ch'uk Yŏngdae chŏn” 梁山伯祝英臺傳, by far the earliest known example of the Liang-Zhu story containing both elements, allows for an inquiry into the first major emergence of the popular version, which followed its own evolutionary path, diverging significantly from the official narration.

The version in question, which dates to the Koryŏ period, is found in an edition of the *Hyŏpchu myŏngghyŏn sipch'osi* 夾注名賢十抄詩 (Poetry Anthology of the Three Hundred Poems by Thirty Famous Poets) annotated by the monk Chasan 子山.⁴⁵ This Liang-Zhu version, which I refer to hereafter as the *Sipch'osi* version, is included in Chasan's annotation to a poem entitled “Butterfly” 蛺蝶, written by the late Tang poet Luo Ye 羅鄴 (active ca. 847–73), who hailed from Yuhang 餘杭 County (Zhejiang Province).⁴⁶ The poem reads as follows:

The color of grass and the glow of flowers light up the small
courtyard;
Over the low wall, the butterfly flies with ease.
Red branches are so tender, as if they have no strength;
Powdered wings flutter high above with special sentiments.
Legends say that [a butterfly] is what the righteous wife's garment
transformed into;
Books claim that [a butterfly] is how the dream of a haughty clerk
[Zhuangzi] became famous.

I envy your pursuit of fragrant blossoms throughout the four
 seasons,
 And your lasting accompaniment of the beautiful ones, moving
 along their lapels and sleeves.

草色花光小院明，短牆飛過勢便輕。紅枝嫋嫋如無力，粉翅
 高高別有情。
 俗說義妻衣化粧，書稱傲吏夢彰名。四時羨爾尋芳去，長傍
 佳人襟袖行。⁴⁷

In the fifth and sixth lines, the poem refers to previously known examples of butterflies in the historical record—the transformation of the skirts of a righteous wife into a flight of butterflies and the famous butterfly dream of Zhuangzi—while the *Sipch'osi* version is inserted in Chasan's later annotation to the fifth line. The reference in the fifth line is itself a significant indication that the butterfly transformation motif was already associated with the legend of a righteous wife during Luo Ye's lifetime, in the mid- to late ninth century.⁴⁸ Scholars believe that the original poetry collection was compiled to serve an educational purpose during the early Koryŏ period (10th–11th centuries)⁴⁹ and that Chasan's annotated edition appeared around 1300.⁵⁰ So, Chasan's insertion of the *Sipch'osi* version in turn shows that Liang-Zhu, originating from the legend of a righteous wife, had developed into a full narrative, including the butterfly transformation theme, by the early fourteenth century at the latest.

In terms of both content and form, the *Sipch'osi* version can be seen as the archetypal basis of the popular modern Liang-Zhu narrative. First, it follows the basic story line of popular versions: Liang and Zhu's encounter on their way to the Confucian academy, their brotherhood oath, Liang's ignorance of Zhu's true sex during their period of studying together, Zhu's invitation to Liang to visit her home, Liang's realization of Zhu's true identity and his subsequent death from lovesickness, their joint burial, and, finally, the butterfly transformation. The two protagonists' emotional relationship is treated seriously, and, ultimately, this version makes an emotional appeal rather than a didactic one. The format of the *Sipch'osi* version suggests that it would have been a performance-based text, targeted at folk audiences.⁵¹ The preserved text is a long narrative poem based on seven-syllable lines, with some parts marked as *yunyun* 云云 (et cetera). The *yunyun* parts may refer to the omitted prose, which would have narrated the events between each stanza.⁵² The fact that the performance is scripted into this format suggests

that this version mirrors the common, non-elite people's understanding and expectations of the tale more than it does any of the official accounts from the period.

Unfortunately, we don't have any background information on this version. Chasan does not give any explanation of where the account originated, and at the end of the story, he provides only one citation: to the *Shidao sifan zhi* record of "the grave of a righteous wife," which authenticates and clarifies that the *Sipch'osi* version he has presented is certainly linked to the righteous wife and her grave. Based on this limited information, I speculate that the *Sipch'osi* version is unlikely to have been copied directly from any well-known Chinese or Korean written account; otherwise, Chasan would surely have included a reference to the primary source. Rather, it seems that the *Sipch'osi* version might have been one of the oral storytellings that were originally popular in Ningbo and other parts of Southern China, and that were then retold among Chinese and Koreans along the Yellow Sea exchange route since at least the Tang-Silla period. This Chinese telling shared by Koreans seems to have been made available in text form during Chasan's time.

The close connection between Zhejiang Province and Korea in the history of the China-Korea exchange supports this view. Due to its geopolitical merits, Zhejiang Province—and especially the Ningbo and Hangzhou areas—had long been the center of religious, cultural, and commercial exchange via the southern sea routes along the Yellow Sea between China and Korea.⁵³ During the Tang-Silla period, for example, a large number of Korean students, officials, religious figures and pilgrims, and merchants took the southern sea route to reach China. This may explain why more Liang-Zhu folktales are found in Kyōngsang Province—that is, the area of the Silla kingdom—than in other parts of the peninsula.⁵⁴ Further, during the Northern Song dynasty (960–1126), due to the prominence of the Khitan (Liao, 916–1125) in northern areas, the southern maritime exchange route became the dominant route.⁵⁵ In Ningbo, the Song government built a guest house and a Korean embassy, such as *Le bin guan* 樂賓館 (1079) and *Gaoli shi guan* 高麗使館 (1117), to facilitate and supervise the exchange affairs, which remained active until 1164.⁵⁶ Many other traces of Koreans' diplomatic, private, commercial, and religious activities can be found in Zhejiang Province,⁵⁷ so it follows that Koreans, not just Chinese, would have had access to unprinted tellings of Liang-Zhu within the exchange space, and may have even participated in the tellings with their own regional adaptations prior to the *Sipch'osi* version.

A close look at the *Sipch'osi* version further illuminates its regional and cross-cultural characteristics, as well as the relationship between this version and other versions from Zhejiang Province. It also shows what makes this version an archetypal version of modern Liang-Zhu.

First, the *Sipch'osi* narrative strongly ties the two characters together through the theme of Confucian study against the historical backdrop of the Tang dynasty. In this version, Liang and Zhu learn under Confucius himself at the Hall of Confucius (Kongqiu tang 孔丘堂):

The Great Tang has unusual things containing many auspicious signs.

There is a virtuous [man of] talent whose surname is Liang.

The well educated, as said, win fame and wealth;

Students, as seen, rush into the exam place,

Since doing nothing at home has no benefit in the end.

It's better to find a master and enter the study hall.

Etc.

大唐異事多祚瑞，有一賢才身姓梁。常聞博學身榮貴，
每見書生赴選場。在家散袒終無益，正好尋師入學堂。
云云。⁵⁸

They two become sworn brothers,

Promising not to forget each other, dead or alive.

Before passing ten days, they meet their master [Confucius],

Reading hundreds of chapters of *The Classic of Poetry* and *The Classic of Documents*.

二人結義爲兄弟，死生終始不相忘。不經旬日參夫子，一覽
詩書數百張。⁵⁹

This version is the first example of an explicit Confucian setting for Liang and Zhu's study. Whereas Buddhist settings are found in other versions from the Yixing area and Korea,⁶⁰ the characters' learning the Confucian classics is dominant in most later Liang-Zhu versions, reflecting the social realities of time and place, in particular the fact that the purpose of education was generally tied to success in the civil service exam. This Confucian academy tradition culminates in later modern popular adaptations such as *yueju* ver-

sions, in which the two characters are portrayed as alumni of the Wansong Academy 萬松書院 (Ten-Thousand Pines Academy), a famous Confucian academy in Hangzhou that had existed since the Ming dynasty (1368–1644).⁶¹ In addition, the depiction of Liang and Zhu studying together under Confucius gives the impression that they are very talented students, and that they share an ardent attitude toward study that facilitates a sworn brotherhood between them. Within this study space, any disparity between the two students—such as Zhu Yingtai’s supposed weakness, derived from her biological or intellectual differences—is not shown at all.

While the Confucian academy tradition shows the *Sipch’osi* version’s tie with later versions, it can also be seen, from a synchronic perspective, as a Korean addition revealing a yearning for education in China with Confucius. Significantly, the Tang setting of the *Sipch’osi* version, which is scarcely ever seen in later Liang-Zhu versions, might suggest that this version has absorbed a non-Chinese vantage point. In most Liang-Zhu versions, including modern operas, it is the Eastern Jin period that is used as the historical setting, mainly because Liang and Zhu are respectfully treated as real figures from that period, as we saw in Li Maocheng’s narration. At times, zealous concern to promote Confucian learning resulted in some versions employing other settings, such as the Song (960–1279) or the Zhou (1050–256 BCE) dynasty, so as to include famous Confucian masters such as the brothers Cheng Hao (1032–85) and Cheng Yi (1033–1107), or even Confucius himself (551–479 BCE) as Liang and Zhu’s teachers. This makes sense because the Song and the Zhou are known for their Confucian traditions.⁶² Such settings, although anachronistic, reflect the growing interest in Confucian learning in the Song and later Ming-Qing dynasties (1368–1911). Yet the same interpretation does not seem to apply to the Tang setting of the *Sipch’osi* narrative. Why does the Tang appear particularly in this version? What does the Tang represent in terms of Liang and Zhu’s study?

In the *Sipch’osi* version, the Tang period is depicted as a peaceful time, producing talented students like Liang and Zhu, and as a relatively open society in which a girl such as Zhu Yingtai is able to leave home and study with male classmates. The emergence of such a romantic vision of the Tang certainly helped increase the audience’s interest in and empathy for the two characters, endorsing their pursuit of study and friendship. The liberal social mood evoked by the adoption of the Tang setting also indicates that in this version, Zhu Yingtai’s unconventional acts (her cross-dressing and academic study) will be subtly tolerated rather than actively punished. In this

light, the Tang setting can be seen as an invention of local people, to whom the word “Tang” signified not just a historical Chinese dynasty but, more importantly, a place where individuals could be more enterprising with few social and gender restrictions. The Tang dynasty may thus be invoked here to symbolically represent the whole of Chineseness—an imaginary Chinese space in the minds of marginalized Chinese people and Korean audiences, particularly scholars and monks yearning to study abroad in China, a space in which the Liang-Zhu story can take flight.

The Tang setting in the *Sipch’osi* version may also indicate that this interpretation originated from a popular Tang or Song telling whose exact roots are unknown but which was closely linked to the lore of Zhu’s gravesite and also to her reputation as a swordswoman in the Ningbo area. As mentioned earlier, Zhu’s image as a real historical figure known to be a valiant woman fits easily into the social milieu of the Tang dynasty, in which Empress Wu Zetian (625–705) wielded absolute power and women enjoyed a relatively higher status as a gender than they would in the Song or later dynasties to come. The loss of Tang culture has been mourned by many people from later periods, so the Tang setting of this version could also be simply a note of nostalgia for the perceived golden age of China’s history.

Essentially, the Tang dynasty and the Confucian academy in this version counterpose the story’s two foci—the subtle collaboration of female autonomy and Confucian learning as the key to success. These two foci later developed to various degrees, remaining important underlying themes in successive versions of Liang-Zhu. From the *Sipch’osi* version, we can see that the two main characters’ enthusiasm for Confucian study was already part of the story’s popular telling by the fourteenth century. The aspiration to link the characters to the highest model of education supersedes the demand for historical accuracy in the popular narration. Such a sanctioned anachronistic embellishment of Liang and Zhu’s zeal for Confucian study, as well as their outstanding academic performance at the academy, has continued to evolve in later versions.

Additionally, the *Sipch’osi* version establishes the archetype of Liang and Zhu as well as the emotional connection between the two, rendering their tale a love story:

Shanbo’s talent surpasses that of the two Lus,
Yingtai’s glorious virtue is greater than that of the three Zhangs.⁶³

Shanbo does not know that Yingtai is a woman,
Yingtai is not afraid of men.

山伯有才過二陸，英臺明德勝三張。山伯不知他是女，英臺
不怕丈夫郎。⁶⁴

Liang is described here as a talented and studious man who shows no interest in women. Zhu is presented as a virtuous but bold woman who is not afraid to compete with men. In the context of their relationship, these unique dispositions can be interpreted as the reason that Liang does not initiate a love relationship, perhaps as a result of his concentration on study and Zhu's convincing disguise as a man, while Zhu is brave enough to know her value and how to approach Liang. For example, it is Zhu who initiates contact outside of the academy. When she leaves the academy, she asks Liang to visit her home with the hidden intention of marrying him:

She says to Liang, "Brother Liang,
There are a grove and a pond near my home.
When you make your way back home later,
Slight not our old affection and visit our village."
Etc.

英臺說向梁兄道，兒家住處有林塘。兄若後歸回玉步，莫嫌
情舊到兒莊，云云。⁶⁵

Zhu's character, her active and brave personality, and her virtuous mind enable her to keep her true sexual identity hidden and to wait for Liang to visit her, instead of confessing her secret immediately. Her upstanding character allows the two to maintain their adherence to Confucian ethics while their relationship progresses. These contrasting images of the characters affect the way—and the extent to which—their emotional relationship develops.

Notably, this version, in contrast to Li Maocheng's account, which omits any instance of love between the young protagonists, foreshadows their romance by mentioning Liang's early feelings of loneliness and the sultry weather:

Traveling alone without a companion,
He feels desolate when passing deserted villages and barren fields.

As the weather turns warmer,
Under the swaying tree, the rain and the wind are cool.
Suddenly, he sees a person arriving afterward.
With red lips and white teeth, what a good young man!
Etc.

一自獨行無伴侶，孤村荒野意恟惶。又遇未來時稍暖，
婆娑樹下雨風涼。忽見一人隨後至，脣紅齒白好兒郎。
云云。⁶⁶

The loneliness Liang feels during his journey, manifested in the description of the bleak and desolate scenery, is soon relieved by an unexpected encounter with a pretty young boy: Zhu Yingtai. Zhu's attractive red lips and white teeth, qualities often ascribed to female beauty, foreshadow the romance to come. Despite such suggestive descriptions, however, Liang and Zhu persistently hide any appearance of love between them; their overt mutual attraction only emerges later when Zhu invites Liang to visit her at her natal home where she greets him in female dress:

Yingtai comes out in slow steps,
Wearing a silky gown embroidered with phoenixes.
Her body is full of the fragrance of musk and orchid,
Her varied tendernesses and myriad gestures are nonpareil in the
world.
Looking at her, Shanbo feels like ○,⁶⁷
Finally realizing that Yingtai is a woman.
He randomly composes a quatrain in sickness,
Expressing his wish to become a couple with her in the
netherworld.
Etc.
This has brought him a lovesickness,
His five souls dissipate when he dies.

英臺緩步徐行出，一對羅襦繡鳳凰。蘭麝滿身香馥郁，千嬌
萬態世無雙。山伯見之情似○，○辨英臺是女郎。帶病
偶題詩一絕，黃泉共汝作夫妻，云云。因茲○○相思
病，當時身死五魂颺。⁶⁸

Zhu, in full knowledge of their situation as students, feels love for the ideal and virtuous Liang, but she cannot communicate it while they are students together at the academy. Liang's deep admiration for his supposed brother-in-learning is shattered when Zhu reveals she is a woman. Liang's respect transforms in an agonizing instant into a love that drives him to die of love-sickness when he cannot marry her. This odd transition, however, is perhaps the only way for the two characters to maintain the bond to which they have sworn, adhering to it even after death. This version emphasizes the characters' virtues and emotions, dispensing with neither. The characters' personalities are kept intact, and their friendship preserved, their love echoing as the story ends.

Like Li Maocheng's text, the *Sipch'osi* version uses supernatural elements to enrich the narrative. The following scene describes the miracles that occur after Zhu's lamentation and the ensuing miracles that occur:

Kneeling and bowing, Yingtai wails sadly,
 And respectfully pours wine [in offering] to his tomb.
 Her funeral address says,
 "Because of me, you are dead,
 Missing you so much, I, your wife, come to your tomb,
 If your spirit is not here, let me leave;
 If it is here, open the tomb."
 The tomb tears apart as her words end.
 Yingtai jumps into the tomb and dies too.
 Startled, villagers run away.
 When family members try to grab her dress,
 Every piece of her dress becomes a butterfly.

英臺跪拜哀哀哭，殷勤酌酒向墳堂。祭曰，君既爲奴身已死，妾今相憶到墳傍。君若無靈教妾退，有靈須遣塚開張。言訖塚堂面破裂，英臺透入也身亡。鄉人驚動紛又散。親情隨後援衣裳，片片化爲蝴蝶子。⁶⁹

While Zhu's weeping over Liang's death and the subsequent miracle are found in Li Maocheng's account, more description is given here. The phrase "If your spirit is not here, let me leave; if it is here, open the tomb" appears here for the first time and reappears like an incantation in later Liang-Zhu versions.⁷⁰ The endurance of these lines for hundreds of years across many different regions is a testament to the vitality of this storytelling tradition.

Even more significantly, as discussed earlier, we find the first instance of butterfly transformation in this passage of the *Sipch'osi* version: Zhu's dress, torn by the people trying to stop her from leaping into the grave, morphs into a swarm of butterflies. An early model of the transformation motif in Liang-Zhu, this theme later develops into the metamorphosis of both characters' souls into butterflies. The description of the butterflies in the *Sipch'osi* version seems to have been influenced by Li Maocheng's account of the wind tearing away Zhu's skirt "like a flying cloud" after she tumbles into the tomb.⁷¹ Elaborating on Li's description, the *Sipch'osi* adds beauty and poetic sensibility, sparking the audience's imagination about the deaths of the story's protagonists. This embellishment reveals that the story is not only laced with Confucian ideas that reflect the social limits imposed upon the two characters but also facilitated by and reconciled with supernatural beliefs, permitting the story to fully blossom.

In addition to the explicitly supernatural elements, the narrator employs dreams to develop the story line. Dreams predict upcoming events and the heroine's concern about those events. For example, Zhu's dream about her parents drives her decision to return home, and it is Liang's appearance in Zhu's dream after his death that impels her to commit suicide:

One night, Yingtai's soul dissipates,
As she sees her parents clearly in her dream.

一夜英臺魂夢散，分明夢裏見爺娘。⁷²

Being buried on the Eastern Road of Yuezhou,
He arrives at her bedroom in her dream.

葬在越州東大路，托夢英臺到寢堂。⁷³

A dream interweaves reality with illusion and brings people together across worlds. This usage of dreams is elaborated upon in the later versions from China and Korea.⁷⁴

Finally, the *Sipch'osi* version ends in tragedy. The supernatural elements do not bring everlasting happiness to the couple, as seen in later Liang-Zhu tellings. There is also no account of the posthumous appearance of Liang that is included in Li Maocheng's account. Instead, this tale is intentionally more tragic, with a final line that obliterates the physical presence of the characters: "The body returns to dust and perishes; what a sorrowful affair"

(身變塵滅事可傷).⁷⁵ The lingering resonance of the sad ending seems to evoke a sense of emptiness after Liang and Zhu's deaths, pointing to the conundrum of the ephemeral human body. Perhaps the empty space left by the characters' disappearance, which is both material and psychological, immortalizes the appeal of the story. There appears to be no room reserved for the secular adornment of Zhu as a "righteous wife," as seen in Zhang Jin's record, or for the material connection of the two characters to the physical shrine and the common grave, as found in Li's record. The *Sipch'osi* version strives to satisfy audiences who are more concerned with the relationship between Liang and Zhu as students and lovers than with their relationship to the common people as heroes or deities. Instead of detailing the concrete, physical compensation brought about by their elevated posthumous status, this story remains focused on narrating the encounter, reunion, and separation of a virtuous man and woman, and their final tragic ending. The deaths of the characters are figured as the only noble way for the couple to remain together. This tragic ending and emotional theme—manifested both in Zhu and Liang's tragic love and in the story's deployment of the elements of Confucian study, premarital affection, marriage conflict, deaths and coburial, and butterfly transformation—make the *Sipch'osi* version the first full-fledged form of the tale, and also the ancestor of later Liang-Zhu versions that drew Chinese and Korean, and even international, audiences.

Popular Liang-Zhu Storytelling, 14th–19th Centuries: The Emotional vs. the Religious

The emotional and romantic themes of Liang-Zhu, prominent for the first time in the *Sipch'osi* version, continued to be developed in later Liang-Zhu storytelling, particularly folk ballad and drama forms. Though it is difficult to trace the direct influence of the *Sipch'osi* version on later folk-ballad versions, we can see that the themes and elements in the *Sipch'osi* version became predominant in the majority of these folk-ballad versions of Liang-Zhu. Composed by an anonymous collective authorship, these ballads illuminate the tale's deep roots and steady growth as a romantic song (*qingge* 情歌) among folk audiences.⁷⁶ They also helped form the tradition of tragedy that runs through so many later, more elaborate tellings, and that has been wholly adopted in modern popular versions. At the same time, the emergence of classical drama forms and the blooming of commercial theatrical

culture starting in the Southern Song–Yuan period (13th–14th centuries) led to Liang-Zhu’s emergence in the growing space of entertainment and popular religion, permeating much broader regions.

The tale’s increased exposure in more public spaces meant that, in order to conform to the tastes of general audiences, the story needed to highlight entertaining but normative voices while subversive or dissonant voices remained hidden. This caused the popular storytelling tradition of Liang-Zhu to develop along two major evolutionary paths: the emotional (serving affectionate needs) and the religious (conveying didactic lessons). Along these two distinct but interrelated paths, Liang-Zhu retained its vitality and continued to evolve, interacting with the needs and tastes of different audiences.

The earliest drama renditions of Liang-Zhu date back to two partial accounts from the thirteenth century: a *nanxi* 南戲 (southern drama) version by an unknown author, entitled “Zhu Yingtai” 祝英臺, and a *zaju* version of the same title by Bai Pu 白樸 (ca. 1226–1306). Only a few tunes from the first *nanxi* version survive today,⁷⁷ and of Bai Pu’s *zaju* (variety play) drama there is no extant information except its short and its full title (discussed below).⁷⁸ But the records of these dramatic texts show that by the thirteenth century, Liang-Zhu had already become popular in the repertoire of professional stages, suggesting that the story’s increased mobility and widened diffusion during this period were the result of stage and traveling performance troupes rather than of the dissemination of textual versions.⁷⁹

The titles of these two earliest plays hint at the characteristics of these dramatic renderings. The fact that both these early versions were named for Zhu Yingtai suggests that they followed the Zhu-centered narrative tradition, which is often the case in folklore and modern opera versions.⁸⁰ The appearance of the Daoist immortal Lü Dongbin in the full title of Bai Pu’s drama, “Ma hao er bu yu Lü Dongbin Zhu Yingtai sijia Liang Shanbo” 馬好兒不遇呂洞賓祝英臺死嫁梁山伯 (Good Son Ma Fails to Meet Lü Dongbin, and Zhu Yingtai Marries Liang Shanbo in Death), links Liang-Zhu to the Daoist teachings of immortality and enlightenment through the characters’ encounter with Lü Dongbin. It also suggests that the version was probably one of the *Shenxian daohua ju* 神仙道化劇 (plays of conversion to the Way by divine immortals), a Daoist dramatic form popular under the influence of the Daoist school of Quanzhen 全真 (Complete Perfection) during the Yuan dynasty. Such an adaptation would likely have presented a more developed treatment of death and immortality than that found in the

Sipch'osi version, given that the interpretation and modification of Liang-Zhu into the Daoist context must have been in vogue. Bai Pu's tale can be seen as the earliest model of Liang-Zhu serving a religious need for both entertainment and teaching purposes, a trend that would bloom fully in the extended prosimetric versions of the Ming-Qing period.

During the Ming period, Liang-Zhu continued to be enjoyed in various folk and popular literary forms, expanding its authorship and readership; it was during this period that the ballad version "Jieyi gongshu" was released in print⁸¹ and that numerous adaptations in *chuanqi* dramas appeared, often composed by (semi-)literati and appreciated as material for both reading at leisure (*antou ju*, the closet editions) and performance.⁸² These stage adaptations further developed into regional plays (*difang xi*) during the Qing period, becoming the progenitors of modern opera versions. Such adaptations to the generic features of drama and other performative literature reveal the way Liang-Zhu expanded to reach broader audiences while still maintaining close ties to local audiences in late imperial China.

As demonstrated by the *Sipch'osi* version, by the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, Liang-Zhu had already spread beyond Southern China, and the recently discovered inscription on the grave of Liang and Zhu in Shandong Province, written by Zhao Tinglin 趙廷麟 in 1516, shows that Liang-Zhu had already become a localized narrative of a local monument in an entirely different region by the sixteenth century.⁸³ During the Qing period, Liang-Zhu was further engaged in various local storytelling performances in prosimetric format, such as *guci* (drum songs), *tanci* (plucking rhymes), *muyu shu* (wooden-fish books), *baojuan* (precious scrolls), and *Shandong qinshu* (Shandong storytelling accompanied by a stringed instrument). Since the genre distinctions between these literatures are based largely on styles of musical combinations (such as instruments) and language, the generic differences do not in themselves add much to our understanding of Liang-Zhu in this period. Each version shares themes with other versions; in many cases, two versions belonging to different genres have no clear-cut differences in themes and story lines. But tracing the evolution and interconnectedness of different genres will help us to sketch the popularization and localization process of the story before the twentieth century.

One key element that most of the prosimetric versions of the Qing period adopt is an earlier time setting, such as Confucius's lifetime. The *guci* "Liu yin ji," the *tanci* "Xinbian jin hudie zhuan" 新編金雙蝴蝶傳 (The Newly Compiled Tale of the Golden Butterflies, 1769),⁸⁴ and even the versions in

popular Buddhist *baojuan* texts from the late nineteenth century,⁸⁵ set the story during the lifetime of Confucius and depict Liang and Zhu as two of Confucius's seventy-two disciples. For example, the *baojuan* "Fang you" 訪友 version begins: "Confucius opens an academy in Hangzhou. / All throw themselves into his teaching to learn literary works. / Commoners in villages and towns without exception hear the news. / They all send their sons and daughters to attend the academy" (夫子杭州便開館，盡來投教學文章。鄉莊百姓齊得之，盡教男女入學堂).⁸⁶ Despite the historical inaccuracies (the name Hangzhou was not used in Confucius's time, and Liang and Zhu did not belong to the group of his seventy-two disciples), this setting accentuates the two characters' talents. Interestingly, as seen in the text just quoted, both sons and daughters were encouraged to study at the academy. This support for female education seems to render the heroine's study more feasible. The Confucian setting that first appears in the *Sipch'osi* version is expanded in these later versions to include the theme of Confucian education.

Also notable in these versions is the inclusion of a denouement or a grand finale (*da tuanyuan*) for Liang and Zhu, as an extension of the butterfly transformation: their resurrection, married life, and worldly blessings, followed by ascension to Heaven or a place of immortality. This happy ending sometimes even includes the marriage of Liang and Zhu's two servants. The insertion of a happy ending would appear to originate from the prevailing religious settings and the desire to add an element of entertainment to the story.⁸⁷ Though there are differences in details, accounts that include Liang and Zhu's resurrection generally have plotlines in which the two protagonists enjoy eventful careers and a happy married life after a trial in the netherworld. This trial is originally held as a response to the indictment ritual performed by Zhu's intended marriage partner, who is jealous and angry about Zhu's sudden death on their wedding day. Liang and Zhu face challenges in their married life on Earth, mostly due to difficulties in the pursuit of Liang's official career, but ultimately they end their lifetime together in blessing.⁸⁸ A recently discovered *zhuban ge* 竹板歌 (bamboo-beat song) version entitled "Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai" contains a part called "Five Sons Passing the Metropolitan Exam" (五子登科), which emphasizes the mundane rewards that await the couple after their tribulations.⁸⁹ Such elements boost the romantic and entertainment side of the tale, in which the various achievements of the characters are all met with commensurate worldly rewards; Liang becomes a successful official, and Zhu becomes his honorable wife.

Some versions include a substantial number of additional characters

and episodes, which can make for somewhat tedious or intricate reading. The best example is the fictional *tanci* tale “Xinbian dongdiao da shuang hudie” 新編東調大雙蝴蝶 (The Newly Compiled Tale of the Great Butterflies in the Eastern Tune),⁹⁰ in which episodes are added to detail Liang and Zhu’s moral qualifications. Liang is tested on his abstinence and moral integrity by a woman who attempts to seduce him at midnight. This version also frequently puts Liang and Zhu into situations that are not directly related to them. Such an elongated plotline that incorporates other episodes was typical of the Qing-dynasty *tanci* versions, which emphasized the entertainment function of the narrative.⁹¹ The length and level of detail of this version suggests that in this period Liang-Zhu was favored for leisure reading.⁹²

A third common element these prosimetric texts share is that Zhu’s role is reduced to that of a gentry wife. Most editions from this period focus on Liang’s talent, passion, and personality, and present Yingtai merely as a good match for Liang—a wise wife. In some versions, Zhu resembles the heroine Zhao Wuniang from the *nanxi* play “Zhao Wuniang Cai Bojie” (趙五孃蔡伯喈). Like the heroine in that play, who is known as *zaokang zhi qi* 糟糠之妻 (usually, a first wife who encourages her husband in a time of poverty or before his success), Zhu Yingtai experiences poverty and the deaths of her in-laws after Liang leaves for the capital to take the civil service exam. Following the model of “Zhao Wuniang,” in the “Mudan ji” (*myyu shu*) version, Zhu Yingtai must go to the capital to search for her husband, finding him with the help of the official Chen.⁹³ This allusion is transparent and intentional—it grants Zhu the title of the first honorable wife of Liang (*zaokang zhi qi*) on top of her original title of righteous wife (*yifu*). Zhu’s status as the first wife of Liang is maintained in the “Liu yin ji” version (*guci*),⁹⁴ in which Liang later marries the daughters of a king and a minister.

Although Zhu is described as academically adept, her rewards in the narrative are based not on her educational achievements but on her womanly skills. In “Liang Shanbo chongzheng yinyuan zhuan” 梁山伯重整姻緣傳 (The Story of Liang Shanbo’s Karmic Affinity; hereafter “Chongzheng”), Zhu is a talented embroiderer and weaver, having diligently practiced in the domestic space of the home.⁹⁵ Her skill solves a diplomatically embarrassing situation when the lord of a barbarian kingdom sends a ninefold pearl (*jiuqu zhenzhu* 九曲珍珠) to the king. The barbarian lord says in an intimidating tone that if there is anyone who can string the pearl, he will serve the country as a great kingdom, but if not, he will treat the country as a small king-

dom. When the king desperately seeks someone to string the pearl, Liang recommends Zhu Yingtai. The pearl has too many curves and a tiny hole inside, but by using an ant and a drop of oil, Zhu finally succeeds in threading the pearl. Because of her domestic talent, Liang and the whole country avoid embarrassment, and Zhu is named a “Great Woman Who Protects the Country” (鎮國太夫人).⁹⁶ In fact, the story of the ninefold pearl had been well known since the Han dynasty (202 BCE–220 CE),⁹⁷ and was used to highlight womanly virtues. Though the *guci* “Liu yin ji” version diversifies Zhu’s virtues by depicting her heroic achievements in martial arts and military skills, obtained with the help of female immortals, it also follows the general trend of the prosimetric versions that emphasize Zhu’s womanly virtue and talent (wisdom) in the support of her husband and her country. Upholding social norms is the trend in these narratives.

The fourth element these versions have in common is the embellishment of the tale with local religious connections. First of all, the stories were often performed in the context of religious gatherings. This tendency is especially strong in *baojuan* versions. For example, in “Shuangxian *baojuan*,” the Liang-Zhu tale is appropriated to preach the law of karma:

Daytime is idled away,
 But youth will never return.
 As a person who recites no sutras,
 One will come back empty-handed from the Treasure Mountain.
 Chant the names of Buddhas so as to leave the sea of
 suffering.
 Listen to the Precious Scroll to escape from the wheel of
 reincarnation.
 Pray for blessing to remove disasters.
 Hurry to cultivate yourself as soon as possible.

白日休閒過，青春不再來。為人不念佛，寶山空手回。念佛
 離苦海，聽卷出輪迴。祈福消災障，急速早修為。⁹⁸

Such messages of moral exhortation and religious salvation are common in *baojuan* texts, and “grateful repayment” (*bao* 報) is the primary focus of the opening and closing lines that control the overall interpretation of the story narrated.⁹⁹ Many folktales were reconfigured on a *baojuan* platform so as to craft a version suitable for teaching and entertaining at the same time,

and the wish-fulfillment fantasy of Liang-Zhu would certainly have met the criteria for such a use of the tale. Liang and Zhu's desires to study and to continue their relationship, for example, serve as a good example of vanity and attachment, causes of human suffering that necessitate religious cultivation and enlightenment. Furthermore, in the "Shuangxian baojuan" version quoted above, the religious interpretation asserts itself when the King of the Underworld reveals that the tragic deaths of Liang and Zhu are the result of "their failure to make vows to the Emperor of the Eastern Peak" (欠東岳帝願) in their former lifetime, as is also seen in the "Yingtai baojuan" (前生欠了東岳原)¹⁰⁰ and "Shanbo baojuan" (東岳殿中欠願) versions.¹⁰¹ Laypeople who saw such *baojuan* versions performed at religious gatherings experienced the eventful reality of the two young protagonists, along with a clear explanation as to why their lives unfolded as they did, and the religious institutions benefited from their absorption of this interpretation.

Other versions offer alternate explanations for Liang-Zhu's fate: Liang and Zhu are destined to marry—their fate is written in the book of karma—and return to their original status of immortals after a married lifetime on Earth. Most versions present Liang and Zhu as human reincarnations of Jintong Yünü 金童玉女 (the Golden Boy and the Jade Girl) who are expelled from Heaven by Guanyin (the Goddess of Compassion, Avalokiteshvara) or the Jade Emperor for their sin and forced to live through three or seven generations as a thwarted couple before they are finally reunited and brought back to their original status (三世不團圓 or 七世不團圓).¹⁰² Liang and Zhu are also depicted as the butterflies living in front of the gate of Guanyin.¹⁰³ These differing configurations of Liang and Zhu's fate are important because they fundamentally change the narrative from a tragedy into a story with a religiously happy ending.

It should be noted that the elongated prosimetric versions are typical examples of the syncretism of popular religion in late imperial China.¹⁰⁴ Different religious ideas, practices, and figures were intermingled and institutionalized to make their messages accessible and attractive to a wider audience. For example, in various versions, Guanyin, Lü Dongbin,¹⁰⁵ Lishan Laomu 黎山老母 (The Old Mother of the Li Mountain),¹⁰⁶ and other immortals save Liang and Zhu, guiding them back to Heaven or to the realms of the immortals. However, although these versions provide religious instruction through such scenes, Cong Yating suggests, in his study on *baojuan* versions, that they were designed mainly as entertainment rather than as a vehicle for religious teachings.¹⁰⁷ "Yingtai baojuan" attests to this point:

As the Precious Scroll of Yingtai opens,
All the Buddhas and bodhisattvas come to offer blessings.
All those present in the hall receive more fortune and blessings;
They no longer need to regret throughout the four seasons of a year.
The Buddhist hall is originally the place for training and practicing;
With a sincere mind, chant Buddha's name and burn the incense.
Spread no rumors or idle talk,
[I will] tell a touching love tale that ridicules [the wind and caresses]
the moon.¹⁰⁸

英台寶卷出先開，諸佛菩薩送福來。在堂大家增福壽，一年
四季免談忤。佛堂源是修行地，誠心念佛把香焚。不宣閑
言併閑語，且宣月朝一段情。¹⁰⁹

Here, we can see that the story was specially designed as a performance for lay-people at temples. Probably for this purpose, this version does not have specific religious elements in it. Only in the last part does it mention karma and thus the need to serve the local gods (to avoid the suffering experienced by Liang and Zhu). This Liang-Zhu story catered primarily to the desires of local people seeking entertainment at their religious gatherings and festivals. Yet this story was also useful to religious leaders who sought to instill the basic message of their faith in the hearts of the people by means of captivating stories.¹¹⁰ Indeed, the strength of the versions performed at religious gatherings was their efficacy in bringing religious messages to an illiterate or semi-illiterate audience.¹¹¹

Such prosimetric tales as “Mudan ji” (*myu shu*), “Chongzheng,” “Liu yin ji” (*guci*), and “Shuangxian baojuan” affected the nineteenth-century Korean fictional narrative “Yang Sanbaek chŏn” 梁(楊)山伯傳 (The Story of Yang Sanbaek, 19th century), which follows the same basic theme and structure of these prosimetric texts. Specifically, in this version, Liang and Zhu also encounter immortals and also ascend to the world of immortals after suffering in their first lifetime together and enjoying marriage in their second life. Originally immortals of Mountain Samsin, Liang and Zhu are sent to the human world as a punishment for their sin. Religious figures such as Immortal Taiyi (Taiyi xianren 太乙仙人) frequently appear to guide the characters. Other elements of this version that are connected to the prosimetric versions from China include Liang's passing the civil service exam and his military achievements (in defeating barbarians), even as the narrative is fleshed out with additional Korean details.¹¹² Rather than being derived

from the *Sipch'osi* version, “Yang Sanbaek chŏn” accommodated aspects from many different tellings of Liang-Zhu transmitted from China during the Qing period, transplanting them into a Korean context.

Overall, the prosimetric versions of Liang-Zhu are characterized by a diversity of plots and themes; their storytelling is multipurposed, fictionalized and diversified, entertaining, professional, and religious. The localization of Liang-Zhu created a hitherto unknown richness of tradition that enormously expanded the tale’s popularity and success. Given the many variations on the Liang-Zhu story and the richness of their contents, it might seem that the texts from this period would be the apex of Liang-Zhu literature. This proliferation did help Liang-Zhu secure audiences from all over China and Korea, but it also contributed to a certain loss of literary quality, perhaps because these Liang-Zhu versions adhered too closely to local tastes and local artistic codes. These local efforts, devoid of the agency required to crystallize the story, could hardly have produced fine versions that would enthrall audiences with a broader range of educational and cultural backgrounds as well as artistic sensibilities and standards. Yet the multiplicity of these prosimetric versions clearly shows how much a story can evolve to meet different local needs. These versions also undoubtedly built up an invaluable capital upon which new versions could draw.

The Continued Storytelling: The Tragic Love and Transformation of Innocent Liang and Virgin Zhu

Tracing Liang-Zhu’s development, we find strong evidence that different accounts served different purposes. From its earliest beginnings, the Liang-Zhu tale has enjoyed multiple faces as a legend, a local history, and a religious story. The legitimacy and pride of the tale granted by Zhang Jin’s account, the religious eternity promised by Li Maocheng’s record, and, finally, the emotions and humanity included in the *Sipch'osi* version—all these offer a platform for the story’s ongoing evolution and its penetration of society. Time and again the tale has grown into a popular story, motivated by the interpretations and expectations of audiences who craved a developing relationship between the two protagonists. The shifting needs of audiences have filled the gaps between the lines and infused vivid energy into the characters.

The evolutionary path of the Liang-Zhu narrative suggests three essential themes in Liang-Zhu that have provided an impetus for its popularity: (1) a woman studying with a man, (2) the social conflicts of her relationship to that man, and (3) her death and transformation. These themes play out a fundamental cycle of human relationships: meeting, separating, uniting, separating (through death), and reuniting (through transformation). They continue to produce colorful Liang-Zhu versions that combine striking images with more elaborate thematic messages, encompassing conflicting human relationships and worldviews. The *Sipch'osi* version, beloved by anonymous audiences from both China and Korea, remains the earliest full-fledged form in Liang-Zhu's long evolution. The characters in the popular versions are not only good and talented moral exemplars, as in official narrations, but vulnerable human beings. The death of heartbroken Liang demonstrates his humanity. The value of Confucian study, which initially provides a legitimate reason for Liang and Zhu to meet, is later replaced by elaborate depictions of the desire for meeting, the pain of separation, and the dream of union. Hence Liang and Zhu are reincarnated as human models who give long-lasting impressions of human feelings and relationships.

Premodern and modern versions exist along a continuum of themes and episodes shaped over time by local people, professional performers, and officials. The popular storytelling in the history of Liang-Zhu even crosses national and cultural boundaries, just as the *Sipch'osi* version itself spans the borders of China and Korea and, in fact, embraces the two. The modern renditions of Liang-Zhu share a structure with the *Sipch'osi* version, attesting to the long, unchanged aesthetic standard of audiences in China, Korea, and beyond. The cultural foundation and legacy of Liang-Zhu are essential to understanding the story and its continued popularity. Regardless of what themes are represented, which character is the primary focus, or how beautifully the tale is embellished with other entertaining elements on stage and screen, at its core Liang-Zhu is a story deeply concerned with the cycle of human relationships and the desperate will to overcome its limits.

Adventures in a Male Space

Troubled Gender and Sexuality

To yearn for the forbidden is human nature.¹ To those living in the rigidly gendered space of a conservative society, the idea of crossing boundaries can seem intriguing and thrilling. Rebellion against such gender roles is always costly, primarily because of the salient gap between (sociological) gender and (biological) sex. Yet despite the price exacted, for some, crossing those boundaries remains desirable. This realm of temptation and penalty is where we can identify with the heroine Zhu Yingtai. Most Liang-Zhu versions that come after the *Sipch'osi* rendition focus on Zhu Yingtai's journey and present surprisingly rich accounts of how a girl from the inner quarters transforms herself into a clever, witty male student. Zhu's journey, itself expanded and embroidered from its simple gravestone origins, is one of the captivating elements that contributed to the tale's popularity.

Zhu Yingtai's journey is a premodern model for women who yearn to study abroad. As is often the case with the heroines of such stories, Zhu has to assume a male identity in order to do so, and she suffers for that infraction.² At school, although she is in academic competition with other students, she must be careful not to arouse suspicion or get into any trouble. Luck, or perhaps her own effort, allows her to avoid embarrassing situations, and ultimately she safely returns to her home and her original gender. What she cannot manage, however, are her feelings for the fellow student who has taken care of her. A new desire has superseded her hunger for learning.³ She wants to marry Liang Shanbo, but she cannot overcome the obstacles. Her female sexuality, which she has once denied, is rekindled by her emotions but remains suppressed by her false identity. Can the heroine escape from this dilemma and maintain her integrity?

Being widely distributed and often rewritten, the story reveals central myths and cultural ideologies about what divides gender from sex and what constitutes desire.⁴ By following in the heroine Zhu Yingtai's footsteps, we can explore the meaning and function of her journey by probing the representations of gender and sexuality embedded in several versions of the tale, mostly ballads from the Ming and Qing periods. Zhu's journey is an interesting case study of this type of gender-crossing narrative: it provides insight into the deeply held desires and values embedded in that daunting adventure, while simultaneously exposing the complexities inherent in any challenge to dominant gender dichotomies.

Scholarship on cultural understandings of gender over the last two decades clearly demonstrates that a binary sex-based opposition of man and woman is not essential to the discourse of gender in East Asia. Rather, a careful observation of the culturally and sociostructurally complex bases on which gender is constructed must be applied to each discussion of gender.⁵ Zhu Yingtai's adventures indicate that gender ideology in premodern China was not monolithic; it was malleable and largely constructed around individual hierarchies in specific situations. The story also outlines the extent to which—and the specific circumstances in which—gender fluidity was tolerated or rewarded. As we follow the course of Zhu Yingtai's journey, from her seclusion in the inner chambers to her decision to leave home to study, her strategy for persuading her parents, her encounter with fellow student Liang Shanbo, and her life with him at the school, we focus on unveiling her inner thoughts and feelings. Considering that the version by Zhang Jin discussed in chapter 1 omits Zhu's internal life entirely, it is significant that most twentieth-century versions provide elaborate detail on her motivations and perspective.

From Illusion to Reality: Embroidered vs. Classical Education

When does Zhu Yingtai decide she wants to pursue education, and why? What does learning mean to her? What conclusions can be drawn from her decision? The search for answers to these questions must begin with a close reading of Zhu's voice. Yet Zhu's voice does not offer an easy path to her inner thoughts. Her external voice does not always tell us what she really thinks or wants, revealing more about her persona than her

true self; she may describe what she looks like or how she is supposed to be, rather than what she actually feels. To supplement the information she communicates directly, we must focus on representations of Zhu's daily life to help discern her inner thoughts and the influences that have affected her decisions. In the stories, Zhu's actions whisper constantly beneath the overtly addressed ideas or events, even when they do not seem to directly concern her. Likewise, Zhu's inner mind often speaks figuratively, in the form of body language or through visual descriptions of her thoughts and dreams. These images all evoke what is absent in her life, helping us locate her hidden or unspoken desires.⁶ According to Judith Butler's reading of Jean-Paul Sartre, "desire attends what is hidden in perception" and "desiring is always coextensive with imagining."⁷ Desire manifests itself by "thematizing absence," and in this sense it is "an effort to fill the vacuum of perceptual life."⁸ By threading together clues and interpretations culled from careful reading, we can begin to explore the absence in Zhu's everyday life and the motivations behind her decision to embark on her journey.

The most conspicuous language that depicts Zhu's everyday life at home concerns her embroidery in the inner quarters. Traditionally, embroidery, along with weaving and spinning, has been considered "womanly work" (*fugong* 婦功), one of four traditional feminine virtues (*side* 四德).⁹ The idea of womanly work encompasses more than simply female labor and its material outcome. For example, in the story of "Jing Jiang of the Ji Lineage of Lu" in Liu Xiang's 劉向 (ca. 79–78 BCE) *Lienü zhuan* 列女傳 (Biographies of Virtuous Women, 18 BCE),¹⁰ Jing Jiang views her womanly work (weaving) as akin to statecraft and uses the example of the art of weaving when admonishing her son Wenbo on how to become a good official.¹⁰ Likewise, as Grace Fong aptly demonstrates, embroidery functioned as a feminine form of self-expression; it was used as a trope to represent women's emotion, knowledge, experience, and memory.¹¹ Embroidery has also been believed to help women cultivate their temperaments and establish their reputations, just as writing did for men.¹² In this sense, embroidery was a measure of a woman's worth,¹³ and according to Susan Mann, it became an emblem of both purity (in the sense of moral refinement) and sexuality, especially for young women whose style of embroidery yielded sexual connotations and whose embroidery thus marked their sexual allure.¹⁴ In this light, Zhu's embroidery work is deeply expressive of her complete being, by turns emphasizing her interiority and her sexuality.

At the beginning of most Liang-Zhu versions, Zhu's skill at embroidery is emphasized in order to demonstrate her excellent disposition. Even in the version "Chongzheng," which depicts very little of Zhu's life in the inner quarters, the following two lines appear:

How marvelously skillful her embroidering of flowers and willow
trees is;
She can draw dragons and phoenixes very well.

雕花绣柳真奇巧，描龙画凤果能工。¹⁵

At first glance, Zhu's excellence in embroidery highlights her skill (巧) and her expertise (工). In particular, the use of the character *qiao* (巧) seems to evoke an image of a *qiaonü* (巧女)—an ideal woman in folk imagination, who maintains a high standard in both morality and skill.¹⁶

Versions that include more detailed descriptions of Zhu's embroidery give further insight into the interior qualities behind her skill. In versions such as "Jieyi gongshu," "Liang Shanbo ge" 梁山伯歌 (Song of Liang Shanbo), and "Liang Zhu shan'ge" 梁祝山歌 (Liang-Zhu Mountain Songs), Zhu's embroidery is described in a repetitive, sequential order that is common in folk songs. This particular narration of Zhu Yingtai's embroidery is called *wuxiu* (五繡, Five Embroideries) or *shixiu* (十繡, Ten Embroideries). The Ten Embroideries, as they appear in "Jieyi gongshu," are as follows:

In her fragrant inner chambers, Yingtai often sighs,
Depicting dragons, drawing phoenixes, embroidering mandarin
ducks.
First, she embroiders peonies,
Second, she embroiders the fragrant blossoms of peach, plum, and
apricot,
Third, she embroiders children playing games,
Fourth, she embroiders a boy holding some incense,
Fifth, she embroiders black dragons playing in the water,
Sixth, she embroiders two tigers fighting over a lamb,
Seventh, she embroiders nine dragons and tigers,
Eighth, she embroiders autumn geese all flying in pairs,
Ninth, she embroiders Daoist immortals transcending this world,
Tenth, she embroiders a heavenly maiden descending from Heaven.

英台常在香房叹，描龙画凤绣鸳鸯，一绣牡丹并芍药，二绣桃李杏花香，三绣孩儿来耍戏，四绣童子手拈香，五绣苍龙来戏水，六绣两虎夺争羊，七绣九龙并画虎，八绣秋雁尽成双，九绣神仙离世界，十绣仙女下天堂。¹⁷

Zhu Yingtai is described as a typical gentry woman who devotes herself to embroidery work in her secluded room, and a list of her embroidery accomplishments follows. This is a typical depiction of a girl in the inner quarters, and we find a similar scene in the “Mulan shi” 木蘭詩 (Ballad of Mulan), in which a girl named Hua Mulan 花木蘭 dresses up as a man in order to serve in the military on behalf of her father. In this ballad, Mulan’s routine before her departure for the army is represented by her weaving, and like Zhu Yingtai she also sighs, which in Mulan’s case denotes her worries about her aged father being conscripted.¹⁸

In Liang-Zhu, the mention of Zhu sighing in the first line is difficult to interpret without further context. That sigh could result from a number of very different emotions. The labor may simply be difficult; or she may feel that embroidery work is her only opportunity for self-actualization. Zhu’s embroidery begins with the traditionally auspicious figures of dragons, phoenixes, and mandarin ducks, respectively symbolizing prosperity, longevity, and marriage—the elements of an ideal life. Soon her work develops greater complexity. She embroiders beautiful patterns of peonies and apricots. As the lines progress, Zhu’s skill increases, and the world she creates in embroidery advances from the natural to the human and, finally, to the divine. Each embroidered work is a vignette of everyday life, imbued with the vitality of natural places. This imagined world seems to fill in what is lacking in Zhu’s everyday life.

In “Liang Shanbo ge,” each embroidered object evokes specific events and themes, culled from various sources, further revealing Zhu’s interior life.¹⁹ In this version, the embroidery starts with the sun and the moon, symbols of Heaven, and there soon follow legendary places and figures such as the palace of Big Dipper and Altair (斗牛宮), the Queen Mother of the West (西王母), Lü Dongbin (呂洞賓), and famous couples such as the Weaving Girl and the Cowherd (织女牛郎), who reside in that heavenly and celestial place,²⁰ and Lü Bu (呂布) and Diaochan (貂蟬), famous for their narrative of separation and reunion.²¹ By depicting such exotic and religious icons, this version conveys a sense of transcendence, power, and motion in the world Zhu travels in her imagination. Her embroidery is not simply a wist-

ful look at a materialistic everyday life; each object she embroiders is a stitch in the boundless fabric of her desire for access to the world. Zhu's physical confinement in reality—that is, the imprisonment of her body in her small, tranquil room—stands in contrast to the infinite spatial expansion represented by those fictional figures and their stories. The world of desire interwoven through Zhu's needlework is an expandable imaginary world, in which human categories lose their meaning in the face of the immortality, mobility, and transcendence that she contemplates.

Is there any correlation between Zhu's longing for escape and her desire for study? By looking further into this version, we discover how and why Zhu's dissatisfaction with her life is channeled into a desire for study. Zhu's mind is fixed not only on legendary figures but also on magical couples such as the Cowherd and the Weaving Girl, a preoccupation that represents an unquenchable desire for love and marriage, and particularly for a love that overcomes all obstacles. Interestingly, the love stories invoked in Zhu's embroidery are not of completely happy unions. Those of the Weaving Girl and the Cowherd, and of Lü Bu and Diaochan, may represent undying love, but both are stories of a devoted couple's repeated heartbreaking separation and joyous reunion. These stories warn that steadfast love will be tested harshly by external obstacles. This may be the message the narrator intends to deliver, portending Zhu's fate later in the story. With this foreshadowing that she too will experience the heartbreak of separation from her lover, but will remain faithful, Zhu may be unconsciously warning herself of what is to come. Yet her exploration of such figures and their stories also secretly prompts her to pursue her own case, which she finds can be furthered by seeking entrance to a new milieu (that of study) rather than remaining within the realm of embroidery.

The world Zhu creates through her skillful embroidery expresses her mind's desire for love and freedom as a remedy for her loneliness and sense of imprisonment. The embroidery scene itself gives a hint: when the reader zooms out from the narrative, Zhu is seen alone in her secluded room, her head bent over an embroidery frame, a needle and thread in her hands. It is no wonder, in this solitary confinement, that Zhu "often sighs in her fragrant inner chambers" (英台常在香房叹) before starting her work.²² There is nothing new or surprising in a woman viewing a romantic relationship and marriage to a man as the path to a free, happy life. Even so, it is worthwhile to mention that Zhu, although her interest in and capacity for study are consistently presented as exceptional, is portrayed, through her attachment to this ordinary dream, as a typical woman.

The following text, which comes after the scene of Zhu sighing in her inner quarters, describes how a fundamental change comes into Zhu's mind. It reveals how she becomes detached from her needlework the moment that she, a sixteen-year-old girl, suddenly realizes the beauty of spring is in full bloom in her garden and overhears her brother reciting the classics in his study. Now she feels emptiness in her womanly work and aspires to go out and study, which she deems a noble pursuit that will make her life meaningful:

In no kind of embroidery work does Yingtai set her mind.
She just wants to attend the academy.
Yingtai hears that there are good things in books, and that
The words in books are very lofty and forceful.
“If I miss this chance now,” [she tells herself]
“I will remain ignorant my whole life, unable to compose anything.”

诸般绣作无心做，一心只要至书堂。英台听得书中好，书中
言语甚高强，如今若还错过了，愚得一世没文章。²³

From the above lines, it is clear that Zhu becomes aware of the need for something more fulfilling, a life in which she can interact with other people and reap some tangible reward. This section offers a clear indication of why Zhu has become bored with her embroidery work; it can no longer contain the desire that is growing greater every day—not simply because its domain is limited, but because it lacks connection to reality. Zhu worries that she will eventually die without having achieved anything at all. Perhaps she senses that the dreams she expresses in her embroidery will never be real, provoking in her a sense of emptiness. Perhaps her garden, full of the fecund scent of spring, triggers her passion for something new—albeit not necessarily something sexual as in the case of the famous sixteen-year-old heroine Du Liniang 杜麗娘 in the Ming drama *Mudan ting* 牡丹亭 (The Peony Pavilion) by Tang Xianzu 湯顯祖 (1550–1616).²⁴ Zhu needs to fill her emptiness with something real! Her choice of a literary education is understandable; literary study was viewed as the “imperishable great business” (不朽之盛事)²⁵ among Chinese literati. Donning the garment of scholarship will enable Zhu to pursue her embroidered dreams in the real world. She will be able to communicate with others through language, joining their broader, shared world.

However, Zhu's desire to study is not simply a longing for freedom from

her cloistered chambers. The sense of lack that she experiences goes far deeper, to the heart of her identity. She longs to escape the rigid confines of her gender role and free her desire completely. The following passage from “Liang shanbo ge” illuminates Zhu’s motivations:

Yingtai’s parents observe the extraordinary brilliance of the embroidered flowers:

“My child, your skills are truly outstanding!

If you were a man and sent to Hangzhou for literary studies,

You surely would have been the top candidate in the palace exam!”

爷娘观花真出色: 我儿手段果然强! 若还是个男子汉, 送往杭州读文章, 必是朝中状元郎.²⁶

Too often, excellence in one area is used to allude to shortcomings in other areas. Zhu’s parents often praise her excellence in embroidery; unfortunately, they also compare it to success in the civil service exam. She can see what they really want from her, what they consciously or unconsciously feel is lacking in her. Their analogy reveals their preference for a male child deep in their minds. This backhanded praise cannot help but fill her with dissatisfaction and disappointment at her routine womanly work; the better she embroiders, the more she is reminded of what is lacking in her work and herself.

Zhu’s parent’s analogy between her excellence at embroidery and her potential for success on the exam makes sense when we recall that, in pre-modern China, the quality of a woman’s embroidery was widely accepted as a comprehensive indicator of her overall value.²⁷ Mastering embroidery requires painstaking practice and considerable effort, and thus the level of sophistication of a woman’s embroidery functioned as a measure of her talents and dedication, much as writing skill did for a man. It was common in some regions of China for a bride-to-be to send her embroidered shoes to her soon-to-be mother-in-law or other female in-laws for inspection.²⁸ So Zhu Yingtai’s entire reputation as a woman is at stake when, in some Liang-Zhu versions, before leaving the academy she gives her embroidered shoes (绣鞋 or 花鞋) to the wife of her master, in the hope that the woman might arrange a marriage for her with Liang.²⁹ Yet the analogy between embroidery and literary talent extends only so far as a measure of individual ability and social recognition. Unlike writing, embroidery engenders no empowerment,

and little sense of influence in the public domain. Zhu's father's valuation of writing over embroidery confirms the marginalization of womanly work and reminds Zhu that she is considered deficient when it comes to the ability to achieve a highly regarded social position.

Though women in premodern China were permitted some childhood education—for their personal and religious development and to offer support for a husband's work³⁰—there was widespread disagreement as to the proper level of education for women, and even some reservations about women being too educated. As one old Chinese proverb says, “A woman without talent is virtuous” (女子無才便是德). This restrictive attitude toward women's literary education certainly played a role in limiting the literary activities of talented women in the real, historical world. In *Liang-Zhu*, Zhu's father holds a similar, or even stricter, view of female education. In some versions of the tale, he directly quotes the proverb mentioned above.³¹ When he hears about Zhu's interest in study, he discourages her, citing the inaccessibility of literary study to women: “Only a man receives education; I have never seen a woman studying literary classics.”³²

Instead of actually prohibiting Zhu's ambitions, however, her father's remarks merely warn her of the difficulties she will face. His rigid notions of gender and his familial concern help Zhu contrive a way to realize her ambition to study. In the next section, we will see how her preparations for her new role begin to develop her awareness of gender difference and of the social realities that will shape her new character as a man.

Jacques Lacan's writing on the formation of subjectivity lends insight into the shift in Zhu's interest from embroidery to literary study. Zhu's evolving state of mind epitomizes the symbolic moment of leaving the mirror stage and entering into the symbolic order. Her self-perception is originally formed through her identification with the image reflected in a mirror, an ideal “I” that is constituted externally.³³ Since that ego is totally dependent on external objects—that is to say, on an imaginary “other”—there remains a fundamental discordance between her imaginary self and her actual self. Zhu's reflection on her routine life inevitably leads her to become aware of this discord and to struggle to harmonize these conflicting selves within her ideal “I.” The dissonance that ensues engenders a sense of imperfection and lack, leading to her incessant striving to form a whole, perfect self-identity. She does so in the manner that Lacan describes, through dialectical compromises, a communication with others in “socially elaborated situations.”³⁴ In

this sense, Zhu's plan to study is driven by her wish to dissolve the disparity hidden beneath her ideal ego.

Yet, at this point in the story Zhu is still under the influence of a constellation of ideas instilled by her learning at home, so her wish for study as a means of self-actualization may originate in the invisible power of ideology, particularly the value system she has internalized through her family education. Louis Althusser contends that an individual's subjectivity and life are formed under the combined operation of repressive state apparatuses and invisible ideological state apparatuses.³⁵ Representations of Zhu's early life—the image of her as a young woman of the gentry, her dialogues with her parents, and her final decision to study—show how familial, educational, and cultural apparatuses affect the constitution of her subjectivity in the private realm, and also the extent to which that subjectivity is legislated by the state's ruling ideology. In light of Althusser's arguments, Zhu's shift of interest from embroidery to writing is less arbitrary than it may initially appear; it is in fact a vital part of her escape from her routine female space. Zhu's move toward study and the male academy gives an operational answer to her psychologically complex dreams as a woman. The various other motivations ascribed to Zhu, which are added in later versions of the story, serve to reinforce the process of her development of identity and subjectivity. With its central motif of departing from home and forging a new, powerful identity, the Liang-Zhu story is a journey to the revelation of cultural subjectivity.

Cross-Dressing, Deception, and Displaced Gender

After her decision to pursue literary studies, Zhu is faced with the problem of how to proceed, given her female identity. Her education will involve travel and contact with men, acts that defy the traditional paradigmatic dichotomy of gender and space (of the feminine/private and the masculine/public). On a practical level, aristocratic women who traveled risked being mistaken for women of a lower social class whose activities involved frequent journeys, such as courtesans, nuns, and wanderers; or they might simply be seen as flouting the norms. Realistically, a woman traveling alone incurred the chance of robbery or rape. This palpable sense of threat—and the attendant need for protection—provides fictional works such as *Xixiang ji* 西廂記 (The Story of the Western Wing) with a useful plot device to spark the romance between the hero and heroine.³⁶ In reaction to the physi-

cal hazards of seeking social or religious achievements, some strong-minded women even voluntarily defaced their femininity.³⁷ Since the female body was a great obstacle to self-actualization—or, on a more practical level, to impersonating a great gentleman (*da zhangfu* 大丈夫)—some women went so far as to negate their female appearance, or their female character, temporarily or permanently.³⁸

Zhu follows this tradition, opting to assume a male identity through transvestism, rather than to mutilate her body or expose herself to the dangers brought on by her femininity. Cross-dressing, which liberates people from their obligatory sex roles,³⁹ has been widely practiced in almost every culture and era.⁴⁰ Since clothing functions as an indicator of a person's social, economic, and cultural standing, switching dress enables an individual to inhabit a spectrum of personas and identities without physical transformation.⁴¹ In the story, Zhu's cross-dressing emerges as a means for her to overcome the inconveniences, threats, and tragedies brought about by gender disparity. It also plays a critical role in her fulfillment of the *da zhangfu* ideal that she claims for herself. Scholars have shown how women's exaggeration or mimicry of patriarchal ideas or looks can be a coding strategy to convey hidden feminist messages.⁴² Zhu's "androcentral" performance serves to expose the context in which gender oppression is being implemented. This subversive message embedded in the Liang-Zhu story has been accentuated over the years. In the recent *yueju* version "Liang Zhu qing meng" 梁祝情夢 (Romantic Dream of Liang-Zhu), directed by Bao Chaozan 包朝贊, Zhu's character as a *da zhangfu* becomes more conspicuous. When Liang Shanbo tells Zhu about other students making fun of her because she looks too effeminate to play the part of a *da zhangfu*, Zhu claims that, despite her looks, she was born a *da zhangfu*.⁴³ In this modern version, Zhu's inner belief is that she is indeed capable of performing the *da zhangfu* character, not in looks but in ideals.

Changing one's identity by changing one's appearance is seldom condoned in normal life due to its very potential to disrupt the hierarchy.⁴⁴ Likewise, in premodern China, cross-dressing was neither socially nor legally accepted; the "correct attire" was considered a strong signifier of civility and social order.⁴⁵ During the Qing dynasty, cross-dressing was even subject to punishment under the statute of "deluding the people with heretical doctrines" (*zuodao huozhong* 左道惑眾).⁴⁶ According to Judith Butler, so negative a view of gender-crossing is rooted in the nebulous nature of the concept of gender, which lacks any essential substance to define it. Gen-

der is constructed through various repetitive acts that create the idea of an essential “masculine” and “feminine.” The performance of gender is one of the key cultural factors that causes people to function as a society.⁴⁷ For this reason, within a compulsory system, gender is maintained by punitive consequences—ensuring the survival of that system by threatening anyone who cross-dresses with the charge of being antisocial.⁴⁸

Nonetheless, not every case of gender violation is cause for punishment. Some gender-crossing acts are rewarded,⁴⁹ and there are many variables that determine the consequences of a particular infraction. In premodern China as well as Korea, what usually dictates the consequences are the motives behind the contravention. In his introductory essay to the first special issue on Liang-Zhu in *Minsu zhoukan* in 1930, Rong Zhaozu 容肇祖 divides women’s cross-dressing into five categories of motivation: to become an official;⁵⁰ to enter military service;⁵¹ to revenge a wrong;⁵² to find a husband; and, finally, to pursue personal goals such as religious enlightenment or learning.⁵³ The first three reasons, regarded as beneficial to family, are socially tolerated or even praised. The latter two, however, remain controversial because they embrace self-interest.

A good example of the latter is the case of the virgin Huang (Huang Shancong) in the story “Li Xiuqing yijie Huang zhennü” 李秀卿義結黃貞女 (Li Xiuqing Righteously Marries Virgin Huang), from Feng Menglong’s 馮夢龍 (1574–1646) *Yushi mingyan* 喻世明言 (Words to Enlighten the World), also known as *Gujin xiaoshuo* 古今小說 (Stories of Old and New).⁵⁴ In this story, the virgin Huang travels in male disguise to make a living in business, and finally marries Li Xiuqing, her long-term business partner. By showing that Huang keeps her gender hidden through her transvestism until she marries, the story suggests that respectable women could justify cross-dressing if it was motivated by survival and the desire to benefit family or others, and if they continued to conform to other normative values even while transgressing gender boundaries. “Li Xiuqing yijie Huang zhennü” actually includes Liang-Zhu as its “entering story” (*rubua* 入話), suggesting that in Feng Menglong’s view the two stories were closely linked. Indeed, both do demonstrate how cross-dressing could have a positive moral function, allowing a woman to keep her chastity while she moves about in a male domain.

Whereas Zhang Jin’s version of Liang-Zhu, discussed in chapter 1, mentions Zhu’s study and death only briefly and says little about her motivations, later accounts, including the version in Feng Menglong’s *Yushi ming-*

yan, show a wide range of interpretations of Zhu's motives for cross-dressing, most of which involve relieving her family's concerns. Feng's version underlines Zhu's family's anxieties about propriety and image:

Her brother and sister-in-law objected: "In the old days, upon reaching the age of seven, boys and girls were no longer allowed to sit and eat at the same table. You, a sixteen-year-old, go out traveling and studying with no distinction between male and female. Wouldn't you be ridiculed by others?"⁵⁵

其哥嫂止之曰：古者男女七岁不同席，不供食。你今日十六岁，却出外游学，男女不分。岂不笑话。⁵⁶

In light of the social prohibition against contact between boys and girls after the age of seven, Zhu must understand the undesirable results her adventure might produce. Her sense of familial obligation requires that she gain her parents' approval, but she is able to mollify them with her plan to dress up as a boy as seen in the "Liang Shanbo ge" version:

Yingtai steps forward and says:

"My respectable parents, please listen to my explanation:
I just want your permission;
If I dress up as a man and change my robe and scarf,
I can go to the city of Hangzhou to pursue my studies."

英台上前禀一声：爷娘在上听原因，只要爺娘親口許，女扮男妝換衣巾，杭州城內攻書文。⁵⁷

The next scene, in which Zhu puts on men's clothing, can be found in almost all versions of Liang-Zhu. When she dons the garb of a male student, she is transformed so successfully that even her brother and sister-in-law fail to recognize her. This demonstration of her talent for disguise underlines how responsive she is to her family's concerns and how scrupulously she has prepared for her journey. Zhu is portrayed as intelligent, strategic, and a bit flexible about rules. She plays with gender with a keen understanding of the power of clothing as an indicator of identity. She wields this power to pass through normal societal boundaries.

To complete her preparations, Zhu again tests her abilities, dressing as a

male fortune-teller to see whether her parents—who should most easily recognize her, even in disguise—will know her. Zhu’s disguise and performance are so convincing that her parents suspect nothing. The following ballad version (published in 1914) includes Zhu’s prognostication, in disguise, to her parents of the course their talented daughter should take:

“Her life has been blessed with no small fortune;
 Establishing herself with achievements, she will bring fame to her family.
 Wealth and nobility have always been worth respecting and admiring.
 She will wear an extravagant robe.
 It would be most suitable for her to go out so that accomplishments can be achieved.
 It would be most ill-advised for her to stay at home because there would be a baneful star.
 Traveling outside often helps one achieve his fame sooner.”
 Upon hearing this, Sire Zhu [Zhu’s father] is joyful and delighted in his mind,
 Fetching four taels of silver, he presents it to the fortune-teller.
 The fortune-teller accepts it with a slight smile.
 “This person shares the same fate [lit., ‘Eight Characters’] as I;
 Without doubt, your child is no one else but me.”
 Upon hearing this, Sire Zhu was awestricken.
 “Indeed, my daughter’s intelligence and knowledge are profound.
 Having listened to your plan, I’m relieved:
 [Since] even your father cannot clearly recognize his own daughter,
 How could others possibly know the truth?”

此命算来福不轻，自成自立显门庭。从来富贵堪恭敬，一身荣华锦衣尽；切宜外出事可成，切忌在家有灾星，外出从来早成名。祝公听见心欢喜，取银四两送先生；先生接礼笑微微，此命共我同八字，无疑你儿我就是。祝公听说心中疑，吾女果然智识深。听尔行程父放心，自己父女看不明，他人焉能得知情。⁵⁸

While suggesting, dressed as the male fortune-teller, that she will be better off in a male identity, Zhu has already proven her argument. After her per-

formance, her father finally agrees to her plan. He praises her talents and the courage required to mix with men undetected. Zhu's improvised divination about her own fate moves her parents to let her leave home to study, even after they realize the trick she has played on them, for she has proved that her cross-dressing will allow her to cleverly maneuver and exploit her new gender identity.

The fortune-teller episode reveals the gender hierarchy and imbalance that make maleness necessary to the acquisition of power and reputation. Zhu's skilled use of cross-dressing to "borrow" a male gender identity reminds us how crucial attire is to the perception of gender, and how easily gender roles can therefore be manipulated. The story subtly suggests that when a society is so rigid that there is no room to define one's identity beyond a sex role, the temporary mobility and flexibility offered by gender-borrowing is understandably very tempting and effective. After her scheme is revealed, Zhu Yingtai defends her cross-dressing on these very grounds, saying:

"It is not that I meant to deceive you.
There is an old saying, 'If there are some advantages to take, who
will not take them?'
How can I help that I'm a traveler?
How can I help that I'm a little girl?
How can I help that my parents are aging?
How can I help that there is no one I can depend on?"

奴家非是要瞞伊，自古道得便宜处谁肯落便宜。争奈我爲客
旅，争奈我是女孩儿。争奈我双亲老，争奈我身无主。⁵⁹

In this version, a *xiwen* (drama-text) from the Yuan dynasty, we see that others can appreciate the personal advantage of Zhu's cross-dressing as long as she demonstrates that her choice was unavoidable. This testimony illuminates Zhu's conscientious personality; she does everything possible within the accepted social norms and pushes the boundaries of those norms only when it becomes necessary in order to pursue her dream.

As I have shown, the themes of embroidery and weaving in Liang-Zhu are closely associated with the evolution of Zhu's subjectivity and desire, and the symbolic power of garments continues to be an important theme in later parts of the narrative. Zhu's aspiration initially grows out of her embroidery

practice, and she interweaves the pieces of her desire through the repetitive motion of needle and thread. Her needlework becomes a process of self-exploration as each thread brings a new image to the fabric. But despite her painstaking work, her embroidery can never develop into a whole garment that will either depict or conceal her mind according to her will. Significantly, whereas Zhu's embroidery remains insufficient to fully express her desire, the male garment she dons allows her the necessary autonomy to do so. In this new garment, the fragments of desire scattered in her embroidery are woven together into a completed form. The male clothing comes to signify the entirety of Zhu's desire.

Zhu's cross-dressing is subversive and resistant because it reveals the problematic and secondary nature of women's role and position in society. As Susan Mann has argued, it represents one example of the legacy of Chinese womanhood showing that "women can do anything men can do."⁶⁰ Wang Ningbang and Zhang Tingting further suggest that Zhu's cross-dressing is evidence of a proto-feminist strain in Chinese literature. They interpret Zhu's disguise as a dauntless attempt to restore a matriarchal society, and argue that Zhu's attitude toward love and study has originated from her awareness of gender inequity, the very antithesis of what the traditional patriarchal society wants.⁶¹

Nevertheless, in the story, Zhu's cross-dressing is the very reason for her failure in love and marriage.⁶² Her gender deception becomes an obstacle to her pursuit of love as a woman. The fact that Zhu's concealment prevents Liang from seeing her true sexual identity is a predictable cause of the initial failure of their romantic relationship. Further, from the moment Zhu's love for Liang arouses the sexuality she has repressed under her male garment, it becomes impossible for her to reconcile her male gender representation and her female sex. It is this tension derived from the arousal of romantic feelings that eventually hinders her ability to study, even though study was her primary motivation for venturing into the male domain. It would therefore be incorrect to interpret Zhu's cross-dressing as the sole reason for the tragic ending of her story. Liang-Zhu paints a realistic portrait of the pathos of gender thereby directing our attention to the more fundamental problem of individuals trapped between established gender hierarchies and their natural desire and feeling. The hidden value of Zhu's cross-dressing is the possibility it suggests of building a new model for relationships between men and women, outside of traditional gender ideology. Zhu's cross-dressing holds an affirmative value so long as it enables her to initiate and pursue her studies.

Virginity Vows and Female Sexuality

When we reflect on Zhu's wish, stitched into her embroidery with its depictions of the world outside the inner quarters, the question arises: Was Zhu's decision to pursue her education as a man the right choice? At first glance, she seems to succeed in expanding her space by escaping the inner quarters through transvestism. Yet over time her choice simply puts her under another yoke. Her body is bound day and night by the male uniform that sustains her identity, and she must constantly improvise to maintain her camouflage. Even though she is justified by her pure motivation, she may feel guilt, shame, and ambiguity over the disparity between her appearance and reality. In other words, a certain level of mental strength is required to sustain the clever choice of cross-dressing, so Zhu comes up with a voluntary virginity oath as a sort of insurance policy before she launches herself on her journey.

The "Jieyi gongshu" version provides the context in which Zhu is prompted to take her virginity oath. In the following scene, Zhu's parents express concern that her beauty will put her at risk:

Father and mother immediately reply:

"Daughter, now listen to our explanations.

If you leave for Hangzhou to study under a Confucian master,

Please keep your true heart and return to your parents.

In addition, since your countenance is gorgeous,

We fear that your secret can't help but leak out."

爹娘当下将言说：“吾儿今日听原因，你去杭州寻夫子，留下真心还爹娘，又怕我儿容貌美，恐防漏泄不相当。”⁶³

These lines show that, in the end, Zhu's parents are most worried that she will not manage to return home with her integrity intact. Although the social disapproval of female travel was, at least outwardly, associated with protecting women from hostile environments, Zhu's parents also remind her that, as their daughter, she herself must not compromise her moral purity.

In premodern China, a young woman's virginity was not just an individual matter: it affected not only her own marriageability but her family's reputation as well. More importantly for the Liang-Zhu story, as we have already seen, Zhu's father's attitude reveals the vital notion that, although gender identity may be altered under certain circumstances, the body, as the

site of sexuality, must remain inviolate. Keeping the body unpolluted was viewed as a crucial measure for a girl. When Zhu Yingtai understands the reason for her parents' apprehension, she responds by declaring her determination to preserve her virginity. Feng Menglong's version of Liang-Zhu contains what is thought to be the earliest example of Zhu's virginity oath. In this version, after dressing as a boy, Zhu plants a branch of pomegranate flowers in a flowerbed and then prays to Heaven, saying:

I, Zhu Yingtai, am about to go on a journey for the pursuit of my studies. I pray that if my good name and chastity remain intact, this branch will take root and grow leaves, blossoming every year. Should anything dishonorable happen to tarnish the family reputation, may this branch wither.⁶⁴

奴家祝英臺出外留學，若完名全節，此枝生根長葉，年年花發，若有不肖之事，玷辱門風，此枝枯萎。⁶⁵

This version seems to foretell later developments in the story. In many Liang-Zhu versions, Zhu pledges to remain a virgin, and the fact of an oath implies her agreement with her father's stance. Zhu's vow of virginity is often pledged in front of a deity such as the earth god (*tudigong* 土地公), and typically uses objects such as flowers or red silk (*hongling* 紅綾) as symbols that will monitor her purity while she is away. The unchanged condition of these objects reflects that of her pure, uncontaminated body.

The "Jieyi gonshu" version presents an especially vivid description of Zhu's oath-giving, in which peonies, instead of the pomegranate flower, are used. Zhu responds to her father's reservations with an exaggerated oath in order to show that her motives are pure:

As soon as Yingtai hears these words,
 She withdraws and goes to the garden.
 Picking a peony flower with her hand,
 She brings it to her parents in front of the hall;
 Bringing a bottle of pure water to contain [the flower],
 She burns incense in front of the deities.
 "I am going to study under a Confucian master and
 Learn literary works at an academy in Hangzhou.
 If I lose my body [virginity] before I return home,

The peony flower will wither in the hall of deities.
[Then] I'd rather not embark upon the journey home;
I'll hold a heavy rock and throw myself into the river.
My true heart will be protected by the deities,
So that the peony flower will remain fresh and alive as always.
On the day I return home in joy and delight,
I will keep my true heart and meet my parents.”

英台见说如此语，抽身便到花园去，手摘牡丹花一枝，拿在堂前见双亲。净水一瓶来供养，神前便乃去烧香，“阿奴今去投夫子，杭州学内习文章，若失真身回家转，牡丹侵死在神堂，奴奴也不回来路，将身抱石去投江。奴奴真心神当护，牡丹鲜活是如常，阿奴欢喜回来日，留取真心见爹娘。”⁶⁶

Peonies make frequent appearances in Chinese drama and fiction, often referring to the sexuality of a young virgin,⁶⁷ and they frequently appear in *Liang-Zhu* in the scene of Zhu's virginity oath.⁶⁸ The version “Mudan ji” from the late Qing period is even named for the flower, and it contains an almost identical description of the oath-taking.⁶⁹ Throughout the *Liang-Zhu* corpus, peonies indicate Zhu's purity of mind and body. Zhu vows that the peonies will remain fresh and unchanged as long as she maintains her vow of virginity; should she break that vow, the flowers, like her honor, will wither away. Any sexual misbehavior on her part will be reported to her family by the guilty appearance of the peonies. And her vow will endure until she finishes her studies and returns safely home. In the version above, she even vows to commit suicide (through drowning) if she violates her oath. The complex ritual quality of the virginity oath demonstrates just how seriously Zhu takes this vow to her parents.

It is important to note that Zhu's oath is voluntary. We seldom see her family demanding the oath as a prerequisite for her adventure. Zhu Ying-tai is portrayed as a willing adherent to the social norms of filial piety and virginity. She is, in this sense, reminiscent of women like Ban Zhao, who played the role of active guardians of Confucian norms. A scholar of the Han dynasty, Ban Zhao accomplished both female virtues and intellectual achievements, and she is sometimes referenced in *Liang-Zhu* to describe Zhu's enthusiasm for and talent in learning. Ban Zhao's works, such as *Nü jie* 女戒 (Commandments for Women, 106 CE), emphasize women's sup-

porting role in maintaining harmony and prosperity for their families, as manifested in the *sancong side* 三從四德 (three obediences and four womanly virtues). Sherry Mou points out the fundamental limit of Ban Zhao's works: because the Confucian classics functioned as textbooks for women's conduct, the female voices represented within them present a fundamentally homogenous, dominant perspective.⁷⁰

Under the pervasive influence of Confucian education, it is not surprising that women's low social position drove them, consciously or subconsciously, to act out Confucian values in an effort to relieve their deeply instilled sense of inferiority. Pursuing the Confucian model set out for men would have been the best choice for women who aspired to prove their talents, but in the end they could not do this precisely because they were female. It was not unusual, therefore, for women to resort to extreme measures to present themselves as unblemished adherents to the Confucian norms. Zhu's character is emblematic of the aspirations of women who wanted to reach higher, perhaps to the center of the domain of male power.

Over time, a sense of competition among women to exemplify female virtue was integrated into Liang-Zhu as a factor affecting Zhu's oath. In Feng Menglong's version from the late Ming period, Zhu's family shows concern for her virtue, but it is not explicit:

By the time Yingtai returns, it is still early summer. The flowers and leaves on the pomegranate branch in the vase on the altar still remain fresh and blooming. Hence, her brother and sister-in-law came to believe [that she had not lost her virginity].

英臺归时，仍是初夏，那花臺上所插榴枝，花叶并茂，哥嫂方信了。⁷¹

The unchanging freshness of the pomegranate flowers testifies to Zhu's fidelity and purity. The phrase "her brother and sister-in-law came to believe" demonstrates that they have been skeptical about Zhu's adherence to her oath until the flowers confirm it. This implies that Zhu endures subtle pressure from her brother and her sister-in-law, whose voices serve to represent the social norms as they act as final inspectors of Zhu's virginity, putting even more familial pressure on her. In "Jieyi gongshu," from the late Ming period, Zhu's sister-in-law (*Zhu dasao* 祝大嫂) casts more overt doubt on Zhu's motives for leaving home, saying:

Yingtai, using the pretext of studying, deceives her parents.
[I believe that] she has some concealed feelings.
My guess is that she is not seeking a Confucian master but
Looking for a young lad in Hangzhou.

假托攻书哄父母，其中另有一衷情，想她不是寻夫子，杭州
寻个少年人。⁷²

In most prosimetric texts from the Qing period, Zhu's sister-in-law moves to the fore as the most stringent examiner of Zhu's virtue. In these versions, the sister-in-law seriously questions Zhu's intention to study before Zhu leaves for the academy and remains a harsh commentator on our heroine's actions. For example, in "Shuang hudie baojuan" 雙胡蝶寶卷 (The Pair of Butterflies), the sister-in-law, upon hearing of Zhu's plan, comes to Zhu's parents, says that their daughter's real reason for wanting to study is to find a husband, and advises them to stop Zhu from attending the academy because studying with men could pollute her body.⁷³ Zhu's sister-in-law reveals a common perception that the only real reason for a woman to leave the inner quarters would be to have contact with men. In this "Shuang hudie baojuan" version, the scene of the sister-in-law's questioning is immediately followed by Zhu's virginity oath, suggesting that her sister-in-law's words are the direct motivator of Zhu's vow.

By divulging her sister-in-law's suspicions, these later versions preemptively defend Zhu from accusations that her motivations are sexual. The sister-in-law's voice has a sense of authority and relevance, not just because she is an elder family member but also because she represents a female perspective, implying that she understands more about Zhu's inner thoughts than Zhu's father and brother do. Thus Zhu's oath, which may seem exaggerated, can be interpreted as a forceful defense against such a charge from an authoritative female figure.

The exact point of conflict between Zhu and her sister-in-law sometimes becomes blurred,⁷⁴ and it is not always explicitly based on virtue. In a folk-tale version collected in modern times, for instance, Zhu's sister-in-law is not concerned about propriety but is jealous of Zhu's opportunity to go out and meet men.⁷⁵ After Zhu leaves home, the sister-in-law frequently checks the peony in hopes that it will confirm her suspicion, but the peony goes on serenely blooming. Angry, she tries to make the flower gradually wither by pouring hot water and charcoal on it but, to her dismay, the peony con-

tinues to thrive. In this version, Zhu's sister-in-law is jealous not because she envies Zhu's opportunity for education but because she is herself not virtuous and longs for the opportunity to behave immorally with strange young men. The jealousy of Zhu's sister-in-law casts a new light on Zhu's transgression; not only has Zhu threatened the male order by adopting the guise of masculinity, she has also become an object of envy to other women.

The sister-in-law's attitude toward Zhu's studying with strange young men also opens up a broader discussion of the representation of young women's sexuality. As we have seen, Zhu Yingtai's use of peonies to take her virginity oath has preexisting cultural connotations. In the "Quanshi" version of the story, the peony pavilion appears as a symbolic place representing Zhu's self: she stays at the peony pavilion before she leaves home for study at the academy, and she flies over the pavilion for some time when she becomes a butterfly after her death.⁷⁶ The peony's metaphorical power as an icon of young women's sexuality culminated in the *Mudan ting*, a story about sixteen-year-old heroine Du Liniang's curiosity and her passionate love for a young man. The heroine Du, who is the same age as Zhu, studies poetry at her home with her Confucian teacher but falls in love with a young scholar (later identified as Liu Mengmei 柳夢梅) when she falls asleep in the garden. She meets Liu only in her dream, but the emotion he arouses eventually leads to her death from lovesickness. Since the late Ming period, Du Liniang's character has been a new ideal of womanhood, fully embodying emotion (*qing*) as well as talent and beauty. The story was widely popular among female audiences and was eagerly emulated in both literature and life.⁷⁷

Du's passion and sexual awakening turn out to be triggered partly by her study of Confucian classical poetry, despite the prevailing orthodox ethical interpretation of the poems in *The Classic of Poetry* (Shijing 詩經).⁷⁸ Although in the end Du is resuscitated by her lover and finally joins him, the story is a clear lesson in the risks of a young woman learning poetry, a genre devoted to expressing—and evoking—authentic emotions. Given the *Mudan ting's* correlation between Du's study and her passionate love, and its depiction of the supremacy of love over education in the long run, it is not surprising that, in the Liang-Zhu story, Zhu Yingtai's quest for Confucian study leads to her awakening sexuality and to her love for Liang Shanbo. Though Zhu keeps her body intact in accordance with her oath, it is undeniable that her story resonates increasingly with Du Liniang's story of love and sexual awakening.

Notably, the heroines' virginity is preserved intact in both narratives: in

Du's case through the use of dreams as a narrative device, and in Zhu's case through her abstinence. The main difference between these two stories has to do with the heroine's subjectivity. In *Mudan ting*, Du's physical desire is openly acknowledged, and thus the dream becomes necessary so that she may symbolically fulfill her sexual desire and yet remain a virgin until she actually marries her lover. Since dreams are viewed as involuntary, Du is also protected from accountability; she has not been deliberately unvirtuous.⁷⁹ Through this device, the story legitimizes her overt sexual activity by placing it within the safe, unreal realm of dreams.

In Liang-Zhu, by contrast, Zhu's virginity is upheld because of her own determination and self-actualization. By prioritizing her study over her love, the heroine silences her sexual passion for the sake of her larger goals. By means of her vow, she has ensured that she will fiercely maintain her purity while she is outside her family home. Strictly speaking, she has neither denied nor affirmed her desire for a man. I suggest that Liang-Zhu actually endorses young women's sexuality through its straightforward depiction of Zhu's self-denial and willing suppression of her sexuality. Through her voluntary oath, Zhu in effect privatizes and appropriates her seemingly oppressed sexuality by her clear declaration of her own capacity for self-control.

Additionally, whereas *Mudan ting* places desire or passion (*qing*) next to or above reason (*li*) from the beginning, Liang-Zhu starts out by putting reason over desire. As their stories progress, however, *Mudan ting* and Liang-Zhu are equally concerned with the conflict between passion and reason, and each story finds its happy ending only after the death of its heroine. The valorization of a young woman's passion in *Mudan ting* has often been interpreted as a male literatus's impersonation of unorthodox voices opposing a fixed and stubborn neo-Confucian view of reason and moral orthodoxy.⁸⁰ In contrast, Liang-Zhu speaks more to embodying the dominant and conservative attitude toward female sexuality. This interpretation of the two works, though it certainly suffers from essentialization, illuminates the very different positions the two narratives occupy within the sphere of literature dealing with young women's desire. *Mudan ting*, written by a male literatus, addresses the author's cultural and political outlook in a sophisticated representation of the disrupting female character. Liang-Zhu, by contrast, dramatizes the cumulative desire of the common people by anchoring the female character firmly in Confucianism.

Nevertheless, the voice of sexuality in Liang-Zhu is not fixed within a didactic tone. The apparent rejection of sexual desire in the narrative does

not completely erase female sexuality from the text. On the surface, Zhu's sexuality is controlled by her oath; but beneath her obedience to social norms, her sexuality and love remain alive and well. In fact, the story's rhetoric of rejection reconfirms the existence of Zhu's sexual desire, which has not yet been fulfilled. As her love for Liang develops, Zhu's delayed and suppressed sexuality is roused. In this context, the exaggerated gesture of the virginity oath may actually be a subtle affirmation of her natural desire for men. The continued blossoming of the peonies therefore demonstrates that a thriving sexual energy lives in Zhu throughout the story. The ostensible suppression but underlying affirmation of Zhu's sexuality generates the apparently conflicting lines in Zhu's pursuit of love later in the Liang-Zhu story (see chapter 3).

Given the likelihood that contemporary sexual mores influenced the various Liang-Zhu versions, I propose that the tension between female family members in the story reflects the historical realities of Ming and Qing China. Particularly from the late Ming through the early Qing, the notion of female virtue was premised on a strict binary structure, with only two sexual roles available to women: the licentious woman and the chaste virgin. Against this backdrop of elevated concern about morality, fidelity was prescribed as the feminine ideal. In contrast, sexual indulgence and remarriage were viewed in negative terms and discouraged by all possible means.⁸¹ Under the circumstances, female virtue as defined by sexual purity led to "veritable cults"⁸² around such archetypes as the faithful maiden and the chaste widow, and these purity-centered ideals came to replace all the other traditional female virtues described in *The Biographies of Virtuous Women*.⁸³

Women's sexuality was brought to the center of the moral and political discourse of the Confucian literati. The idea that women's sexual purity was equivalent to men's loyalty to the state, which reached its greatest prevalence during the late dynastic transition from Ming to Qing, allowed the neo-Confucian literati to strategically integrate the issue of female sexuality into their moral discourse,⁸⁴ ritualizing virtue by demonizing the licentious and enshrining the chaste.⁸⁵ This enforced restriction of female sexuality is often thought to be rooted in the Neo-Confucian literati's attempts to maintain high morality and reestablish the normative Confucian order, which was already suffering significant degradation. As a result, feminine virtue became a dominant theme in the literary discourse of the Ming and Qing periods, as well as in popular storytelling and entertainment.⁸⁶ It is unlikely, there-

fore, that the Liang-Zhu versions discussed here, most of which date from this period, exist independently of the social and literary discourse on the female ideal of the period. If we read the shifting Liang-Zhu story as being injected with, or contaminated by, the literary conventions and attributes of contemporary and later literary works, then the various versions of the tale reveal a complicated collaboration of hidden but strong erotic elements and the didactic voices of sexual repression. These two forces work together to make the story an enduringly popular romance.

It is important to remember that the virginity oath in Liang-Zhu did not appear until the late Ming period. The “Jieyi gongshu” and “Liang Shanbo ge” versions from the late Ming period are among the earliest versions to include the oath motif.⁸⁷ As the *baojuan* versions show, the oath is common in the prosimetric versions that are believed to date back to the Qing period. However, it is not always treated as a main element of Liang-Zhu. “Liang Zhu shan’ge,”⁸⁸ for example, lacks the oath motif even though it shares many elements of phrasing and plot with “Liang Shanbo ge.” In “Liang Zhu shan’ge,” Zhu’s sister-in-law teaches Zhu embroidery and later encourages her to study abroad. The differences between Liang-Zhu versions show the potential for completely different treatments of an important motif in otherwise similar renditions. The contested terrain of the moral discourse on female sexuality and its practice exists at the core of the Liang-Zhu narrative.

It is interesting that in Korean versions of Liang-Zhu, the virginity oath does not play such an important role, if it appears at all. The texts either omit it altogether or emphasize Zhu’s promise that she will accept her parents’ choice of husband for her after her studies are completed. To be precise, the “Yang Sanbaek chön,” as well as most Korean folktale versions, omit the virginity oath motif (and the use of the flowers in oath-making) while preserving the brotherhood motif (see chapter 3); in most cases, Zhu’s father is delighted about her plan to study and expresses no worry about her cross-dressing or her potential loss of virginity. In the versions in which Zhu’s parents don’t support her study outside the home, she persuades them through reassurance; in “Maengse üi söyak” (Promises; hereafter “Söyak”), for instance, the heroine Hwang Pongnye (Zhu) convinces her father by saying, “When I turn sixteen, I will have to come back and marry the person you have selected for me.”⁸⁹ In this version, the heroine understands that her father’s primary concern is that she participate in an arranged marriage, and that, to keep her promise, she should not reveal her true gender until she returns home. What is most important in this version is thus that she keeps

her promise to her father out of filial concern, and that her will to keep her promise conflicts with the promise she makes to Yang Sangbok (Liang) as a sworn brother. This ethical focus in this Korean version, in contrast to the Chinese versions' focus on female virtue and sexuality, presents an interesting point for more comparative analysis.

This shift of focus from virginity to obedience to one's parents is not a fundamental difference; both versions reflect a fear that Zhu will not achieve a good marriage. Nonetheless, the Korean versions' omission of the virginity oath shows that an extreme focus on the virginity theme is not omnipresent in Liang-Zhu texts across cultures; rather, it is primarily Chinese. It also demonstrates that the virginity theme in Liang-Zhu is not an inevitable product of Neo-Confucian philosophy; in some ways, Korea underwent a more intense practice of Neo-Confucian ethics during the late Chosŏn period than did Ming-Qing China.⁹⁰ Korean Liang-Zhu stories could have elaborated on the motif, or at least preserved some trace of it, had it been an important part of the Liang-Zhu story as it was introduced into Korea, or had it appealed to Korean audiences. Although more research is needed to reach a conclusion, my theory is that the virginity theme is a later Chinese addition, particularly to those versions that were performed in communal and didactic spaces, where more dramatic representation of female virtues could have increased profits and justified the performance.

Although Zhu evolves from an insulated, daydreaming girl into an ardent, bold woman with a masculine appearance, her sexuality never changes. While her cross-dressing allows her to assimilate with the male students, the reality of the virginity oath keeps her alert to her original gender identity. Zhu's performance, thoughts, and actions in the male domain are permitted only as long as they do not jeopardize her physical body. As a result, Zhu's identity is divided into two imperfect roles: male student and female virgin. The resulting dichotomy between gender and sex inhibits her accomplishments as either a student or a young woman. This situation erodes her autonomy and forces a severe concealment of her body. Within this epistemological inconsistency, Zhu must invent a third gender that does not exist in her real world.

CHAPTER 3

Between Women and Men

Friendship vs. Love

In the Liang-Zhu story, the problem of gender becomes most noticeable as Zhu Yingtai builds her relationship with Liang Shanbo at the academy. Zhu's male persona during their period of studying together (*tongchuang* 同窓) forms the kernel of her friendship with Liang but is also fundamentally in conflict with her true gender and emotions. Despite her initial intentions, Zhu ultimately spends as much time and energy experimenting with her contradictory gender roles as she does on her pursuit of academic fulfillment. Gender continues to play an important role in the love relationship that later develops between Liang and Zhu, and in their tragic deaths.

Looking back at the history of Liang-Zhu, we can see that studying together was already a major theme of the story during the Song dynasty, as was Zhu's burial with Liang. Through the theme of studying together, the story had long explored the depth of the relationships young people develop when they leave home and how passionately they maintain those relationships (see chapter 1), a theme that was common in the dramatic versions of Liang-Zhu with titles such as "Tongchuang ji" 同窗記 (Records of a Common Career in Study) that appeared during the Ming and Qing periods.¹ As friends, Liang and Zhu develop a mutual affection built on their common interests and activities while living (*tongju* 同居) and studying together (*tongxue* 同學) at the academy. Their friendship is based not only on utility and pleasure, but also on virtue, which resonates with the perfect model of friendship suggested by Aristotle.²

The theme of studying together in Liang-Zhu is constructed to exemplify the strong bond between friends, particularly school-aged youths, in traditional Chinese society. At first glance, the relationship established while

studying together seems similar to friendship in a modern sense, focusing as it does on deliberate choice and reciprocal behavior within, for the most part, private life. The meaning of friendship between schoolmates in pre-modern Chinese society, however, was much broader and deeper: it was initially a means to cultivate and perfect one's morality, but it also played a critical role in forming a social and public community among men, in which intimate connections of talent, action, emotion, and desire were a requirement of membership. For school-aged youths, the drive to succeed academically could easily form a barrier to friendship, and in this highly competitive school environment that invited amity and enmity, one's character—a constellation of gender, desire, emotion, and ideals—was strenuously tested against those of one's peers.³ Under these conditions friends strove for a better, mutually beneficial form of companionship that could become almost cultishly close. More often than not, such friendship blurred the precise emotional boundaries between love (*eros*) and friendship (*phillia*), which converged to constitute a particularly strong friendship bond.⁴ In Liang-Zhu, the emotional depth of the protagonists' friendship intensifies over time, from their first encounter on the road to the academy through their moment of parting, and also evolves from a friendship from one of utility and pleasure into one of virtue, and, finally, into a life-and-death friendship (*shengsi zhi jiao* 生死之交).

The friendship between Liang and Zhu at school is also a manifestation of Zhu's ability to control her emotions and sexuality. Within the exclusively male environment of the academy, Zhu temporarily annihilates gender disparity by convincingly donning the garb of a male student. Zhu's complicated feelings toward Liang are suppressed so that she does not violate a double boundary: that of friendship on one hand, and of her virginity on the other. This means that she lives daily with the inherent risks and limitations of her performance as a male student. Suspicions around Zhu's identity inevitably arise, and she plays a risky game by repeatedly assuaging Liang's doubts. But these moments also raise questions: How does Zhu manage to escape Liang's suspicion, or perhaps, why is Liang willfully blind to any suspicions? How is it possible that Zhu's deception is not exposed while she is actually living with Liang? And what does her success in this gender performance represent with respect to the Liang-Zhu story and its cultural meaning? A careful analysis of the nature and scope of the relationship between Liang and Zhu during their time at the academy reveals nuanced representations of gender that provide insight

into their relationship while locating it within the larger discourse of masculinity and femininity in China.

The progression of the Liang-Zhu relationship from friends to lovers, developed primarily through episodes arising from their cohabitation, reflects the tastes of the audience with respect to gender relations. The action represents gender-crossing as exciting and fun and uses Zhu's gender play to reveal her intelligence. Zhu's ongoing attempts to assuage suspicions about her gender are both suspenseful and humorous, while also revealing much about the ideals of Liang and Zhu. The knowledge of Zhu's true sex and gender makes this phase of the story exhilarating for the reader. The enjoyment Liang and Zhu find in getting to know each other and working together tempers the anxiety created by the possibility of Zhu's identity surfacing. Even when the ongoing game over gender distinction is over, there remains a distinct notion of precisely defined gender.

The stubborn persistence of the gender-boundary that restrains the two characters ultimately leads the story to its tragic culmination. It is the internal characteristics of both Liang and Zhu that delay Liang's discovery of Zhu's true gender and prevent his realizing his love for her until it is too late. The tragic deaths of the protagonists, allowing them to be united forever in the afterlife, suggest that audiences initially favored a tragic ending, even while they actively enjoy the story of Liang and Zhu's time together. Why would the audience want the lovers to die [and, in later versions, return]? I suggest that the tragic ending of Liang-Zhu is presaged by the strength with which gender distinctions and norms are maintained while they study together. The rigidly defined gender designations that Liang and Zhu embody at the academy are meant to guide them toward compliance with social norms.

These norms do not, however, prevent the audience from supporting the characters' relationship; the audience's real feelings cannot be dictated by the norms represented in the story, and the tension between normative and popular values adds to the tale's excitement. Ironically, though, the audience sees death and a shared tomb as the only possibility for continued growth in Zhu and Liang's romance. Given that social norms sharply defined male and female character ideals and acceptable male-female relationships, there is no rational, moral way to save both their relationship and their lives. The faceless audiences of Liang-Zhu demanded that the characters they loved be transported into a new space that was void of the social restrictions imposed on them in life. In light of the social protocols that determine their inescapable fates, Liang and Zhu's adherence to traditional ideals may be viewed as the determining factor in their tragedy.

Liang embodies two archetypal views of Chinese masculinity: the *junzi* (gentleman) and the *caizi* (talented scholar). These two archetypes, which were dominant in romance drama and fiction during the Qing period, also appear in various combinations in the construction of Zhu's male character and in each version of Liang-Zhu, particularly the elongated prosimetric version. These models of manhood underlie the narrative mechanism across different versions, so that the finales of disparate Liang-Zhu tales are interconnected across a wide spectrum of interpretations. Liang and Zhu's responses to each other, regardless of differences in gender and emotion, create a versatile template for any desired or actual human relationship.

Becoming a Boy: The Brotherhood Oath and Male Bonding

"Boy meets girl" is an enduring narrative theme across cultures and time periods. Based on the perception that complicated, worldly values interfere little in their interactions, the meeting of young people is often described as a pure, naive model of human relationship. Liang and Zhu's first encounter foretells the innocence of their relationship. The two students do not arrive at their meeting place simultaneously. Although a few treatments differ, it is common in the ballad versions that Zhu arrives first. In "Liang Zhu shan'ge," for example, Zhu travels to the academy with her maid Renxin 人心 or 仁心 (or Yinxin 殷心),⁵ who is dressed as a male servant. They stop to rest at a pavilion under a willow tree, where they are soon joined by Liang and his servant Shijiu 事久 or 士久 (or Sijiu 四九):

The weather of the third lunar month brings life to everything;
Her dress is thoroughly soaked with her fragrant sweat.
Tying up a horse under the shade of a willow tree,
Yingtai has a rest and enjoys the cool breeze.
One other young scholar arrives at the pavilion.
Shanbo urges his horse and passes by the pavilion;
Sijiu follows him closely, carrying a book case on his shoulder.
Shanbo stops his horse under the same willow tree;
He sees a student sitting in the pavilion
Whom [he] greets formally even before he rests.
Shanbo issues a formal greeting and asks, standing to the side of the
road:

“My benevolent friend, where do you live?
How old are you?
Why are you traveling to other places?
What is your respectful name and rank [in your family]?”

三月天气抛回阳，一阵香汗湿衣裳。柳荫树下拴了马，英台歇足乘风凉。长亭又到秀才郎。山伯策马过长亭，四九挑箱紧跟随。柳荫树下停住马，亭中坐着一书生，未曾歇定把礼行。山伯施礼站路旁，“仁兄家住啥地方？贵庚今年多少岁？有何贵干走他乡？尊姓大名怎排行？”⁶

In this passage, as in most Liang-Zhu versions, Liang Shanbo initiates this first exchange of greetings. Not only has Zhu, as a girl, been raised not to talk to men, but her passive behavior also reflects her intent to act carefully, so she won't accidentally expose her true identity. Liang asks questions that might seem awkward, or even rude, to readers from a different culture and time period, but they are traditional in China. A stranger's age and home region were important clues to how he should be treated. This common scene demonstrates the influence of the Chinese social hierarchy over simple acts like forming a friendship.

In most Liang-Zhu versions, Zhu's responses to Liang's questions quickly lead to the two becoming sworn brothers. There are many explanations for this rapid intimacy, but in most versions from the Ming and Qing periods, it is simply that their basic social roles are similar enough to bring them together.⁷ From Zhu's answers, Liang finds out that they come from neighboring hometowns, are the same age, and share a common goal, all of which creates a favorable impression. Other versions emphasize their appealing physical appearances as well. A modern dramatic version provides a more vivid and elaborate description of the scene, with a direct expression of their initial feelings about each other:

SHANBO [SPEAKS, ASIDE]: In my view, Yingtai is young and handsome. Our talk accords with each other, and we come from neighboring districts. I would like to be his sworn brother, but I don't know if he will agree. . . .

SHANBO [SPEAKS]: I'd like to become your sworn brother,⁸ but I don't know if you'll agree.

YINGTAI [SPEAKS, AFTER CONTEMPLATION]: What you have said, my friend, is exactly what I am thinking. This is our first time to

be away from home and live among strange people and in unfamiliar places. So it would be good to become sworn brothers and help each other. But first we must determine which of us would be the elder and the younger. . . .

ZHU AND LIANG [SING TOGETHER]:

What a great meeting!

Under the willow's shade we bow together. . . .

This oath of sworn brotherhood makes our relationship excel that of blood brothers,

We shall remain true friends in life and death.

山伯（白）（旁白）：我看英台，年少英俊，言语相投，又是同乡共井，有心与他结为金兰之好，不知他意下如何。[. . .] 梁山伯（白）：小弟有心与书友结为金兰之好，不知尊意如何。祝英台（白）（沈思）书友之言，正合我意。彼此初次出门，人地生疏，若得结为金兰好友，也好互相照应，但要叙一长幼。[. . .] 梁祝（合唱）：相逢好，柳阴树下同拜到。[. . .] 结金兰胜过同胞，做一个生死之交。⁹

Liang's remarks on Zhu's appearance show that Liang likes Zhu because, at first sight, her looks are pleasant to him. His next reason is the practical advantage of friendship: mutual caring. The scene presents the mutual benefit of having an ally in their new environment as a sound reason for swearing brotherhood. Liang and Zhu's recognition of the utility of friendship when far from home highlights the practical need and justification for social bonding in premodern China.¹⁰ This instantiates the very case Aristotle presents of the first two models of friendship—friendship of pleasure and friendship of utility—which he categorizes as incidental ones.¹¹ Whether the other person is attractive and useful is a common consideration in building such friendships. Once two individuals agree on their mutual attractiveness and usefulness, their friendship can proceed. In Liang-Zhu, they call each other “brothers”; in this version, their ages are presented as different (Zhu is sixteen and Liang seventeen) so as to allow Zhu to assume the role of younger brother and Liang that of elder brother. A ritual follows: a broken willow twig serves as incense; they bow to Heaven and swear to brotherhood in life and death.¹² The same version also features a hilarious meeting of Liang and Zhu's servants. In this first encounter at the pavilion, neither Liang nor Zhu initially dares speak to the other, so Sjiu and Renxin play go-between

with their casual talk. Sijiu, realizing that Liang and Zhu have made a good impression on each other, asks Renxin about Zhu and proposes the pledging of sworn brotherhood for its mutual benefits. Prompted by Sijiu, who has already obtained a great deal of information about Zhu, Liang plucks up the courage to suggest the oath to Zhu.

In both the “Liang Zhu shan’ge” and “Liu yin ji” (*chuanju*) versions, Liang is the first to propose brotherhood, but in some versions it is Zhu who takes the initiative. In “Quanshi,” Zhu—surprisingly for a girl from the gentry who has left home for the first time—knows how to treat a boy and how to make friends.¹³ Her prompt action and persuasive remarks fascinate Liang. In this version, Zhu initiates their discussion of brotherhood, saying:

“Now I see that you and I are headed in the same direction.
It is said that if there is a karmic affinity, people a thousand *li* apart
will meet, and if there is no karmic affinity, people will not see
each other even if they are face to face.
If you are willing to bring me,
I’d like to be your sworn brother and go to the city of Hangzhou
together.”

今见相公一同行。有缘千里来相会，无缘对面不相逢，相公
若能携带我，拜为兄弟上杭城。¹⁴

Zhu plays a leading role in building a sworn brotherhood, and her use of the proverb about karmic affinity adds meaning to the encounter. She uses her conversational knowledge to hide her true identity and protect herself.

Liang and Zhu’s relationship, while solely based on mutual interest and the will to fulfill brotherhood, remains immature and thus lacking in deep physical and emotional interactions. According to C. S. Lewis, the interests and background shared by individuals constitute a sort of companionship.¹⁵ In the strict sense, the companions are not yet friends, and this companionship is “only the matrix of friendship”; friendship supervenes.¹⁶ Individuals, therefore, remain companions until they share something more than common interests, “something more inward, less widely shared and less easily defined, etc.”¹⁷ In Lewis’s terms, Liang and Zhu present a perfect model of companions, but not yet friends, even though they have sworn the brotherhood oath. They will gradually become friends through a shared vision and feelings, and particularly through their determination to care for each other

for the rest of their lives. Furthermore, because Liang and Zhu are both bound by their oath, the romantic relationship between them is forestalled.

Detailed descriptions of everyday life at the academy show how the companionship between Liang and Zhu develops into a strong friendship. At the academy, Liang and Zhu share all activities as sworn brothers, even sharing a bed. Their common life at the academy is exemplified in the depiction of their studying together. They both work hard and achieve the highest level of performance. None of the Liang-Zhu versions, in China or Korea, fails to emphasize the couple's dedication to their studies:

Time passes by like an arrow, rushing people into senility;
 Years elapse like a loom, pressing youth.
 Spring, summer, and autumn come and then go,
 Suddenly winter comes, and the plum blossoms are fragrant.
 Sharing a desk, Liang and Zhu learn words and passages together;
 Determined, they study diligently every day.
 One year has passed after beginning their studies in the academy;
 Yingtai's intelligence is indeed extraordinary.
 Having perused the *Nine Classics* and the *Three Tactics*,
 Yingtai ranks as the top student of the academy.
 When Shanbo writes one sentence,
 Yingtai is able to complete two or three.

光阴似箭催人老，日月如梭攢少年，春来夏去秋又到，忽然
 冬天腊梅香。二人同桌学文字，日日坚心都要强，在学攻
 书有一载，英台聪俊实非常，九经三略都看过，赛过书堂
 众学生，山伯写得一行字，英台写过两三行。¹⁸

Within a year, Liang and Zhu have mastered many classic texts. It is interesting to note that, in the above “Jieyi gongshu” version, it is Zhu's outstanding talent in learning that is emphasized. Although she knows her studies will not lead to an official career, she pursues her education for her own fulfillment. Zhu's academic achievement surpasses even Liang's, and she wins first place among the three thousand students at the academy. Her hard work and academic excellence are described in glowing terms:

Yingtai reads late till midnight;
 She has mastered the *Nine Classics* and the *Three Tactics*;

She has become very skillful in the composition of poetry and rhapsody.

No one among the three thousand can compete with her;
Having her mind filled with writings, she becomes perspicacious
and virtuous.

英台深夜读文章，九经三略来通晓，题诗作赋甚高强，三千
学生应难比，文章满腹作贤良。¹⁹

Looking back on Zhu's sighing over her embroidery in the inner chambers, and her motives for study then, we can see that she has fulfilled the goals she set back in her lonely, secluded room. This emphasis on Zhu's academic performance demonstrates a thread of advocacy for women's education and for the benefits of the intellectual exchange between men and women. There is no implication in this "Jieyi gongshu" version of any betrayal, anger, or jealousy between Liang and Zhu due to their intense competition at the academy. Instead, their studying together brings synergy to their close bond. Just as they pledged under the willow tree, the two watch over each other and ensure that their academic success is mutual. This protectiveness also appears in many other situations.

The version "Yingtai hen" 英台恨 (Yingtai's Grief)²⁰ perhaps best describes Liang and Zhu's concern for each other during their schooling. In this version, they study at a small, local academy and take good care of each other in their daily routine:

Each day they collect firewood once;
In turn, they carry water to refill the vat.
But Yingtai is frail, and
Shanbo always shoulders water in her stead.

一天一次把柴抱，轮著担水把缸添。内有英台气力小，山伯
遭遭替她担。²¹

This scene demonstrates that, disguised as a man, Zhu faces hard labor at the academy. However the focus is not on Zhu's physical weakness but on Liang's touching insistence on helping her. While it may be quite ordinary for friends to help each other, in this case the help takes on a special meaning to both Zhu and the audience, who know how help in desperate moments

builds trust and attachment. As implied by the title, “Yingtai’s Grief,” in this version it is through Zhu’s unhappy moments that the relationship of Liang-Zhu develops and fully blooms. The difficult situations Zhu faces reveal Liang Shanbo as a strong, active man. By turning his physical strength to her assistance, he emerges as more than just a friend to Zhu. Liang is also portrayed as valuing friendship over study, not hesitating to expend his energy in helping. Zhu’s affection for Liang is based not on admiration for his academic accomplishments, which are less impressive than her own, but on his excellent character. This rendering of Liang Shanbo reflects the image of him discussed in chapter 1: that of a humble, sincere, and good-hearted youth. Liang reveals his feelings about Zhu not through complex reflections but through simple, everyday actions.

A related episode in the same version gives another hint about Liang’s feelings for Zhu and how their relationship develops into something more than friendship. One winter day, Zhu is told to carry water by a teacher’s wife who is suspicious about her identity. When she cannot finish the task by herself, she silently calls to Liang, thinking:

“Brother Liang,
Please come quickly!
Please quickly come!
Help your younger brother carry the water!”

暗暗叫声梁大哥，快来吧，来快吧，你替为弟把水担。²²

Liang, studying alone in a room beyond the reach of Zhu’s voice, suddenly thinks of her:

At this time, Yingtai is thinking about her old friend.
Let us talk about Shanbo from the Liang family:
“My worthy younger brother has gone to fetch water today,
But he has not returned yet.
Indeed I know that he is frail.
But still,
Let me go to the well and check.”
Shanbo puts down his *Four Books*;
Striding to the well as fast as he can.

英台正然思故友，再说山伯梁家男：贤弟今日去担水，直到如今未回还。情知贤弟力气小，如不然，我到井台去看，山伯把四书忙放下，一边大步到井边。²³

Their relationship has, by this point, achieved a deeper mental and spiritual connection than mere friendship. Reciprocity is portrayed as the essence of an ideal relationship,²⁴ and the mutual trust and emotional bond that have grown between them now allow them to sense each other's distress from a distance. Liang often acts as a guardian angel to Zhu. This telepathic communication may be viewed as the ideal state that any close relationship strives to reach, and it is also used to solidify their companionship.

The close relationship between Liang and Zhu is also evidenced in the way they address each other. After pledging an oath of sworn brotherhood, they routinely call each other elder (*xiong* 兄) or younger (*di* 弟) brother. On one special occasion, they define their relationship using literary tropes referring to friendship. Liang refers to Zhu as *zhiyin* 知音, the well-known expression for “true friend,”²⁵ when he visits her: for example, he says, “I have come to look for my true friend (找知音)”²⁶ or “I accidentally met my true friend before (遇知音).”²⁷ In the “Jieyi gonghu” version from the Ming dynasty, Zhu expresses her perception of her relationship with Liang in a parting poem:

Remembering that past scholars followed the traditional way,
I encountered you on the way, studying together with you.
Now when we return, the plum blossoms on the northern hill have
just turned white;
When we first arrived, the blooming flowers in the south were
crimson.
Separation comes after three beautiful springs;
After a delightful night, each goes in a different direction.
When will we meet again like Fan Shi and Zhang Shao?
I have gathered new poems as the gift for your departure.

忆昔先贤秋古风，共君同学道相逢。来归岭北梅初白，去日江南花正红。美景三春分聚散，良宵一宿各西东。范张难约何时会，聊集新诗别赠君。²⁸

As she recalls the years they have spent together as friends, in harmony with the natural passage of time, Zhu unveils the feelings she has developed for Liang. In the last two lines of the poem, Zhu compares her relationship with Liang to that of Fan Shi and Zhang Shao, the famous model of Chinese male friendship, known as the “friendship of metal and stone” (*jinsi zhi jiao* 金石之交).²⁹ She hopes that, like Fan Shi and Zhang Shao, she and Liang will be reunited someday.

A closer examination of the story of Fan Shi and Zhang Shao gives us further insight into how Zhu feels about her friendship with Liang. The Fan-Zhang story has much in common with Liang-Zhu, such as the theme of studying together, the promise of reunion, and, finally, death. The relationship between Fan and Zhang provides a clear model for Zhu’s vision of male friendship. According to the earlier version of the story in *Soushen ji* 搜神記 (The Record of Searching for the Supernatural, fourth century CE), Fan Shi 範式 (style name Juqing 巨卿) and Zhang Shao 張劭 (style name Yuanbo 元伯) are classmates at the Imperial Academy (太學) during the Han dynasty, and they pledge brotherhood and become best friends.³⁰ After completing their course of study, they set a date for a reunion at Zhang’s home. On the appointed day, Fan sets out as promised. On the way, he dreams of receiving news of Zhang’s unexpected death. He rushes to Zhang’s house, and although he is too late for the funeral, Zhang’s coffin remains unmoving until Fan arrives.³¹

This story reemerged in late imperial China, along with a revived taste for the intimidating intensity of Fan and Zhang’s friendship.³² In Feng Menglong’s expanded version of the Fan-Zhang story in *Yushi mingyan*, Fan and Zhang value their friendship even above their own lives. Knowing that ghosts are believed to be able to travel one thousand *li* in a single day, Fan commits suicide for fear of being late for his appointment with Zhang. After their meeting, Zhang realizes that it was as a ghost that Fan had visited him, and he goes to Fan’s home to hold a funeral for him. Afterward he himself commits suicide by slitting his throat so that he can be with Fan forever, as a testament to the true friendship (*wenjingzhijiao* 刎頸之交) between them. With this twisted and intensified plot, Feng’s version uses the friends’ mutual death to signify the sincerity of their friendship, suggesting that it must be maintained even beyond the grave.³³ In the “Jieyi gongshu” version of Liang-Zhu, Zhu’s allusion to the Fan-Zhang story thus demonstrates her wish and determination that the affection she and Liang share will continue beyond their deaths. The reference to the Fan-Zhang story in the “Jieyi gongshu” version also suggests that Liang-Zhu’s theme of friendship was

embellished and strengthened by other folktales, vernacular novels, and dramas on friendship,³⁴ and particularly by Feng's version of the Fan-Zhang story written around the seventeenth century.

In traditional China, particularly in orthodox Confucianism, friendship, rooted in selective and individual values, inevitably conflicted with familial and societal values. In a society that was based on hierarchy and that emphasized the collective over the individual, friendship—with its perceived vulnerability to selfishness—was not highly valued.³⁵ Norman Kutcher's study on friendship in the context of Confucianism demonstrates how cautiously Confucian writers responded to the nonhierarchical and voluntary quality of friendship.³⁶ Those writers attempted to lessen the importance of friendship and mitigate its perceived detrimental effects on hierarchy by defining it narrowly, as a bond that could help in fulfilling one's responsibilities to family and society, and in achieving moral perfection and Confucian study.³⁷ This emphasis on the utility of friendship allowed it to coexist with order in family and state, specifically as an analogy to the three most basic relationships: the ruler-subject relationship, the parent-child relationship, and the husband-wife relationship. For example, an elder friend should take care of a younger friend just as a ruler or teacher takes care of a subject or student. Friends should also be complementary, like husband and wife. The analogy to the husband-and-wife relationship also theoretically permits the growth of an erotic sensibility within friendship, and of social tolerance toward it.

Scholars such as Susan Mann have demonstrated the predominance of the male bond in almost every aspect of China's patriarchal society, and have called for more attention to male bonds and relations in Chinese history.³⁸ Despite the philosophical caution against friendship, in reality it is inarguable that (male) friendship has served as a framework for social activity in China. Friendship for advantage, where social connections would serve as a networking ground vital to success, was particularly encouraged during the schooling period.³⁹ In late imperial China, particularly during the late Ming period, friendship had great textual visibility; the male bond, both homosexual and heterosexual, was viewed not merely as an aid to career success but as an outlet for moral, emotional, intellectual, sexual, and artistic demands.⁴⁰ According to Joseph McDermott, Matteo Ricci's translation of classical Greek and Latin thoughts on friendship (*Jiaoyou lun* 交友論) is said to have contributed to the increased discourse on friendship among Chinese intellectuals of that period, but late Ming intellectuals' flexible understanding of its meaning and emphasis on its value in reinforcing morality also played an important role in the social practice of friendship.⁴¹ Along with Kutcher's

discussion of the pitfalls inherent in the concept of friendship and the Confucian literati's efforts to overcome them, McDermott's study illuminates the increased practice and recognition of friendship that engendered the need to make logical sense of it within the textual realm.

Friendship proved useful in achieving social ends, and the desire to form a homosocial community sometimes led Chinese men to abandon the values that defined their other relationships.⁴² This emphasis on social value partly explains why male friendships took priority over male-female relationships among Chinese literati. Anthropologist Lionel Tiger suggests that male bonding, which can be seen as preadaptive, was developed by male cooperative behavior during the evolution of the division of labor, particularly hunting and warfare. In this view, a strong sense of male bonding, based on dependence or particular trust between males, was forged during cooperation between men, and it influenced the social view of male-female bonding or (heterosexual) marriage as a relationship mainly for reproduction, which can be rendered as either inferior or threatening to male bonding.⁴³ In practice, however, homosexual behavior is seen as not incompatible with traditional marriage in China, which concerned one's obligations to continue the family line more than any other personal interests.⁴⁴ Geng Song's study of Chinese male culture shows that a misogynist attitude and condemnation of heterosexuality are central to the homosocial/homosexual discourse in patriarchal Chinese society.⁴⁵ Research on male bonding during the Ming and Qing dynasties has revealed a strong undercurrent of heterosexual norms being ignored or resisted.⁴⁶ The development of the bond between Liang and Zhu—an essential part of the Liang-Zhu story—cannot reasonably be scrutinized separately from the fashion of celebrating male friendship. Zhu's willful infiltration of the male community, which seems to undermine the exclusivity of the male relationship by addressing the marginalization of equivalent relationships among women, in fact plays an active role in echoing, solidifying, and reinforcing the male-centered relationship codes promoted by the Confucian order.

Not a Girl: Killing Suspicions and Oppressing Heterosexuality

Zhu's ongoing efforts to disarm Liang's suspicions about her identity are another key element of Liang and Zhu's co-residence at the academy. While

scenes of her studying with fellow students are certainly necessary to the narrative, how she manages to conceal her identity is of utmost importance to the reader—and to her status as a student. It is assumed that everyone aside from Liang Shanbo already has their suspicions about Zhu's identity, particularly the master and his wife, who at times exert their authority to assist Zhu in her deception. Liang Shanbo is in a very complex position. The brotherhood oath makes Zhu feel that Liang is a friend who will always be on her side. Liang's presence alleviates her fear of living with unknown youths, but Zhu still needs to assure Liang of her fake identity.

In the earlier official narration (see chapter 1), Liang is described as a man of simplicity and innocence because he doesn't realize that Zhu is a girl. Because this image of Liang was seen as too naive and unrealistic, attempts emerged in popular storytelling to portray him as more perceptive, which altered and challenged Liang's basic image. Liang is described as a person with common sense, so it is only natural that he should sometimes question Zhu's identity. In some versions, both Chinese and Korean, Liang is even aware of Zhu's true sex soon after they meet.⁴⁷ These changes in Liang's character give each Liang-Zhu version room to develop a more dynamic Liang and an opportunity for additional dramatic episodes. Nevertheless, the Liang who, despite his doubts, shows absolute trust in Zhu remains dominant in popular storytelling, leaving untarnished the Liang of earlier official narration.

The tension surrounding Zhu's gender identity is manifested in Liang and Zhu's dialogues, whether initiated by Liang or by Zhu. Depending on the version, Liang's suspicion is first aroused either when the pair cross the river together or during the first night they sleep together at the inn or at the academy.⁴⁸ In the following "Shuangxian baojuan" version, Zhu defends herself in advance, realizing that Liang may wonder why she doesn't undress for bed:

The sun is already sinking in the west;
They find an inn [where they can] stay.
When they go into the room after finishing their dinner,
Yingtai skillfully explains herself.
"Brother Liang, I have been very sick since childhood, so I can't take
off my clothes when sleeping."
Shanbo answered, "My dear brother, since you are sick, don't take
them off!"

看看红日西沉去，投宿招商饭店门。用完夜饭将房进，英台弄巧说原因。英台“哥哥，小弟从小病多，所以睡不能解衣的。”山伯道“贤弟弟既然有恙，不解衣便了！”⁴⁹

Zhu's excuse is credible enough to convince Liang. From this moment on, Zhu's game of providing plausible excuses continues. Once they start living in the academy, Liang's questions become more frequent. His unwavering belief in Zhu's words continues as long as Zhu performs a male identity. Of course, there comes a moment when Zhu's body is exposed, and her explanations are not quite convincing. Yet they are conceivable enough that, in the end, Liang's attitude remains the same. The following scene shows this moment unfolding:

It is during the heat of the sixth lunar month
That Yingtai opens her gown in the room.
How could she know that Shanbo enters and glimpses
Her snow-white skin and exposed breasts?
He comes forward and asks immediately,
“Why does your breast look like the mountains?”
Yingtai immediately answers,
Calling him her sworn brother,
“A man with a big breast shall become a minister,
As is clearly explained in the physiognomy.”
[Thus] deceived by Yingtai,
How could Shanbo possibly know Zhu is a girl?

却逢六月炎天暑，英台房内解衣拎。谁知山伯来看见，雪白肌肤敞了胸。上前即便开言说，“英弟因何奶有峰？”英台即便回言答，口叫同窗结义人。“男子奶大为丞相，相术上面赘分明。”山伯被他来瞒过，那晓英台是女身。⁵⁰

Instead of pretending he hasn't seen Zhu's bared breast, Liang immediately questions her, and she promptly responds with improvised excuses. Despite the clear evidence, Liang is fooled. Zhu's use of pseudoscientific language lends her words a certain authority and credibility. This echoes the earlier scene when, dressed as a fortune-teller, Zhu persuaded her father to permit

her to carry out her plan to study. Like her father, Liang comes to believe in Zhu's words. Zhu also cleverly reminds Liang of the fact that they are sworn brothers, with its implication that Liang must be on Zhu's side. The narration then implies that Liang doesn't realize the truth not because he is naive but because he has unflinching faith in what Zhu says.

In this "Shuangxian baojuan" version, the scenario then develops further.⁵¹ Again, Liang finds something unusual about Zhu's behavior, and again, Zhu provides her excuses. But this time, the question of whether or not to believe Zhu is premised on their particular relationship (or emotional connection) rather than on any logical explanation. What Liang is supposed to believe prevails over what he actually sees. When Zhu exposes her bare breast, she uses quick words to protect her identity. However, her explanation immediately makes Liang suspicious again. He begins to give more thought to previous situations that raised doubts about Zhu's identity; the first example that comes to his mind is that, unlike the other students, Zhu urinates squatting down. At this moment Liang seems confident that Zhu is a girl, and he asks her to tell him the truth, promising to keep her secret. To the reader, this might seem like the appropriate moment for Zhu to tell the truth to Liang, the one person she can trust. She might even be better off if he knew her true identity.

However, Zhu sticks to the same tactics she has used before and again makes a pseudoscientific excuse. This time, though, it is even less convincing. Perhaps realizing that she sounds absurd, she plays the card of sworn brotherhood:

My dear brother, there's something you don't know. Do you remember the ancient people's saying that "One should not urinate in front of the Sun, the Moon, and the stars"? If so, that would offend them, so one can't enjoy longevity and immortality. How could you possibly not know about this, and come to ask me instead? Since we are sworn brothers, don't listen to deviant words, which will only raise many suspicions. How can this not be gossiped about by others? It is more important to study together with you when being away from home.

Upon hearing these words, Shanbo becomes dumbfounded,
He dares not raise the issue again.

梁兄有所不知，可记得古人云，小解不可对了日月三光。倘然立直，恐防触犯三光，不能寿山高升。你是不知，反来问我，我与你结为兄弟，莫听邪言，多起疑心。岂不被人谈，与兄离乡背井读诗要紧。山伯听了真无趣，不敢将言最问情。⁵²

According to the *tanci* version “Xinbian jin hudie zhuan,” which has much in common with the above “Shuangxian baojuan” in expressions, episodes, and sequence, Zhu’s justification for her way of urinating is drawn from the moral treatise called *Ganying pian* 感應篇 (Treatise of Feeling and Responding).⁵³ Her improvised excuse, far-fetched as it may seem, therefore demonstrates her intelligence and talent for rhetoric. Seeing that her male disguise is endangered, in “Yingtai ge” (Song of Yingtai) Zhu uses the rhetoric of *junzi* to turn the situation in her favor: “To squat and pee suits the *junzi* (the noble man or gentleman). / To stand and pee is how a dog does it” (坐到小便是君子，站着小便狗撒尿).⁵⁴ It is not clear that Zhu’s excuses convince Liang, but they do seem to make him, in light of their friendship, decide not to press her, especially since Zhu reminds him that they pledged brotherhood on their way to the academy, and asks Liang to focus more on their original goal, their studies. In other words, Liang tolerates Zhu’s excuses—in fact, her lies—because his rejection of them would violate the public construction of their relationship as faithful friends, and he perhaps sees the utility of those excuses in protecting both Zhu’s image and his own.⁵⁵ At any rate, for Liang to accept Zhu’s words without thinking about them further remains his best option, and Zhu’s use of their relationship to dispel Liang’s doubts turns out to be effective.

After Zhu’s straightforward request that Liang focus on his studies, Liang’s doubts about Zhu’s identity are either dispelled or silenced. But for Zhu the discussion also serves as a warning that her schoolmates are suspicious of her identity. Knowing that her deception could be exposed at any minute undoubtedly makes Zhu nervous. At the academy, Zhu uses all possible measures to maintain her cover. She even asks the master to intervene in situations that are unfavorable to her deception.⁵⁶ And yet, there are limits; Zhu can defend herself to Liang, but not to the majority of students. Both the “Yingtai ge quanben” 英台歌全本 (The Complete Version of the Song of [Zhu] Yingtai) and “Xinbian jin hudie zhuan” versions include a hunting competition, during which the students make fun of Zhu’s poor performance in hunting due to her physical weakness and lack of experi-

ence. They even say that Zhu looks like a girl. Although some versions of the story emphasize Zhu's filial piety (wishing to take care of her parents) or her familial obedience (following her parents' order to come back) as her reasons for leaving the academy and returning home, in the above versions and in many others, her fear about her identity being discovered is her primary motivation for leaving. In "Yingtai ge quanben," Zhu's deception is actually discovered by Yan Yuan (Yan Hui), the smartest known disciple of Confucius.⁵⁷ In this version, because Yan Yuan has unmasked her, Zhu reviews her time at the academy and decides to go home.

There are slight differences in the details of the episodes in which Zhu's identity is called into question, but in most Chinese versions of the story her deception is successful, at least in the eyes of Liang and her fellow students. Nonetheless, although Zhu excels at study, she is not as skilled at everyday routines and at spending time with the other boys. Put to the test, she proves to be less able to imitate male behavior than she expected. She can't completely hide the female traits in her behavior, and her physical strength is much less than that of the average boy. In fact, Zhu doesn't ever attempt to achieve extreme masculinity. The narrative clearly shows that she is not a woman who excels in all that men do. Instead, what Zhu persistently wants to acquire is a knowledge and understanding of literary studies.

The suspicion aroused by her persistently feminine looks and behavior means that Zhu feels constantly in danger, and she relies almost entirely on words to diffuse suspicion. Zhu shows knowledge and a good command of language in defending herself, and she proves, through the completion of her literary studies, that a well-raised gentry girl is capable of becoming a woman of letters. During her three years of schooling, both her character as a gentry girl and her virginity are preserved. Whenever she is in trouble, she counts on Liang, whom she can persuade to help her, not only because of their brotherhood oath but also because of Liang's warm and sincere personality.

It is important to remember that Liang is described as a kindhearted and compassionate man, far from naive or stupid. Liang deals with Zhu's lies and his own suspicions according to trust and emotion. He is judicious enough to choose his own position in dealing with the matter, and remains a moral man, never trespassing over the boundary Zhu has drawn. To him, investigating is less meaningful than obeying the wishes of his friend. As a result, Zhu's successful gender performance, the very thing she wants to achieve, becomes the greatest obstacle to the friends developing a romantic relationship.

As I previously mentioned, the very fact of Zhu's female sex places male bonding in a vulnerable position; Zhu and Liang's friendship clandestinely harbors the seeds of romantic love. Although Zhu's male friendship with Liang continues based on her male persona, it is implied that her feelings gradually change into love as she spends time with him. The "Yingtai hen" version explicitly says that Liang's sincere and susceptible personality makes Zhu "secretly feel an affection for Liang" (暗喜欢).⁵⁸ In the "Jinzhuan ji" 金砖记 version, from the same region as "Yingtai hen," Zhu says to herself: "When I go back to my home later, / We could tie a knot as we have a marital fate" (日后回到我家下, 俺二人配就姻缘).⁵⁹ Following this, the narrator says, "This is just her thought. / Yingtai has never uttered those words" (这是英台心里话, 未曾讲出口外边).⁶⁰

This emotional development is different from the most frequently portrayed type of love between girls and boys, namely, "falling in love at first glance" (*yijian zhongqing* 一见钟情). Zhu's attempt to create a relationship of both heterosexual love and male bonding therefore represents a different kind of love in Chinese culture, fostered by the discrepancy between her assumed male gender and her actual female sex. Zhu's love for Liang is therefore not inimical to their male bonding. In fact it may deepen her attachment by adding the element of romance. Liang understands his feelings for Zhu, however, only in the context of friendship. To him, Zhu is his best male friend, although "he" has a somewhat feminine beauty and form. Having to part from "him" causes Liang enormous pain. He is deeply depressed and loses all desire to recite the classics (每日诗书无心看, 心中闷闷失精神).⁶¹ Indeed, his heart is broken, as if "A sharp saw has cut apart two interlocked trees, / [Like a] solitary goose flying alone without its mate" (锯齿断开连理木, 孤飞只雁不成双).⁶² Liang laments how lonely he feels, lying sleepless in his cold bed after Zhu has gone (两人同睡温和暖, 如今自睡却如冰).⁶³ But still his affection for Zhu is devoid of any connotations of heterosexual love, rooted as it is in Zhu's assertion of her male gender during their time together. When Zhu tries to reveal her identity through figurative language before she parts from Liang, she is thwarted by Liang's firm belief—or, more strictly speaking, his determination to believe—that Zhu is a man.

It is possible, however, that Liang views Zhu's image in more flexible terms than we have been led to believe. When Liang urges Zhu to tell the truth, he could be exploring the possibility of having a romantic relationship with her—once she confesses that she is a girl—or, indeed, even without her confession, if it were not impossible for him to be interested in such a relationship with a male.

To Liang, Zhu's continuing to hide her identity could mean that she doesn't want any relationship with him other than their sworn brotherhood. This notion that Zhu is (or wants to be) a man is so deeply carved into his mind that it is very difficult for him to even consider the possibility that she is a young woman. This possibility would also explain why Liang doesn't understand Zhu's allusions and riddles until he actually sees her in female attire, or until she reads her poem to him that states directly that she is a girl.⁶⁴

The tension surrounding Zhu's identity at the academy is among the most exciting themes of Liang-Zhu and is portrayed with humor and wit. Zhu's clever verbal defenses of her assumed identity lend savor to the gender play. Ironically, the fact that Zhu's words, technically all lies, are, for whatever reason, believable to Liang turns out to be an essential element of their true friendship. When her identity is questioned, Zhu's sexuality is aroused but then immediately quelled by her aggressive defenses. Zhu's excuses become a comic thrill for the audience. The tension about Zhu's troubled gender is eased by this playfulness, particularly in her relationship with Liang. Neither the author nor the audience of Liang-Zhu would want to see Zhu become entirely a man. They are more interested in seeing how she escapes difficult situations with a flash of wit. They enjoy exploring how an inexperienced, virtuous woman can sleep in the same room with a man at such a young age, how a smart woman can compete intellectually with men, and how she can develop a deep friendship with a man—a friendship of equals.⁶⁵ These motifs are central to Liang-Zhu's enduring acceptance and popularity.

Friends to Lovers: Contested Gender Ideals of *Junzi* and *Caizi*

Whether and how Liang and Zhu will meet again and continue their relationship (in marriage) after leaving school is at the core of the latter part of Liang-Zhu. Zhu returns home hoping she will meet Liang again. And Liang does come to visit, but too late;⁶⁶ Zhu's parents have already arranged a marriage for her with a man from the Ma family. Zhu and Liang both strive to change the situation, but they cannot flout the authority of parents and society. Although Liang and Zhu's friendship was the most important relationship in each of their lives during their time at the academy, back in the real world the bonds of friendship do not hold up to familial and societal obligations. After he confirms with his own eyes that Zhu is a girl, Liang bitterly

regrets that he has arrived too late to offer a marriage proposal.⁶⁷ To Zhu's family, cancellation of the previous engagement would have been almost impossible; such an act would surely bring public shame. Soon after, Liang becomes ill and dies. Liang's failure to marry Zhu not only indicates the institutional force of arranged marriage, but also illuminates traits of Liang's character that are not always fleshed out in the earlier part of the story.

In this latter part of the story, Liang is portrayed as a vulnerable and frail young man who, finding no solution for his unsatisfied desire, surrenders his life. This fragile but love-oriented image of Liang reveals that Liang's character has gradually been filled out as the story evolved, and that a gender shift has also taken place, to varying degrees depending on the version of the story. In this change we also see the existence of, and tension between, two conflicting ideals of masculinity—those of the *junzi* (gentleman) and the *caizi* (talented scholar). These two ideals play a large part in determining the nature of Liang and Zhu's relationship and the various endings of the story.

The construction of Liang's character within these two views of Chinese masculinity produce two different sets of male-female couples: the *junzi* and *shunü* 淑女 (fair or gentle maiden), and the *caizi* and *jiaren* 佳人 (beauty). The term *shunü* is drawn from a virtuous woman praised in the first poem of *The Classic of Poetry*, "Fishhawk" (關雎), in which a *shunü* is presented as an ideal match for a *junzi*,⁶⁸ whereas the idea of the *jiaren* hails from *caizi-jiaren* (talented scholar and beauty) stories in the drama and fiction of Ming-Qing times.⁶⁹ These two sets of models show how the characters of Liang and Zhu have historically represented different male and female ideals to different audiences, and also how those ideals determine the different endings of the story.

The term *junzi* (literally, "son of a ruler") came, during the time of Confucius, to mean a superior man, a gentleman, or a cultivated man who sets a moral example to all, regardless of social status and gender. Anyone could become a *junzi* through cultivation; it was an ideal to strive for, a higher calling than its opposite, *xiaoren* 小人 (petty or inferior man). But in time *junzi* became almost exclusively associated with male discourse on integrated personality or on exemplary masculinity based on the Confucian ideology.⁷⁰ Briefly speaking, the core of moral virtue for a *junzi* is *ren* 仁,⁷¹ which can be translated variously as care, love, humanness, benevolence, or true goodness. Along with *xiao* 孝 (filial piety) and *li* 禮 (ritual propriety), *ren* is a central idea of Confucian morality;⁷² a person of *ren* is expected to establish his own character and, in so doing, help establish the characters of others. This vir-

tue extends from oneself to one's family, then to others, to others' families, and, finally, to one's country.⁷³ Confucius explains how to attain *ren* in *The Analects*: "To subdue one's self and return to propriety (*li*) is perfect virtue" (克己復禮).⁷⁴ *Ren* is the outcome of the internalization and actualization of *li*, attained by self-restraint and self-discipline. A person of *ren* therefore serves others (為人) and the public welfare, rather than personal desires or private interests. A real gentleman, therefore, should not be overcome by sexual temptation, and this point became an important barometer by which to judge men's qualifications as *junzi*.⁷⁵

Liang's image as a *junzi* springs from his period at the academy, where he is very much a faithful scholar, official, and friend. Liang cultivates his *junzi* character legitimately through study. He fully observes the prescriptions in the Confucian classics and obeys the master's words. But, in particular, Liang's persistent avoidance of Zhu's sexuality demonstrates that his character is suitable to the *junzi* ideal. Liang's apparent lack of interest in female sexuality while he works to maintain his sworn brotherhood with Zhu shows that he suppresses his desire or controls his private concerns in order to adhere to the virtue of *ren*. Zhu Yingtai is able to use this virtue to help conceal her true gender; whenever she is about to be exposed, she cites *The Analects* or enlists the master's authority.⁷⁶ Liang's sincere acceptance of everything Zhu tells him and his adherence to social regulations exemplify his *junzi* character. He scarcely attempts to cross either Zhu's or society's boundaries, even when it makes him seem foolish or, ultimately, leads him to sacrifice his life. He would certainly not be able to accept cohabitation with a female Zhu, so Zhu's true gender must remain hidden in order to maintain their friendship and their brotherhood. If Liang Shanbo made any real effort to ascertain Zhu's true sex, or if he pursued heterosexual—or homosexual—love with her, his character as a *junzi* would collapse.

This compelling image of Liang as a *junzi* expands his vaguely described character in early official accounts and complements Zhu's complex character as a brave, gender-transgressing, and righteous woman. Zhu's cultivation by, as, and for a *junzi*, at school with Liang, presupposes the refining or nurturing of her character as a *shunü*. In particular, Liang's ignorance of sexual matters helps Zhu establish and maintain her image as a *junzi/shunü*, which protects her from censure for mixing with men at the academy. For example, in "Jieyi gongshu," her admittedly unorthodox acts are viewed through the lens of the *junzi/shunü* ideal. When Liang visits Zhu at her home after she has left the academy, she confesses concern for social norms by saying, "If I

still violate the law, knowing it is illicit, / I would be sent to jail as a criminal” (奴奴知法來犯法，將去牢中做罪人).⁷⁷ “Originally I wanted to marry you,” she tells Liang. / “But at home my parents make the decisions” (本欲將身來嫁你，在家由父又由娘).⁷⁸ Zhu’s acknowledgment of her parents’ authority in marriage decisions demonstrates that she has sublimated her own desire to the normative power to which male-coded elements and values are central. The story shows the role that Zhu’s *junzi/shunü* character plays in keeping her within the norm on the one hand, and in controlling uncomfortable and unfavorable situations on the other. Despite the incompatibility of publicly displaying both *junzi* and *shunü* ideals, Zhu simultaneously pursues ideal masculinity and ideal femininity.

In Chinese literature, particularly popular vernacular fiction and drama, the ideal of the *junzi* character gradually yielded to that of the *caizi* (talented scholar) character. Over time, the characters and subplots in vernacular literature changed to accommodate the *caizi* character ideal. The concept of *caizi* also shifted somewhat throughout its textual history, though less dramatically than that of *junzi*. Originally used during the Zhou dynasty to refer to a man of high virtue, by the time of the Wei-Jin dynasties (220–420), *caizi* was used solely to describe a man of literary talent.⁷⁹ Later on, in vernacular literature, the term refers broadly to a talented but sociopolitically marginalized young man who falls in love with a young beauty (*jiaren*).⁸⁰ The *caizi* character I refer to here is the male paragon in *caizi-jiaren* drama and novels: well-known examples include Zhang Sheng in *Xixiang ji* and Liu Mengmei in *Mudan ting*.

The most common *caizi* characterization combines good looks and literary talent with physical and emotional vulnerability.⁸¹ Talent in music and poetry composition, both basic qualifications for Chinese scholars, is prerequisite to the *caizi* character and bolsters his romantic air. The fragile, sentimental, and even effeminate scholarly image of the *caizi* resonates with that of Liang Shanbo in the latter part of the story, first with Liang’s frustration over his inability to marry Zhu, and later in the excessively emotional poems he sends her and his subsequent illness and death from lovesickness.⁸² This type of behavior is not commensurate with an ideal *junzi* character. According to Geng Song, the *caizi* is a temporary stage of a *junzi*’s life before he enters the official world. The *caizi* belongs to the *yin* world while the *junzi* is of the *yang* world.⁸³ The *caizi*’s symbolic partaking of a masculine “*yin*” suggests that there was a newly emerging demand among the literati for ambiguous identities in fiction that could operate contrary to neo-Confucian character ideals and the patriarchal order that underlies them.⁸⁴

In light of the evolution of these two character ideals within the domain of masculinity, we can make a further distinction between *caizi* and *junzi* with respect to their contrasting attitudes toward morality and sexuality. Whereas the *junzi* defines himself through public and social value, with particular emphasis on the official, responsible world, the *caizi* seeks his own personal interests and desires in his private artistic and intellectual pursuits. Simply speaking, the *junzi* is a timelessly exemplary man in the official domain, while the *caizi* is an ideal man from the popular domain, an attractive lover (in talent and appearance) but also a faithful and passionate one. In the later, extended Liang-Zhu versions, Liang is overwhelmed by Zhu Yingtai's beauty and compelled to pursue his love for her. His sincere attitude toward Zhu identifies him as a *zhicheng zhong* 志誠種 (true and faithful lover),⁸⁵ a description often applied to an ideal man in the *caizi-jiaren* romances.⁸⁶

Liang's character as a *caizi*, falling victim to his love, presupposes Zhu as a *jiaren*, a woman worthy of the love of a *caizi*. The term *jiaren* (literally, "beautiful person") was originally gender neutral but gradually came to be used to refer to a woman of great beauty.⁸⁷ While the term early on became associated with the physical beauty of a woman, in *caizi-jiaren* stories during the Ming-Qing period, it meant a woman of "perfect or true beauty," which consisted of literary talent, wisdom, courage, fidelity, and sensibility.⁸⁸ Such a perfect character as the *jiaren*, according to Li Zhihong, exists in between the *shunü* and the *shennü* 神女 (divine woman or goddess) of the poem *Gaotang fu* (Rhapsody of Gaotang).⁸⁹ While the *shunü* represents virtue and propriety (德禮), viewed as ideal for married life, the *shennü* in *Gaotang fu* embodies physical beauty and the pleasure of sexual intercourse (情慾)—a woman desirable for erotic love in the male imagination. The *jiaren* balances the merits of the *shunü* and the *shennü*, and thus is seen as the perfect fit for the *caizi* character. In extended versions of Liang-Zhu, Zhu's sexuality is stressed to the extent that her body invites the male gaze. Now imbued with the eroticism of a *jiaren*, Zhu becomes a desirable wife in an erotic sense.⁹⁰ More exact qualities of *jiaren* are found in Keith McMahon's discussion of the common characteristics of the classic *caizi-jiaren* romances.⁹¹ The *jiaren* in these romances is portrayed as independent and superior (to men), sometimes even cross-dressing as a man to achieve what she wants, including a husband. In this light, Zhu was already a *jiaren* before her study at the academy. She temporarily suppresses this nature in order to study, but resumes it as soon as she finishes her journey and returns to her home. In this sense, Zhu undergoes three phases: *jiaren*, *junzi/shunü*, and once again, *jiaren*.

This shift in the gender construction of the protagonists not only chan-

nels the story toward heterosexual love but contributes to the construction of Liang-Zhu as a sometimes preposterous but culturally revealing romance. All manner of popular subplots and mundane blessings were added to bring the story closer to the popular *caizi-jiaren* stories. These include a love triangle; the characters' heavenly origin and karmic affinity (due to their sins in Heaven, they are doomed to experience "separations and unions" for either seven or three lives before they are united); a medical remedy to cure Liang's lovesickness; and the promise of rewards in the next life, such as Liang's passing the imperial civil service exam with the highest rank, *zhuangyuan*. Liang's official career, his achievement by martial valor of *wu* 武 masculinity through his involvement in Daoist/folk-religious magic and military affairs,⁹² and his being blessed with multiple wives and sons are all plotlines that are common in the *caizi-jiaren* stories.⁹³

Significantly, because of this transition, these later versions of the story focus far more on male-centered desire than do the earlier versions, which end with the deaths or the rebirths of Liang and Zhu. In these newer versions, death is merely the price Liang and Zhu must pay to reach their goal of a happy married life. The reduction of Zhu's role to that of a common gentry wife, longing for her husband's return, and Liang's entitlement to (and Zhu's tolerance of) several other wives as a badge of his official or military achievement epitomize the further assimilation of Liang-Zhu into male-centered *caizi-jiaren* stories.⁹⁴ Historicizing the Liang-Zhu stories reveals yet more difficulty in determining the inception points of versions that interpenetrate and assimilate with *caizi-jiaren* stories. Based roughly on the few available historical references, it appears that the adoption of a *caizi* image had already begun in the *Sipch'osi* version, around the early fourteenth century, which portrayed Liang as a victim of passionate love. By the seventeenth century, "Liang Shanbo ge" appeared, with intense emotional emphasis and moral deliberation on virtue, sexuality, and marriage, clearly emulating many elements of *caizi-jiaren* stories (see chapter 2). The *caizi* format dominated the extensive plots of eighteenth- to twentieth-century Liang-Zhu versions and continued to penetrate and supplement other treatments of the *caizi* character with strong eroticism, folk-religious beliefs, and martial masculinity. Yet the original androgynous vision of the characters wielded enormous influence throughout the shift in character ideals and in the evolution of earlier, simple accounts of Liang-Zhu into a full-fledged love story. This transition was geared toward

shifting the emphasis of Liang-Zhu from friendship to love, though it appeared to different degrees from one version to the next, contingent on the time and environment in which these versions were produced. What is certain is that the heterosexual reading of the story, with its interest in love and a happy marriage, is prominent in most of the extended versions I have been able to find from the Ming-Qing period.

I have not been able to pinpoint precisely how and why Liang's character gradually deviates from the dominant *junzi* image and becomes intertwined with the image of a romantic hero, other than to emphasize the rise of a popular readership for *caizi-jiaren* stories. The addition of more complicated plots and situations in the extended Liang-Zhu versions cannot be substantially explained without considering the interaction between the Liang-Zhu story and the *caizi-jiaren* stories, as well as other subgenres in late imperial China. The extent to which this transition reveals the historical reality of premodern China and Korea remains in question. We can, nonetheless, be sure that a sizable and devoted group of people were interested in this type of romance, just as a comparable population today is interested in paranormal romances.

Given that for many centuries the story either circulated orally or was performed on stage, it is significant that the *junzi-caizi* transformation earned Liang-Zhu a new role as popular reading material and thus gained its entrance into the book market. Along the way the story absorbed literary and entertainment elements attractive to romance readers. According to Janice Radway, the function of romance stories is to entertain readers, and let them “feel lifted out of their daily routine” and recover an “optimistic outlook which is often very strained in day to day living.”⁹⁵ This promise of satisfaction, pleasure, and fulfillment drove the popularity of later Liang-Zhu versions, in which the tragic aspect of the story is correspondingly diminished. Over time, the Liang-Zhu story has instead presented itself as a tale of triumph over a series of delays, misunderstandings, and obstacles that arrives, finally, at a “grand denouement or reunion” (*da tuanyuan* 大團圓). The popularity of Liang-Zhu as a *caizi-jiaren* romance continued into the early twentieth century and, although scholars critically derogue these versions, their popularity brought the Liang-Zhu story to a dramatically wider audience.⁹⁶

In modern times, the images of Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai have once again shifted. In general, the theme of studying together or male bonding

proved less popular than that of everlasting pure and spiritual love. Yet the absence of physical union, which allowed the story to be praised as one of pure love, is closely tied to the theme of male bonding.⁹⁷ Simultaneously, the motifs of occult belief in the afterworld and of mundane blessings after rebirth, which were dominant in the extended versions, are generally rejected in modern versions as a product of the feudal and superstitious past. This modern reading of Liang-Zhu, often based on popular stage versions such as “Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai” (in *yueju* and *caidiao ju*) and “Liu yin ji” (*chuanju*), has produced a new interpretation of ideal Chinese masculinity, composed of elements which echo from the traditional traits of *junzi-shunü* and *caizi-jiaren*, such as the absence of sexual union and the concept of dying for love. The popularity of the themes of “no physical union” and “purity” in modern Liang-Zhu readings reflects the legacy of the motif of chaste male bonding, and the tragic ending is consequently favored over that of the grand reunion. The hunger for women’s education in modern times has further enriched the original bold and challenging image of Zhu; Zhu embodies feminist ideas in these modern adaptations.⁹⁸

In most modern versions, Zhu and Liang’s transformation into butterflies, symbolizing the eternity of their love, is retained to convey the traditional bittersweet ending. On the popular commercial stages of modern China, the extravagant representation of the butterfly transformation scene always seems to trump the call, reflected in the earlier extended versions, for a happy ending of rebirth replete with worldly blessings. However, in some operatic editions from the early twentieth century, the ameliorative butterfly motif is omitted so as to present a more realistic tragedy.⁹⁹ At the same time, such versions as “Liang Shanbo,” and “Hou Liang Shanbo” in *yueju*, inherited the *caizi-jiaren* elements of extended versions like “Mudan ji (*nanyin*),” and were still performed until a reformed *yueju* version of Liang-Zhu came to dominance in the 1950s.¹⁰⁰ While a happy ending appealed more to Chinese romance readers, the butterfly transformation of modern Liang-Zhu versions represented a compromise between the modern elites’ desire for tragedy (as we see in the next section) and the popular audience’s demand for a familiar happy ending. After the 1950s, the butterfly transformation was solidified as a representative, necessary element of Liang-Zhu. Liang-Zhu has thus been constantly reconfigured along a *y*-axis of conflicting emotions between and beyond love and friendship and an *x*-axis of shifting gender norms bordering on traditional *junzi* and *caizi* images, all the while seeking the best possible story each time.

Making a Tragedy: The Continuing Dilemma between Body and Emotion

Since the early twentieth century, Liang-Zhu has been best known for the versions that end in tragedy, rather than for the many with happy endings of rebirth and worldly success. As traditional values and cultures were reconsidered and reconstructed to accommodate the new demands of modern China, intellectuals and artists began to reexamine the popular elements of Liang-Zhu tales, and applied a framework of Western aesthetics and poetics to the story.¹⁰¹ In particular, the emphasis on tragedy introduced by scholars such as Wang Guowei (1877–1927) greatly influenced the understanding and performance of the tragic ending of Liang-Zhu. Lamenting the lack of tragedy in Chinese theatrical tradition, Wang Guowei, exalted tragedy as “the finest form of literature.”¹⁰² By presenting “the beautiful and the sublime” (優美壯美之情) as the two major aesthetic experiences of tragedy, he argues that the characters in a tragedy represent the noblest of souls: namely, men (and women) who have delivered themselves through “their release from desires” and “aesthetic contemplation of the suffering of others.”¹⁰³ Wang’s unequivocal esteem for tragedy was widely accepted by Chinese intellectuals,¹⁰⁴ and Liang-Zhu’s tragic ending readily satisfied their aesthetic requirements. The titles of early twentieth-century versions of Liang-Zhu, such as *Liang Zhu tongshi* 梁祝痛史 (The Painful History of Liang-Zhu, 1926)¹⁰⁵ and *Liang Zhu aishi* 梁祝哀史 (The Sad History of Liang-Zhu, 1939), testify to the growing appeal of tragic endings. It is in this context that Liang-Zhu came to be regarded as the “Chinese *Romeo and Juliet*,”¹⁰⁶ and until recently tragic love was considered its dominant theme.

Scholarly discussion surrounding the cause of Liang and Zhu’s tragic deaths has focused on the conflict between individual desire and social norms, and especially on a branch of Confucian ethics called *lijiao* 禮教.¹⁰⁷ Liang and Zhu’s love has been yoked to the social custom of arranged marriage, exemplified in the phrase “parents’ order and matchmaker’s words” (父母之命，媒妁之言). Early modern scholars praised the deaths of Liang and Zhu as a representation of the victory of the unyielding human spirit over all obstacles.¹⁰⁸ Some scholars, emphasizing the class difference between Liang and Zhu added in some later versions,¹⁰⁹ have also suggested a revolutionary interpretation of Liang-Zhu, in which Liang’s poverty or his being of lower status than Zhu is considered the main reason for the tragedy.¹¹⁰

Meanwhile, Roland Altenburger has brought critical attention to the performance of gender and emotion in the discourse of Liang-Zhu. Concerning the transition of Liang's feelings from friendship to love, Altenburger insists that Zhu's act of gender bending plays a significant role in the development of emotions between Liang and Zhu. Instead of trying to repair the ruptured parts of the transition, Altenburger's reading proposes the emotional discrepancy as the fundamental problem of the narrative.¹¹¹ In his view, the long-standing desires of Liang and Zhu—male bonding and love, respectively—constitute the basic conflict that ultimately leads to the story's tragic ending. The story places male bonding far above a marital relationship,¹¹² and Zhu's jumping into Liang's tomb is interpreted as an "involuntary act of submission to male-centered values."¹¹³ This view is convincing (although it's unlikely that traditional audiences would concur with its radical interpretation of gender), given the powerful attachment between Liang and Zhu and the strength of the idea of male bonding in the Liang-Zhu story. To Liang Shanbo, disrupted male companionship is the fatal loss, which means that Zhu's death is the only means by which this sacred bond can be restored. Viewed in this light, the narrative of male bonding is indeed privileged over that of heterosexual love.

Although my analysis so far has agreed with much of Altenburger's analysis, I suggest that his interpretation of Zhu's death represents, to some degree, an androcentric, passive, and nonreligious reading of Liang-Zhu, ignoring Zhu Yingtai's active role as a love-seeker and a partner, as well as the meaning of death in folk culture. Viewed through the lens of folk-religious belief in people's karmic affinity, rebirth, and immortality, Zhu's death can signify a positive action, performed to earn a just reward. More importantly, Altenburger's reading overlooks the fact that Zhu Yingtai's feelings for Liang are a complex combination of male bonding and romantic love that she has built up and maintained by her own strong will. By the same token, Zhu's acute self-awareness, as seen in her active decision to travel to the academy and enter into a brotherhood oath with Liang Shanbo, is undervalued in readings that emphasize male bonding. The problem lies in the complexity of the various character ideals that define the relationship between Liang and Zhu.

Based on my analysis of Zhu's character shifting back into that of a *jiaren* toward the end of the story, her desire for heterosexual union is an important factor in her act of dying. In fact, although male bonding is certainly valued in the story, the protagonists' desire for a husband-and-wife relation-

ship becomes increasingly explicit as the story approaches its tragic end. For this reason, it is difficult to perceive Zhu's death solely as the fulfillment of, or yielding to, the desire for male bonding. Paola Zamperini argues that heroines in Ming and Qing literature use suicide to emphasize the strength of their passion.¹¹⁴ In pointing out how women who commit suicide can be incorrectly interpreted as martyrs to or victims of society, Zamperini helps rectify common misunderstandings of female suicide in the representational realm. In light of this view, Zhu's suicide should be understood as a deliberate expression of her passion and free will. Throughout the narrative, Zhu's relationship with Liang demonstrates the extent to which women could engage men and the male world.

The gendered code to which Zhu must adhere, if she is to continue her deep affection for Liang, means that she must secure a legitimate relationship through marriage. But in Zhu's mind, the two emotions—male bonding and heterosexual love—are connected and not antithetical. What this means is that, in its breadth, Zhu's love is not the same love that Liang experiences upon first seeing Zhu dressed in female clothing. Zhu's love entails more than what the word "love" signifies in a modern sense. Liang's perception of bonding is, in contrast, reserved for the purely homosocial and, in some sense, symbolic homosexual world. Zhu's journey from the female world to male symbolic order, however, shows that she understands both the homosocial and the homosexual/heterosexual worlds, as she demonstrates by her two oaths, one of brotherhood and one of virginity. For Zhu, there is no clear demarcation between heterosexual love and male bonding. Zhu's suicide after Liang's death, whether voluntary or not, should therefore be read as a result of her emotional tie to Liang. It symbolizes her unvanquished will and passion—the same will and passion that launched her academic journey and her friendship with Liang—and is surely a more coherent view to Zhu.

The heart of the tragedy of Liang-Zhu is the conflict that stems from dissimilar expectations of each ideal gender role in human relationships, in which human sentiment, or *qing*, is embodied. In all Liang-Zhu versions, the emotional themes of friendship (between two men or between a man and a woman) and of love (between a man and a woman) go hand in hand. Through two distinct sets of character ideals—those of *junzi-shunü* and *caizi-jiaren*—the focus and interests of the story shift, but they never deviate entirely from this framework. Through this interplay of the narratives of male bonding and love/marriage, the story touches upon the fundamental problems of human relations. We can imagine a different society, in

which Zhu and Liang remaining together as intimate male/female friends is sanctioned. Zhu's gender play reads as an exploration of the limits of male-female relationship, and even of all existing human relationships.

Recent readings of Liang-Zhu have restored the story's original theme of male bonding and stressed its effect from a different perspective. For example, in his essay on Liang-Zhu, cultural critic Zhu Dake maintains that Liang-Zhu is originally a narrative of homoeroticism.¹¹⁵ This interpretation entices LGBT readers into the world of Liang-Zhu. The homosocial feelings and values embedded in Liang-Zhu resonate with the call for freely determined love and marriages.

While Zhu Dake interprets the story as homoerotic, Suo Shaowu objects to the dominant modern view that Liang-Zhu is a love story. He maintains that the recent labeling of Liang-Zhu as the most famous Chinese love story should be withdrawn because the story is not really about mutual love.¹¹⁶ Suo correctly notes that modern popular versions do not develop the love between Liang and Zhu in a discernible way. Efforts to maintain Liang's *junzi* character foreshadow the suppression of his love. This absence of a developed love plot is complemented by the addition of the *caizi* character and the rhetoric of the young, innocent couple, unversed in the ways of adult love. Suo's claim reveals an interesting perception of Liang-Zhu; although the text does not include a mature love story (Liang does not fully confess his love for Zhu, and there is no description of any acts of love between them), the story is still labeled a (tragic) love story. Perhaps Paolo Santangelo's discussion of women and love in the *caizi-jiaren* stories can give some insight into this:

In order to successfully express the sublime nature of this love it was necessary to proceed to exalt a passion that was partly *de-sexualized* and to the transfiguration of the Woman, the only attempt made in traditional Chinese literature: the woman becomes ethereal, celestial, and her "floral" nature takes on new significance and dimensions, and "true" love is always less carnal; the male protagonist himself undergoes a process of effemination.¹¹⁷

The desexualization of the female protagonist, along with the feminization of the male protagonist, certainly played a role in constructing and appraising an ideal love—and an ideal woman—in the *caizi-jiaren* stories and other Chinese imaginations of passionate love. In my view, however, it

is more important that Liang-Zhu demonstrates how a tale without explicit eroticism can become a “popular love story” in China. The story’s lack of erotic language renders it an inimitable love story that connects “first love” (and/or friendship)—and not-yet-experienced or fully bloomed sexuality—with the nostalgic sense of youth and the first moments of adult relationship. This labeling is strongly influenced by the popularity of the later extended versions, which firmly established the story as a romantic and erotic icon. The changing images of Liang and Zhu have allowed the narrative to construct gender differently in different times, and to perform the construction of gender both inside and outside the narrative.

CHAPTER 4

From Sorrowful Separation to Convivial Excursion

The Aesthetics and Poetics of a Parting Journey

The scene: Two students walk through a beautiful natural landscape and revisit places that are particularly meaningful to them. Their conversation may sound like arguing or teasing, but it is only the sound of their closeness; they are enjoying this chance to be together outside the academy. They stop at the pavilion where they first met three years ago. The younger student bids the elder farewell and continues toward home; the elder turns back to the academy. The departing student is Zhu Yingtai, a woman disguised as a man; the other is Liang Shanbo, who has become Zhu's sworn brother. It is not until Zhu leaves the academy—creating the occasion for their parting—that the romantic tension building between them can have any hope of being resolved. This journey marks the end of their easy time together as students.¹

Like many other romantic narratives in Chinese culture, the Liang-Zhu story comprises a series of separations and reunions (*lihe* 離合), culminating in separation by death and a subsequent eternal reunion. The scenes of separation and meeting in Liang-Zhu have captivated both traditional and modern audiences, marking the dramatic peaks of the story. The parting scene just described—often known as the “seeing off” (*xiangsong* 相送 or *songbie* 送別)—is frequently cited as one of Liang-Zhu's most beautiful and popular, together with the scene of reunion at Zhu's house (“Loutai hui” 樓台會).²

The “seeing off” scene in Liang-Zhu deserves our special attention, not just because of its popularity, but also because it is crucial to understanding the enduring, fundamental theme of the Liang-Zhu story and the cultural

conditions that shaped it. The scene reveals how two vulnerable adolescents cope with a complicated reality and with their uncertainties about the future by properly handling their emotions, a skill viewed as a necessary step toward adulthood. Although the theme of parting may be universal, its development over time as a ritual in *Liang-Zhu* brings insight to the intersection of natural human emotion and the culturally shaped values that structure its expression.

Long a major literary theme and an important social event in China, the act of parting has been refined over time into a unique Chinese tradition of “parting rituals.” However, despite the pervasiveness of this theme in Chinese literature, poetry, and culture, few scholars have focused on parting as a literary trope or as a culturally distinct ritual performance of emotion. It therefore seems doubly important to explore the evolution, symbolism, and function of parting in the *Liang-Zhu* story and to explain the significance of the theme in the tale’s development and cultural legacy. *Liang-Zhu*’s parting scene helps reveal the poetics and aesthetics of Chinese parting culture, as well as how the elaborate representation of parting rituals in *Liang-Zhu*, both emotionally and spatially, was one of the reasons for the story’s popularity in the past.

The scene of parting that I focus on here has been popular ever since *Liang-Zhu*’s drama-song adaptations in the Ming-Qing period.³ Known as “*Shiba xiangsong*” 十八相送 (*Seeing Off over Eighteen Li*), this famous scene demonstrates how time and space combine in the rituals of parting, to embody the conflicting emotions and moods associated with parting bringing them into representational space and revealing the aesthetic value of parting as understood by Chinese audiences. The core themes of the *Liang-Zhu* tale—the transition from friendship to love, and the ambiguities and conflicts between these emotional contexts crystallize in this scene of parting. As *Liang* and *Zhu*’s relationship extends beyond the physical boundaries of the academy, a unique tension develops that both simplifies and complicates the emotional intricacy of the traditional parting scene. The parting simultaneously functions as a sanctioned event for overcoming unfulfilled hopes and as a space for working out the accompanying emotional residue.

The Scenes of Parting: “Seeing Off” and “Leaving Together”

It is unclear when the parting scene was first integrated into *Liang-Zhu* because the story circulated orally for some time before it was transcribed.

What we do know is that, from the twelfth century on, the parting scene appeared more frequently in popular versions than in the surviving official accounts.⁴ To be precise, no elaborated parting scene appears in an official account until a nineteenth-century version called “Zhu Yingtai xiaozhuan” 祝英台小傳 (The Brief Biography of Zhu Yingtai), written by a local official of the Yixing area named Shao Jinbiao 邵金彪 (active ca. 1821–50).⁵ In this account, as in many popular retellings, Zhu parts from Liang with a promise to introduce him to her marriageable (and fictitious) sister, thus inviting him to her home. Shao’s parting scene ties together several plot points left loose in earlier official narrations, demonstrating that popular opinion had begun to influence official accounts.

Nonetheless, the scene remains a simple dialogue, bereft of emotional expression or the details of a parting ritual, and functions simply as a foreshadowing of Liang and Zhu’s reunion. This minimal treatment of the parting scene makes sense in light of the didactic nature of its genre; official accounts are more concerned with communicating the normative values and concepts embedded in a given tale than with exploring its emotional aspects. The downplaying of the parting scene can also be understood as a reflection of the tendency in traditional Chinese culture to value emotional restraint so as to minimize tension in relationships.⁶ In contrast, the popular folk songs, dramas, and prosimetric texts tend to be more expressive of the emotional complexity of the parting scene, playing off the audience’s responses.⁷

*Sorrowful Separation: Conflicting Emotions
between Filial Piety and Friendship*

The simplest treatment of the parting scene is found in a small number of folk song and folktale versions of Liang-Zhu. In these simplified versions, the scene consists of either a minimal statement indicating their parting, similar to those found in official accounts, or of verbal expressions in which Zhu invites Liang to visit her home later. The parting scene in the early fourteenth century *Sipch’osi* version serves as an even earlier model of this type of parting scene. As in other versions, Liang and Zhu become sworn brothers at their first encounter, promising not to forget each other, dead or alive (二人結義爲兄弟，死生終始不相忘).⁸ Yet their sadness about parting after three years of close companionship is not expressed explicitly, and the event of parting is revealed only through Zhu’s remarks to Liang: “There are a grove and a pond near my home. / When you make your way back

home later, / Slight not our old affection and visit our village” (兒家住處有林塘。兄若後歸回玉步，莫嫌情舊到兒莊)。⁹

In this prototypical version, the friends' parting is depicted as springing from filial duty; Zhu dreams of her parents and of being worried about them, leading her to return home. Liang and Zhu see their parting as a temporary separation between friends, and both expect a future reunion. By downplaying the emotions of parting between friends, this version upholds the hierarchical structure of traditional Korean and Chinese society, in which the relationship between friends is less important than that between parent and child.

Maram Epstein points out that filial devotion toward one's parents was the one area of traditional Chinese culture in which the expression of extreme emotions was socially and culturally encouraged.¹⁰ As such, the sadness of separation is not so much expressed through language and action in this version as it is implied to exist beneath the obligations of a son. Since the *Sipch'osi* version may have omitted the prose part of the text,¹¹ it is difficult to believe that Zhu's remarks quoted above make up the whole description of the parting scene in this version. Based on what is preserved, we can assume that the simplest model of the parting scene would have consisted of two main thematic elements: filial emotions as the cause for separation, and the hope of reunion as emotional compensation for having to part.

These two elements may blur the underlying conflict of emotions about separation but they never erase it. The lingering melancholy of separation echoes throughout, despite the scene's emphasis on Liang and Zhu's everyday duties and promises. And although this version portrays their relationship as that of friends, there is still a trace of Zhu's hidden intent in asking Liang to visit her home; she wants to reveal her identity and transform her relationship with Liang—to anchor their affection in marriage when they meet again. By implying Zhu's marriage scheme, the parting scene in this earlier version presages the tension and conflict in later versions between Zhu's secret love for Liang and Liang's brotherly affection toward his friend.

The folk song version “Huadie Yingtai diao” 化蝶英台调 (Tune of Yingtai Transforming into a Butterfly) gives just as brief a description of the parting scene as the *Sipch'osi* version, except that here the scene is filled with rich emotions and actions that embody them:

Yingtai is going to get some wine,
Holding Brother Liang's hands.

“There is a house with four chambers on the exterior wing;
This is the Zhu family residence.
When you return [home], make sure to visit my house
As you are my sworn brother.
Brother Liang, please drink some wine!”
Her shirt is soaked with her pearl-like tears.
“My beloved brother, you do not know
What is inside my heart and mind?”
Zhu randomly picks up a chair, saying:
“Brother Liang, please take a seat!
Let’s have a heart-to-heart talk,
So you are clear about [why I am] leaving you.
I have two parents.
Yet I didn’t devote my filial heart to them.
My departure results from my filial heart, and
I’m afraid otherwise I will earn a bad name.”
Pouring a cup of wine [for Zhu],
Shanbo understands Yingtai’s words.
“I completely understand my worthy little brother’s intent.
Go back, go back to see your parents.”

英台去打酒，拉住梁兄手，一头四阁外厢房，就是就是祝家庄。回去要往我家走，结拜结拜好朋友。梁兄把酒喝，珠泪打湿衣，义重哥哥你不知，不知不知心腹事。顺手提起椅，梁兄你坐起，二人说句知心话，明白明白分别你。上有二双亲，不知奉甘心，这是为了孝大心，恐怕恐怕落骂名。一杯酒儿斟，山伯把话明，知道贤弟一片心，回去回去看双亲。¹²

As in the *Sipch’osi* version, Zhu leaves the academy to take care of her parents, but in this version, Liang and Zhu share a parting cup of wine, just as adult friends normally might. Though Liang doesn’t say much about their parting, this shared ritual—and Zhu’s tears—show their sadness at parting in a concrete and direct way, and their words assuring each other of their shared affection increase that sense of emotion. Compared to the *Sipch’osi* version, this folk song provides a certain space for pouring out sadness at the moment of parting, marking the story’s engagement with the common notion of parting and its cultural practice.

The lack of any explicit verbal expression of Liang's emotions in both these versions may be partly attributed to Zhu's active, expressive, and versatile character, but it can be more broadly understood in the context of gender differences. Both versions' minimizing of men's emotional expression also suggests that the narrator does not intend to draw audiences' sympathy exclusively to Liang's sense of loss. Because Liang remains mute, the parting scene proceeds in a way that emphasizes the desire to continue the friendship, allowing sadness to soften in light of the promise and hope of reunion. Because Zhu is expressive in her emotions, she can propose a chance to be united with Liang in a changed relationship. The narrator's perspective on Liang and Zhu's differing capacities for expressing emotion reveals the underlying belief that a person's emotions are so intrinsically attached to his or her body that Zhu's imitation of masculinity cannot mask her female emotional abilities. This subtle play of gender identity and gendered expressions of emotion is a key mechanism in the parting scene of Liang-Zhu.

“Seeing Off”: Acting Out the Sense of Parting

In most Liang-Zhu versions, the parting scene takes the form of Liang seeing Zhu off on her journey. “Seeing off” is a common practice in China when someone departs for another place. This practice is probably related to a traditional custom called *yaozhuang* 搖裝, in which the person leaving chooses an auspicious date and performs a symbolic act of leaving in advance of their true parting.¹³ On the chosen day, close family members and friends escort the departing person to a nearby river to embark and then hold a farewell party for them. After the party is over, the departing person returns in the boat, and the actual departure takes place on a different day. This parting ritual enacted a wish for the safe travel of the one departing,¹⁴ but it also helped people better handle the impending separation by providing a specific time and space in which to process and accept the change.

This ritual illuminates the notion that parting is an important and difficult matter to confront. Though this specific form of ritual is no longer practiced, the spirit of the *yaozhuang* custom lives on in parting rituals that are widely practiced to this day. These rituals vary by generation, but all serve to lessen the sorrow of those facing a separation through the sharing of time and space. They are viewed as rituals for psychological satisfaction and ethi-

cal perfection.¹⁵ The distance over which the parting ritual is performed in Liang-Zhu varies, but this mode of parting discloses, in a culturally engaged way, the transition from denial to acceptance that characterizes separation.

A likely candidate for the earliest Liang-Zhu version that includes a “seeing off” is the Ming ballad version “Jieyi gongshu,” discussed in detail in chapter 2. This complete prosimetric text assigns more textual space to the parting than do previous versions, including a scene in which Liang accompanies Zhu to the riverbank, where she departs on a ferry. Along with the exchange of parting poems, which functions as a linguistic outpouring of the characters’ inner worlds, the “seeing off” ritual in “Jieyi gongshu” reveals the emotional depth of their bond. In a significant change from versions in which Liang’s feelings for Zhu are hidden or missing, here they are revealed through his own words. Liang worries for Zhu’s safety during her travels and also promises himself that he will visit her within a certain time period. This initiative on Liang’s part is rare, given that in most Liang-Zhu versions it is Zhu who urges Liang to visit her home. Because of Liang’s affection and concern for Zhu, seeing her off seems a natural and necessary event to him; he accompanies Zhu until he can go no further, reaching as far as the riverbank at Qiantang, where Zhu finally leaves:

At that moment, Yingtai makes her farewell [to Shanbo],
Yet he sees her off all the way down to Qiantang,
Up to the ferry port to say good-bye;
There, by the riverside, she takes the ferry.

英台即时忙拜别，一程相送到钱塘，送到渡口来相别，便在
江边过渡船。¹⁶

With their repeated good-byes and drawn-out sending-off process, this version captures a quality common in the parting: neither one can bear to leave the other first. It goes on to offer an enhanced description of the seeing off, describing Liang and Zhu’s emotions even after they have parted and each is alone:

On her way back home after the two bid farewell,
Yingtai’s tears roll down her face in profusion.
Yingtai and Shanbo were supposed to go back to study together,

Yet Yingtai is returning home earlier all alone.
 Shanbo can't let go of his younger brother Yingtai;
 Yingtai can't let go of the young man Shanbo.
 When Shanbo returns to his studies,
 [It is] so hard to reunite with and separate from each other that his
 heart is broken.

二人话别回来路，英台眼泪落纷纷，英台山伯回学去，英台
 独自早还乡。山伯难舍英台弟，英台难舍山伯郎，山伯回
 归书房内，难合难分寸断肠。¹⁷

With its descriptions of Zhu's tears and Liang's physical pain at separation, this version of Liang-Zhu revels in the sorrowful atmosphere of parting. The expressive language of suffering from separation renders this depiction of Liang and Zhu's parting distinct. As seen in chapter 3, the parting moment in this version smoothly incorporates the hope for reunion—both in Liang's remark that "I will go to see you at your home first" (回来先到你厅堂)¹⁸ and in Zhu's parting poem, which includes the line "When will we meet again like Fan Shi and Zhang Shao?" (范張難約何時會)¹⁹—but this hope does not assuage the pain and loss the two friends feel in the moment of parting. The mention of Liang's broken heart suggests that the enduring ritual of seeing off is not enough to lessen the feeling of sorrow and loss.

In this scene of seeing off, Zhu plays the role of a departing guest while Liang plays the role of host. It is important to note that in most representations of separation or romantic longing in China, men are portrayed as departing guests while women stay behind and wait desperately for reunion.²⁰ Here, the reversal casts Liang as the more emotional character of the two; indeed, his anguish at their parting is clearly apparent in this version. In contrast to the earlier Liang, stoic and mute about his emotions, this new image signals his effemination; this Liang overtly reveals the so-called womanly emotions that have rendered him vulnerable and powerless.²¹ This version of Liang, sensitive to private and personal emotions, is not the masculine ideal of orthodox Confucian thought that frequently appears in public spaces. However, it is still favored in certain literary and cultural spaces that are reserved for expressive emotions. Viewed on a personal level, in the context of the common experience of parting from beloved friends, Liang's

expression of his grief and sense of loss is nothing unusual;²² his performance of a “seeing off” ritual can be seen as a step toward healing his broken heart after parting with his close male friend. Yet due to Zhu’s gender play and the resulting ambiguity of emotions, the otherwise common parting scene between male friends takes on a subversive meaning: Zhu’s disguise as a male student enables her to outwardly participate in the seeing off of a male friend while clandestinely observing the separation as a woman.

The adoption of “seeing off” can be viewed as a natural outcome of the growing interest in the parting theme and its popularity among audiences as the Liang-Zhu story evolved; it played an instrumental role in making the story dynamic, widening its emotional content by equipping the characters with the agency to probe their feelings about each other and to act upon them. The element of “seeing off,” though confined in the “Jieyi gongshu” version to the four lines quoted above (“At that moment, Yingtai takes her farewell . . .”), transformed into a surprisingly extensive parting journey in both textual and performance spaces.

Leaving Together for Our Parents

The early Qing version “Liang Shanbo ge” adds another element to the seeing-off model discussed above, in that Liang unexpectedly decides to leave for his home, too, turning “seeing off” into “leaving together” This leaving-together mode relocates the friends’ parting into the context of “going together” (*tongxing*), and thus postpones their sense of separation:

[ZHU SPEAKS:]

“It’s been a whole year since I came here.

I left my old parents behind at home,

So I am eager to return as soon as possible to serve them tea and
soup.”

When Shanbo hears this, he smiles:

“My worthy brother’s words are very noble.

When you leave, I will leave, too,

As I also want to return home to serve my parents.

We can keep each other company on the road.”

“我今来了一年整，家中丢了老爷娘，急早归家奉茶汤。”山伯听说笑吟吟：“贤弟说话合理文，你要去时我也去，我也回家奉双亲，二人路上好同行。”²³

Liang is not surprised when Zhu explains her plan to leave. Nor is he sad or apparently worried about their separation. He immediately agrees with Zhu's thoughts and applies them to his own situation. A similar scene can be found in “Liang Zhu shan'ge,” in which Liang praises Zhu's dedication to her parents and reinforces her decision by announcing his intention to emulate her plan.²⁴ In both folk song versions, Liang's sudden decision to also go home forestalls the sadness of a parting in which one person leaves and the other person stays. By leaving alongside with Zhu, Liang does not have to return to the academy alone, nor does he have to be haunted by memories of his friend. The tradition of “leaving together” may even have emerged as a later salve bestowed upon the suffering Liang in the “Jieyi gongshu” version.²⁵

The leaving-together mode presents a model that is focused on Liang and Zhu sharing their thoughts and actions. In both “Liang Shanbo ge” and “Liang Zhu shan'ge,” Zhu is depicted as superior to Liang in terms of intelligence and literary composition, but her personal situation and her gender propel her departure from the academy. If we compare Liang's situation to Zhu's, however, Liang's response doesn't sound quite reasonable. Culturally, his study at an academy would have been considered the best thing a son could do for his parents; his education and resulting success would eventually bring fame and wealth to his family. Hence, Liang's decision to leave with Zhu, ignoring his clear academic duties, casts doubt upon his judgment even though his words appear to prioritize filial piety above all else. Liang's mention of his parents seems not so much real concern as a justification for an unexpected, early departure. Although it is not explicitly articulated in either of the two versions, it is not unreasonable to surmise that Liang's fear of losing his friend is the main reason he decides to leave.

This leaving-together mode is an idealized parting, rooted in popular sentiment, between friends who “sleep, sit, and walk together” (同床同坐又同行).²⁶ Both Liang and Zhu may have unspoken reasons to leave the academy, and filial devotion serves to legitimize the choice for both of them. Liang's support for Zhu's decision and his voluntary decision to follow Zhu show that Liang is actualizing his sworn brotherhood with Zhu to the best of his ability. In most Liang-Zhu versions, Liang either

continues his studies after Zhu departs or he quits, upon discovering the truth about Zhu's true identity, in order to offer her a marriage proposal as quickly as he can. Liang's decision to abandon his studies, though it is cloaked in the filial piety of Confucian ethics, nevertheless transmits the message that the highly regarded enterprise of pursuing an official career could be compromised by other values and situations. Moreover, Liang's decision to join Zhu in her departure cannot help but impress upon Zhu's heart a strong sense of the friendship bond between them. Even though they will have to go separately to their own villages after their journey, now they are given a prolonged time to spend happily together before parting. The enjoyment of this pleasant excursion may explain why the parting journey of Liang and Zhu tends to be characterized by a cheerful mood.²⁷

The leaving together of "Liang Shanbo ge" serves as a rudimentary model of this cheerful parting journey, often expressed under the title *shisong* 十送 or *shidao* 十道 (Seeing Off over Ten Stretches of Road). This journey represents an accumulation or repetition of the parting ritual conducted within a certain time and distance, and consists of between four and ten dialogue-episodes between Liang and Zhu over the course of their journey. These episodes make the excursion a bright composition of farewell words and actions that exhaust the emotional residue of parting and create a festive interlude during which Liang and Zhu enjoy their last moments of being together.

The parting scene in "Liang Shanbo ge" presents four stretches of road. These stretches of road lead Liang and Zhu first to an ancient garden, then to an ancient temple, then to an old well, and, finally, to a riverbank. At each of these sites, the natural and architectural environments and the material objects they encounter help them engage deeply with nature and with their innermost selves. Zhu makes use of these favorable conditions, testing Liang's character and opening her mind to him, although in an indirect manner, using riddles to hint at the relationship she wants to build with him:

[ZHU:]

"Brother, please listen to my talk about the passages.

I will compose a riddle for you to solve:

[A character that] consists of a man (丁) and a mouth (口) conceals another mouth (口)."

[LIANG:]

“This little character is truly strange!”

Shanbo lowers his head and ponders this riddle, thinking:

“Why can’t I figure out this character?

I have learned a thousand characters.

But I think I have to go back to Hangzhou to ask my master!”

“哥哥听我说文章。打个哑谜你去猜，丁口反把口字藏。”“这个小字叫奇哉！”山伯低头把字猜：“因何此字解不开？一千大字我略识，要回杭州问师台。”²⁸

The character Zhu describes in the riddle is the character *lǚ* 侶, which consists of the character for “man” and the doubled character for “mouth,” and means “partner” or “companion.” Liang’s action of going back to the academy to get the answer is revealing; although it may seem unnecessary to the audience, it demonstrates his studiousness, simplicity, and sincerity. It also underlines the existing linguistic and emotional gap between Liang and Zhu. She is attempting, in her way, to tell him the truth, but instead only manages to deceive him yet again, with an undesirable result. Over the course of their journey, as they visit places and exchange words, Zhu becomes more and more sure of Liang’s character and decides to marry him, but the gap in understanding persists. She is forced to improvise yet another deceptive strategy, presenting herself as a matchmaker and offering to introduce him to her fictitious sister.²⁹

The reason Zhu can’t tell the truth in a direct way, and Liang can’t ask her the meaning of the riddle directly, can be found in the character ideals that Liang and Zhu represent (see chapter 3). But the scene is also meant to draw laughter from the audience. It encapsulates the characteristics that define Liang’s personality across all versions of Liang-Zhu; after a long walk back to the academy, Liang finally learns the truth about Zhu’s gender, and understands all the hints from Zhu that he has missed. He sets out again along the same road he walked with Zhu, which is often performed as an act of “Hui shiba” 回十八 (Revisiting the Eighteen-*Li* Road of Seeing Off) in *yueju*,³⁰ and then travels farther, to Zhu’s village, to meet her as a new, changed man. This time, the road is long, and it feels even more so as his newly awakened romantic feelings for Zhu mix with bitter regret. Although in this “Liang Shanbo ge” version their peaceful parting journey is interrupted, Liang’s eventual discovery of the meaning of Zhu’s riddle means that the parting journey has fulfilled

Zhu's desire to make her true self known to him, thus finally affirming the romantic feelings for Liang that have been growing in her.

In short, the shift from “seeing off” to “leaving together” that we see in “Liang Shanbo ge” provides the seed for a cheerful rendering of the scene, which blooms fully in later dramatic representations. The amusing scenarios that play out along the road give the characters license to enjoy their journey while holding at bay the tears and sorrow that lurk in the background. By interweaving the sentimental elements of the theme with humor that counterbalances the sorrowful tone of parting, this version created a new model for Liang and Zhu's parting that quickly gained popularity over the earlier, forlorn parting scenes.

The Physical and Emotional Distance of Parting: Seeing You Off over Eighteen *Li*

The best representations of the modern model for Liang and Zhu's parting journey can be seen in the “Shiba xiangsong” (Seeing Off over Eighteen *Li*) scenes of *yueju* opera versions and their adaptations into various local operatic forms. Since its first performance by the earliest *yueju* opera group in 1906, “Shiba xiangsong” has been performed both as an act of a larger play and as an independent piece.³¹ Though these opera forms underwent reform incorporating new interpretations, the theme and mode of this parting journey remain almost identical. The predominant emotion that audiences see, feel, and amplify in the popular scene of parting is not the protagonists' fear of separation but their joy in being together. In the modern classic *yueju* film version *Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai* (1953), these characters step lightly, with smiling faces, toward their separation. They take advantage of the opportunity to explore their emotions through the sights they encounter, as if they were writing a poem. The tensions that are unpacked and examined along the way merge with the beautiful backdrop and a cheerful mood interlaced with dramatic irony.

Remembrance and Exploration: The Interplay of Emotional and Material Worlds

In contrast to the parting scene in “Liang Shanbo ge,” the “Shiba xiangsong” provides an elongated journey over a distance of eighteen *li*, with

dialogues between Liang and Zhu whenever they encounter new places and objects. The parting journey in these opera versions is a more active exploration of the exclusive, separate space that Liang and Zhu come to occupy in the material world, so an examination of the role of places and natural objects in connecting to and revealing Liang and Zhu's inner worlds is key to making sense of this representation of a parting journey. In his discussion of the correlation between memory and space, Gaston Bachelard maintains that space is everything, and is more important than time in retrieving memories.³² Time is by nature fleeting whereas space is relatively stable, and thus it is in space, not time, that memory is securely fixed and becomes increasingly sound.³³ Henri Lefebvre agrees, pointing out that time can only become visible when inscribed in space.³⁴ Lefebvre notes that, in a social sense, space exists both empirically and symbolically—through our activities, such as walking or traveling—and that each society has its own spatial practice, which plays an instrumental role in the existing modes of (re)production.³⁵ The parting scene of Liang-Zhu, often referred to in spatial terms, like the distance of eighteen *li*, illustrates how the two characters construct and materialize their images and memories within their parting space. The parting is a composite of experiences broken into discrete units of space; in each episode they walk a certain distance, approximately one *li*. The temporal duration of parting is measured only by the completion of the entire distance.

The representation of the parting journey in Liang-Zhu has always been concerned with constructing and reliving memory, for the main characters as well for the audience. “Shiba xiangsong,” in particular, shows how the parting space represented on the stage evokes and houses emotions and memories. It is, as we will see, the artistic form and expression of recalling earlier parting experiences, and of rounding them off by maximizing the nostalgic sense of them.

The theatrical representation of “Shiba xiangsong” runs up to about twenty minutes.³⁶ This remarkably long scene shows that parting is more than an act of shedding tears and saying good-bye. Instead, parting becomes a space that Liang and Zhu can physically enter and explore, creating meaning and memories that help them accept the separation. Indeed, the duration of the parting on stage may represent the time it takes for Liang and Zhu to search their own and each other's inner worlds.

As students at the academy Liang and Zhu had little physical mobility, but during the parting journey they move freely through a series of locations,

not restrained by space or by status and free also from artificial distinctions or social roles. Counterintuitively, the act of parting provides the couple with a safe, warm place to be together. Their increased mobility creates a milieu that is favorable to removing their masks or public personas. To the heroine Zhu, who is about to reveal her secret, it is a safe place in which to correct the distorted identity created by her male clothing and persona. The space is protected, for her, by Liang's presence as well as by their common memories. The dilemma in which she is placed is treated as one of the spatial units that constitute their journey. Liang and Zhu pass through the problem as they pass through the material world, experiencing but never solving it. In this sense, the parting journey acts as a buffer, outside of or in between social categories, actually allowing the conflict to be forgotten for a short time.

Parting forms a temporary, imaginary space in which the couple can come to understand each other's inner self. It allows each of them to map the geography of their relationship onto the material realm. That virtual space contains their hidden emotions, thoughts, and understandings, while the actual space they are traversing serves as a pathway joining her inner world to his. What is most significant about their parting journey is the interaction of the two separate emotional spaces that Liang and Zhu create, which move in parallel, on both imaginary and material levels, toward their individual goals, until the parting space is finally exhausted. As the journey becomes dislocated from their previous academic lives, the sense of time's passing becomes subjective, and the space created by the distance of eighteen *li* becomes the absolute duration of the journey.

The pair's psychological attachment to the parting space, and the material objects within it, protects them and constitutes a communion of memory and imagery that reinforces their affection for each other. The road is familiar to them; it is the same one they took when they first came to the academy three years earlier. The parting journey leads them back to the pavilion where they first met and pledged brotherhood. The road reminds them of their previous journey filled with excitement and anticipation. By recalling the years they've spent together as friends, they begin to explore their feelings for each other. Their imminent separation may make them worry about the future of their relationship, but their travel together strengthens their confidence and helps them overcome their fear. Instead of forcing them to express their feelings about separation directly, the parting space, bounded by the passage of time and their natural surroundings, allows them to remember their parting as a private time together. Memories of times and

places they've shared, reflected in everything they touch or pass by, serve as "marks of intimacy"³⁷ for them, and the journey becomes a unique space for performing their togetherness.

The parting therefore informs how Zhu and Liang will remember each other and their connection, and allows the audience to participate in the couple's remembrance of each other and exploration of their love. In this moment when the audience finally has the chance to celebrate Zhu and Liang's love, the characters' past bursts into a metaphoric flight of butterflies in the minds of the audience observing the scene. Their rekindled memories blend loss and sadness with a growing hope for the continuance of their attachment and new memories to come. The parting scene invites audiences to make sense of the inevitable meetings and partings in the ebb and flow of human affairs.

Components of the material world spur recollections of certain moments, places, and events, and it is in this way that the audience is able to connect with Liang and Zhu on a deeper level. The parting scene evokes nostalgia by playing on the audience's emotional experiences and memories of everyday places and objects, through which the couple's inner worlds are connected to the audience. The parting scene of "Shiba xiangsong" features an array of material objects that not only offer Liang and Zhu a joyful and exciting form of sightseeing but also help them explore each other's innermost reflections. In contrast to "Liang Shanbo ge," which employs just four objects in the parting journey, the representation of "Shiba xiangsong" in the *yueju* version "Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai" (1949) presents a wide range of sights: a woodcutter, a well, magpies, mandarin ducks, watermelons, peonies, plum trees, white geese, temples, and bridges. Everything that catches the couple's attention carries cultural connotations, and their encounters with these objects speak for them, generating meaningful opportunities, as when the sight of mandarin ducks prompts the following exchange:

ZHU YINGTAI (SINGS):

Among green lotus leaves in the clear pond,
Mandarin ducks are matched in pairs.
Brother Liang, if Yingtai were a girl adorned in red,
Would you like to make a match with her like the mandarin ducks?

LIANG SHANBO (SINGS):

Make a match like the mandarin ducks?
Make a match like the mandarin ducks?

What a pity that
You, Yingtai, aren't a girl adorned in red.

祝英台(唱): 青青荷叶清水塘, 鸳鸯成对又成双. 梁兄啊! 英台若是女红妆, 梁兄愿不愿配鸳鸯? 梁山伯(唱): 配鸳鸯, 配鸳鸯, 可惜你, 英台不是女红妆!³⁸

Ducks are a common symbol of happy marriage in Chinese culture, allowing Zhu to introduce the idea of marriage to Liang. For Zhu, the ducks become a symbolic expression of a coveted marriage; for Liang, however, they merely reconfirm a gender restriction that he thinks he is already aware of. The use of nature in situating and representing identity and emotion is a typical feature of Chinese poetry,³⁹ but it is a mechanism that is uniquely developed in Liang-Zhu, where the characters actively engage with various material objects in order to reveal their deepest thoughts at the moment of parting.

The *chuanju* version “Liu yin ji” 柳荫记 explains why Zhu wants to use riddles, allusions, and poems to express her thoughts at parting. When Liang asks his sworn brother (Zhu) about his plans for marriage, Zhu longs to tell him the truth, but she remembers the conditions her father gave her before she left home: “I have to think again and again so as not to act recklessly; / Though the words have come to tip of my tongue, they need to be concealed for the time being” (还须再思休鲁莽, 话到舌尖暂隐藏).⁴⁰ With this in mind, she holds back from blurting out the truth. “He is like a loud [good] drum that doesn't need a heavy drumstick to beat” (他响鼓何须重捶打), she thinks;⁴¹ “I will utter a poem on the object to make a comparison” (借物吟诗作比方).⁴²

As is often the case in the simple, symbolic, and standardized style of classical Chinese theater,⁴³ a minimal stage setting and codified performance technique are employed in stage versions of Liang-Zhu, underscoring the intriguing play between the material and emotional worlds. This symbolic presentation of the scene was effective in stimulating the emotions of audiences by inviting them to observe and imagine the situation.⁴⁴ Further, the *yueju* version utilizes a chorus, or the singing of other characters (namely, Liang's servant Sijiu and Zhu's servant Yinxin), to further develop the scene and increase its dynamics and vivacity. The chorus singing offstage alerts the audience to upcoming events and helps them understand how the entire plot flows, while the two servants' singing sets the scene for various exchanges between Liang and Zhu. In the earlier versions discussed above, the two servants are assumed to be traveling with Liang and Zhu, but they

remain offstage; it is Zhu who brings a particular bird, flower or other sight to Liang's attention and leads the discussion. The *yueju* version cited above and the *chuanju* "Liu yin ji," by contrast, increase the role of the two servants at parting, allowing them to play a supporting role in the communication between Liang and Zhu. Their appearance in the scene adds dynamism, and moderates the active and bold image of Zhu initiating these intimate dialogues.

The support of symbolic objects from the material world and of the two servants' singing also helps Zhu gradually regain and demonstrate her femininity. Until the moment of parting, Zhu has had to hide her female body and suppress her femininity. When suspected, she has improvised lies and excuses. Now, no longer bound by her male identity as she was at the academy, Zhu shows the vulnerability of her body; she admits, for example, to being frightened when she encounters a single-plank bridge.⁴⁵ To audiences, who already know Zhu's secret, the unusual way in which she encounters the material world around her makes perfect sense. Of the two protagonists, it is clearly Zhu who especially benefits from this interplay of the emotional and material worlds.

Tackled Emotions and Conflicting Inner Worlds

While their engagement with the passing scenery helps to reveal the inner worlds of the two protagonists, the parting journey itself creates a virtual world in which ordinary things take on different symbolic meanings for Liang and Zhu, drawing attention to the tension between the homosocial and heterosexual dynamics of their relationship. Although Zhu continues to present herself as male, her inner feelings are expressed in her female voice, shifting the focus of the story to a heterosexual relationship and beginning Liang and Zhu's transition from friends to lovers.

Both Liang and Zhu shape and develop their own inner worlds around their memories and experiences of each other. The gap between their inner worlds is presaged in earlier versions such as "Liang Shanbo ge" and "Liang Zhu shan'ge," in which Liang fails to understand Zhu's riddles and innuendos. The modern opera versions, with their longer and more detailed parting journeys, provide intensified representations of this conflict through an increased number of episodes evoking the heterosexual sense in the Liang-Zhu relationship. For example, in the first conversation of the parting scene

in “Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai” (*yueju*), Zhu compares Liang to a woodcutter working hard for his wife:

ZHU YINGTAI (SINGS):

Out of the city and through the pass,
I only see a woodcutter chop down firewood on the mountain.

LIANG SHANBO (SINGS):

Getting up early and working until night are so painful,
Gathering wood to make a living is so difficult.

ZHU YINGTAI (SINGS):

For whom does he gather firewood?
Who are you sending down the mountain?

LIANG SHANBO (SINGS):

He gathers firewood for his wife,
I’m sending you off, my worthy little brother, down the mountain!

祝英台(唱)出了城,过了关,但只见山上樵夫将柴砍。梁山伯(唱)起早落夜多辛苦,打柴度日也很难。祝英台(唱)他为何人把柴打?你为哪个送下山?梁山伯(唱)他为妻子把柴打,我为你贤弟送下山。⁴⁶

Liang’s answer is correct, but he doesn’t make out Zhu’s intention in asking the question. The gap in understanding that characterizes the scene is echoed in “Liu yin ji” (*huangmei xi*), in which Zhu makes many futile attempts to reveal her true identity to Liang. In this version, Zhu compares herself and Liang to the famous romantic couple Lü Bu and Diaochan, well known in traditional Chinese folklore.⁴⁷ Even when Zhu makes this explicit connection to a relationship characterized by romantic love and marriage, however, Liang still doesn’t understand her not-so-subtle hints:

[ZHU SINGS:]

Brother, you are just like Lü Bu, and
Please consider me as Diaochan.

Our karmic affinity will be connected over a thousand miles by a
single thread.

[LIANG SINGS:]

My worthy little brother, you talk like an idiot!
 Don't stir up your romantic longings.
 Each of us will be engaged when we return home, and
 Our parents will have their own arrangements.
 How can there be any green mountains where firewood does not
 grow?

哥哥却像吕布样，就把我做女貂蝉，千里姻缘一线牵。贤弟
 说话大觉呆，莫把春心动起来，各人归家将亲定，自然爷
 娘有安排，那有青山不长柴。⁴⁸

Zhu again hints at their possible marriage and asks directly about her relationship with Liang when they pay their respects to the God of the Soil (Tudi Gong 土地公) and his wife.⁴⁹ But again Liang doesn't understand, and even scolds Zhu for saying nonsensical and disrespectful things.⁵⁰ Hence, as they proceed on their parting journey, the riddles and allusions Zhu uses gradually become more transparent. In the *yueju* version, when they go into the Guanyin temple—the last place they visit on their journey—Zhu expresses her wish to marry Liang by suggesting that they pray for a marriage:

LIANG SHANBO (SINGS):

Arriving at the Guanyin Hall, the Guanyin Hall.
 The child-bestowing Guanyin sits above.

ZHU YINGTAI (SINGS):

Guanyin comes to be a matchmaker.
 Come on, Come on. You and I, as a pair, make conjugal bows to each
 other.

LIANG SHANBO (SINGS):

Your talk is getting more and more ridiculous!
 How can two men make conjugal bows?

梁山伯(唱) 观音堂，观音堂，送子观音坐上方。祝英台(唱)
 观音大士媒来做，来来来，我与你双双来拜堂。梁山伯
 (唱)贤弟越说越荒唐，两个男子怎拜堂?!⁵¹

Although in this version Zhu directly asks Liang to join her in worship as a couple, which confounds Liang, unable to grasp her message, in the *chuanju* version “Liu yin ji” Zhu leads Liang more subtly to consider a marriage. In this version, at the Guanyin temple they encounter the image first of the Golden Boy and the Jade Girl, a couple doomed to be separated forever, and then that of Yuexia Laoren 月下老人 (The Old Man under the Moon), a god of love and marriage and a legendary matchmaker. Although Zhu knows exactly who the old man is, she pretends not to and asks Liang:

ZHU YINGTAI (SPEAKS) (TURNS AROUND AND FINDS SOMETHING ELSE):

Oh, Brother, come and look at that white-bearded old man, smiling and holding a red thread in his hand. Is he the God of Soil?

LIANG SHANBO (SPEAKS):

He is the Old Man under the Moon, the one specifically in charge of marriages!

ZHU YINGTAI (SPEAKS):

If he really is, then why doesn't he use the red thread to tie them [implying her and Shanbo] together?

LIANG SHANBO (SINGS):

The Old Man under the Moon is specifically in charge of marriages. True lovers will naturally be matched.

祝英台(白)(转身另有发现) 暖... 梁兄, 你看那边供着一个白胡子老头儿, 笑嘻嘻的, 手里还拿有一根红绳, 他是土地爷吧? 梁山伯(白) 这是月下老人, 专管男女婚配之事. 祝英台(白) 他既是月下老人, 为什么不用他的红绳, 把他们(暗示自己) 系成一对呢? 梁山伯(唱) 月下老人专把婚姻掌, 有情人自然配成双.⁵²

This scene perfectly encapsulates how even Zhu's deft attempts to shift Liang's thinking continue to meet with failure. Liang's answers make sense, and they are correct from the perspective of what he has learned. In the conversational cycle that plays out, in which a seemingly strange question or action from Zhu is followed by a seemingly right answer from Liang, the

moment when Liang finally discovers the truth is continually postponed. Yet the delay generates neither severe regret nor discontent for Zhu. In the *yueju* version, she from time to time expresses her frustration at Liang's blindness or stubbornness, and even complains, comparing their conversations to "playing the lute to a cow" (*dui niu tan qin* 對牛彈琴)—or, more directly telling Liang, "You are as stupid as a cow!" (笨如牛).⁵³ Liang gets angry at her harsh words for a moment, but he soon forgets his anger, realizing that the moment has come for them to finally part. Zhu's complaints are not really about Liang, but about the situation she is in, unable to reveal her identity directly to him, and even though Liang isn't aware of her true identity, he seems to realize that her frustration is motivated by their situation and not by real anger toward him.

In earlier drama and folk song versions such as "Liang Zhu shan'ge" and "Yingtai songbie," Zhu utilizes lexicons evoking sex and sexuality in a final attempt to subtly reveal her secret to Liang. However, even though most opera versions (including the *yueju*, *chuanju*, and *jingju* versions) are largely based on those previous folkloric and dramatic versions, they generally avoid any expressions that imply sexual impulses or activities between Liang and Zhu.⁵⁴ Instead, they tend to employ figurative language and allusions to communicate Zhu's wish to shift the homosocial context of their relationship to a heterosexual one, eliding the direct expression of sexuality as a way to uphold the image of Liang and Zhu as sexually pure. These modern operas, through their constant innovations with the story, come to focus much more than earlier versions do on the small, intimate moments that transpire between the young students, particularly those that disclose their inner worlds poetically, rhetorically, and comically, through their discussion of the scenery through which they travel. Although these updated versions delve much more deeply into Liang and Zhu's true thoughts and feelings, none of them go so far as to have one of the two characters propose a solution to the fundamental problem in their conversations. The dilemma caused by the existence of unanswered desires and questions continues to dominate the long journey of the parting scene.

As a result, the conflict between Liang and Zhu's worlds—the fact that while Zhu's emotions are strong and flexible enough to embrace male friendship, Liang's feelings of male friendship are not compatible with either a woman's love or the institution of marriage—reaches its peak during the extended parting journey. Throughout the journey, Zhu speaks metaphorically, with the support of the symbolic images they encounter in the material world,

but finds that the emotional gap between them persists because Liang's inner world remains unchanged. Zhu's love for Liang has already made her imaginary space heterosexual, filled with her dreams of a husband-and-wife relationship, whereas Liang's inner world remains homosocial. While the objects of the material world may help the audience understand Zhu, she cannot regain her true gender and make her inner world manifest in the outer world without a total change to Liang's inner world, which is, as yet, little affected by the material world around him.

Zhu's reading of the material world, which builds on her feelings of love and sexuality, is repeatedly rejected by Liang on the grounds that it suggests "nonsensical" meanings. From Liang's perspective, his response is perfectly reasonable, since he still understands his feelings for Zhu only within the context of male bonding. To Liang, Zhu is his best male friend, who is unfortunately hindered by a somewhat feminine beauty and body. Hence, despite her desire for Liang, Zhu's veiled efforts to tell the truth find no place in Liang's homosocial space.

The impermeable emotional barriers unveiled here show not only the characters' different emotional expectations but also their different understandings of their parting. For Zhu, still disguised as a boy, parting is potentially a space in which she can return to her true sex and inscribe her womanhood onto Liang's imagination. But for Liang, parting is a ritual in which the loss of his friend dominates both the material and imaginary spaces. After her long journey with Liang, Zhu finally realizes that her image as a man is fixed, not only in the material world but also in the imaginary space of Liang's mind. Interestingly, it is because of this deadlock that the characters' personalities and virtues remain intact, as does their adherence to acceptable gender roles and sexual desires.

Adhering to social values and norms without crossing boundaries is a major theme of the Liang-Zhu story, even though the heroine initiates her adventure by traversing gender norms through cross-dressing and deception (see chapters 2 and 3). This parting scene, then, demonstrates Zhu's best efforts to continue her deep affection while adhering to social codes, which dictate that she must secure a legitimate relationship through marriage. Liang and Zhu's initial male friendship is transformed into mutual heterosexual desire only when Zhu is fully revealed as a woman (in female costume). This adherence to the boundaries of propriety, even though these boundaries are the greatest obstacle to Liang and Zhu's happiness, is perhaps the reason that these characters have earned such a long life on the stage. This

is how, despite its fantastical elements, the story embraces reality more than imagination. Underlying the cheerful companionship of Liang and Zhu is a distinct distance between the material and the imaginary. The complicated dialectic relationship between these two worlds embodies the complexities of human relationships, bringing the conundrum the two friends face into sharp focus as the parting scene plays out.

Yet, in the parting scene of Liang-Zhu, the cheerful mood suppresses or obscures the implicit emotional gaps and conflicts that foreshadow the story's tragic ending. The emotional and gender conflicts remain unresolved, and the true union between Zhu and Liang is delayed as they instead walk happily together just eighteen *li* farther. The beautiful image of the couple traveling presents a stronger sense of happy union than anything else in the story, which is ironic to an audience that knows how the story will end. Indeed, it is perhaps because of the couple's inevitable death that the audience lingers over this happy episode.

Eighteen Li: The Maximum Distance the Emotions Allow

As I have discussed, the characters' imaginary space can be expressed only within the physical distance they travel on their parting journey. The apparently long trip is precisely limited by a physical space, marked clearly as eighteen *li* in the *yueju* version.⁵⁵ This precision gives rise to several questions: Where does the distance of eighteen *li* come from? Why is it so specific in the parting scene? If it is not simply an expression of the long distance, then what does it represent? Liang-Zhu texts provide little clue to the origin of the distance because different versions give various locations for the academy, none of them demonstrably legitimate. Among the people in Henan Province, there is a long-standing idea that the distance of eighteen *li* is based on the actual distance between the academy Hongluo Shuyuan 红罗(山)书院 (Red Silk Academy or the Academy in the Red Silk Mountain) and Zhu's natal home in the Maxiang 马乡 village of Runan 汝南 City.⁵⁶ According to most *yueju* versions, eighteen *li* is the distance from the academy Wansong Shuyuan in Hangzhou to the bank of the Qiantang River—that is, to the pavilion next to the riverbank where Liang and Zhu meet for the first time and where Zhu finally boards the boat for home.⁵⁷ However, on a modern map, the distance between the Wansong Shuyuan academy and the Qiantang is much less than eighteen *li*, so unless the ferry used to be

located far from its current position, this explanation seems unlikely. Of course, we can't exclude the possibility of discrepancies or fallacies in the measurement of *li* or of geographical features that extended the distance traveled. Another account found in local lore suggests that a place called "eighteen bays" (*shiba wan* 十八湾), near Taihu lake in Wuxi (Jiangsu Province), is the actual model of the eighteen *li* in Liang-Zhu,⁵⁸ but this account lacks any empirical or historical validation. Most likely this story arbitrarily linked the distance to a local place, based on the popularity and transplantation of the story into that area.

Although we can't match a real geographical model to the travel distance of eighteen *li* in Liang-Zhu, doing so would not actually help much in interpreting the meaning of that distance to our characters, to the scene, or to the audience. Once a certain distance appears in a particular context and becomes a fixed trope, detached from its origin, it comes to have many other meanings that play into imagination and representation. Just as time has its own, sometimes anachronistic track in our own memories, so the distance of eighteen *li* in the Liang-Zhu story indicates the remembered or the imaginary space of Liang and Zhu's journey much more than it does the actual physical space of their travel together.

Thus the distance of eighteen *li* represents Liang and Zhu's feelings and attitudes toward their shared journey. The distance may indicate a detour or a delay that Liang and Zhu choose: the more detours they take, the longer they can stay together; the slower they walk, the longer the journey becomes. Within this dynamic, the length of the journey becomes subjective and corresponds to the depth of Liang and Zhu's emotions. Perhaps this is the reason Liang says that three years of deep sworn brotherhood make him see Zhu off over eighteen *li* (与贤弟草桥结拜情义深，让愚兄送你到长亭).⁵⁹ In this context the location of the academy hardly matters in measuring the distance traveled.

Another way to investigate the meaning of eighteen *li* is to look for the number eighteen elsewhere in the Liang-Zhu story. Eighteen appears most frequently as the total number of students at the academy.⁶⁰ In some versions it also refers to Liang and Zhu's ages; although in many versions they are seventeen and sixteen, respectively, in some they are slightly older.⁶¹ In the versions describing Zhu as a sixteen-year-old girl when she meets Liang, Zhu would be eighteen when she dies.⁶² Eighteen is the age of majority, when youth reach adulthood and are ready for marriage and families of their own. In this sense, eighteen may represent not only an ideal age for

a bride but also Zhu's short lifespan in the mortal world. In some versions, the number has auspicious or inauspicious meanings: in "Liang Shanbo ge," for instance, the eighteenth is an auspicious day for Zhu to marry a groom from the Ma family,⁶³ but the same version mentions the eighteen-layered hell (*baceng difu* 八层地府), where unimaginable suffering is endured eternally.⁶⁴ Although there is no single answer to why the number is used in the parting scene, it carries the idea of youth and marriage for the characters, and also seems to represent both the good and bad sides of everyday life.

The cultural and symbolic connotations of the number eighteen bring further intrigue to the meaning of the eighteen *li*. Eighteen has been interpreted as a number of fullness (since it consists of two nines, and the number nine, made up of three threes; represents perfection) that characterizes a group or constitutes a whole, fully packed space; eighteen students make for full enrollment at the academy, and the age of eighteen symbolizes the fullness of youth. Likewise, the eighteenth day and the eighteen-layered hell symbolize the fullness of time and the deepest depths of space, although the nuance differs depending on the nature of the place. In this view, the eighteen-*li* shared journey of the parting scene represents the entire time and space the characters have in which to move on to the next stage, whether that stage is physical, mental, or relational.

Significantly, although the number eighteen stands for fullness or perfection, it also heralds an imminent change or transformation. The repetition of the number in the texts may mark the transitions in Zhu's life as she shifts from life at home to residence at the academy, from youth to adulthood, and from friendship to love. While the sense of transition associated with the number eighteen has a neutral value, the distance of eighteen *li* becomes a threshold, a ritual space for the two travelers, and an event providing an opportunity to grow or to simply proceed with life. In their parting journey Liang and Zhu travel to the farthest point they can reach, both physically and emotionally, while still carrying unresolved questions with them. When the journey is completed, the emotional ambiguity between Liang and Zhu is at its fullest. Zhu finally realizes the limits of her scheme, and so she turns to a common social remedy: a marriage proposal. She invents a twin sister and promises to introduce her to Liang so that he can marry her. When Liang expresses his gratitude, Zhu's disappointment deepens; the emotional distance between them is confirmed, but only she recognizes it. At this moment the material distance of eighteen *li* becomes an emotional distance, one which Zhu tries to overcome with the promise

of a future visit. The fake marriage proposal is the last thing Zhu wants to suggest, but in the moment it is the only solution she can find. At the same time, eighteen *li* is a distance that Liang needs to traverse to prepare for their separation. In the end, it functions as the spatial manifestation of the distance between both their physical bodies and their emotional worlds. This emotional distance between Zhu and Liang—between her love and his friendship—echoes and embodies the distance that is felt in all human relationships.

There is comparatively little evidence of textual or theatrical representations of such a long, cheerful parting journey in Korean Liang-Zhu versions, where the romantic parting of the two characters depicted in most Chinese versions is either muted or omitted. Even in the famous Korean *p'ansori*-based novel *Ch'unhyang chŏn* (The Story of Ch'unhyang), in which there is a scene of parting at O-ri-jŏng 五里亭 (Five-Li Pavilion), the romantic mixture of sorrow and overwhelming joy in being together is absent.⁶⁵ In addition, the distance of eighteen *li* is not found in Korean literature. Given the negative connotations of the number eighteen in Korea, the distance was unlikely to be adopted.⁶⁶ Instead, ten *li* (*sip-ri*) is the unit of distance most commonly used in Korean culture, and appears in many of Korea's most famous folk songs and poems, including *Arirang*.⁶⁷ While the number ten represents a unit of perfection in Chinese culture and frequently appears in nonoperatic Chinese Liang-Zhu versions, the longer distance of eighteen *li*, once it became popular, replaced ten *li* both onstage and off. The exact physical distance functions as a culturally specific denotation of a psychological and emotional distance. The distance of eighteen *li*, then, is a unique rhetoric designed to aesthetically accommodate a Chinese understanding of parting.

Parting as a Cultural Space

The Liang-Zhu parting, situated in the friendship between two youths of different genders and subject to constant modification as the years go by, has established its own unique tradition. It is rich with the passionate, deep, and eternal emotions of the main protagonists and is, at the same time, reflective of the stark distance between their emotions, ideals, and gender realities. This flexibility, over time, especially in the drama-opera and folk song versions, elevated the scene of parting into a separate,

culturally specific artistic genre for representing Chinese emotional life, transforming the originally subdued or sorrowful parting scene into a series of spectacles to be shared and explored by the audience. This evolution paralleled the rising cultural sentiment that valued true, innate, or romantic emotions over the traditional or Confucian proscription against the expression of personal feelings.⁶⁸ The lively and adventurous parting journey in many Liang-Zhu versions shows increased collaborative efforts to bring a bright side to the separation of the two friends, and the impending revelation of Zhu's gender deception and the erotic connotations resulting from that effort fill the scene with comic ironies, prompting laughter, empathy, and rapt attention from audiences. Zhu's gender ambiguity, though it causes her conflict and tragedy, works here as a catalyst, dissipating any discomfort caused by her infiltration of the male realm. The resulting delicate balance between two people's different genders and emotions allows the scene to remain whole and comfortable, but still exciting. This perpetual, ever-expanding scene of the Liang-Zhu parting becomes a cultural museum of past audiences, packed with nostalgic souvenirs.⁶⁹ Though there are other parting scenes from China, this parting scene of Liang-Zhu is distinct in this regard.

The changes in the parting sequence illustrate the complexities of the story's reception and appropriation, as well as the process by which it has grown from a wisp of lore and legend into a love story that is perennially popular, both in print and on the commercial stage. During the Ming-Qing period, Liang-Zhu plays were frequently performed during religious and communal gatherings at local temples (*maiohui* 庙会), where festivity was all important.⁷⁰ These festive performances shared themes and characteristics with many other kinds of performance literature, including *chuanqi* dramas written by (elite) literati, particularly in combining sorrowful events with a happy ending.⁷¹ According to recent research by Mei Chun, writing and reading practices in the late Ming and Qing periods were interlaced with the ubiquitous social practices of theater; the literature of the period was preoccupied with theatricality, indicative of the literati's attempt to link theatricality to the social context for therapeutic purposes.⁷² The validation and advocacy of true emotion in literature and culture during the period was not distinct from the dramatization of the story in the theater.⁷³ The changes we see in the Liang-Zhu parting scene over time are manifestations of the shared emotional and aesthetic horizons

of numerous audiences, which favored a cheerful dramatization and a happier interpretation of parting.

The role of past audiences, in turn, illuminates the simple truth that the scene of parting will continue to evolve to accommodate the needs and tastes of future audiences. Liang and Zhu's cheerful excursion and the gender play contained within it may lose their dominant place in the narrative as different interpretations arise. Interestingly, the recently revised *yueju* version, "Xin Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai," directed by Guo Xiaonan 郭晓(小)男 and first performed in 2006, reduces the emphasis on the parting scene. Instead of depicting the full journey, it inserts a new act, "Gaoshan liushui" 高山流水 (High Mountains and Flowing Water),⁷⁴ which precedes the parting journey and describes the development of Liang and Zhu's affection at the academy (Wansong Shuyuan) more deeply.⁷⁵ The insertion smoothes the emotional lines and fills in some gaps in the story, which helps maximize the tension between Liang and Zhu during the parting journey.⁷⁶ This revision is symptomatic of the new, contemporary demand that the story present a more realistic, cathartic, and tightly knit emotional line. It increases the role of Zhu by reducing the part of her maid Yin Xin, and imbues Zhu's character with more vitality than before, presenting her as an independent and enthusiastic young woman. In portraying Liang's character, the new version focuses more on his considerate and thoughtful disposition rather than on his naive, over-simple nature. These changes seem to suggest that the elongated, cheerful journey and juxtaposed episodes of the earlier popular *yueju* versions do not hold audiences' attention as they used to.⁷⁷ As audiences change, so too does Liang-Zhu.

Still, the parting scenes of Liang-Zhu impart a solid message that has endured over time: that parting and its associated emotions matter as much to audiences as to Liang and Zhu. What modern audiences most want to see is neither the difficult reality that Liang and Zhu face nor their inevitable sorrow, but the pleasant, if fleeting, and intriguing journey of two friends. Although the romantic image of flying butterflies after their deaths may softly echo Liang and Zhu's love, it is this parting scene that is the clearest picture of their happiness together. Whether represented sadly or cheerfully, the parting is imprinted on the minds and hearts of audiences, evoking their own affections and commitments. As Donald Wesling argues, storytelling can be seen as a "re-enactment of the social and reciprocal nature of emotion" for people who want to understand, civilize, and control emotion through stories.⁷⁸ Audiences who retell the scene may experience, reshape,

and synthesize the represented separation and its cargo of emotions in their own minds. Parting is at once a process of testing and recollecting our emotions and lingering attachments, and a painstaking effort to deal with difficult feelings by either replacing or transcending them. A certain emotional space allows people, whether real or imaginary,⁷⁹ to engage fully with both real and textual worlds.

Transformation and Deification

Butterflies, Souls, and Cross-Cultural Incarnations

After their initial parting at the academy, Liang and Zhu meet again, just as they hoped they would. But another parting awaits them; they cannot wed because, prior to Liang's arrival, Zhu's parents arranged for her engagement to a son of the Ma family. Liang's delay in arriving at Zhu's home, therefore, directly prevents their being united in marriage and ultimately brings about their subsequent deaths. Yet this very failure also conveys that their relationship will continue beyond death, which makes their second mortal parting merely a transition.

While living "happily ever after" is a typical closure for European fairy tales,¹ living another life beyond death is a traditional (or common) conclusion in East Asian folk and popular literature. Combined with folk-religious ideas of death, transformation, rebirth, immortality, and heaven and other realms, this afterlife element springs from the hopes and fears of living people who are incapable of confronting the reality of death and oblivion, just as John Bowker indicates in his discussion of the origin of religion.² Though the idea of afterlife naturally cannot alter this reality, it is an appealing narrative device because it renders sensitive elements of the story conceptual, and thus less realistic and threatening, and speaks to the need for wish fulfillment in the minds of the audience.

The emotional suffering of fear, the misery of separation, and the social and physical limits experienced in the everyday lives of audiences are softened by notions of Liang and Zhu's continued life after death and their

celestial connection to immortality and deification. The cohabiting souls of Liang and Zhu's transformed bodies reside in common things that exist in abundance in everyday life, including butterflies, birds, rainbows, trees, and even deities, as if manifesting themselves for the audiences and encouraging them to extend to the couple their sympathy and their hopes for a continuing relationship.³ The changes in Liang and Zhu's bodies exemplify their ideal path after death as envisioned by the folk audience, whose beliefs demanded that Liang and Zhu live on in some form, whether human (through rebirth), nonhuman, or divine. The growth of Liang-Zhu in the soil of the common people's minds left traces within the story of its audiences' accumulated wishes for a better life, their fears and uncertainties about death, and their beliefs in the afterlife and immortality.

The reciprocal relationship between the Liang-Zhu story and folk audiences' everyday lives was so deep that the emotions, values, and shared wishes of the people came to be reflected in the literary treatment of the protagonists' deaths, which often intermingled with religious imagination. By focusing on the transformation and deification of Liang and Zhu after their deaths, we can discover how culturally specific regional and religious elements allowed the story to multiply and take firm root among ordinary people in different areas. In the earlier Chinese tellings, and some Korean versions as well, the butterfly transformation element was probably adopted to embody folk beliefs in souls, immortality, and the afterlife. With this in mind, I have paid special attention to folk beliefs and rituals associated with the butterfly in China and Korea while simultaneously exploring a variety of cultural meanings evoked by the butterfly motif in Liang-Zhu.⁴ In the case of deification, I have drawn on a cross-cultural model, the Chach'ongbi narrative from Cheju Island, Korea, in which Liang and Zhu are incarnated as the Son of Heavenly God and the Goddess of Agriculture. Although my focus is on the elevated power and status of the deified Liang and Zhu in this Korean version, I have also examined this adaptation from a cultural and literary perspective, in terms of what it discloses about the transmission and appreciation of folk or vernacular tales in and between China and Korea.

Hitherto, popular-religious elements have remained unpopular in the discussion of Chinese literature, and accordingly the religious connections in the Liang-Zhu story have not been sufficiently discussed.⁵ But an in-depth study of the butterfly transformation motif and deification elements in Liang-Zhu reveals that the religious themes and function originally embedded in the story have played an instrumental role in its long-term,

cross-cultural popularity. The religious elements in Liang-Zhu are fluid, plural, and complex, which is unsurprising given that no religious tradition is ever monolithic or unchanging.⁶ In Liang-Zhu these elements are essentially syncretic, consisting of ideas and practices derived from Confucianism, Buddhism, Daoism, and shamanism.⁷ The coexistence of different religious ideas in Liang-Zhu has contributed to the continued vitality of the story, for it reflects cross-pollination both between religious traditions and between the profane and the sacred. The result is that we see the borders of the secular and the sacred overlap and shift in various interpretations of the story. In this light, Liang-Zhu cannot be thought of merely as literature; it has been so much a part of local folk-religious culture that the story has metamorphosed into what might be called a Liang-Zhu culture. The story's consistent engagement with local religious configurations has only enriched its adaptability. That adaptability, and the religious aspects hidden within it, have enabled the story to fly across cultural and national boundaries, transporting shared themes and messages on its colorful wings.

The Meanings of Butterflies: From the Romantic to the Philosophical and Religious

The symbolic meaning of the butterfly is so broad that it is difficult to pinpoint a meaning that is specific to a particular case. In 1976, Ronald Gagliardi presented some interesting research introducing more than seventy different instances of butterfly symbolism in Western culture.⁸ Yet scholars such as Jean Cooper, Clare Gibson, and Jack Tresidder have generally focused on the soul, rebirth, transformation, and immortality as the primary symbolic meanings of the butterfly.⁹ These meanings, derived primarily from the natural phenomenon of the butterfly's metamorphosis from a caterpillar, ascribe to the butterfly a sort of magical power that is analogous to the human life cycle but that also transcends it. Some scholars say that the Western interpretation of soul and rebirth originates from the Greek myth of Psyche. In the Greek language, the word *psyche* refers not only to the goddess of the soul, and to the soul itself, but also to the butterfly.¹⁰

The symbolic meaning of the butterfly in the lives of East Asian people is not dramatically different from its meaning for their Western counterparts. Yet the butterfly is such a part of everyday life that its symbolic meaning has often remained unconsidered. Although there is little to date documenting

the exact extent of its symbolic use in East Asia, we know that the butterfly has long fascinated East Asian people with its natural beauty, appearing frequently in ornaments, paintings, and all forms of literature.¹¹ In China, the butterfly has largely been known as a sign of love or mating, of pleasure on social and cultural levels,¹² and of change and liberation on philosophical and religious levels. These associations, it would seem, are derived mostly from the butterfly's natural attributes of breaking free from the chrysalis and flitting from flower to flower.

The butterfly motif has not attracted attention as an independent academic subject; in most cases, it has been discussed in relation to the themes of specific works of literature. In the case of Liang-Zhu, most academic discussion of the butterfly motif has focused on its connection to the romantic themes of the story. For example, Wu Gong suggests that the butterfly is used in Liang-Zhu because it is one of the most common symbols of romantic love in Chinese folk culture, along with mandarin ducks.¹³ Similarly, He Qifang, focusing on the image of the flying butterflies, argues it is a romantic image of a couple who have escaped this world to finally be together forever as free souls.¹⁴ To most scholars, the butterfly in itself is not remarkable and serves only to strengthen, or even just decorate, the theme of romantic love. However, if we look further at the cultural and religious meanings of the butterfly in East Asian culture and literature, we see that the butterfly motif is much more than a decorative flourish used to romanticize the story. The butterfly represents escape, relativity, transformation, and enlightenment, in combination with its popular meanings of love, mating, marriage, and eternity. It also symbolizes the human soul, transcendence, and immortality. Because of its breadth of associations, the butterfly readily became a symbol among common people, one that gave structure to cultural imagination. In Liang-Zhu storytelling, the butterfly becomes both a channel and a solution for relational pathos and the social problems such pathos entails.

The Butterfly Dream: Ontological Change and Enlightenment

The most famous, and perhaps earliest, example of butterfly imagery in Chinese literature and culture is the so-called butterfly dream from the Daoist philosophical text *Zhuangzi* 莊子. In this work, Zhuang Zhou 莊周 (369–286 BCE) claims that one day he awoke from dreaming he was a butterfly

and couldn't tell whether he was a butterfly who was now dreaming he was a man or a man who had just dreamed he was a butterfly (不知周之夢為胡蝶與，胡蝶之夢為周與).¹⁵ This story presents a conundrum about the very nature of consciousness that has led to many metaphysical discussions and debates. The favored interpretations of the butterfly dream have viewed it as rhetoric for enlightenment (focusing on awakening from a dream) or as a model of epistemological skepticism (highlighting that we cannot be sure of knowing anything).¹⁶

Another interpretation that draws our attention is that of Hans-Georg Möller, who interprets the butterfly dream from the perspective of traditional Daoist thought.¹⁷ Möller maintains, based on the commentary of Daoist scholar Guo Xiang 郭象 (252–312), that the story is in fact about the sharp distinction (*fen* 分) between different states or segments, such as wakefulness and dreaming, human and nonhuman existence, and life and death. Rather than blurring the boundaries between states, these complementary divisions become the preconditions for different states being connected with each other in the Daoist world, and being kept in balance during their continual interdependent changes over time.¹⁸ This view explains the true meaning of “the transformation of things” (*wuhua* 物化)—namely, that, owing to the sharp distinctions between states, one can only ever belong to one state, with no knowledge of the other(s) in the course of time. Thus, in this view, it is a mistake for one who is alive to worry about death or be sad about it. Though these multifarious philosophical interpretations of the butterfly dream story don't relate directly to the case of Liang-Zhu, we can see that the butterfly has also been used to express Daoist interpretations of enlightenment, human limitations, and the metamorphosis between different distinct segments along the continuum of time.

The butterfly's association with such Daoist ideas is further manifested in its adaptation into the Yuan *zaju* drama known as *Zhuangzi meng hudie* 莊子夢蝴蝶 (Zhuang Zhou Dreams of the Butterfly) by Shi Zhang 史樟 (ca. 1279).¹⁹ This dramatic version, influenced by the Quanzhen (Complete Perfection) school of Daoism, yields a religious lesson using the deified Zhuangzi and his famous butterfly dream story. In this version, Zhuangzi appears as a banished celestial god who lives an uncontrolled, intoxicated life in Hangzhou without knowing who he really is. One day, the drunken Zhuangzi dreams of a butterfly and becomes connected to an old man who knows about his dream. The old man, who is actually the star Venus (Taibai jinxing 太白金星) in disguise, helps Zhuangzi discover

his original status as a god and understand that he must adhere to Daoist religious practices to prevent further banishment. The role of the butterfly as a guide to enlightenment in this version indicates that the butterfly has its own role in the celestial world of Daoism, with which it has been associated since at least the Yuan dynasty (see chapter 1). Though further research is needed into the links between the original butterfly dream story and this dramatic version, the popularity of this kind of religious play appears to have played a significant role in generating extended Liang-Zhu versions with plotlines such as Liang and Zhu being banished to the world for their sins, receiving religious training from Daoist gods, and, finally, ascending to Heaven.

The interdependent ontological change between butterfly and human represented by the butterfly dream was further utilized in many ways in literature; for example, butterflies serve as a device to give warnings about or insight into a current situation. Thus, in the Yuan *zaju* courtroom drama *Hudie meng* (Butterfly Dream) by Guan Hanqing (ca. 1224–ca. 1300).²⁰ Judge Bao is granted a hint about a court case when, in a day-dream, he sees that three small butterflies are caught in a spiderweb, and that a large butterfly then saves the first and second but not the third. Clever Judge Bao realizes that the three butterflies are three brothers involved in a murder case, each of whom has confessed that he alone is the murderer. The large butterfly represents the mother of the three who, to protect her two older stepsons, will let her own third son be executed. In the end, Judge Bao doesn't condemn the third son, praising the acts of the virtuous mother and her filial son and stepsons. The appearance of a butterfly omen in a dream is also found in an anonymously written Korean novel, *Cho Ung chön* 趙雄傳 (The Tale of Cho Ung), in which a pair of butterflies appear while Cho Ung rests and lead him into a dream where he meets dead ancestors who warn him about difficulties he will soon face.²¹

The image of the butterfly as a medium of ontological change was also connected to beliefs and rituals associated with the birth and death of beings. In the “Song of Butterfly Mother,” an epic from the Miao (Hmong) ethnic group, the butterfly is associated with the creation of humankind and the world.²² In the butterfly dance often performed as part of a Korean Buddhist ritual called *Yöngsan chae* 靈山齋 (*Lingshan zhai* in Chinese), the butterfly's solemn but elegant gestures represent the wish of the living for the dead to achieve enlightenment and travel to the next world safely and peacefully.²³

The use of the butterfly to represent the birth of humankind as well as the soul's escape from the suffering of the world shows that, for laypeople, the butterfly was an accessible and plausible image. Inscribed into myths and artistic and religious ritual forms, the butterfly image strengthened indigenous or religious beliefs about what exists outside the human realm and what happens to human souls after death. Such instances of butterfly imagery all reveal the will and desire of authors and audiences to understand the realm beyond death. Through these examples, it becomes clear that the butterflies in Liang-Zhu and other tales are not only symbolic of romantic pleasure and eternal love but also carry meanings bestowed upon them by local cultural or religious traditions.

Returning Souls: The Butterfly and Funerals

While the butterfly image was often a signpost for the communication of philosophical and religious messages, in folk life butterflies frequently embodied the souls of the dead.²⁴ The poem “The Butterfly” 蝶 by the Northern Song poet Lin Bu 林逋 (967–1028) includes the line “Lovers’ souls still linger after their deaths” (情人歿後魂猶在), suggesting the link between butterflies and the souls of the dead that is seen in the story of Liang-Zhu.²⁵ According to Zheng Zhenduo, stories of people becoming butterflies after their deaths circulated widely in both oral and literary accounts in East Asia.²⁶ This widespread circulation of the motif helps explain why, in many versions of Liang-Zhu, the protagonists become a pair of butterflies after death.

The link between the human soul and the butterfly is well captured in the late Ming literatus Lai Jizhi’s 來集之 (1604–82) essay “Hudie yu sangji zhi shi” 胡蝶與喪祭之事 (On the Relationship between Butterflies and Funerals). Composed of episodes culled from the writings of others,²⁷ Lai’s essay sketches out the specific circumstances in which the association of souls and butterflies took place.

At the beginning of his essay, Lai Jizhi explains why the human soul has long been related to the butterfly. He quotes a sentence from *Zhouyi* 周易 (The Book of Changes) that reads: “The essential energy (*jingqi* 精氣) forms a being [thing or person], and wandering souls undergo transformations” (精氣爲物，游魂爲變).²⁸ In Chinese culture, the notion of the wandering soul refers to the soul of someone who had an unusual or sudden death or did not have a proper funeral, but, according to Lai’s view, wandering souls

are subjects or beings who are susceptible to ontological transformation. Such a faculty is comparable in the human imagination to a butterfly, a being metamorphosed from a caterpillar.²⁹ This attribute of transformation, shared by human and butterfly alike, leads Lai to cite numerous accounts about the connection between the soul or ghost and the butterfly, as well as between butterflies and funerals.

The first event introduced in Lai Jizhi's essay is the appearance, in the form of butterflies, of the dead servants of Han Wudi (Emperor Wu of the Han dynasty), who ruled over the golden age of Han China (206 BCE–220 CE):

There is a shrine dedicated to Emperor Wu [141–87 BCE] on Mount Liang, where sacrificial worship is still carried out. One or two hundred butterflies often come to the shrine to enjoy the sacrificial food. When people approach them, they are not frightened at all, but leave only after finishing the food. It is said that they are Emperor Wu's servants and that whoever dares to catch them will definitely become ill.

梁山有漢武帝廟，至今祭者，往往有一二百蝴蝶降祠所，享其飯，近之不驚，徹饌然後辭去，時謂武帝侍從，捉之者必至病。³⁰

The butterflies' attendance at the sacrificial worship for Emperor Wu seems uncanny. The belief that the butterflies at the shrine are the transformed bodies of his servants attests to the dead emperor's perceived supernatural power and prowess. This conveys the message that humans can, even after death, come back to the present world to do their work. By detailing the negative consequence of interrupting the butterflies—in this case, illness—the story also shows that contact with the transformed bodies, perhaps because they belong to a different world, can do harm to the living.

While the above account presents a case of subjects' loyal allegiance to their lord even after death, the following example offers an enthusiastic description of the appearance of butterflies at a funeral:

When Li Duo, Consultant of Imperial Rules and Magistrate of Fengxiang County, passed away, there was an auspicious appearance of butterflies. They covered everywhere from the funeral venue to

the government buildings, such that there was no room for people to walk. Officials of both high and low ranks stood so close to each other but they couldn't tell one from another. They did everything they could to shoo the butterflies away, but failed. In the end, they trod on the butterflies, crushing them into the mud. The large ones were as large as a fan. The funeral procession lasted for over a month, and only at its end did the butterflies disperse.

李鐸(譯)諫議知鳳翔，卒有蝴蝶之祥，自殯所，以至府宇蔽映，無下足處。府官尊卑，接武不相辨，揮拂不開，踐踏成泥，其大者如扇，喪行逾月方散。³¹

In this example, when a respected official dies, numerous large butterflies attend his funeral as ghost-mourners who have come from the other world to participate. It is not immediately clear whether the butterflies are the transformation of the official himself or of other ghostly figures, but the fact that these many butterflies of different sizes remain even at the risk of being trampled indicates that they are probably the souls of other dead people, because even in such a changed form, the official would likely command the respect of those attending his funeral. This appearance, then, of a number of ghosts at the funeral shows that the official's honorable character is praised by both the living and the dead.

The presence of butterflies in these two episodes has to do with the lifetime achievements of the dead. But they reveal opposing attitudes toward living people. Whereas the first episode suggests a taboo against contact between humans and butterflies, the butterflies in the second episode enter into human space and mingle with the people there. The people in the second episode do not appear to be afraid of any supernatural harm the large butterflies might cause them. Further, the appearance of butterflies at the funeral is understood as a good sign, implying a belief that ghosts and humans coexist and routinely communicate through the medium of butterflies.

Lai Jizhi next introduces a case involving ordinary people, a story that was originally included in Zhou Mi's 周密 (1232–1308) "Huadie" 化蝶 (Becoming Butterflies) in *Guixin zashi* 癸辛雜識 (Miscellaneous Notes from the Guixin Quarter, ca. 1298). In this story, after a man named Yang Hao dies far away from home, he transforms into a butterfly and returns home in that guise:

Yang Hao, whose courtesy name was Mingzhi, married a young woman from the Jiang family. In the following year, they had a son. Mingzhi died while doing business far from home. The next day a butterfly as big as a [person's] palm appeared (at his home) and flitted around Ms. Jiang. It did not leave even when the day drew to a close. Soon the relatives of Mingzhi received an obituary notice, and the whole clan gathered together to grieve. Then the butterfly came again, flew around Ms. Jiang, and didn't leave her even when she was drinking, eating, sleeping, or awake. It was believed that, because Mingzhi could not separate himself from his beloved ones, his wife and his little son, he transformed himself into a butterfly and returned home.

楊昊字明之，娶江氏少女，連歲得子。明之客死之明日，有蝴蝶大如掌，徘徊翔於江氏之旁，竟日不去。及聞訃，聚族而哭，其蝶復來繞江氏，飲食起居不置也。蓋明之不能割愛(戀)於少艾(妻)稚子，故化蝶以歸耳。³²

The butterfly in this episode is the manifestation of a dead man who has transformed for love of his wife and baby boy. In his changed form, he can linger with them a little longer and bid farewell to them through attentive flitting. This episode suggests that transformation can occur around people and in places to which the dead are physically and emotionally attached. The appearance of butterflies has a soothing effect on the living, especially when they miss their loved ones. In this sense, the story also illuminates the concern of the dead for the living. Far more than the first two episodes, this third one demonstrates how the butterfly transformation assumes meaning for ordinary people in their everyday lives, by temporarily bridging the emotional and physical abyss between the living and the dead shortly after a person's death.

The butterfly episodes in Lai Jizhi's essay all show humans returning to the world as butterflies either to bring messages, or to continue or complete their life's work, particularly if they had an unhappy death. These episodes resonate with Liang-Zhu, in that each one illustrates how human souls can become butterflies if they have strong emotional and ethical ties to the people and places they love. Stories of the appearance of butterflies at funerals have been told and retold in modern China and Korea, though I have not found a Korean equivalent of Lai Jizhi's essay.³³ In Korea, there has long

been a widespread notion that white butterflies are the souls of the dead who visit the living—especially those they have loved most—to say a final goodbye.³⁴ It is not clear why white butterflies are associated with funerals while butterflies of other colors usually have cheerful and auspicious meanings in Korea.³⁵ One clue might be found in the fact that Koreans themselves wear white at funeral ceremonies and shamanic death rituals. This link between the white butterfly and death and funerals in Korea seems to be a cultural variation within the prevalent trope of the souls of the dead returning as butterflies.

Woman, Butterfly, and Miracle

Whereas in Lai Jizhi's stories the human soul's appearance in the form of a butterfly is often presented as something unusual that happens independently of other narrative elements, the butterfly transformation in Liang-Zhu is the result of several consecutive miraculous events: Zhu's lamentation ritual at Liang's grave, her death/suicide there, and her joint burial with Liang. This series of events gives a specific context and meaning to the butterfly transformation in Liang-Zhu—a context and meaning in which the power of female gender and emotion play a significant role.

The beginning of the chain of miracles is Zhu Yingtai's lamentation ritual, performed as she passes by Liang Shanbo's tomb on her wedding day. As soon as her lament ends, Liang's tomb cracks open. In the lamentation, best represented in the scene of the *shiku* 十哭 (ten lamentations) in "Liang Zhu shan'ge," Zhu implores the tomb to open, and also voices her intention to open it herself should words alone prove ineffective:

Brother, please open the tomb if your spirit is here;
If not, keep it closed, and
I will take a gold hairpin and insert it in the altar of the tomb.

哥哥有靈墳開口，若是無靈墳莫開，取下金釵插墳台。³⁶

The tomb promptly opens, and Zhu leaps into it to rejoin her beloved Liang.

The lamentation ritual was a social practice, allowed at the time of marriages and funerals, that gave women an emotional outlet to help them accept major changes in their lives.³⁷ But in Liang-Zhu, it can

also be considered a means of evoking a supernatural power or miracle. Zhu's authentic and strong emotions for Liang, and her grief over Liang's untimely and unjust death, allow her to perform a miracle. Moreover, the death of a woman like Zhu—who has strong emotions and the will to triumph over any obstacle to the pursuit of desire, virtue, and righteousness in her relationship and in society—reinforces the potential of lamentation and turns it into an unusually powerful force, necessary for the salvation of her soul.

The efficacy of Zhu's lamentation is apparent in the phrase, "please open the tomb if your spirit is here." This expression is found in almost all Liang-Zhu versions, from the *Sipch'osi* version to the modern folktales. Korean folktales collected in the early twentieth century follow the same pattern,³⁸ and the directive "please open the tomb" was integrated into other Korean folktales as a spell for opening a big gate.³⁹ The preservation of such a formulaic expression is likely a natural outcome of a text derived from oral traditions. Still, we cannot help but be impressed by this long-lived trace of oral performance and of the interactions between oral accounts.⁴⁰ Even when there is some modification to further heighten the frenzied mood or to negotiate different performance environments, the formulaic expression "please open the tomb" in the preserved texts continues to convey the power and command of the original oral text. For instance, in the following version, Zhu's words rouse Liang's supernatural power by warning that if he does not use it, she will marry Mr. Ma:

If your spirit is here, please open the tomb,
 So that I can be with you [my brother] in the tomb.
 If your spirit is not here and does not respond,
 I'd rather go and serve the son of the Ma family.

陰魂有靈破墳裂，我與哥哥同入墳。無靈無應不開裂，還去
 服侍馬郎君。⁴¹

Interestingly, Zhu's compelling request to Liang's soul to "please open the tomb" seems to suggest a trace of shamanic influence in the tale, and possibly also the role of Zhu Yingtai as a shaman who can communicate with the spirits of the dead.⁴² Using her spiritual power, Zhu even crosses over the boundaries of life and death and comes into direct contact with

ghosts. Moreover, this kind of captivating, repetitive use of the language of lamentation is characteristic of the spells recited by shamans in summoning ghosts or spirits, and this scene at the tomb is reminiscent of shamanic performance rituals. Indeed, dressed in a colorful wedding gown, Zhu laments and finally summons her lover's soul, just as a shaman would. Zhu's grief and wailing over Liang's death go beyond ordinary mourning and become a religious incantation that leads to a miracle. If she is not a shaman, Zhu at least appears in the role of a spiritual woman. In this sense, Zhu resembles the young woman in the story of "Huashan ji" 華山畿, said to share many of the motifs of Liang-Zhu,⁴³ which presents a woman's lamentation over a young man's death and their resultant joint burial. The woman in the "Huashan ji" story is explicitly referred to by local people as a "divine or spiritual woman" 神女 for her religious power. Zhu Yingtai's similar archetypal features suggest that she, too, possesses the faculties of a spiritual woman.

To the ancient Chinese, oral expression, in the form of chants and lamentations, was considered an effective medium for communicating directly with deities or Heaven because chants and lamentations were associated with *yin* activities and the supernatural beliefs of the *yin-yang* cosmology.⁴⁴ This analogical link can pejoratively suggest that women, who are placed in the *yin* category, are inherently more apt than men (*yang*) to turn to superstitious methods to solve their problems, and also that they wield ritual power through lamenting, which empowers them to bless or to curse, to praise or to blame, and to bring good or bad.⁴⁵ Due to this perception, female priests or shamans are sometimes believed to be more powerful than male religious leaders.⁴⁶ Female shamans' lamentation has been construed as a powerful tool of mediation between humans and Heaven, particularly in calling on divine power for solving problems or expelling evil spirits.⁴⁷

The transformation scene in Liang-Zhu suggests a strong link between the death of a passionate and spiritual woman for love and a butterfly transformation. Though Liang and Zhu both become butterflies, it is Zhu who initiates the events through her suicidal act of calling on Liang to open his tomb and then leaping into it; thus it is Zhu's lamenting and emotional appeal—indicative of the magical capability of a woman with spiritual power—that brings about the butterfly transformation. The butterfly transformation signifies Zhu's moment of liminality, during which she summons within herself the power to transcend not only her own suffering but even the constraints of her overwrought mind and body.

Associations between butterflies and women, like this one, have also been common in Korea, and sometimes even stronger correlations are drawn. A folktale entitled “A Woman Who Becomes a Butterfly” (Nabi ka toen yöin 나비가 된 여인), which follows the same basic story line as Liang-Zhu, ends with the message that all butterflies that exist today are incarnations of women who died by jumping into their lovers’ tombs.⁴⁸ As we have seen in the *Sipch’osi* version of Liang-Zhu, Zhu’s skirt is torn to pieces when she jumps into Liang’s tomb, and the moment her family member grabs at it, it is transformed into butterflies. Another example is the famous legend of Arang, a young gentry woman from Miryang, Kyöngsangnam-do. In the folktale originating from that region, Arang appears as a ghost to the local magistrate to report her own murder and to ask that the murderer be punished.⁴⁹ Later, her soul transforms into a butterfly that flies to her murderer in court, where all the villagers have gathered together. The butterfly transformation of Arang carries a clear message to Korean folk audiences about the vengeance a wrongfully treated woman can extract even after death. These examples show a common association in Korea between butterflies and women who harbored an unfulfilled desire or grudge (*han*). The image of butterfly incarnations helping women release their *han* has a clear relationship to the influence of shamanism and an indigenous belief in the strong will and spiritual power of women.

The powerful aspects of femininity discussed above in relation to the association between woman and butterfly are rarely seen in modern operatic representations. In the West, the butterfly came to denote a stereotypical image of Asian women, as perhaps best manifested in Giacomo Puccini’s (1858–1924) opera *Madama Butterfly* (1904).⁵⁰ In this opera, the female heroine, Cio-Cio-San, embodies the stereotype of a passive and submissive Asian (Japanese) woman, dying for love of the American soldier Pinkerton and yet continually exploited by him.⁵¹ In modern performances of Liang-Zhu, the butterfly image originally attached to Zhu’s death is blended into the spectacle of exquisite butterflies flitting on stage, accomplished through the wonders of modern technology.⁵² Butterfly-shaped ornaments are often used as tokens of love, and the most recently revised *yueju* presentation adopted a fan to maximize the romantic imagination evoked by the butterfly.⁵³ The incorporation of different positive meanings of the butterfly images—such as romantic love, happy marriage, blessing, and liberation—in modern Liang-Zhu versions affixes the butterfly transformation, originally a miracle closely and specifically related to the female body, as a reward granted to both male

and female in true, innocent love. The blended gender image of the butterfly also enables it to serve as an emblem of changing gender. A spotlight on the couple's image as a pair of butterflies, often staged by performers of the same gender, allows for interpretations of the story that embrace "queer tension, erotic indeterminacy, and the ambivalence of desire."⁵⁴

In fact, such a dynamic representation of the butterfly image of Liang-Zhu seems to have been an outcome of efforts to emphasize the themes of gender and emotion in Liang-Zhu. While the butterfly transformation motif highlights the sublime romantic emotions of the female protagonist, other soft, peaceful, and joyful images of the butterfly are also employed to balance the emotional themes of friendship and love (between friends or lovers) and to signal the themes of gender twist and deception.⁵⁵ Indeed, the queer reading of Liang-Zhu has become increasingly common among contemporary writers and artists, as evidenced by Raymond To Kwok-wai's 1998 musical version and Stanley Kwan's view of the story as "a collective memory and gay myth."⁵⁶ Such queer readings of the story can be seen as a further development of the original homosocial aspect of the narrative (discussed in chapter 3), in which the image of a pair of butterflies in Liang-Zhu comes to adumbrate love of the same gender.⁵⁷ While numerous rereadings and rewritings of the story continue to be produced, audiences continue to rechannel the ambiguous transition and transformation between homosocial and heterosexual. Modern readings of the story highlight the ways that images of butterflies are integrated into and appropriated by traditional gender politics. Hence the butterfly imagery in the story makes a further meaningful case for Liang-Zhu's ongoing exploration of the labyrinth of human sentiments, gender assumptions, and insecure sexualities. In other words, Liang-Zhu will keep on expressing nuanced gender and human relations through new interpretations of butterfly imagery, perpetually reimagined as the "Butterfly Lovers" narrative continues to evolve.

The meaning of the butterfly element in Liang-Zhu is not confined to the romantic connection between a man and a woman but includes folk beliefs, religious interpretations of souls and death, and the power of femininity as well. Such aspects have been almost forgotten, except for some vestigial evidence in rural areas of China and Korea. Nevertheless, given the prevalence of the religious meaning of the butterfly, the notion of the transformation of human souls seems essential, which may explain why a few Liang-Zhu versions adopt other animals and insects instead of butterflies. Of course, the capacity of butterflies to fulfill such a task is

particularly apt. Clearly, people have also found it easy to associate butterflies with their ideas and experiences of everyday life. When we think of butterflies flitting among flowers, we recall the beautiful moments provided by nature. But when someone who is loved or remembered leaves this world, butterflies can become more religiously symbolic, allowing us to honor, remember, or connect with the lost loved one, particularly when the loved one is a woman who has had a tragic life. The butterfly motif in Liang-Zhu functions as a magic spectrum that reveals ever more complexity to this multifaceted tale.

Localization, Deifications, and Cross-Cultural Incarnations

Liang-Zhu, Local Cults, and Festivals in China

As the Liang-Zhu story permeated local areas, it became an integral part of folk-religious life and everyday culture, centering on the worship of Liang and Zhu as deities. It was common to see fictional characters increased and embellished with deification in a variety of literary forms, but rarely did the literary imagination translate so thoroughly into local worship as in the case of Liang-Zhu. As discussed in chapter 1, in the Liang-Zhu texts from the Ming and Qing periods, Liang and Zhu are often associated with the Golden Boy and the Jade Girl, suggesting that their celestial origin and limited suffering on Earth before their final return to Heaven were popular at that time. In the area of Ningbo, Liang Shanbo has been worshipped as the “Divine and Sage King of Righteousness and Loyalty” since at least the Northern Song dynasty. According to Li Maocheng’s temple inscription (see chapter 1) and local lore recorded in modern times, the temple was built to worship Liang Shanbo because he helped Liu Yu, the founding emperor of the Song dynasty (Liu Song, 363–422), defeat pirates with his divine power. The temple was built at the request of Liu Yu, and the worship of Liang Shanbo spread as more and more people received responses from Liang to their prayers.

The tradition of worshipping Liang Shanbo continued into the twentieth century. Every March and August (the months of Liang’s birth and death, respectively), the temple in Ningbo was crowded with people who came to worship him.⁵⁸ Events and performances were held during this time to honor the deified Liang Shanbo and entertain the local people who attended the ceremonies.⁵⁹ According to Qian Nanyang’s field research in the early

twentieth century, seven professional shamans used to perform rituals at this temple to pray together to Liang Shanbo to send rain.⁶⁰ Qian also mentions that in the temple there was a hall that contained a statue of Zhu Yingtai, called Songzi Dian 送子殿 (The Hall of Bestowing a Child).⁶¹ Local people would come there to pray to Zhu Yingtai to give them a child, usually requesting a boy. In this respect, Zhu Yingtai plays the same role as Songzi Niangniang 送子娘娘 (The Lady Bestowing a Child) or Samsin Halmi (The Triad Grandmother) in Korea, the deities that people most often turn to when they have problems bearing children. The record indicates that both Liang and Zhu, here as a pair of deities rather than the romantic couple of our story, played an important role in local religious society, performing duties assigned by the local people.

Although in many places the more elaborate religious practices are no longer carried out, there are still vestiges of ritual devoted to the deities Liang and Zhu, some of which seem to directly reflect local audiences' responses to the deaths of the storied couple. For example, people in the Runan 汝南 area, on the fifteenth day of the seventh month of the lunar calendar, place white paper lamps around the tomb of Liang and Zhu, out of sympathy for their tragic deaths.⁶² The people believe that this practice will help bring Liang and Zhu's souls together, and in this voluntary practice, Liang and Zhu are remembered for their deaths rather than for their acts. Although this ritual tradition expressing sympathy for Liang and Zhu's deaths has not been widely visible in China, it is reflected in some Korean adaptations of the tale, as described below.

As time went by, Liang and Zhu came to be remembered more as protectors of love and marriage than as deities for everyday needs. Liang, for example, is better known as a "god of eternal love" than as the "Divine and Sage King of Righteousness and Loyalty." A custom has appeared at the Zhu Yingtai an 祝英臺庵 (Zhu Yingtai Hermitage), a study place in Yixing. Young men and women go to the hermitage to pray for the best marriage partner. Moreover, every year, a large pot of vegetable soup is prepared in this hermitage that people do everything they can to taste, since it is said that whoever drinks the soup will marry someone he or she truly desires. What the symbolic significance of the soup is, or how it is related to finding a partner, is not clear, but the event is attended by many young people who celebrate the possibility of a freely chosen marriage.⁶³ In Ningbo, young couples join together in front of Liang Shanbo's temple to ask for his blessings, and there is even a common expression, stating that "Once you come to the shrine of Liang Shanbo, / You will grow old together as husband and

wife” (梁山伯廟一到，夫妻皆同到老).⁶⁴ The couples I met during my 2012 field trip to Ningbo at the construction site of Liang Zhu Cultural Park (when the park was closed for renovation) also confirmed that Liang and Zhu are acknowledged today as the protectors of young couples. Pure and eternal love, like that between Liang and Zhu seems to be the ultimate goal of modern young couples, and today Liang-Zhu is mainly remembered as a means of ensuring such marital and amorous success.

More and more large-scale cultural and commercial activities have emerged at the historic sites of Liang-Zhu in recent decades, driven by local governments' efforts to boost their economies and reconstruct local traditions and regional identity. Liang-Zhu has sparked local festivals and amusement sites for commercial activities that are dedicated to the concept of ideal love and marriage. The best example of the festivals is the Hudie jie 胡蝶節, or Butterfly Festival, held at places such as Liang and Zhu's hometowns, places of study, and tombs, especially where archeological artifacts related to Liang-Zhu are said to have been found. The history of the Butterfly Festival is said to go back to the Song dynasty in the Yixing region, where it began after local people observed that, on every third month of the Chinese lunar calendar, numerous pairs of colorful butterflies would appear around the place where the couple was said to have studied together.⁶⁵ People declared Zhu Yingtai's birthday (the first day of the third month) to be the day of the Shuangdie jie 雙蝶節 (Festival for Butterfly Couples), and they celebrated the couple's love for each other on that day.⁶⁶ Another Butterfly Festival held in Liang Zhu Cultural Park, in Ningbo, is combined with the government-promoted Hunsu jie 婚俗節 (Wedding Festival), at which time 999 couples are invited to participate in festivities that include the selection of a Miss Butterfly and the “top ten couples.”⁶⁷ The story and the site celebrate the love of the young couples who participate, and the festivals and the couples make the site and the story live anew. Although this celebration of the love and marriage of young couples has diminished the meaning of Liang-Zhu, it also maintains the tale's place and its utility in the lives of local folk in modern China.

Liang-Zhu in Korean Shamanic Ritual Narratives

While Liang-Zhu remains an emergent tradition in modern China, its trail in Korea shows how the story evolved in a culture with a different histori-

cal and cultural background. As mentioned earlier, remnants of historical Liang-Zhu versions show that the tale initially traveled to Korea before or at least around 1300, when the *Sipch'osi* version made its first appearance. Unlike in China, the tale never gained a strong commercial foothold in Korea, though it was adapted into a vernacular Korean fictional narrative called “Yang Sanbaek chŏn” that was published commercially in the mid-nineteenth through early twentieth century. Instead, the tale has remained largely at the local level, where it has circulated orally and become deeply engaged with Korean folk-religious culture over time. I have therefore chosen the versions preserved in local lore and shamanic rituals, particularly shamanic ritual songs called *muga* 巫歌, to illustrate the tale’s long but less visible life in Korea.

The versions of Liang-Zhu seen in shamanic ritual narratives were written down in the mid- to late twentieth century. There are two types of Korean shamanic rituals (*kut*) in which we see the Liang-Zhu tale. The first of these is the sending of the souls of the dead to the afterlife, found in versions such as “Mun kut”⁶⁸ and “Ch’i Wŏndae Yang Sanbok,”⁶⁹ from the northern part of the Korean Peninsula.⁷⁰ During *kut* rituals, a shaman alternates singing and speaking the words of different characters in a complex register that mixes old style Korean, Sino-Korean lexicons, and local dialects, at times interwoven with traditional dancing. These two versions from North Korea, both categorized as death rituals called “Mangmuk kut,” have been incorporated into rituals for the dead, particularly those designed to console the souls of those who died young and unwed.⁷¹

In Korean culture, the death of the young or unmarried is categorized as a particularly bad death, believed to cause harm to the living, and thus in these cases a shaman is summoned to perform a ritual to console the soul.⁷² In the “Ch’i Wŏndae Yang Sanbok” version below, it is clearly stated that Liang and Zhu play the role of spiritual guardians for the souls of the unwed dead as they move to the afterworld:

[SINGING:]

What human beings want most is to go to the afterworld happily and unite with their beloved on the way to the afterworld.

May men and women who died without having married leave this world happily under the guidance of Yang Sanbok and Ch’i Wŏndae.⁷³

These “Mun kut” and “Ch’i Wöndae Yang Sanbok” shamanic ritual versions, unlike the fictional narrative version “Yang Sanbaek chön,” follow the well-known story line that ends with the tragic deaths of Liang and Zhu, which demonstrates that they were influenced by earlier popular storytelling. Nonetheless, as I have discussed elsewhere, in these versions we can trace many additions derived from the Liang-Zhu story’s interaction with local lore, such as the Korean surnames Yi and Kim, Korean literary and cultural tropes of unusual births and events, study at a Buddhist monastery, and so forth.⁷⁴ The active engagement of Liang-Zhu in shamanic rituals and Korean folk life attests to the long life of the tale in Korea and calls for more attention to building an exchange map between and within Chinese and Korean versions.

The second type of shamanic ritual featuring the Liang-Zhu tale appears in the villages of Cheju Island, off the southern part of the Korean Peninsula. With its history of Chinese residents, particularly during the Yuan period, the traditions from this area add further complexity to our discussion of the cross-cultural nature of Liang-Zhu. On Cheju Island, the tale was adapted into folktales as well as indigenous shamanic rituals dedicated to the local deity in order to bring a good harvest and comfort to the villagers. Collectively referred to as the “Chach’öngbi sörhwa,” this Cheju Island folk adaptation of the Liang-Zhu story centers on a girl named Chach’öngbi 自請妃 (Lady Who Invites Herself), about whom there have been a number of different stories. The most representative of these is the shamanic ritual narrative called “Segyöng pon (世經本) p’uri” (Unraveling the Myth of the Agricultural Goddess), in which Chach’öngbi becomes an agricultural goddess. The Liang-Zhu narrative is adapted in the first half of the text, in which Chach’öngbi meets Mun Toryöng, a son of Mungoksöng 文曲星 (Wenqu Xing in Chinese), one of the Northern Dipper gods), who has come down to Earth to study. She follows him to his school after dressing herself up as a man. This version is similar to the “Yang Sanbaek chön” in its employment of the unusual births, military achievements, and celestial connections of the main characters. Yet the “Yang Sanbaek chön” shows more influence from Chinese prosimetric versions of Liang-Zhu, both in its detailed plotlines and in their arrangement—most events included in this fiction are seen in other similar romance fiction of Ming and Qing China and Chosön Korea (see chapter 1).

The “Segyöng pon p’uri,” in contrast, reveals more influence of local cults and oral myths and legends that circulated among the people, which allows

it to serve as a model of the Korean appropriation of the Liang-Zhu story on a large scale. In light of the earlier history of Chinese residence on Cheju Island during the Koryŏ period, it is even possible that the Chach'ŏngbi narrative may have, preserved within it, the tastes of Chinese folk people some hundreds of years previous, who viewed Zhu Yingtai as a very powerful woman who saved local people rather than as a simple gentry girl interested in study (see chapter 1). The appearance in this version of the male protagonist Mun Toryŏng—a son of the Northern Dipper god Mungoksŏng, who is often identified with the Daoist god Wenchang Dijun 文昌帝君—is an indication of the story's deep engagement in popular religions, particularly Daoist cults. In fact, Mungoksŏng appears in Chinese Liang-Zhu versions such as “Mudan ji” (*myushu*) as well,⁷⁵ adding another layer of complexity to the interaction between Chinese and Korean Liang-Zhu versions. The differences among major Korean versions—such as the fictional narrative “Yang Shanbaek chŏn” from the late Chosŏn, the North Korean adaptations used in shamanic rituals, and the “Segyŏng pon p'uri”—show that each version models a different form of reception of, or engagement in, Liang-Zhu storytelling.

Hence, the extent to which Liang-Zhu tales are included in shamanic ritual narratives from both northern and southern parts of Korea in modern times not only suggests the widespread circulation of the story in the past but also raises the following questions: What values and themes in the Chinese tale captivated Korean audiences and remained dominant? And what purpose does such an appropriation of the story ultimately serve? The Liang-Zhu tale's link to shamanic ritual narratives allows us to examine local Korean literary practices as well as the process by which an imported Chinese tale was made popular among ordinary Koreans. These are two important avenues through which we can explore Chinese and Korean exchange at the textual level.

*Liang-Zhu and Chach'ŏngbi: Interdependent,
Localized Narratives of Love and Femininity*

The Cheju Island shamanic ritual narrative “Segyŏng pon p'uri” appropriated Liang-Zhu's theme of love and its adventurous image of Zhu Yingtai in a way that served the needs and desires of the Cheju people and embodied their understanding of gender and the world.⁷⁶ These elements of the

original Liang-Zhu tale played an important role in constructing the heroic images of Chach'ongbi throughout the story. Chach'ongbi's desire to be united with Mun after their separation at the school is the driving force for her to continue her long and painful journey until she achieves her aim. In the end, Chach'ongbi is rewarded for all her past suffering and audacity in fighting many obstacles, when she becomes a deity of agriculture. Her image as a goddess, in contrast to that of Zhu Yingtai as a powerful woman, shows how the bold female protagonist of the original Liang-Zhu story has developed further in "Segyöng pon p'uri," into a divine figure of local femininity, construed and celebrated by local Cheju women.

The "Segyöng pon p'uri" version shows affinity to Liang-Zhu versions in two respects. First, it shares the basic plot elements of popular Liang-Zhu tales, such as the heroine's taking the initiative to pursue study, her journey to the academy in disguise as a man, the schooling period shared with the male protagonist, and the pair's eventual separation. Second, it emulates the extended Liang-Zhu versions of the Ming-Qing period in that the main characters are linked to Heaven—the hero Mun Toryöng as a son of the King of Heaven (or the Northern Dipper god), and Chach'ongbi as a goddess. The main difference from Chinese religious versions from the Ming-Qing period is that the rebirths of the hero and heroine, and their leading of a happy life in this world, are absent in the "Segyöng pon p'uri." Instead, this version focuses on narrating the process of reunion of the couple and Chach'ongbi's elevation to the status of a goddess. This difference no doubt results from the version's unique religious function, serving as a local narrative for a ritual performed to the agricultural goddess and a festival called "Paekchung" (Baizhong 百种 or 百中), which celebrates a good harvest.⁷⁷ Hence, the narration of the heroine's efficacy (that is, her heroic aspects from a shamanistic perspective) is considered important throughout the story.

Another important difference is the rigidly hierarchical notion of gender that structures the two characters' relationship in the "Segyöng pon p'uri." Chach'ongbi is portrayed as inherently inferior to Mun Toryöng, who originally comes from Heaven whereas Chach'ongbi is born to childless parents as a reward for all their prayers for a son. Grateful for a daughter since they had no other choice, her parents named her Chach'ongbi (literally, "Lady Who Invites Herself"), suggesting that she was born only because she wanted life so badly. In the story, her parents' great efforts to bear a (male) child foreshadow Chach'ongbi's outstanding efforts that draw the attention of Mun, as though her heroic exertions can actually ameliorate her inferior-

ity as a human and a woman. The gap between her original status and Mun's reflects the inherent gender inequality in local society, which Chach'ongbi and local female audiences were not content to leave unchallenged.⁷⁸

Whereas the Liang-Zhu tale in general features the theme of romantic love between an innocent and mutually devoted young couple, the "Segyöng pon p'uri" renders the couple's relationship into an encounter between an irresponsible, mercurial heavenly man and a responsible, driven earthly woman. The young girl's steady yearning to connect with the boy creates a love line that dominates the whole narrative. In most Chinese Liang-Zhu versions, including modern opera and Ming-Qing prosimetric versions, Zhu Yingtai is portrayed as very talented at women's work such as embroidery, and it is her mastery of this work at home that drives her to yearn for study at an academy. Zhu's motivation for study is thus understood as her quest for a different endeavor that will help her fulfill her ample talent and potential. Hence, she voluntarily dresses as a boy and leaves home after getting permission from her parents. This plotline leads to the encounter with her fellow student Liang in a relationship between equals; when Zhu first meets Liang on the road to the academy, they exchange a few words about their respective backgrounds and then quickly become sworn brothers by performing a ritual using a willow twig.⁷⁹ This scene of their first encounter illustrates how male friendship begins; the basic social and biological categories to which the two presumably belong are sufficient to bring them together. By contrast, in the "Segyöng pon p'uri," the heroine Chach'ongbi meets the hero Mun Toryöng while she is doing laundry at the river.⁸⁰ Mun Toryöng has come to Earth to learn from Master Gömu, and he stops by the river to drink water. When he sees the beautiful Chach'ongbi, he asks for a gourd of water, and she brings it to him, floating three willow leaves on it. In response, Mun asks her a question that becomes pivotal to the formation of their relationship:

"Why did you set the willow leaves afloat on the water?" asked Mun.

"Sir, you still need to learn more. If you drink water hastily and the water sits heavy on your stomach, there is no medicine for that. I saw your dry throat and your heart burning, so I put the willow leaves on the water," said Chach'ongbi.

"It makes sense," said Mun.

"Sir, where are you going?" asked Chach'ongbi.

"I am going to Master Gömu to learn from him," said Mun.⁸¹

Chach'ongbi's thoughtfulness—floating the three willow leaves on the water to make him drink more slowly—creates an opportunity for her to talk to Mun, which in turn reveals to her the opportunity to study under the master. Motivated by her strong wish to study, Chach'ongbi immediately asks Mun whether it would be possible for her younger brother, who happens to resemble her, to join him for study.

The willow twig, frequently used for swearing brotherhood in Chinese versions, becomes willow leaves in this version in order to reveal the character of Chach'ongbi—and the context for creating a sworn brotherhood disappears accordingly. The trope of floating willow leaves is a more conventionally used expression among Koreans, meant to show a woman's wisdom—especially that of a woman who is considered the best marriage partner for a heroic man.⁸² Chach'ongbi returns home and persuades her parents to let her go to the academy by saying that, as their only child, she will need to know how to write if she is to write a mourning paper for their eventual funeral service. After receiving her parents' permission, Chach'ongbi disguises herself as a boy—her fake younger brother—and reappears to Mun, introducing herself as “Chach'ong,” a shortened version of her original name, since the last syllable “bi” often refers to female gender.

Both Zhu Yingtai and Chach'ongbi are bold, astute, and strategic in gaining what they want. They both use cross-dressing to cover up their identities, but there is a slight difference in their primary purposes. In Liang-Zhu, Zhu's disguise originates from herself and is used to persuade her parents that such a masquerade will ensure her ability to maintain her virginity. Chach'ongbi's disguise, in contrast, is adopted specifically to hide her identity from Mun, whom she has already met as a female. She, unlike Zhu, persuades her parents to let her dress as a man so that she can become literate for their sake, rather than as a strategy to keep herself safe. While Zhu has to deceive Liang to conceal her true identity and keep her promise to her parents, Chach'ongbi deceives Mun in order to implement her plan to be with him from the very moment she meets him. Both characters deceive their male counterparts, but Chach'ongbi's lies seem to be more quickly improvised. There is no earlier explanation of her motive for study, and thus we can conclude that the desire to be with Mun is her primary motivation.

As discussed earlier, in Chinese texts, Zhu Yingtai's desire to study is implicit in her excellence in and languor about women's work. In the

“Segyöng pon p’uri,” Chach’öngbi’s excellence in weaving is also mentioned throughout the text, but it is not connected with her intention to study. Rather, her weaving serves as a sign of her talent and, more importantly, as a valuable skill that helps her meet Mun. Her encounter with Mun Toryöng is, in a sense, predicted in the text when she receives advice from a certain maidservant who appears while Chach’öngbi is weaving on the loom and suggests that Chach’öngbi can “make her hands white and fine” if she does her washing at the river. In hindsight, this advice might seem intended to make Chach’öngbi believe that her encounter with Mun was a chance to make her hands white and fine, which suggests a promotion of her body or her status. It is unclear, however, whether such a potential promotion is related to her study or simply to her desire to be united with Mun.

There seems to be a subtle suggestion in Chach’öngbi’s wish to follow Mun to the academy that she has fallen in love with Mun at first sight, which suggests that her desire to be with the young Mun necessitates her pretext of studying together or awakens in her the previously unconsidered necessity for female education. Given that there is no explicit mention of Chach’öngbi’s desire to study before she encounters Mun, it can be inferred that education serves primarily as a pretext or means to be with Mun. This is a major difference in the image of Chach’öngbi compared to that of Zhu Yingtai, who has long yearned for learning. Although there is not enough historical and literary information available to extrapolate too much, it is clear that the plotline of male bonding is not as important in the “Segyöng pon p’uri” as it is in *Liang-Zhu*. Also, despite the fact that Chach’öngbi proves extremely talented at learning,⁸³ she is not depicted as nearly as enthusiastic a student as is Zhu Yingtai.

Mun Toryöng, even though he has descended to Earth from Heaven, cannot see through Chach’öngbi’s gender disguise and simply believes her presentation of herself as a young man. In this respect, the character of Mun resembles that of Liang Shanbo, who takes Zhu’s words at face value and is very slow to suspect her true sex. Fully deceived by Chach’öngbi’s words and appearance, Mun, too, never questions Chach’öngbi’s gender identity, and he prepares to leave the school when he is summoned back to Heaven for his marriage with the daughter of King Sösu.⁸⁴ At the news that Mun is leaving to wed, Chach’öngbi plans to return home first, and when, before parting, they bathe together—though on different sides of the river—she writes a hint of her true sex on willow leaves and then floats them to Mun’s side of

the river. Regrettably, Mun fails to understand her hint, and Chach'ongbi leaves for home shortly thereafter. Knowing that she has departed already, Mun rushes to catch her and send her off. He does so out of friendship, but when Chach'ongbi sees him coming, she confesses her true identity and then asks him to come meet her parents and rest at her home. It is unclear whether or not she is already considering marriage to Mun. But when the two arrive at her home, Chach'ongbi lies to her father about Mun's age and has him stay in her room. Her intention in hosting Mun at her home is revealed in the next scene:

“How have you been for the three years' study?” asked her father.

“I have been fine, but I have something to tell you. Outside the gate is standing a student who studied with me at the same school for three years. Because his feet have swollen and the sun is setting in the west, why not let him stay with me and leave tomorrow?” said Chach'ongbi.

“Man or woman?” asked the father.

“Man,” said Chach'ongbi.

“Then, if he is fifteen or older, send him to my room, or let him stay in your room if younger,” said the father.

“He is not yet fifteen,” said Chach'ongbi.

“Then take him with you,” said the father.

Immediately Chach'ongbi took off the male garments and put on her own clothes, and guided Mun to her room.⁸⁵

Chach'ongbi successfully brings Mun into her room. Later that night, they sleep together as a young couple, revealing the love between them. As the dawn comes, Chach'ongbi tells Mun to return to Heaven. When he parts from her, Mun gives Chach'ongbi a gourd seed and says that if he doesn't come back by the time the seed yields a gourd plant, and then gourds, she should consider him dead. They exchange broken combs as a token of farewell. Mun climbs up the rope to Heaven, and Chach'ongbi plants the seed in the ground.

These elements of the hero's arranged marriage with another woman and the couple's one secret night together are rarely found in Chinese Liang-Zhu versions. The couple's premarital sex does appear in the Korean vernacular version “Yang Sanbaek chŏn,” in which the soul of dead Liang comes back on the wedding day of Zhu Yingtai and spends nights with Zhu for a cer-

tain period. In this case, however, it is Liang's soul who initiates the affair, and the union takes place only after Liang's death. In the "Segyöng pon p'uri," by contrast, it is Chach'öngbi who presents herself as a wife to Mun after revealing that she is a woman, thus exemplifying the independence embedded in her name, Lady Who Invites Herself. Many words illustrating Chach'öngbi's inner feelings are omitted in this version, but it can be inferred that Chach'öngbi falls in love with Mun, probably at first sight, and that her love for him deepens during their time together as students at the academy. Because of her love, she cannot let Mun marry another woman. In this sense, we can suppose that the element of arranged marriage is employed in reverse in this version, to help build Chach'öngbi's active and daring character.⁸⁶ It is also assumed that Mun has built a strong emotional bond with Chach'öngbi even before he knows her true sex, for as soon as he learns the truth, his affection for her blossoms into romantic love and is consummated.

The couple's one night together, initiated by Chach'öngbi, thus turns the two friends into lovers who now anticipate a reunion. We have seen that Chach'öngbi begins her studies primarily because she wants to be with Mun, so her desire to study evaporates when she learns that Mun is about to leave the academy to marry someone else. Because Chach'öngbi never misses a chance to achieve her aims, she seizes this opportunity to reveal her true identity and her hidden love for Mun, and even her desire to make love with him. Mun Toryöng follows her scheme throughout the story, maintaining his relationship with her first in friendship and then in heterosexual love. Without Chach'öngbi's invitation to her home, and her wily organization of sleeping arrangements, the relationship between the two would have remained ambiguous, lingering between friendship and love.

The audacity that Chach'öngbi shows in implementing her plan has two related outcomes: the end of her studies and the beginning of her romantic relationship with Mun. Her character is similar to that of Zhu Yingtai in that she initiates both her studies and the love relationship, but in contrast to Zhu, Chach'öngbi reveals her sexual identity directly to Mun and, as a result, actually achieves the desired physical union. This affair occurs without acknowledgment from Chach'öngbi or Mun's parents, so their relationship is tied solely to their own wills.

In Liang-Zhu, Liang Shanbo dies of lovesickness after learning that Zhu is engaged to another man, and Zhu follows him into death by jumping into his tomb on her wedding day. In the "Segyöng pon p'uri," Mun also

leaves Chach'ongbi, though not by death: instead he returns to Heaven, while Chach'ongbi waits for the gourd to grow and for Mun to return. However, by the time the gourd has finally ripened, Mun has still not come back. Chach'ongbi continues living despite the assumed death of Mun. The time promised by Mun has expired, which means that Chach'ongbi has no personal obligation to him anymore; she is free to look for another love and another life. Chach'ongbi's actions, however, indicate that for her, Mun's time never expires. She waits for a long time, finally setting out on a journey to look for him.

Chach'ongbi's life without Mun is filled with tests of her perseverance and loyalty. She endures many hardships and attacks, the first and most severe of which comes from a male servant called Chöngsunam, who harbors sexual desire for her. He tricks her by saying that he has seen Mun playing with heavenly immortals in a mountain valley, and promises to lead her there. Chach'ongbi believes him and follows him to the remote area, where she finally comes to understand his scheme. Fortunately, Chach'ongbi manages to stop Chöngsunam when he tries to touch her body, and she kills him while he is sleeping out of fear that he will kill her later. As she returns home, she meets three wizards who advise her to perform three cleansing rituals because her body is contaminated with the dead servant's blood. She follows their instructions and cleanses her body.

Chach'ongbi's love for Mun remains unchanged, and her act of killing the servant reveals her strong will to protect herself. This raises the question of whether her love for Mun justifies her act of murder, or whether her will to protect her own body from any unwanted male approach exonerates her. The fact that her status is higher than that of her servant might also seem to excuse her extreme action. However, in the story, these justifications are far from acceptable:

Returning home, she asked her parents, "Who is more valuable between a servant and your child?"

"How can a servant be more valuable than my child?" replied the parents.

"Mum and dad! Because Chöngsunam's conduct was so wicked, I took him to a mountain and killed him there," Chach'ongbi confessed her guilt.

"You're a fine one! Did you kill a servant who can grind three sacks of soybeans a day? For you, it's the end of all if you marry, but for us, the servant can work for us until we die," the parents rebuked her.⁸⁷

Her parents' response suggests that the servant's labor is more important than the life of their own daughter. This response is rooted in the common idea that the agricultural value of a man exceeds the innate value of a female body. Chach'ongbi tries to make up for the loss of the servant's labor with her own fieldwork, but she fails to meet her parents' expectations. Her parents even tell her to bring the male servant back to life.

Even though, in Korea, there was a strong tendency to value a male child over a female one, it would have been unusual for parents to consider their own daughter to be less useful than a male servant. The attitude of Chach'ongbi's parents thus highlights the difficult situation women face, in which gender-value trumps class and even bloodline, especially when it comes to material necessity. Indeed, Chach'ongbi's desire to protect herself from the advances of a man other than Mun creates further problems for her. In performing cleansing rituals and doing physical work for her parents, Chach'ongbi is, in theory, repaying the debt she has incurred by killing the wicked male servant, but her efforts are in vain. Chach'ongbi's subsequent ordeals show the cruel realities that even a loyal woman can face while her husband or lover is absent in a culture where women are, in general, considered inferior in labor and worth. At the same time, they illustrate the complexity of life in which a woman sometimes has to compromise her morality to protect what she values, even though she must pay a high price for doing so.

It is important to note that Chach'ongbi remains obedient to her ruthless parents throughout the story, just as Zhu Yingtai does in *Liang-Zhu*. Although she kills her male servant for his wickedness, Chach'ongbi never once considers harming her parents. The authority of one's parents and the virtue of filial piety are primary values maintained in both Chinese and Korean *Liang-Zhu* tales, although their parents' will and notion of gender function are the main obstacles to the heroines in both the Chinese and the Korean stories.

The continued hardships that Chach'ongbi faces demonstrate her power to resolve problems. To satisfy her parents, she finds a way to bring the dead servant back to life. To get the magic flowers necessary to raise a dead person, she goes to the king of the Söchön garden disguised as a man,⁸⁸ gains his favor, and eventually becomes his son-in-law. She finally gets the flowers with the help of her wife, with whom she never sleeps for the one hundred days that their marriage lasts. When Chach'ongbi brings the male servant to her home as her parents wish, another unexpected thing happens; her parents now think of her as a strange, dangerous creature because of her ability

to kill and restore life, and they ask her to leave home forever. Chach'ongbi can find no way to stay at home, so she bids farewell to her parents. Her situation reflects a widely accepted idea that women's unusual talent or power is not virtuous but frightening. For Chach'ongbi, there is no one who truly cares for her and no space for her even in her natal home.

All that is left for a woman like Chach'ongbi is help from an outsider. Luckily, Chach'ongbi meets old lady Chumo, who weaves silk, and, through her own excellent weaving skill, becomes her adopted daughter. Soon after, however, Chach'ongbi discovers that the silk she is weaving will be used for Mun's wedding. With her tears, she embroiders a message in the silk that it is Chach'ongbi who has woven it. Chach'ongbi has continued to love Mun, and hearing that he is going to marry causes her to lose the last hope she has cherished for their reunion.

Later, when Mun realizes that it was Chach'ongbi who wove the wedding silk, he comes down from Heaven to meet her. When he arrives outside her window, Chach'ongbi asks him to first put his finger through the hole of the window to see if he is really Mun, and then, in her love and delight, pricks his finger with a needle.⁸⁹ Mun leaves immediately, complaining that the human realm is unclean. Chach'ongbi thus loses her chance to see Mun and is driven out of Lady Chumo's house to again wander. The despair Chach'ongbi feels at this point is so deep that she decides to become a nun. Yet, even after doing so, she continues to pray that she will meet Mun again.

While she is practicing the way of the Buddha, another chance comes for Chach'ongbi. She encounters heavenly maids who are looking for the stream where Mun Toryong and Chach'ongbi had bathed. They are crying on the road because they have been unable to find the stream, but Chach'ongbi helps them find it and in turn journeys to Heaven with them. It is, in fact, Mun who has ordered the heavenly maids to fetch water from that stream, and at the end of the journey Chach'ongbi finally meets Mun at his home in Heaven. She stays in his room with him just as Mun had stayed in her room with her long before.

Chach'ongbi then tells Mun how to persuade his parents to cancel his upcoming marriage with the daughter of King Sösu, and Mun follows her advice:

Chach'ongbi also noticed it and asked, "Sir Mun, would you tell your parents what I asked last night, please?"

"Yes, I would," said Mun.

As requested by Chach'ongbi, Mun went to his parents and asked, "Are new clothes warmer than old ones?"

"New clothes look better to others, but are not warmer than old ones," replied his parents.

"Is new soy sauce sweeter than old sauce?" asked Mun again.

"Old soy sauce is sweeter," replied his parents.

"Do you like a new person or an old person?" asked Mun last.

"A newly married woman moves swiftly like a bat, but she is not better than a trained one," replied his parents.

"Then, I will not marry the daughter of King Sösu," said Mun.⁹⁰

These words, prepared by Chach'ongbi, are an indication of the traditional Korean view of relationships. Higher value is placed on older people and relationships than on new ones, and here those words affirm the old affection shared by Mun and Chach'ongbi. Hearing those words, Mun's parents set up a test for Chach'ongbi, saying that if she wants to become their daughter-in-law, she must be able to stand on a sharp blade hung over a pit filled with burning coals. Chach'ongbi, with her courageous power, fulfills the task and finally receives permission to marry Mun. Her long and thorny journey is over. Because of her endurance, audacity, wisdom, and potency she will finally be united with Mun.

It is interesting that a female image as strong as that of Chach'ongbi is rare in most Chinese Liang-Zhu versions. Zhu's image, despite her transgressive actions in going to study and staying with a man, remains within the feminine ideal; her character is an emblem of the educated virgin or chaste wife. In her revived life with Liang, Zhu fulfills the role of a virtuous wife, and uses her wisdom to support him in his career, but she never crosses any lines that might reveal her talents to be superior to those of Liang. The dramatic ordeals that Chach'ongbi undergoes are paralleled in the standard Liang-Zhu narrative by Zhu's plunging (voluntarily or not) to her death within Liang's tomb. Her internal strength has no chance to be further tested or elaborated upon. In contrast, by taking her tactics and schemes to the extreme, Chach'ongbi wins the chance to be more than a seeker of love. The more hardships she faces, the more Chach'ongbi's strength, adaptability, and competence are revealed, and the more "Segyöng pon p'uri" paints a picture of a strong local femininity.

Although Mun cherishes his feelings of love for Chach'ongbi, he is not as active as Chach'ongbi in seeking their reunion. Mun does not want to

break the rules set by his parents, nor does he employ tricks to acquire what he wants. He is slow to take decisive action in his relationship with Chach'ongbi. It is Chach'ongbi who guides him to the actions that matter, and Mun always listens to Chach'ongbi. This relationship is a reversal of conventional gender roles; Chach'ongbi's powerful character complements Mun's weakness and vulnerability.

At times Mun's inaction even casts doubt on his love for Chach'ongbi. He could have come to Chach'ongbi earlier, when she was in danger from her male servant or when she was driven from her home. Where has Mun been during these times of hardship? How can Chach'ongbi so easily forgive him? Mun even shows interest in other women after marrying Chach'ongbi: he is sent to Chach'ongbi's wife (the daughter of the king of the Söchön garden, whom Chach'ongbi wed in male disguise) for fifteen days to cover up Chach'ongbi's earlier lie (that she would go to Seoul to take the civil service exam), but he doesn't want to leave after the prescribed time due to his indulgence with Chach'ongbi's wife. This infidelity is contrasted with the fidelity of Chach'ongbi, who remains loyal to Mun throughout her journey.

Further, although Mun is a noble creature as a son of the King of Heaven, he lacks actual skill in handling practical matters and people on Earth. He is ignorant of the threats imposed by the thousand learned people, who are jealous of the beauty and power of both Mun and Chach'ongbi. Despite the multiple strategies Chach'ongbi uses to defend against such threats, Mun's recklessness leads him to be fatally poisoned, so that Chach'ongbi must again obtain the flowers of revival, this time to save his life. Mun's social role as Chach'ongbi's lover or husband, outside of their intimate relationship, remains empty or superficial. Help from Chach'ongbi is essential to Mun's success, but Chach'ongbi does not ask or wait for Mun's help; his being itself seems to have more meaning than his actions. Later, Chach'ongbi helps quell rebellions by using the flowers of destruction; as a reward, she gains five types of grains, which she then brings to Earth, bringing good harvest to the local people:

As Chach'ongbi suppressed the rebels, the emperor granted her a piece of land and a piece of water. However, Chach'ongbi asked the emperor to grant five kinds of grain. Accepting Chach'ongbi's request, the emperor granted the five kinds of grain. Thus, Chach'ongbi came down to the human world with Mun on the fifteenth of July.⁹¹

Chach'ongbi's military accomplishment, achieved with the magical flowers, illustrates her character, underscores her capability, and indicates again her important role as the people's protector. Her many trials do not end without reward; instead, they end in a blessing to local people.

It seems clear that Chach'ongbi achieves her love (for her own sake at first) as well as the five grains (for the sake of other people later) largely because of her hope for the freedom to love and as proof of that love's triumph over social, gender, and even ontological boundaries. The value of the love between Mun and Chach'ongbi is emphasized not by the description of one sweet moment of union, but instead by its flourishing materialistic outcome. More significantly, the power of love is confirmed by the tenacious will and magical power of Chach'ongbi in her journey to reach her lover.

The model of femininity presented by Chach'ongbi and the outcome of her relationship with Mun are inseparable from the thoughts and wishes of the local audiences of this shamanic ritual narrative. In Korea, Cheju women are well known for their independence and autonomy within a patriarchal milieu that dismisses women in general and diminishes their value. Since they work doggedly in their everyday lives despite unfavorable life conditions, they are often considered capable of living without men.⁹² It is not uncommon to see families run by women whose husbands are dead, missing, or unemployed. On Cheju, women worked even harder than is usual due to the shortage of men available to work in the fields. Local men traditionally went to distant fishing grounds, returning only after days, weeks, or months, if they were not lost at sea. With frequent male absence and little daily support from male partners, the local women developed a powerful and unique femininity that endures male absence, a part of which is reflected in the image of Chach'ongbi.

Indeed, all Chach'ongbi's deeds embody both the cold reality of island life and the levels of strength and wisdom that the local women expect of themselves and their fellow women. Women's everyday tasks, such as washing, weaving, and other manual labor, as well as their generally unfavorable treatment by family members, are embodied in detail through the character of Chach'ongbi. Further, Mun's long absence portrays the local women's lives without male help and their will to improve their problematic conditions through their own efforts. In this light, Chach'ongbi serves as a model that women could identify with and turn to for help, especially when their days without their husbands were prolonged, when their hard-

ships intensified with no prospect of reward, and when their talents and survival skills were considered harmful rather than beneficial. Mun's portrayal as a somewhat disappointing male figure should be interpreted within the context of a local environment that imposed more burdens on women's shoulders than on men's. In the story, Chach'ongbi wants to reunite with Mun for her own purposes and goes through many hardships in her journey to reach him, whereas Mun, who seems to need constant help and advice from Chach'ongbi, makes little effort to come to her. Local women can seek, care for, and even make local men holy, just as Chach'ongbi does for Mun. What is more, while Mun gives Chach'ongbi only one seed to plant to measure the time of his return, Chach'ongbi earns five kinds of grain through her own accomplishments, which she then uses to nourish the local people. Chach'ongbi's love, and the painful ordeals that pay for it, result in a reward not only for herself but for the community—a commentary on the potency of women's work and worth.

The "Segyong pon p'uri" is different from the Chinese Liang-Zhu tale in that the couple reunites happily through Chach'ongbi's skill and wisdom, endurance of hardships, and persistence. Chach'ongbi and Mun Toryong are separated by Earth and Heaven just as Liang and Zhu are separated by life and death. But Chach'ongbi's efforts overcome the gap between the two realms. The social force of patriarchal power that seeks to diminish her worth and make her suffer is nullified. As the name *Lady Who Invites Herself* suggests, her character presents women's self-reliance or autonomy as the most powerful quality of all. While the popular Liang-Zhu tale that ends in the tragic deaths of the characters illuminates the romantic nature of their love and the irreconcilable social regulations imposed upon them, the "Segyong pon p'uri" story demonstrates how one can overcome such obstacles and how the happy union of a couple can result in material blessings. In this Cheju Island shamanic ritual version of the story, the love between Liang and Zhu, successfully materialized in terms of agricultural values, becomes a measurable social force. Love is no longer simply an event told in a story-book, making people shed tears. Here it bears tangible fruit.

Looking back on the tale of Chach'ongbi's journey, it seems that her union with Mun is necessary to her becoming a half-heavenly being, a medium between Heaven and Earth, a goddess of agriculture who communes with the upper world on behalf of humans. Indeed, Mun Toryong's status as a heavenly being may partially motivate Chach'ongbi's affection. But at the same time, the absence of Mun during most of the story serves to illustrate Chach'ongbi's strength and her independence from both heavenly

and masculine support. Chach'ongbi's ultimate self-reliance celebrates the female identity exemplary of the local area. By ascending to the status of goddess through her own painstaking work, Chach'ongbi becomes a model and invites other women to join her on her path. At the very least, Chach'ongbi's experience, shared by local women, recognizes female efforts and sacrifice in everyday life as important and encourages women to be more actively engaged in their everyday lives under the guidance of Chach'ongbi. Given the potency and wisdom that she displays in the story, it is not surprising that Chach'ongbi has been considered by local people as one of the ancestors of Korean shamans. Even today, a large statue of Chach'ongbi and the local festivals and shamanic performances held in her honor mark the site of the story's origin, not only as a tourist attraction but as an important site of local religious heritage and cross-cultural literary appropriation.

The Liang-Zhu elements in the "Segyong pon p'uri" also suggest the likelihood that a diverse wealth of Liang-Zhu stories have been forgotten or neglected over the years.⁹³ At the same time, these elements exemplify the appropriation of Liang-Zhu storytelling into the particular rituals and culture of Cheju Island. Cheju was a traditionally literarily and culturally isolated area with no appreciable readership of traditional fiction due to the low literacy rate.⁹⁴ Thus it seems unlikely that many Cheju women read stories themselves or shared them in written form over successive generations. Nonetheless, the transformation of Zhu Yingtai into Chach'ongbi demonstrates that a seed of the original Liang-Zhu tale was transplanted, grew, and bloomed vibrantly in unfamiliar soil. To date, almost nothing is known about who first brought the Liang-Zhu tale to Cheju Island. If it was not the wind that brought the story—or butterflies from China crossing the Yellow Sea to reach Cheju and other parts of the Korean Peninsula—then it must have been transmitted through retellings of the tale by traveling Chinese and Koreans. The Chinese political and cultural influence on Korea, and especially the increased intercultural marriage between Chinese and Korean people during the Yuan dynasty, may well have been an important conduit for Chinese tales.⁹⁵ It is not surprising that the intriguing themes and plots of the Liang-Zhu tale, whatever the "original" version may have been, were appropriated by Cheju people, specifically unknown Korean shamans, whose role included creating or tailoring stories to serve the gods and rituals which were, in many cases, deemed the only recourse left for common people, especially women, in facing difficult situations.⁹⁶

The religiousness of Liang-Zhu, found from time to time in its textual

and ritual adaptations, makes it a unique story, interwoven with local customs, folk-religious imaginations, and a strong affirmation of female desire and autonomy. While the story's attire as a tragic romance is perhaps most suitable for its appearance on modern stages, its original nature as a local religious narrative, responding to everyday concerns and hopes, is still preserved, hidden beneath the appealing garment of romance. It is all too easy to forget that modern incarnations of Liang-Zhu represent only a fraction of the myriad transformations of that eternal tale, which has lived multiple lives and continues to respond to the needs of people living in different cultures and times, even in the rather flattened world of our modern era.

Epilogue

The Interconnected Worlds of Liang-Zhu

On May 5, 2010, a North Korean opera troupe called Pibada (Sea of Blood) performed the traditional Chinese novel *Honglou meng* 紅樓夢 (The Dream of the Red Chamber) at the BTV Grand Theater in Beijing. Audiences were amazed and entranced to see this famous Chinese tragedy set elsewhere and narrated and sung in a foreign language, by foreign performers. The success of this cross-cultural performance delighted the director of Pibada, who announced that the North Korean troupe's next performance in China would be Liang-Zhu. He was confident that the show would be an even bigger success.¹ The troupe's preparation for the Liang-Zhu performance, supervised by the late North Korean leader Kim Chŏngil himself, was reported on with great interest in the Chinese press, heightening anticipation for the North Korean version of Liang-Zhu.

In late October 2011, the advertised Liang-Zhu performance finally debuted for Chinese audiences, going on to play for about three months in fifteen Chinese cities, including Beijing, Shanghai, Hangzhou, and Chongqing.² Directed by Ch'ae Myŏngsŏk, it was well received by Chinese audiences, and Liang-Zhu was recorded as the third most popular opera performed by North Korean troupes, following *Honglou meng* and *The Flower Girl* (*Maibua de guniang* 卖花的姑娘 in Chinese).³

The North Korean troupe's choice of Liang-Zhu hints at the modern appreciation of the story in North Korean society as, among other things, a medium for cross-cultural exchange. The modern *yueju* version of Liang-Zhu was first performed in Kaesŏng in 1953 at the request of *yueju* performers Xu Yulan and Wang Wenjuan, who wanted to contribute to the war effort by entertaining soldiers.⁴ It was said that the *yueju* operatic form

was favored by Kim Il-sung, the founder of North Korea, who had seen a performance during his visit to China in 1961. Kim Il-sung and his son Kim Chŏng-il's particular interest in the story of Liang-Zhu seems to have sprung from its political and diplomatic value rather than its fundamental, humanistic themes of gender fluidity, travel, autonomy, and self-fulfillment.⁵

Indeed, the North Korean version is not remarkably different from those produced in China during the Cultural Revolution, which depict the harmful effects of past social institutions such as class distinctions, restrictive Confucian ethics, and arranged marriage. In these versions, Liang and Zhu's deaths and their butterfly transformation send a clearer message than ever: their reunion after death is the young couple's mental victory over their cruel reality. North Korea's 2011 performance emphasized this theme in an artistically refined manner. Indeed, its commonalities with Chinese versions from the Cultural Revolution, and its general artistic spirit, made it more a performance of a Chinese version of Liang-Zhu by Korean people than a Korean version of Liang-Zhu.

Although the 2011 performance was clearly influenced by the Chinese opera tradition in the modern era, readers of this book will recall that the folktale "Sŏyak" (discussed in chapter 2) and adaptations of the story in shamanic rituals in North Korea (chapter 5) are evidence of the Liang-Zhu tellings that were once popular in the northern part of the Korean Peninsula. While it is difficult to trace a direct connection between the forgotten renditions of North Korea and the North Korean modern opera adaptation, the fact that a North Korean opera troupe is performing Liang-Zhu in the twenty-first century shows how Liang-Zhu has survived and been revived again and again, living a cycle of flourishing, vanishing, and reappearing. Just as the origin of Liang-Zhu is not definitively traceable, so the birth of each Liang-Zhu telling remains largely a mystery. Variations from different regions were reintroduced into the tale's birthplace and mixed with the indigenously evolved versions. The North Korean opera troupe's 2011 debut of Liang-Zhu in China thus makes all the more relevant the question that initiated this study: What is it about Liang-Zhu that has made it such an enduringly popular narrative?

Although there are many ways to construe the value and meaning of Liang-Zhu, what is too vivid and important to neglect is its collaborative interplay of emotion and gender. Liang-Zhu's emotional themes of love and friendship, epitomized in the separation and reunion of a young couple who transition from being apparently same-sex classmates to being heterosexual

lovers, have proved universally appealing to the hearts of its audiences. The most popular acts of the drama versions of Liang-Zhu since the Ming-Qing period all focus on the meeting, separation, and reunion of the two characters. Furthermore, the engaging scenes of the two young students' intimacy, filled with amusing examples of Zhu's wit and gender manipulation, allow the story to remain cheerful despite the conflicts the characters face. At the same time, the nostalgia the story evokes through its episodes depicting the young and passionate lovers encourages audiences to revisit Liang and Zhu's story as they explore their own. The Liang-Zhu narrative and its performances in various forms communicate universal themes of human love and loss in a beautiful and entertaining way.

The vows and promises in the story that valorize the nature of Liang and Zhu's relationship also deserve our closer attention because they reveal the values of everyday people. In most versions of Liang-Zhu, vows and promises are set as important thresholds to developing the narrative and dictating the expected behaviors of individuals in a relationship. Virginity vows and brotherhood oaths reflect normative values and social restrictions imposed on women and men, but in Liang-Zhu they are made to work as strongholds of the shared wishes of those who are in sincere relationships, rather than as institutional impositions on those relationships. The value of such vows—keeping a female body or a personal bond intact—remains one of protection rather than destruction. It serves to link the protagonists to the world of trust which, in the popular sentiments in almost every society, is meaningful and must be upheld at any cost.

Hence, the ability to keep promises is a major concern in Liang-Zhu, particularly when those promises conflict with each other (for example, filial piety and trust between friends). Zhu's only way to keep her promises to both Liang and her father is through death, emphasizing the seriousness and inherent danger of any promise made. Liang and Zhu's tragic deaths have been respected and memorialized precisely because of the couple's faithfulness to their oaths. By rendering the words of love and friendship beautifully, romantically, and sentimentally, the story ennoble the relationship between friends, secretly endorsing even friendships between different genders. In addition, a horizontal relationship (between friends) is emphasized and kept almost in parallel with a hierarchical one (between parent and child). What led to the later elevation of Liang and Zhu to the status of protecting god and goddess may well have been a shared acknowledgment of the characters' commitment to the values of trust and reciprocity.

It is enthralling to see how the butterfly images operate in Liang-Zhu to embody the conundrum of humanity's ephemerality as well as the impossibility of implementing individual desires, social obligations, and relational expectations. Liang and Zhu's relationship epitomizes the fundamental problem of finding oneself trapped by the tensions between social norms and personal desires. The butterfly images aptly capture this problematic human relation, in which desires, interests, and confused emotions intermingle and confront each other across unresolved categorical barriers. The problematic expectations of gender and emotion, and the trauma of trying to reconcile these, are carried away as the butterflies soar up into the sky. As long as butterflies fly, the ambiguous nature of Liang and Zhu's feelings remains unchanged, evoking new interpretations and responses. Though the most socially accepted interpretation is heterosexual, the story also contains a homosexual undercurrent.

The history of Liang-Zhu is also a repository of the meaning and memory that those butterfly images harbor and invoke in myriad situations. As we have seen, the history of Liang-Zhu reveals the tale to be both a local and a universal narrative. It adapts to the worldly desires, practical wisdom, and religious hopes and fears of local groups through the languages and objects of their everyday lives, while engaging ideas common to much broader audiences. The cultural, philosophical, and folk-religious contexts of the butterfly images illuminate one important way that the tale has engaged with different cultures, and vice versa; the circulation of Liang-Zhu, at times equated with the origin tale of butterflies, may also have contributed to the construction and diffusion of certain images of butterflies.

Another core feature of Liang-Zhu is found in the adventurous journey instigated by the heroine Zhu Yingtai. Zhu's strong and versatile character—from her image as a righteous woman (and in some versions brave swordswoman) to that of a dedicated student, a passionate lover, and sometimes even a virtuous gentry wife—bespeaks the ideals audiences have harbored for and about women across time and place. In particular, Zhu's image as an independent, capable, talented woman remains dominant throughout most Liang-Zhu versions over time. These ideals were even reincarnated cross-culturally into the powerful character of the goddess Chach'ōngbi on Cheju Island, where Zhu's spirit and her adventures with Liang formed the basis for the myth of the local agricultural goddess (see chapter 5). In addition, Zhu's journey, initiated by her desire to study (or sometimes for a man), inverts the traditional gender roles that reserve formal education as the domain of men.

Zhu's befriending of and premarital residence with Liang, her attempts to legitimize her feelings of love, and, finally, her wish to be united with Liang are all shared human experiences. The story keeps those yearnings intact until the end while avoiding any serious violation of rigid social norms, albeit at the expense of the protagonists' lives. But is death truly the end of the story? What is the function of Zhu's adventure if, in the end, it leads only to her unexpected death? In many versions, even when Zhu dies, the story ultimately fulfills her wish through her posthumous return and reunion with Liang, inviting us to ponder the meaning of Zhu's journey at the personal and social levels and its effect on our overall understanding of the Liang-Zhu literature.

From a Zhu-centered perspective, Liang-Zhu begins with Zhu's initiation at school and ends with an unfulfilled return. And yet, after everything, Zhu does return: she returns home after her studies; she returns to the world after her death; and she returns to Heaven after her butterfly transformation or second death (after the consummation of her happy marriage in rebirth). What does her journey to the school and to Liang represent? Does Zhu gain what she wants upon her return? Why does she have to return to where she originally belonged?

Zhu Yingtai's academic foray into a male space represents her female desire to enter a domain in which knowledge and social relationships are practiced and produced. Zhu's desire is both bound and enhanced by the division of her gender into two independent faces. Although she sometimes stumbles over the inherent contradictions of her dual gender identity, Zhu's courage seems to be rewarded with virtual equality and freedom. Upon closer examination, however, Zhu struggles so much with this double jeopardy that she fails to achieve her original goals. While her studies may grant her access to both manhood and knowledge, they do not bring her to ultimate happiness. Zhu's literary talent is clear in her improvisational excuses and in the poems she writes to Liang, but she remains silent as to whether she is content. From the moment she enters the academy, her focus is on Liang. In this respect, her sister-in-law's accusation that she's just "searching for a man" seems less empty. Her temporary independence has brought her neither deep satisfaction nor a more lasting sense of freedom.

Nonetheless, after her experiences of learning and friendship, Zhu is transformed, filled with a new desire that cannot be achieved by her own will. From a Lacanian perspective, she ventures into the male domain in the hope of filling the lack in her deficient female body. Realizing her body lacks

the phallus, the signifier of desire, Zhu seeks it in the body of the man from whom she demands love.⁶ Zhu must then become an object of male desire in order to acquire the phallus (which she pretends to have but does not possess). Despite being criticized by feminists for phallocentrism, Lacan's perspective reveals psychological machinations of desire within the context of the phallogentric society to which Zhu belongs. Her yearning for the dominant language of the male sphere semantically reflects the human condition in which "only man speaks" and "in man and through man it speaks."⁷

Zhu must confront the "the matrix of domination"⁸ that controls individual consciousness and access to institutional power and privilege.⁹ This matrix is intersectional—oppression works in more than one form.¹⁰ Normative and hegemonic thought in gender, emotion, and sexuality constitute a mechanism of oppression in Liang-Zhu, and Zhu's body becomes a site of convergence for different forms of oppression. In later interpretations, such as the *daoqing* version of Liang-Zhu, class (relative differences in wealth and status among the Zhu, Ma, and Liang families) emerges as another form of oppression. Zhu's choice of a male identity as a route to self-pursuit and emancipation attests to the endemic power hierarchy and matrix of domination. She even places the yokes of virginity and brotherhood on herself to avoid being distanced from power. Conversely, Zhu's conscious residence in the matrix causes the objectification of her desire and her loss of subjective authority under the inherent contradictions of her performance as the other. Inside the matrix, she never reaches her dreams; her desires are postponed by an endless *difference*.¹¹ Her desire is gradually altered by changing hopes, and despite her efforts, she finds it slipping away until the expanding gap between the signified and the signifier finally pushes her to suicide—the only escape from the trap of her desire. Whereas before she was a prisoner of desire, now she is freed by death, returning to the same empty place where she started her journey. Her journey comes to represent the "impossibility of wishful thinking."¹²

Of course, Zhu's mind cannot revert to its original state upon her return¹³ and nor can the audience. Her experience has created new possibilities for empowerment. Zhu's life at the academy reveals the real world inside her wishful thinking. The scenes of Zhu and Liang studying together at the academy suggest not only what it would be like for a woman to study with a male peer and maintain a relationship with him, but also how rare that opportunity is even now, and how worthy a pursuit it is despite its inherent challenges. In this light, Zhu's journey is a revelation of the social reality of

life as a woman, and the various versions of the tale work to both reinforce and subvert this reality in the representational realm.

Such a view figures Zhu's journey as the struggle against the dominant other. Although her gender play brings her no material gain, it gives voice to a multiplicity of energies that hold potential to change the world. Today, Zhu's desire—manifested as travel, education, friendship, and love—does not seem as unattainable or costly as in times past. However, those desires were scarcely recognizable, much less achievable, to the premodern audience. The tension between the center and the margin, and the gap between the desiring and the desired, nevertheless allow the Liang-Zhu story to convey different themes in human relations and values outside of kinship, thus building a contested example. It is no wonder that the story serves as an arena for heterosexual and homosexual sentiment and love. Liang-Zhu speaks to anyone who feels a lack and who longs to embark on their own journey in search of fulfillment despite the complicated web of dominant power structures around them. The tale's seemingly infinite and multifaceted legacy as an inter- and cross-cultural discourse on gender and emotion is surely far broader than could be covered in this single volume. Yet within the dizzying complexity of Liang-Zhu traditions, I have endeavored, in this book, to locate areas of affinity between versions, creating a space that may help us better appreciate the story's rich diversity. I invite you to step into the treasure trove of Liang-Zhu, where you may, in time, fulfill your emotional and gendered desires and eventually find comfort. This space, though elusive, has been, and will continue to be, necessary to all of us who see and experience it as meaningful.

Notes

INTRODUCTION

1. For these symbolic meanings of the images of flowers and butterflies (bees), see Wolfram Eberhard, *Dictionary of Chinese Symbols: Hidden Symbols in Chinese Life and Thought*, trans. G. L. Campbell (London: Routledge, 2006), 7, 58, 131.

2. In this book, I generally use the terms “tale” and “story” interchangeably, to indicate a narrative of Liang-Zhu events. But in some places I employ the term “tale” to highlight the fact that Liang-Zhu in its early stages was a short account, originating from a local legend (*minjian chuanshuo* 民間傳說) and carrying culturally specific meanings. I tend to use the term “story” in the context of Liang-Zhu versions that successfully communicate messages with complex plots, themes, and characters. And I use the term “legend” to refer to a traditional tale that has been transmitted from generation to generation with certain historical connotations that are not necessarily authenticated.

3. This final scene of Liang-Zhu in butterfly form, playing in a garden in Heaven against the backdrop of a rainbow bridge, is the representation of Liang-Zhu that is found today in most introductory and children’s books on Liang-Zhu; see, for example, Yang Yilin, *Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai* (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin meishu chubanshe, 2010), and Tang Yaming, *Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai*, illustrated by Yu Hongcheng (Beijing: Zhongxin chubanshe, 2015).

4. For instance, people from Henan Province believe that the yellow butterfly is Liang Shanbo and that the white one is Zhu Yingtai; see Yu Maoshi, “Liang-Zhu gushi qiyuan yu Zhumadian shi Runan xian,” in *Mingjia tan Liang Shanbo Zhu Yingtai*, ed. Tao Wei (Beijing: Wenhua yishu, 2006; hereafter *MJLZ*), 121. Koreans have also linked the origin of butterflies to the Liang-Zhu tale, one example being that in Ch’ungch’öng Province, the white butterfly is thought to embody the souls of Liang and Zhu (or those

of a young girl and boy who loved each other but died together unwed); see Im Sökchae, comp. and ed., *Han'guk kujön sörhwa* (Seoul: P'yongminsa, 1987–93), 6:353–54.

5. Numerous articles published in the last ten years in Chinese discuss the similarities and differences between Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and the Liang-Zhu tale. These studies are part of a growing East-West academic discourse and have helped introduce the tale to the world, in combination with the official promotion of the tale as both cultural heritage and commercial business, in forms such as Liang-Zhu TV shows, ballets, and musicals. The different characterizations and endings of *Romeo and Juliet* and Liang-Zhu are interpreted as a sign of the differing cultural backgrounds and narrative priorities of the Eastern and Western worlds. See chapter 3, n.106.

6. The three other favorites are “Niulang Zhinü” 牛郎織女 (the Cowherd and the Weaving Girl), “Meng Jiangnü” 孟姜女 (Lady Meng Jiang), and “Baishe zhuan” 白蛇傳 (White Snake). Thanks to Wilt Idema's efforts, many texts of these important legends are now available in English. His 2012 article provides a comprehensive study of all four legends, including a scholarly overview and a discussion of their modern and contemporary appropriations; see his “Old Tales for New Times: Some Comments on the Cultural Translation of China's Four Great Folktales in the Twentieth Century,” *Taiwan Journal of East Asian Studies* 9.1 (June 2012): 25–46. For further information on the overall popularity of Liang-Zhu, see Xu Duanrong, *Liang Zhu gushi yanjiu* (4 vols., Taipei: Xiuwei zixun keji, 2007), esp. vols. 2 and 3; also see Zhou Jingshu and Shi Xiaofeng, *Liang Zhu wenhua lun* (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2010). General information about Liang-Zhu is also available on websites such as www.chinaliangzhu.com (Ningbo) and www.liangzhu.org (Shangyu City).

7. This Eastern Jin origin is the traditional view popular among Chinese scholars in the twentieth century. It is based on the accounts of local gazetteers written in the Song dynasty (960–1279), and on some earlier texts from the fifth to ninth centuries that are either lost or remain untenable. Since most Liang-Zhu versions are set during the Eastern Jin, this view is still commonly accepted. Scholars such as Qian Nanyang continue to follow the traditional dating, arguing that there are no sources to discredit the Eastern Jin origin; see his “Zhu Yingtai gushi xulun,” in *MJLZ*, 3.

8. The first reliable extant records on Liang-Zhu appeared during the Song dynasty, and they show that the tale circulated during the Tang dynasty (618–907) at the earliest. For the tale's circulation during the Tang, see Yin Zhanhua, “Liang Zhu gushi qi yuan yu liuchuan de zaikaocha,” *Qin Zhou xueyuan xuebao* 23.2 (2008): 55; and Idema, ed. and trans., introduction to *The Butterfly Lovers: The Legend of Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai: Four Versions with Related Texts* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2010), xi–xxxvi. For discussion of these records from the Song, see chapter 1 below.

9. In *Liang Zhu wenhua daguan* (4 vols., Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1999; hereafter LZWD) and *Liang Zhu wenku* (4 vols., Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2007; hereafter LZWK)—the two collections of Liang-Zhu texts and study edited by Zhou Jingshu—there are about 300 different versions: 112 folktales and legends; 99 folk songs, including narrative poem or folk ballads (叙事歌) and prose songs (散歌); 25 versions in performance art forms (*quyi* 曲艺); and 65 local opera and screen adaptations. But nonanthologized Chinese and Korean versions are not included in these two collections, and when we add those found in Taiwan, the total number of Liang-Zhu versions is much higher. In fact, Xu Duanrong states that he has located 878 versions; see his *Liang Zhu gushi yanjiu*, vol. 1, 6.

10. The success of modern Liang-Zhu adaptations features elegant performances by all-female troupes, such as *yueju* 越剧 musical theater troupes in Shanghai and Zhejiang areas. These performances with females playing all the parts, both female and male, further elaborate the dynamics and intricacies of Liang-Zhu's gender deception through the effects of situational and dramatic ironies. For the history of these *yueju* adaptations and their reception, see Jin Jiang, *Women Playing Men: Yue Opera and Social Change in Twentieth-Century Shanghai* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009); see also Shi Lijuan, "Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai zhi dangdai gaibian yanjiu" (MA thesis, East China Institute of Technology, 2015).

11. Bai Yan, "Liang Shanbo miaomu yu fengsu diaocha," in *Liang Zhu wenhua daguan: Xueshu lunwen juan* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1999; hereafter LZWDXL), 303.

12. Lu Shijun, "Dui yueju fazhan juyou zhongda yingxiang de yi chuxi: yi bai nian yueju hua Liang Zhu," *Xiwen* 1 (2007): 6–7; Idema, introduction to *The Butterfly Lovers*, xxxvi.

13. Both Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai became fans of Liang-Zhu in the 1950s, after watching the Yue opera version. There are many stories about these leaders' relationship with Liang-Zhu. See Li Linda, "Mao Zedong yu Zhejiang Xiju," *Jinri Zhejiang* 24 (2006): 50–51; Lu Shijun, "Dui yueju fazhan juyou zhongda yingxiang," 7–8; Gu Yubiao, "Zhou Enlai zhi tui Liang Zhu," *Dangzheng luntan: Ganbu wenzhai* (2008): 5.

14. He Xuejun, *Zhongguo sida chuanshuo* (Hangzhou: Zhejiang jiaoyu chubanshe, 1996), 41; see also Lu Gong, ed., *Liang Zhu gushi shuochang ji* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1985), 1–4.

15. Wilt Idema indicates that the story's ascendance to the status of canonical literature in early and mid-twentieth-century intellectual discourse played an important role in engendering the numerous modern adaptations and their commercial success; see his "Old Tales for New Times," 41–42. The success of the Yue-opera-based film

Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai (1953) earned global recognition for the tale. Zhao Qingge's novel *Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai* (1954) is a good example of these new Liang-Zhu versions. See Zhou Jingshu, "Bainian Liang Zhu wenhua fazhan yu yanjiu," in *LZWDXL*, 742–43.

16. The nostalgia evoked in audiences by Liang-Zhu's romantic representation of an idealized Chinese past is often presented as an important reason for the success of the story in terms of various cultural products; see, for example, Idema, "Old Tales for New Times," 42–43.

17. Ramona Curry, "Bridging the Pacific with *Love Eterne*," in *China Forever: The Shaw Brothers and Diasporic Cinema*, ed. Poshek Fu (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 177–78.

18. *Ibid.*, 179–82.

19. Kong Yuanzhi, "Zailun Liang Zhu zai haiwai de chuanbo," in *Liang Zhu wenku: Lilun yanjiu juan* (hereafter *LZWKLY*), 582.

20. Though we can assume a transmission of the tale into these Asian countries prior to the twentieth century, evidence of premodern Liang-Zhu texts or of long-lived localized adaptations has not yet been reported except in Korea. Kong Yuanzhi's discussion of the Liang-Zhu texts in Indonesia, for example, proves this point; see his "Liang Zhu zai Yinni," in *LZWDXL*, 702–5. Similarly, little has been known about the popularity of Liang-Zhu in Japan before the late twentieth century, when modern Liang-Zhu adaptations were introduced; see Zhou Jingshu and Shi Xiaofeng, *Liang Zhu wenhua lun* (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2010), 281–300.

21. During the late Koryŏ period, the integration of Korea into the Mongol Empire facilitated the emergence of a multilingual world in which many elites and non-elites were good at both spoken Chinese and Mongolian. This environment certainly contributed to the circulation and recording of the Liang-Zhu tale among Koreans. However, in the following Chosŏn dynasty, elite people by and large distanced themselves from spoken Chinese and devalued the role of interpreters. See Wang Sixiang, "The Sounds of Our Country: Interpreters, Linguistic Knowledge, and the Politics of Language in Early Chosŏn Korea," in *Rethinking East Asian Languages, Vernaculars, and Literacies, 1000–1919*, ed. Benjamin A. Elman (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 63–67.

22. I define "Korean versions" as those narratives that are found in Korea and that include the main plots of Liang-Zhu, such as the heroine's cross-dressing in order to study with boys, the two friends' parting, and their tragic deaths. The names of Liang and Zhu appear in various forms; some are close to the Chinese pronunciations, while others are different or are Korean names in local dialects. Most versions of the tale

in folk and religious literature were not collected and written down until the mid-twentieth century.

23. Religious figures in Korea could also see the efficacy of the tale as an instrument of religious teachings. See Pak Yongsik, “Han’guk sōsa munhak ūi chōngae wa sinang sasang,” in vol. 1 of *Han’guk sōsa munhaksa ūi yōn’gu*, ed. Sa Chaedong (Taejōn: Chung’ang munhwasa, 1995), 158–59.

24. I have consulted more than twenty folktales and folk songs, one narrative poem written in Chinese from Koryō (918–1392), five different editions of one vernacular fictional narrative from the late Chosōn (17th–19th centuries) and the early twentieth century (in woodblock and movable-type printing), and five different versions of three shamanic ritual narratives originating from the southern and northern parts of the Korean Peninsula. The total number of Korean Liang-Zhu versions, though low compared to the large body of Chinese versions, still serves as an indicator of the broad popularity of Liang-Zhu in Korea.

25. It is highly possible that the tale was transmitted around the sixth century, at the earliest, when the religious and cultural exchange between China and Korea was already very active. Recent research by An Sangbok on the history of Chinese and Korean performing arts, particularly the origin of Korean mask plays called *sandae chapkūk* 山臺雜劇 (stage theatricals), argues that the exchange between China and Korea in terms of performing arts traces back to the sixth century. See his “Han-Chung tu nara sandae wa chaphūi pigyo yōn’gu,” *Chunggukōmunhakchi* 52 (2015): 37–76.

26. For a discussion of the maritime exchange between Korea and China in relation to the Liang-Zhu tale, see Sookja Cho, “Within and between Cultures: The Liang-Zhu Narrative in Local Korean Cultures,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 74.2 (2014): 223–29; see also chapter 1 below.

27. More attention should be paid to this aspect. An Sangbok’s discussion of comic adaptations of *The Thousand Character Classic* (千字文辭說) highlights the often neglected role of these foreign professional entertainers in the cross-cultural reception and adaptation of performing arts in and between premodern China and Korea. See An Sangbok, “Ch’ōnjamun sasōrūl t’onghae pon Han-Chung chōnt’ong yōnhūi ūi kwallyōnsōng,” *Chunggukōmunhakchi* 47 (2014): 189–218. For the influx and role of foreign professional entertainers in China, see also Kang Baocheng, “Luolilian yu Zhongguo xiqu de chuanbo,” in *Nuoxi yishu yuanliu* (Guangzhou: Guangdong jiaodeng jiaoyu chubanshe, 1999), 76–118.

28. An Sangbok, “Ch’ōnjamun sasōrūl t’onghae pon Han-Chung chōnt’ong yōnhūi ūi kwallyōnsōng,” 210–12.

29. See Robert A. Georges, “The Folklorist as Comparatist,” *Western Folklore* 45.1 (1986): 1–20.

30. Folklore was perceived by intellectuals in the early twentieth century as an important subject in the context of the search for a cultural identity in the face of imperialist power. In the mid-twentieth century, when China set out a clearer socialist vision of building China for the masses, the embodiment in folklore of the spirit of the majority, non-elite working classes, as opposed to the upper, elite classes, further justified the use of folklore in political discussion. However, folklore scholarship itself gradually altered its research goals and approaches, striving to depart from its class-oriented political role and engage more broadly in the humane and communal aspects and values embedded in folklore. For the historical background of twentieth-century Chinese intellectuals' concern with the Liang-Zhu tale and other folklore, see Wolfram Eberhard, *Studies in Chinese Folklore and Related Essays* (Bloomington: Indiana University Research Center for the Language Sciences, 1970) and Chang-tai Hung, *Going to the People: Chinese Intellectuals and Folk Literature, 1918–1937* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 1985). For a recent overview of the field, see Jing Li, “Chinese Folklore Studies: Toward Disciplinary Maturity,” *Asian Ethnology* 74.2 (2015): 259–72.

31. Qian Nanyang authored the first important study on Liang-Zhu, which appeared in Beijing daxue yanjiusuo's *Guoxuemen zhoukan* 国学门周刊 in 1925. Following this, Qian continued to publish articles and books on the tale, including his *Liang Zhu xiju jicun* (Shanghai: Shanghai gudian wenxue chubanshe, 1956). According to Chang-tai Hung, Gu Jiegang's pioneering work on the story of Lady Meng Jiang (Meng Jiangnü) inspired Qian's interest in Liang-Zhu; see Hung, *Going to the People*, 93. For detailed information on Qian and other scholars' works in the early and mid-twentieth century, see Mo Gao, “Liang-Zhu yanjiu daguan,” in *LZWDXL*, 514–26.

32. Gu Jiegang's 1930 essay, “Huashan ji yu Zhu Yingtai,” included in *Minsu zhoukan*, brings attention to the close connection between Liang-Zhu and the story of Huanshan ji; see *LZWDXL*, 25–26.

33. Lu Gong collected Liang-Zhu stories in various forms, such as folklore, historical texts, drama, fiction, and prosimetric literature. These stories became available in his collection *Liang Zhu gushi shuochang ji*, which provides an essential guide to the world of Liang-Zhu. He was very critical of “antifeudal” aspects of some of Liang-Zhu versions. For further information on the history of research on Liang-Zhu, see Zhou Jingshu, “Bainian Liang Zhu wenhua fazhan yu yanjiu,” in *LZWDXL*, 734–50.

34. For example, the performance of Liang-Zhu dramas was banned in local areas during the revolution period. See Yu Maoshi, “Liang Zhu gushi qiyuan,” 118–19 and Jin Jiang, *Women Playing Men*, 194–98.

35. The open policy of the Chinese government in the 1980s facilitated this new move. During this period, the scholarship on Liang-Zhu, along with other folktales, received official support, which laid the foundation for the academic boom in Liang-Zhu studies in the early 2000s.

36. The application was submitted in 2004, and Liang-Zhu was sanctioned as an official cultural legacy of China in 2006. This effort can be understood in relation to the Chinese government's view of intangible cultural heritage as a symbol of the Chinese nation, manifesting the diversity and splendor of China. See Dawson Munjeri, "Following the Length and Breadth of the Roots: Some Dimensions of Intangible Heritage," in *Intangible Heritage*, ed. Laurajane Smith and Natsuko Akagawa (London: Routledge, 2009), 145–48.

37. The most notable of these include the two huge collections of Liang-Zhu texts and important articles compiled by Zhou Jingshu et al., namely, *Liang Zhu wenhua daguan* (LZWD) and *Liang Zhu wenku* (LZWK). This study relies primarily on such modern collections and research on the Liang-Zhu tale, as well as on other related sources found in China and Korea.

38. For example, "Yang Sanbaek chön" 梁(楊)山伯傳, a version from the late Chosŏn, anonymously written in native Korean, was translated into Chinese; see *Liang Zhu Wenku: Guowai wenyi juan* (hereafter LZWKGW), 7–43.

39. The competition took place among several cities, especially between Ningbo 宁波 and Yixing 宜兴, to claim the historical origin of Liang-Zhu; see Jiang Yaomin, "Qianxi Liang Zhu zhu xue shuo," in *LZWKLY*, 44–49. This contributed to the production of many articles and books on the Liang-Zhu tale and on cultural and historical aspects related to it. However, this kind of purpose-driven approach may have impeded productive discussion among scholars from different regions. See Chen Hanci and Zhao Lei, "Liang Zhu guli zhi zheng: Liang Zhu qiyuan di queding you nan Jiang Zhe Su Lu ge yuan qi shuo," in *MJLZ*, 106–108; see also Huang Wei, "Liang Zhu guxiang zhi zheng' sandi hunzhan," *Zhongguo diming* 115 (2004): 20–21.

40. For instance, volumes of scholarly articles such as *MJLZ* and *LZWDXL* are dominated by studies examining the tale's historical origin and birthplace, with fewer discussing gender, characterizations, and themes of friendship and love in the tale.

41. Roland Altenburger, "Is It Clothes That Make the Man? Cross-Dressing, Gender, and Sex in Pre-Twentieth-Century Zhu Yingtai Lore," *Asian Folklore Studies* 64.2 (2005): 165–205. In this article, Altenburger points out the lack of analytical approaches to the study of the Liang-Zhu story.

42. To date, Xu Duanrong's *Liang Zhu gushi yanjiu* is the most comprehensive study of Liang-Zhu. It features the classification of Liang-Zhu versions based on the Chinese folktales index, which is built on the Aarne-Thompson motive index. It also

provides a textual history of Liang-Zhu, along with a long list of Liang-Zhu accounts and main versions, including the *ge zai xi* versions from Taiwan.

43. Fei-wen Liu's articles on Liang-Zhu present a thorough analysis of different Liang-Zhu versions focusing on the interplay among genre, narrative, and gender. See, for example, her "Narrative, Genre, and Contextuality: The 'Nüshu'-Transcribed Liang-Zhu Ballad in Rural South China," *Asian Ethnology* 69.2 (2010): 241–64.

44. *The Butterfly Lovers* is a representative example of Wilt Idema's work on the Liang-Zhu tale. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Professor Idema for sending me his early manuscripts on Liang-Zhu and prosimetric literature, as well as translations of major versions of Liang-Zhu when my research was still at a preliminary stage some years ago.

45. Since the late 1950s, for example, *yueju* was forced to undergo substantial reform—particularly changes in the plots and costuming of its popular repertoires—to disseminate political propagandas; see Jin Jiang, *Women Playing Men*, 190–202. For the background of the theater-reform campaign in modern China, see Wilt Idema's introduction to his *The Metamorphosis of Tianxian pei: Local Opera under the Revolution (1949–1956)* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2015), 1–26.

46. See Cho, "Within and between Cultures," 213–15.

47. In fact, few Liang-Zhu materials, particularly those newly collected by modern Chinese scholars, were available to modern Korean scholars due to the unfavorable diplomatic relationship between China and Korea during the Cold War period. Most early Korean scholars relied on some accounts preserved in local gazetteers, collections of vernacular tales from the Ming period, and/or Japanese sources in which only summaries of a few versions were introduced. The Korean intellectual and political milieu that emphasized nationalist treatment of folklore and folk religions (e.g., shamanism) also discouraged scholars from further investigating the transmission of the tale and its significant value in cross-cultural contexts. In such a milieu, the history of literary exchange between China and Korea focused more on the elite texts written in classical Chinese; see Cho, "Within and between Cultures." For more information on the nationalistic milieu within the folklore scholarship of twentieth-century Korea, see Roger L. Janelli, "The Origins of Korean Folklore Scholarship," *Journal of American Folklore* 99.391 (1986): 24–49; for the relationship between folklore scholarship and nationalism in Korea and other East Asian countries, see Keith Howard, ed., *Music as Intangible Cultural Heritage: Policy, Ideology, and Practice in the Preservation of East Asian Traditions* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2012).

48. Wang Yaping, "Minjian yishu zhong de Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai," in *LZWDXL*, 34.

49. See Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books,

1973), 3–30. In view of folkloric studies, I generally adopt a dialectical approach that builds largely on Vladímír Propp's morphology (an account of the tale based on its component parts and their relationship to the entire tale and other components parts) in extrapolating the basic pattern or structure of Liang-Zhu literature, and on Claude Lévi-Strauss's paradigmatic analysis in unveiling the cultural context in which Liang-Zhu is found; see Alan Dundes's introduction to the second edition of Vladímír Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1975), xi–xvii. I have also benefited from performance-centered approaches. For example, Richard Bauman's folklore as *performance* and John Miles Foley's concept of *word-power* provided insights for discussing how the message of the tale could be communicated to audiences within an interpretive frame that renders folklore as an emergent text to each circumstance of the performance; see Bauman, *Verbal Art as Performance* (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 1977), 9–11; Foley, preface to his *The Singer of Tales in Performance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), xiv. Although these folklore-based approaches also informed my analysis of Liang-Zhu, it is important to note that, due to its diversity and multiformity, Liang-Zhu is not reducible to a folktale, and thus my analysis is not limited to these approaches.

50. These works are the collections by the leading scholars of China and Korea in the field. They include Zhou Jingshu (his *LZWD* volumes in 1999 and *LZWK* volumes in 2007), Lu Gong, Kim T'aegon, Chang Chugün, Im Sökchae, and all other collections of folk literature available on- and offline. The numerous adaptations that have appeared in China and Taiwan since the mid-twentieth century are outside the scope of this study, though I mention them from time to time.

51. The dates of a small number of versions of Liang-Zhu are either known or have been estimated by scholars. However, it is impossible to date the oral and folk versions that were first written down in the twentieth century, which account for the majority of extant Liang-Zhu versions. Even for a version with a publication date, there has always been a time gap between the circulation of that particular version and its being recorded and published. In general, the authenticity of collected versions remains open to question because a certain level of embellishment and modification by the collectors/editors is assumed to have been necessary to turn the oral versions (many of which were performed in local dialects) into texts suitable for the general reader. In modern Liang-Zhu versions, there are also cases suggesting a wide range of modification undertaken for political or commercial purposes (see, for example, Idema's discussion of a version from Yixing in his introduction to *Butterfly Lovers*, xxxii). The difficulty of fathoming the invisible role and influence of past collectors of oral and folk literature is countered to some extent by the notion that they sought above all to preserve the versions' original ecology (*yuan shengtai* 原生態 or

wŏnhyŏng 原型), or affinity with the inherited tradition, and thus that their job was confined to minimal and necessary arrangement of the works they collected. In this book, I view past collectors of Liang-Zhu materials, regardless of the degree of their involvement, as part of the author-audience group of the Liang-Zhu tradition—that is, as active agents who have been instrumental in either developing or safeguarding the inherited tradition over time. I also assume that each version, including those from the twentieth-century, reflect variations accumulated from centuries ago (at least from the nineteenth century for the twentieth-century versions). The chronological period of the versions from permodern China and Korea is estimated on the basis of such an assumption.

52. The terms I use in this study originate from these various disciplines, and most of the time I use them in the general sense commonly used in the field of literary studies. For example, I use “motif” to refer to a basic narrative unit developing into a theme. A theme consisting of a group of motifs, in Propp’s sense, is not separable from other themes of a tale; see Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, 1–12; see also Diane M. Sharon, *Patterns of Destiny: Narrative Structures of Foundation and Doom in the Hebrew Bible* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2002), 16–19. I use “archetype” not in a Jungian sense, but rather in Northrop Frye’s sense, to refer to a typical or recurring image of Liang-Zhu, a communicable symbol that allows us to connect different versions of Liang-Zhu across time, genre, and region as one body; see Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 99–100.

53. The term “oicotype” (also known as oikotype or ecotype) is borrowed from Swedish folklorist Carl Wilhem von Sydow, and is useful in analyzing regional or other distinctive characteristics of cross-culturally distributed tales such as Liang-Zhu. See von Sydow, “Geography and Folk-Tale Oicotypes,” in *International Folkloristics: Classic Contributions by the Founders of Folklore*, ed. Alan Dundes (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999), 137–51; the original piece was first published in 1932.

CHAPTER I

1. As discussed in the introduction, the Liang-Zhu tale is traditionally said to go back to the Jin dynasty (265–420), and particularly to Xie An’s 謝安 (320–85) lifetime, though related records emerged only during the Tang dynasty at the earliest. There are many places in China that have connections to the legend, including Ningbo, Shangyu, Hangzhou, Yixing, Jining, and Runan. Among these, accounts claiming the Jin origin of the legend are found only in local gazetteers and literati’s writings from

the Ningbo and Yixing areas. Today, Ningbo is considered the official birthplace of the Liang-Zhu tale. See note 39 in the introduction, and notes also 11 and 21 in this chapter.

2. Laurajane Smith, introduction to *Uses of Heritage* (London: Routledge, 2006), 3–4.

3. Richard Bauman, *Story, Performance, and Event: Contextual Studies of Oral Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 4.

4. Lu Gong's *Liang Zhu gushi shuochang ji* provides a timeline of published versions of Liang-Zhu. The earliest version among them is “Liang Shanbo ge” 梁山伯歌 (Song of Liang Shanbo), whose date is estimated as ca. 1660.

5. The term “oral-traditional texts,” originally coined by Albert Lord, is used by Anne E. McLaren in her analysis of Ming chantefable texts (*cihua* 詞話) published in the 1470s. McLaren's work helps reveal the characteristics of orally modeled works and the locus of oral traditional culture. These insights can also be applied to Liang-Zhu literature which, for the most part, has been transmitted orally and printed in vernacular texts. They also help illuminate how Liang-Zhu has taken forms that appeal to less educated or uneducated people, serving as a transmitter of shared lore. See McLaren, *Chinese Popular Culture and Ming Chantefables* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 11–12.

6. In general, popular literature and culture developed along a similar trajectory in China and Korea, though later in Korea than in China.

7. For a general discussion of the view of popular culture in China, see the preface to *Popular Culture in Late Imperial China*, ed. David Johnson, Andrew J. Nathan, and Evelyn S. Rawski (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985). For the Korean side, see Michael J. Pettit's review of Peter Lee's *A History of Korean Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) in *Korean Studies* 27.1 (2003): 151–52; see also Cho, “Within and between Cultures.”

8. McLaren focuses more on the “bottom-to-top” influence in her discussion of the chantefable texts, describing the mutual communication between oral and elite popular literature as “translating upwards” and “translating downwards”: see McLaren, *Chinese Popular Culture and Ming Chantefables*, 12. In the case of Liang-Zhu literature, which largely remained distant from writing and print culture before the twentieth century, the bottom-to-top influence may predominate, given the tale's representation of popular folk sentiments, whether affirmative or subversive, toward social and gender norms. As seen in the chapters that follow, the orthodox voices within Liang-Zhu texts do not serve as evidence of top downward influence; rather, they represent a more complex trajectory.

9. The earliest accounts of the righteous wife (*yifu*) theme reportedly go back to

two Tang texts: *Shidao sifan zhi* 十道四蕃志 (Records of the Ten Circuits and the Four Territories), credited to Liang Zaiyan 梁載言 (active ca. 705), and the ninth-century *Xuanshi zhi* 宣室志 (Records from the Chamber of Dissemination) by Zhang Du 張讀. Unfortunately, the *Shidao sifan zhi* is lost, and the authenticity of the *Xuanshi zhi* is questionable because its extant editions do not preserve any accounts of Liang-Zhu or a righteous wife.

10. Zhang Jin, “Zhongmu liu” 冢墓六, *Qiandao Siming tujing*, in vol. 5 of *Song Yuan fangzhi congkan*, ed. Zhonghua shuju bianjibu (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1990), 4894.

11. Liang Shanbo was acclaimed a hero by the people in the area, and the shrine for him still exists in Ningbo City. See the next section for a discussion of this shrine. For more information on the lore of hero Liang, see the legends included in Zhou Jingshu’s *Liang Zhu de chuanshuo* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2001), 162–75; see also Bai Yan, “Liang Shanbo miaomu yu fengsu diaocha,” 305. After comprehensive field research, Watanabe Akitsugu suggested that the tale was based on a true-life story of Liang Shanbo, who was a virtuous and heroic official. See his *Ryan shanbo Chū intai densetsu no shinjitsusei o ō* (Tōkyō: Nihon Kyōhōsha, 2006).

12. Ming officials Huang Runyu 黃潤玉 (1389–1477) and Zhang Shiche 張時徹 (1504–77), for example, supplement Zhang Jin’s account by including details of Liang Shanbo’s status as a magistrate of Yin County, the origin of the grave, and the time and place of Liang and Zhu’s deaths. For the original texts, see *LZWDGG*, 286–87.

13. A few other sources that were commonly cited as early references to the tale, such as *Jinlouzi* 金樓子 (ca. sixth century), *Kuaiji yiwen* 會稽異聞 (?), and *Xuanshi zhi* (ca. ninth century)—though they are either nonexistent or unverifiable—also suggest this possibility of the circulation and evolution of the tale during the Tang period.

14. The examples are “Zhu Yingtai jin (近)” or “Zhu Yingtai man (慢)” in the Yue-scale keys (越调); see Xu Qingqing 徐慶卿 and Niu Shaoya 鈕少雅 (ca. 1659), eds., *Huicuan Yuanpu nanqu jiugong zhengshi* 彙纂元譜南曲九宮正始 (Collected Excerpts of Southern Tunes Scored in the Yuan with Nine Modes and Correct Origins), in *Riben suo cang xijian Zhongguo xiqu wenxian congkan*, ed. Huang Shizhong et al. (Guilin: Guangxi shifan daxue, 2006), 7:947–48.

15. See Luo Yonglin, “Shilun Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai gushi,” in *MJLZ*, 17. According to my own search of the Airusheng, the largest ancient Chinese books database, there are 171 mentions of Zhu Yingtai and 93 mentions of Liang Shanbo in Chinese texts.

16. This receptionalist view, originally presented by Wolfgang Iser and Hans Robert Jauss, is well received but differently posited in the discussion of the meaning-making process in oral-derived literature. For example, a singular literary text becomes

a fluid one, a singular implied reader becomes a communal, plural audience, and, more importantly, the meaning is conveyed through the combined role of performance (the *enabling event* that invites communicative exchange) and tradition (the *enabling referent*, the body of immanent meaning assured through metonymic referentiality). See John Miles Foley, *The Singer of Tales in Performance*, 30–59, especially 45–46, 55.

17. Chen Huawen and Hu Bin, “Lun Liang Zhu gushi de xingcheng, yanbian ji qita,” in *LZWDXL*, 466.

18. For an example of such an account, see *LZWDGG*, 198; see also Zhou Jingshu, *Liang Zhu de chuanshuo*, 168–70.

19. Double burial was a familiar custom, intended to “marry the souls of young men and women in the netherworld” (*yinpei* 陰配). See Lü Hongnian, “Liang Zhu ‘Huangquan fuqi’ shuo xiaoyi,” in *LZWDXL*, 317.

20. Chen and Hu maintain that during the Tang dynasty the “studying together” plot merged into the existing legend of Zhu Yingtai as a righteous woman, to become the basis of the Liang-Zhu tale; see Chen Huawen and Hu Bin, “Lun Liang Zhu gushi de xingcheng, yanbian ji qita.”

21. There are ten graves said to be those of Liang and Zhu in China; see *LZWDGG*, 293. The one in the city of Ningbo (within Liang-Zhu cultural park) is considered the official one, but further research is needed to explain the spread of graves of Liang and Zhu in other localities.

22. It does not seem to be a coincidence that most Liang-Zhu versions from the Ningbo area are Liang focused. See Luo Yonglin, “Shilun Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai gushi,” in *MJLZ*, 16.

23. In early Confucianism, sex for men’s pleasure was not highly thought of due to the demeaning common view of the female sex and of women’s harmful influence on men. See Paul Rakita Goldin, “The View of Women in Early Confucianism,” in *The Sage and the Second Sex: Confucianism, Ethics, and Gender*, ed. Chenyang Li (Chicago: Open Court, 2000), 143–45.

24. James M. Hargett’s research points out that, during the Song period, education emerged as one of the important reasons for the compilation of local gazetteers; see his “Song Dynasty Local Gazetteers and Their Place in The History of Difangzhi Writing,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 56.2 (1996), 405–42.

25. This resonates with the fact that women’s names were lost in adulthood, when they were represented by the names of their husbands and sons. See Rubie S. Watson, “The Named and the Nameless: Gender and Person in Chinese Society,” *American Ethnologist* 13.4 (1986): 619.

26. Wang Xiangzhi, *Yudi jisheng*, in vol. 2 of *Song Yuan dili zhi congkan* 宋元地理志叢刊 (Chengdu: Sichuan daxue chubanshe, 2005), 658.

27. Luo Jun, *Baoqing Siming zhi* 寶慶四明志 (Gazetteer of Siming from the Baoqing Reign Period [1225–28], 1277), in vol. 5 of *Song Yuan fangzhi*, 5257.
28. Zhang Shiche notes in relation to the grave that “[o]ld records referred to it as the grave of a righteous wife, but since Yingtai never married, its name was changed to the present one” (舊志稱曰義婦塚，然英臺尙未成婦，故改今名也). See Zhang Shiche, “Yin” 鄞, in vol. 17 of *Ningbo fuzhi* 寧波府志 (Gazetteer of Ningbo Prefecture), 2.
29. The Liang-Zhu tale was performed in both the southern drama (*nanxi*) and variety play (*zaju*) forms during the Yuan dynasty. Only three arias from the Southern drama text *Zhu Yingtai* have been preserved. They appear in Qian Nanyang, *Liang Zhu xiju jicun* (Shanghai: Shanghai gudian wenxue chubanshe, 1956), 1–2.
30. For the original text of the inscription, see Wen Xingdao 聞性道, “Jingyang kao” 敬仰攷, vol. 9 of *Kangxi Yinxianzhi* 康熙鄞縣志, in vol. 18 of *Zhongguo difangzhi jicheng: Zhejiang fu xian zhi ji* (Shanghai: Shanghai shu dian, 1993), 377.
31. LZWDGG, 289.
32. Liang’s assistance in defeating the bandits in Liu’s dream turns out to be a real event. When Liu wakes up the next day, he learns that there has been an attack by Japanese bandits during the night, and they have all been defeated. For an example of a local rendition of this such a miraculous achievement by Liang, see LZWDGG, 221.
33. Li-Hsiang Lisa Rosenlee, *Confucianism and Women: A Philosophical Interpretation* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), 35.
34. Anthony C. Yu, “History, Fiction and the Reading of Chinese Narrative,” *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews (CLEAR)* 10, 1/2 (1988): 13.
35. Lin Fu-shih, “The Cult of Jiang Ziwen in Medieval China,” *Cahiers d’Extrême-Asie* 10 (1998): 357–75.
36. *Ibid.*, esp. 371–75.
37. See Philip Clart, “Confucius and the Mediums: Is There a ‘Popular Confucianism?’” *T’oung Pao: International Journal of Chinese Studies* 89.1 (2003): 1–38. Clart discusses the aspects of Confucian philosophy that lent themselves to the practice of “popular Confucianism,” focusing on the particular term *ru* 儒.
38. Wu Bing’an, *Zhongguo minjian xinyang* (Changchun: Changchun chubanshe, 2014), 2–3.
39. Xu Bingling and Li Qihan suggest the possibility that Li Maocheng broadly adopted other literati’s writings to embellish his Liang-Zhu account, not limited to Liang-Zhu related storytelling and records. See their “Liang Zhu gushi fayuan di kaocha,” in LZWDXL, 333.
40. In *Xuanshi zhi*, for example, Liang and Zhu hailed from the same places, as in Li Maocheng’s account. The account in *Xuanshi zhi*, though it ends with Zhu being

honored as a righteous wife after her death, has similar basic plotlines, such as the encounter of Liang and Zhu, their schooling and parting, Liang's appointment as a local magistrate, and Liang's illness and death. Since the *Xuanshi zhi* account of Liang-Zhu is found only in a citation in the eighteenth-century bibliophile Zhai Hao's 翟灏 (*jinsbi* 1754; d. 1788) *Tongsu bian* (Compilation on Folk Customs), and not in the extant edition of *Xuanshi zhi*, it is difficult to say whether the long-lost original edition of *Xuanshi zhi* from the Tang dynasty actually influenced Li's later account. However, many Chinese scholars take the *Xuanshi zhi* account as the earliest (popular) storytelling of Liang-Zhu. Based on the fact that the *Xuanshi zhi* version focuses more on Zhu's voice and has no mention of Liang's deification, it can be inferred that the *Xuanshi zhi* account at least reflects an earlier version (as early as the Tang period) of the Zhu-centered popular storytelling of later periods.

41. Zhou Qinghua, "Dui Liang Zhu xiju de lijie," *Liang Zhu gushi yanjiu*, vol. 154 of *Folklore and Folk Literature Series of National Peking University and Chinese Association for Folklore*, ed. Lou Tsu-k'uang (Taipei: Orient Cultural Service, 1974), 4–5.

42. Tan Xianda, "Liang Zhu chuanshuo de yanyuan yanbian kao," in *LZWDXL*, 236. I argue that Li Maocheng's account, though it contains unverifiable historical and superstitious elements, is a religious story with efficacy in real life. In transplanting the Liang-Zhu tale from the gravesite of Zhu Yingtai to the shrine for Liang Shanbo, Li's account provided the tale with a religious platform on which it could live eternally, communicating with people whenever they entered the shrine. This religiousness no doubt allowed the story to easily penetrate the daily lives of local people. The tradition of Liang-Zhu as a religious narrative should therefore be traced back to Li's account.

43. Luo Yonglin, "Shilun Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai gushi," in *MJLZ*, 17.

44. The gazetteer was published in 1882, during the Guangxu reign (1875–1908) of the Qing dynasty (1644–1911). It introduces Shao Jinbiao's 邵金彪 "Zhu Yingtai xiaozhuan" 祝英台小傳 (A Biography of Zhu Yingtai), along with Liang-Zhu–related local sites and lore of the Yixing area. For the original text and related information, see *Yixing Liang Zhu wenhua: Shiliao yu chuanchuo*, ed. Yixing shi zhengxie xuexi he wenshi weiyuanhui and Yixingshi huaxia Liang Zhu wenhua yanjiuhui (Beijing: Fangzhi chubanshe, 2003; hereafter *YXLZSC*), 152–56.

45. For a general introduction to the *Sipch'osi* version of Liang-Zhu as well as an English translation of the entire text, see Wilt Idema, ed. and trans., introduction to *The Butterfly Lovers: The Legend of Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai: Four Versions, with Related Texts* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2010), xv–xvi. The translation provided here is my own, but I have also consulted Idema's translation.

46. Not much is known about Luo Ye's life. Based on the record in vol. 68 of *Tangshi jishi* 唐詩紀事 (Records of the Events of Tang Poetry), Luo Ye, despite his literary

talent, failed the civil service exam many times and barely secured a low-level official status before he died. Luo Ye and his two clan relatives (宗人), Luo Yin 羅隱 and Luo Qiu 羅虬 (ibid., vol. 69)—who also made their names for their literary talent but failed the civil service exam—were known as *sanluo* 三羅 (ibid.). Although Luo Ye's poems are included in *Tang shi sanbai shou* 唐詩三百首 (The Three Hundred Tang Poems), the inclusion of ten of his poems in this Korean anthology shows not only the popularity of his poems among Koreans but also a particular relationship, whether personal or regional, between the poet and the Korean compiler.

47. Chasan, ed. and annot., *Sipch'osi*, 40–41. For the original text of the *Sipch'osi* version, I use the Kyujanggak woodblock print edition (古 (*ko*) 3442–15), published in 1452, Miryang, Kyöngnam Province.

48. Most scholars suppose that Luo Ye died before 900. For example, Liang Charan presents the date of his death as circa 869; see Zhou Xunchu, ed., *Tangshi dacidian*, rev. ed. (Nanjing: Fenghuang chubanshe, 2003), 267.

49. Kang Söckchung, "Sipch'osi üi Chungguk si sönsi yangsang ilgo," *Han'guk Hansi yön'gu* 11 (2003): 9–11.

50. There are some disputes among scholars on the dating of Chasan's annotated edition of the *Sipch'osi*. For example, while Zha Pingqiu and Yoshimura Hiromichi estimate that the edition came out no later than 1300, Im Hyöngtaek presents a more detailed date of 1321 or 1333. For more information, see Zha Pingqiu, "Shuoming," in Zha, ed., *Jiazhu mingxian shichaoshi* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2005), 2; Yoshimura Hiromichi, "Chosönbön hyöpchu myönghyön sipch'osi üi kich'ojök koch'al," trans. Sim Kyönggho, *Hancha Hanmun yön'gu* 1 (2005): 261, and Yoshimura's introduction (*kaidai*) to his *Jissböshi, Kyöchü meiken jissböshi* (Tökyö: Kyüko Shoin, 2011). See also Im Hyöngtaek, "Hyöpchu myönghyön sipch'osi haeje," in Han'gukhak chungang yön'guwön, ed., *Hyöpchu myönghyön sipch'osi* (Söngnam: Han'gukhak chung'ang yön'guwön, 2009), 11–20.

51. Idema, *Butterfly Lovers*, xvi–xix.

52. This omitted part allows us to suppose that the *Sipch'osi* version of Liang-Zhu was originally a prosimetric text, a combination of song and narration. In this respect both Zha Pingqiu and Yoshimura Hiromichi also suggest that the version might be a storyteller's text ("prompt book" or "transcript") used for the tale's performance during the Song dynasty; see Zha, "Shuoming," 10, and Yoshimura, "Chosönbön hyöpchu myönghyön sipch'osi üi kich'ojök koch'al," 280.

53. For general information on the maritime exchange between Southern China (Zhejiang) and Korea, see Lin Shimin, *Zaixian xiri de wenming: Dongfang dagang Ningbo kaogu yanjiu* (Shanghai: Sanlian shudian, 2005), 290–95, 498–504; see also Pak Hyön'gyu, "Chöltong yönhaean esö Koryöin üi suro kyot'ong: Kyot'ong yujök

kwa chimyöng ül chungsim üro,” *Chungguksa yön’gu* 64 (2010): 43–67; Cho Yöngnok, ed., *Han-Chung munhwa kyoryu wa nambang haero* (Seoul: Kukhak charyowön, 1997). For religious exchange, see Robert E. Buswell, ed., *Currents and Countercurrents: Korean Influences on the East Asian Buddhist Traditions* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2005). See also my discussion of the influence of the Guanyin cult from Ningbo areas on Korean religious tales: Cho, “Within and between Cultures,” 226–29.

54. For example, Im Sökchae’s *Han’guk kujon sörhwa* reports six Liang-Zhu folktales from this region, which is the highest number of Liang-Zhu tales per province in Im’s collection. See Im, *Han’guk kujon sörhwa*, vols. 10, 11, 12.

55. In his *Xuanhe fengshi Gaoli tujing* 宣和奉史高麗圖經, the Song official Xu Jing 徐兢 (1091–1153) provides a vivid account of Chinese official travels to Korea via the southern sea route. See also Sally K. Church, “Conceptions of Maritime Space in Xu Jing’s *Xuanhe fengshi Gaoli tujing*,” in *Perception of Maritime Space in Traditional Chinese Sources*, ed. Angela Schotenhammer and Roderich Ptak (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2006), 79–108.

56. Regarding the Korean embassies in Ningbo and the exchange between Song and Koryö, see Pak Hyön’gyu, “Chöltong yönhæan esö Koryöin üi suro kyot’ong”; Lin Shimin, *Zaixian xiri de wenming*.

57. Ch’a Kwangho presents detailed examples of the southern sea-route exchange—such as the sites where Korean-related names such as Silla or Koryö were used, records of Chinese merchants who worked with Koreans, and records of Chinese and Silla/Koryö immigrants—as evidence of the China-Korea maritime exchange during the Tang-Song period. Ch’a, “Koryö wa Chungguk namdong hæan chiyök kwa üi hæsang kyoryu rül t’onghæ pon 11 segi Hwanghæ haero pyön’gyöng,” *Han’guk munmyöng kyoryu yön’gu* 2 (2011): 107–39.

58. Chasan, *Sipch’osi*, 40.

59. Ibid. The word *fuzi* 夫子 in the original text means either Confucius or a Confucian master. But given that the school is named after Confucius, it is reasonable to translate the word *fuzi* as Confucius. Wilt Idema also translates *fuzi* as Confucius. See his *Butterfly Lovers*, 17.

60. The Liang-Zhu affair is mentioned in the brief explanation of the origin of the “Bixian an” 碧鮮庵 (Fresh Blue Hut or Bamboo-Shoot Hut) site in Jiangsu Province, known locally as the study place of Liang and Zhu. The study place is located in the Shanjuan temple (善卷寺) area. For examples of related accounts, see the thirteenth-century record *Xianchun pilingzhi* 咸淳毗陵志 (The Chronicles of Piling, Chang Prefecture in Jiangsu Province, during the Xianchun Reign [1265–74], 1268), written by Shi Nengzhi 史能之’s (fl. 1241–68), in *YXLZSC*, 13–19. In most Korean versions, Liang

and Zhu are portrayed as studying at Buddhist temples such as Unhyangsa 雲香寺. For more information, see Cho, “Within and between Cultures,” 240–46.

61. Given the fact that the Wansong Academy was established in the late fifteenth century (1498), it is clear that this element was added much later, probably after the academy became famous to local people for producing such famous scholars as Wang Yangming (1472–1529) and Yuan Mei (1716–97). The academy has a small hall that is believed to be the place where Zhu and Liang studied and lived together. Because of this, it has become a favorite destination for Hangzhou visitors. Although the foundation date of the academy is later than the story itself, the link between the academy and the story demonstrates one reason the story became so popular: it is strongly associated with Confucian learning and mundane success because it has anchored itself to a famous local educational institution.

62. For example, the *baojuan* versions “Yingtai *baojuan*” 英苔寶卷, “Fangyou” 訪友, and “Shuang hudie *baojuan*” 雙蝴蝶寶卷 adopt the Zhou-dynasty setting, while “Shanbo *baojuan*” 山柏寶卷 is set in the Song dynasty, with Liang and Zhu studying under the Cheng brothers.

63. The two Lus (二陸) referred to here are Lu Ji 陸機 (261–303) and Lu Yun 陸雲 (262–303), and the three Zhangs (三張) are Zhang Zai 張載 (active ca. 289), Zhang Xie 張協 (active ca. 295), and either Zhang Kang 張亢 (ca. 270–335) or Zhang Hua 張華 (232–300), all of whom were leading figures of Taikang literature during the Western Jin period (265–316).

64. Chasan, *Sipch'osi*, 40.

65. *Ibid.*

66. *Ibid.*

67. The presence of “○” indicates a missing character.

68. Chasan, *Sipch'osi*, 41.

69. *Ibid.*

70. Variations on this phrase frequently appear in later versions from both China and Korea. See chapter 5.

71. Zhu Huan can remarks that Li Maocheng's account of the transformation is the progenitor of the butterfly transformation motif. See his “Shitan Liang Zhu gushi de qiyuan yu bianyi,” in *LZWDXL*, 392.

72. Chasan, *Sipch'osi*, 41.

73. *Ibid.*

74. Examples include the ballad version from the Ming period, “Liang Shanbo Zhu Yingtai jieyi xiongdi gongshu ci” 梁山伯祝英台結義兄弟攻書詞 (The Ballad of Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai's Diligent Study as Sworn Brothers, hereafter referred to as “Jieyi gongshu”) and the *guci* version “Liu yin ji” 柳蔭記 (The Story

under the Shade of the Willows, ca. 1870). The versions from the Gelao people, such as “Danao ge” 打鬧歌, and the Korean fictional narrative “Yang Sanbaek chön” also employ the plot of Liang appearing in a dream to Zhu.

75. Chasan, *Sipch’osi*, 41.

76. The three volumes of Zhou Jingshu’s Liang-Zhu collections (*LZWDGG*, *LZWKMGI*, and *LZWKMGI2*) consist of these folk ballads. Most of these ballads are short, singing certain events with deep emotion, particularly the longing of the separated Liang and Zhu, their reunion, and their butterfly transformation, rather than narrating the entire story line. For example, “Zhu Yingtai de ge” 祝英台的歌 (Song of Zhu Yingtai) from Henan Province narrates Liang and Zhu’s parting journey; see Liu Xicheng, “Liang Zhu de shanbian yu wenhua de chuanbo,” in *MJLZ*, 48–49. The Korean folk song of the same title, “Su Yöngdae norae” 수영대노래 (Zhu Yingtai Song), from Kyöngsang Province, expresses Zhu’s regret about Liang’s ignorance of her identity while they were classmates at the academy; see Yi Sora, “Yangch’uk kosa mit kü Han-Chung minyo üi kasa wa sönyul kwan’gye,” *Pigyo minsokhak* 16 (1999): 255–70.

77. The tunes ([醉落魄][傍妝臺][前腔換頭]) are preserved in Niu Shaoya’s musical anthology, *Huicuan Yuanpu nanqu jiugong zhengshi*. Since *nanxi* is indigenous to southern China, this version can be regarded as evidence of the early adaptation of the story to traditional theater; see Qian Nanyang, *Liang Zhu xiju jicun*, 1–2.

78. Whereas the *Taihe zhengyin pu* 太和正音譜 (Formulary of Correct Sounds for an Era of Great Harmony) by Zhu Quan 朱權 (1378–1448) simply mentions the title of Bai Pu’s drama as “Zhu Yingtai,” the *Lugui bu* 錄鬼簿 (Register of Ghosts) by Zhong Sicheng 鍾嗣成 (ca. 1279–1360) gives the title and a full name (題目正名). This title suggests the familiar narrative of the death of Zhu Yingtai and her union with Liang Shanbo.

79. Yan Dunyi, “Gudian wenxue zhong de Liang Zhu gushi,” in *LZWDXL*, 119.

80. However from the late Ming (sixteenth to seventeenth centuries) through Qing periods, Liang-Zhu versions were more often named after Liang Shanbo than Zhu Yingtai. In prosimetric literature, too, the Liang-centered title is dominant, even when the narrative focus is on Zhu Yingtai.

81. Based on its similarity to the ballad stories (*cihua* 詞話), Idema estimates that the “Jieyi gongshu” version came from the period between from 1250 to 1450, the same period as the ballad stories; see Idema, *Butterfly Lovers*, xx.

82. The *chuanqi* plays include “Mudan ji” 牡丹記 (The Story of the Peonies) by Zhu Conglong 朱從龍; “Yingtai ji” 英臺記 (The Story of Zhu Yingtai) or “Huanhun ji” 還魂記 (The Story of the Return of the Soul) by Zhu Shaozhai 朱少齋; “Liangdie shi” 兩蝶詩 (The Poem of a Pair of Butterflies) by Wang Zitao 王紫濤; and “Tong-

chuang ji” 同窗記 (The Story of Classmates) and “Fangyou ji” 訪友記 (The Story of Visiting a Friend) by unknown authors. See Qian Nanyang, *Liang Zhu xiju jicun*, 3–28, and Lu Gong, *Liang Zhu gushi shuochang ji*, 6.

83. In this inscription, the story was set in Weishan 微山 County (Zou 鄒 County before 1949) in Shandong Province, where a shrine for Liang and Zhu (Liang Zhu si 梁祝祠) is also found. For the full transcription of this inscription, see Idema, *Butterfly Lovers*, 208–10.

84. Idema’s English translation of this text is available in Victor H. Mair and Mark Bender’s *The Columbia Anthology of Chinese Folk and Popular Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 505–51.

85. Most *baojuan* texts have a positive attitude toward Confucianism and the ruler/state, so Confucian settings in these texts can be understood in this light; see n. 62. According to Daniel L. Overmyer, the *baojuan*’s basic concern is religious salvation and ethical exhortation. Although it supports Buddhist values, it is also critical of Buddhism as an elitist form of religion and of the celibacy of Buddhist monks; see his “Attitudes toward the Ruler and State in Chinese Popular Religious Literature: Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century Pao-chüan,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 44.2 (1984): 347–50. Xuan Bin argues that *baojuan* in the name of popular religion (here he calls it *mijiao* 密教) actually propagated Confucian values in local areas; see his “Liang Zhu gushi de san ben baojuan,” in *LZWDXL*, 144.

86. *LZWDGG*, 543.

87. Timothy C. Wong’s view that pleasing and amusing audiences/readers might be a more compelling motive than instruction for a Chinese fiction writer may be applicable to the Liang-Zhu narrative as well. Plotlines to satisfy audiences’ “visceral desires and sense of justice” seem to appear more frequently in the later Liang-Zhu folk ballad and drama versions. See Wong, “Entertainment as Art: An Approach to the Ku-Chin Hsiao-Shuo,” *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews (CLEAR)* 3.2 (1981): 235–50.

88. “Mudan ji” (*myu shu*) shows the typical structure of these extended versions. After Liang and Zhu’s deaths and the butterfly transformation, this version includes the elements of Ma Jun’s indictment (馬俊告狀), the judgment of the King of the Underworld (閻王審判), Liang and Zhu’s return to the mortal world and subsequent marriage (還陽配合), Liang’s official mission to purchase a horse from a barbarian king as a consequence of his refusal to marry the daughter of a minister (彩樓招贅, 山伯買馬), Zhu’s going to the capital to find her husband and their reunion (駟所逢夫), and their blessed life together after returning to their hometown (榮歸團圓); see *LZWDQX*, 227–43.

89. *Ibid.*, 176–77.

90. The “Xinbian dongdiao da shuang hudie” version was written by the Master of Apricot Bridge 杏橋主人 (recorded in 1769 and published in 1823). This version, consisting of thirty chapters (*hui*), is four times as long as another *tanci* version, “Xinbian jin hudie zhuan” (1769), which follows the same basic story line as “Liang Shanbo ge.” These two versions show different adaptations within the same genre. For original texts of these two versions, see Lu Gong, *Liang Zhu gushi shuochang ji*, 237–345.

91. See Sheng Zhimei, *Qingdai tanci yanjiu* (Jinan: Qi Lu shushe, 2008), 59–60.

92. Lu Gong considers this version to be representative of the literati’s revision of texts from the perspective of feudal ethics; see his “Liang Zhu gushi shuochang ji xu,” in *LZWDXL*, 146.

93. *LZWDQX*, 239.

94. Two *guci* “Liu yin ji” versions are available in the Liang-Zhu collections; the one I refer to is the full version included in Lu Gong’s *Liang Zhu gushi shuochang ji*, 106–87.

95. *LZWDGG*, 353–71.

96. *Ibid.*, 371.

97. Che Xilun, *Su-wenxue congkao* (Taipei: Xuehai chubanshe, 1995), 27–36.

98. *LZWDQX*, 297.

99. Overmyer, “Attitudes toward the Ruler and State in Chinese Popular Religious Literature,” 348–49.

100. Zhang Xishun, ed., *Baojuan chuji* (Taiyuan: Shanxi renmin, 1994; hereafter *BJCJ*), 37:209.

101. *Ibid.*, 307.

102. See *LZWDGG*, 49, 129; “Chongzheng,” in *LZWDGG*, 357, 362; see also Dai Bufan, “Liang Zhu gushi san zhong” in *LZWDXL*, 218–19. Over three generations, for example, Jintong Yünü are reborn as Meng Jiangnü and Wan Xiliang (萬喜良), as the Cowherd and the Weaving Girl, and as Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai; see *LZWDGG*, 39, 199. Yet a folktale version shows that Liang and Zhu are originally immortal butterflies (*Hudie xian*) who are banished by the Queen Mother of the West (*Xi Wangmu*) for their misdemeanor; see “Hudie xian” 胡蝶仙, in *LZWDGG*, 137–38.

103. See “Fangyou,” in *BJCJ* 37:368, 377. This relationship between Guanyin and the butterfly is unique. Liang and Zhu are originally a pair of butterflies in front of the gate of Guanyin (觀音門前一對胡蝶) in Heaven, but they harbor a mundane heart and come down to the world (*ibid.*, 368); after completing their religious practice and attaining enlightenment, they finally ascend to Qinghua gong (The Abode of Purity and Prosperity) in Heaven and become a pair of colorful butterflies (*hua hudie*) in front of Guanyin (*ibid.*, 377).

104. The definition of popular religion can vary. By “popular religion,” I mean the

eclectic religious beliefs and practices that have been found in varying forms and to varying degrees all over China. Popular religion covers the broad spectrum of beliefs and benefits that flexibly serve the majority of the people (including the middle class)—with the exception of orthodox devotees of institutional religions and government. Popular religion has a long history in China, appearing as early as the fifth century CE: see Daniel L. Overmyer, “Alternatives: Popular Religious Sects in Chinese Society,” *Modern China* 7.2 (1981): 153–90. For a general discussion of the definition of popular religion, see Stephen F. Teiser, “Popular Religion,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 54.2 (1995): 378–95.

105. For example, see “Shuangxian baojuan,” in *LZWDQX*, 297–328.

106. For example, see “Liang Shanbo Zhu Yingtai huan hun tuan yuan ji” 山伯祝英台还魂团圆记 (The Story of the Revival and Reunion of Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai), in *LZWDGG*, 604–42.

107. Cong Yating, “Tanci, Baojuan zhong de Liang Zhu gushi,” in *LZWDXL*, 438.

108. The last line can be interpreted in many ways. One possibility is that it refers to the festive mood of the music and dance performed by Cao Cao’s 曹操 (155–220) consorts and female entertainers on the first day (and on the fifteenth day) of each month. In his “Posthumous Order” (Yiling 遺令), Cao Cao expressed his wish to continue to enjoy such pleasures after his death. In this translation, I also consider the expression *yue chao* (月朝) in the original text to be a simplified form of *chao yue* (嘲月), which is an abbreviation of *chao feng nong yue* (嘲風弄月), connotating romantic frivolity. This interpretation seems to make the most sense when it is related to the next phrase, *yi duan qing* (一段情), meaning a touching love tale.

109. “Yingtai baojuan,” in *BJCJ* 37:121.

110. Che Xilun, *Zhongguo Baojuan yanjiu lunji* (Taipei: Xuehai chubanshe, 1997), 27.

111. For information on this function of *baojuan* performance, see Idema, “Evil Parents and Filial Offspring: Some Comments on the *Xiangshan baojuan* and Related Texts,” *Studies in Central and East Asian Religion* 12.1 (2001): 14; see also Idema’s introduction to his *Personal Salvation and Filial Piety: Two Precious Scroll Narratives of Guanyin and Her Acolytes* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2008), 1–44.

112. For example, “Yang Sanbaek chön” is set during the Chenghua reign (1465–87) of the Ming dynasty instead of in the Early Jin, Zhou, or Song. Liang and Zhu study at a Buddhist temple instead of a Confucian academy, and Zhu marries a son of the Sim family, not a son of the Ma family. Zhu’s parents dress Zhu up as a boy and send her to the temple out of their zeal for education. Liang discovers Zhu’s true identity soon after he meets her and proposes marriage to her, which causes Zhu to quit her studies; this leads to the omission of the scenes of “seeing off” (*xiangsong* 相送) and “reunion

at the tower” (*loutai hui* 樓臺會). Liang’s soul appears on Zhu’s first night with her husband, which leads to Zhu’s visit to his grave and to her suicide.

CHAPTER 2

1. There is a common expression that “the taboo exists to be violated.” Georges Bataille states that human society is “the world of taboos” (taboos don’t exist in the world of animals), and elaborates on the complementary roles of taboo and transgression in maintaining the social order by saying that the transgression transcends the taboo and even completes it. See his *Eroticism: Death and Sensuality*, trans. Mary Dalwood (San Francisco: City Lights Publishing, 1986), 63–70.

2. Zhu Yingtai’s character is particularly resonant with that of Yentl (Anshel) in the modern short story “Yentl the Yeshiva Boy,” by Isaac Bashevis Singer (1902–91). Set in a nineteenth-century Jewish community, the story depicts a young girl’s academic zeal and the inner conflict between her gender and her scholarly identity, as epitomized in the following expression: “she had the soul of a man and the body of a woman.” See Marion Magin and Elizabeth Pollet, trans., “Yentl the Yeshiva Boy,” in *The Collected Stories of Isaac Bashevis Singer* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1983), 149–69.

3. I use the term “desire” in Jacques Lacan’s sense, meaning that desire is a metonymy; constituted by lack or absence, it continues as desire and can never be completely satisfied. There are causes that set desire into motion, but a person can never understand what he/she truly desires. See Bruce Fink, *A Clinical Introduction to Lacanian Psychoanalysis: Theory and Technique* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), esp. 26–27.

4. Lewis C. Seifert argues that fairy tales (including folktales) disclose, more explicitly than other texts, the most central myths about gender and desire, and that for this reason they are “apt means” of studying the cultural construction of those themes. See his *Fairy Tales, Sexuality, and Gender in France, 1690–1715: Nostalgic Utopias* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 2–3.

5. For example, scholars such as Tani Barlow, Dorothy Ko, and Geng Song have explored the fluid and discursive nature of gender politics in Chinese society, each presenting specific cases of the contingency of gender in relation to other factors determining social inequalities, such as class, marriage, kinship, and age. See Barlow, “Responses: Asian Perspective: Beyond Dichotomies,” *Gender and History* 1.3 (1989): 318–29; Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers: Women and Culture in Seventeenth-Century China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994); and

Song, *The Fragile Scholar: Power and Masculinity in Chinese Culture* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2004). For a comprehensive study, see Christina K. Gilmartin, ed., *Engendering China: Women, Culture, and the State* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994).

6. Lack or absence is the central concept in both Hegelian and Freudian/Lacanian discourses of desire. According to Seifert, folktales such as Liang-Zhu reveal how this lack was culturally understood, which can often be modeled as a combination of revolt and accommodation. The deployment of Zhu's desire in Liang-Zhu is similar to this model, as we will see. Seifert, *Fairy Tales, Sexuality, and Gender in France, 1690–1715*, 12.

7. Judith Butler, *Subjects of Desire: Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth-Century France* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 117.

8. Ibid.

9. The other three *side* (literally, “four virtues”) are womanly virtue (*fude* 婦德), womanly speech (*fuyan* 婦言), and womanly bearing (*furong* 婦容). Ban Zhao 班昭 (ca. 45–ca. 116), in her “Admonitions for Women” (Nü jie 女戒), inscribed the preexisting four aspects (virtue, work, speech, and bearing) as standard examples of women's learning. See Wilt L. Idema and Beata Grant, *The Red Brush: Writing Women of Imperial China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2004), 17–42.

10. For a translation of this episode, see Anne B. Kinney, trans. and ed., “Jing Jiang of the Ji Lineage of Lu,” in *Exemplary Women of Early China: The Lienü zhuan of Liu Xiang* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 12–16.

11. Grace Fong, “Female Hands: Embroidery as a Knowledge Field in Women's Everyday Life in Late Imperial and Early Republican China,” *Late Imperial China* 25.1 (2004): 4–14.

12. According to Grace Fong, Ding Pei, in the preface to her book on embroidery, states that, when compared to calligraphy and painting, “embroidery reaches similar wonders.” Quoted in Fong, “Female Hands,” 28.

13. Marsha Weidner, “Women in the History of Chinese Painting,” in *Views from Jade Terrace: Chinese Women Artists 1300–1912*, ed. Marsha Weidner et al. (Indianapolis, IN: Indianapolis Museum of Art; New York: Rizzoli, 1988), 21.

14. Susan Mann, *Precious Records: Women in China's Long Eighteenth Century* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 159–60.

15. “Chongzheng,” in *LZWDGG*, 353.

16. Though *qiaonü* literally means “skillful women,” in Chinese folk narrative it refers to women of high morality and talent (wisdom), which reflects the demand that women find a balance between virtues and talents; see Peng Qin, “Minjian xushi zhong qiaonü xingxiang de daode yiwen,” *Tongren xueyuan xuebao* 1.5 (2007): 55–56.

17. “Jieyi gongshu,” in *LZWDGG*, 543.

18. The Ballad of Mulan was written by an anonymous poet of the Northern Dynasties (386–581). It is the earliest version of the legend of Hua Mulan, which begins as follows: “Jiji, sigh! Jiji, sigh! / Mulan was weaving facing the door / The sound of the loom couldn’t be heard / There was only the sigh from the door / What was she thinking of? / What was she recalling? / “I had nothing to think of / I had nothing to recall.” Translation from Lan Dong, *Mulan’s Legend and Legacy in China and the United States* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011), 53–54.

19. “Liang Shanbo ge,” in *LZWDGG*, 516–17.

20. In the story of the Weaving Girl and the Cowherd, the two lovers are originally stars (Altair and Vega) in Heaven. They love each other so much that they neglect their duties. The Jade Emperor places them on opposite sides of Heaven as a punishment and allows them to meet only once on Double Seventh, the seventh day of the seventh month (also known as the time when the stars Altair and Vega intersect). In folklore, in order to be reunited, this couple has to be incarnated as a human couple seven times and experience passionate love and painful parting seven times. Liang and Zhu are considered one of the seven incarnations of the couple.

21. Diaochan is originally depicted in Luo Guanzhong’s 羅貫中 (1330–1400) *Sanguozhi yanyi* 三國志演義 (Romance of the Three Kingdoms) as a famous beauty who is used by Wang Yun 王允 (137–92) to destroy the relationship between Dong Zhuo and his adopted son, Lü Bu (Lü kills Dong to secure her). However, according to the *pinghua* version *The Annals of the Three Kingdoms in Plain Language* (*Sanguozhi pinghua* 三國志評話) and the Yuan *zaju* versions such as *Double Intrigue* (*Lianhuan ji* 連環計), Diaochan is originally the wife of Lü Bu. The couple, who experience multiple partings because of war, remain devoted to each other. Diaochan’s role of destroying the relationship between Dong Zhuo and Lü Bu, the so-called honey-trap (*meiren ji* 美人計), is reduced in these vernacular versions, and her image as a chaste woman is stressed instead. In Liang-Zhu, Zhu praises this couple for their everlasting love. Hu Ying’s research provides an overview of the different representations of Diaochan; see her “Angling with Beauty: Two Stories of Women as Narrative Bait in *Sanguozhi yanyi*,” *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews (CLEAR)* 15 (1993): 99–112.

22. “Jieyi gongshu,” in *LZWDGG*, 543.

23. *Ibid.*, 544.

24. As seen in the famous acts of “Youyuan” 游園 (Strolling in the Garden) and “Jingmeng” 驚夢 (Awakening from a Dream) in the play, the garden becomes the place where a young girl is awakened to her passion for a man. In traditional Chinese society, the garden generally represents a miniature of the world as it is conceived by the person who designed it, and thus embodying that person’s inner sensibility. Yet,

according to Wai-ye Li, gardens were also favored settings for theatrical performances during the late Ming and early Qing periods, which encouraged the increasing use of the garden for romantic affairs, as in the case of *Mudan ting*. See Li, “Gardens and Illusions from Late Ming to Early Qing,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 72.2 (2012): 295–336.

25. This expression is from Cao Pi’s 曹丕 (187–226) essay “On Literature” (論文) in his *Classical Essays* (Dianlun 典論); the original text is included in *Selections of Refined Literature* (Wenxuan 文選) compiled by Crown Prince Zhaoming 昭明太子 (502–77).

26. “Liang Shanbo ge,” in *LWDGG*, 517.

27. See previous notes 11–14.

28. Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers*, 92, 170.

29. See, for example, “Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai quan shi” 梁山伯與祝英台全史 (The Complete Story of Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai; hereafter “Quanshi”) and “Shanbo fangyou” 山伯訪友 (Shanbo Visits His Friend), in *LZWDGG*, 295–352 and 428–32, respectively, and “Daoqing: Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai” 道情: 梁山伯與祝英台, in *YXLZSC*, 307–31.

30. Beatrice Spade’s research on women’s education during the Southern Dynasties shows that during the fifth and sixth centuries, women’s education was practiced for the aforementioned purposes, and that the qualifications of an ideal woman included a certain level of scholarship and intellect. Spade also maintains that during this period there was even a social venue where educated women could put their talents to good use. This research raises the possibility that Zhu Yingtai’s character is based on the perception of limitation in women’s education during Southern Dynasties, for some scholars (mostly Chinese) believe that the Liang-Zhu story originated in this period. See Spade, “The Education of Women in China during the Southern Dynasties,” *Journal of Asian History* 13.1 (1979): 15–35.

31. See Zhao Qingge, “Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai,” in *LZWDQX*, 676.

32. “Quanshi,” in *LZWDGG*, 300.

33. Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Tavistock, 1977), 2.

34. *Ibid.*, 2, 4.

35. Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), 142–46.

36. In this play, the male protagonist, Zhang Sheng, saves the heroine Cui Yingying when she and some family members staying at a temple are besieged by bandits. Zhang and Cui have a good first impression of each other, which grows into love thanks to this event. Cui’s mother, however, although she has promised earlier that

any man who saves her daughter will have permission to marry her, does not approve of their marriage due to Zhang's poor background.

37. Daoist master Sun Bu'er 孫不二 (ca. 1119–82), for example, is said to have mutilated her good looking face to help her focus on her religious practice. See Grace Schireson, *Zen Women: Beyond Tea Ladies, Iron Maidens, and Macho Masters* (Boston: Wisdom, 2009), 142.

38. However, Beata Grant warns against any simplistic interpretation of women's mutilations or their efforts to become "a great gentleman" (*da zhangfu*) as just "looking like a man." In scrutinizing the uses of the term *da zhangfu* in Buddhist monastic practice, she points out that discarding feminine characteristics (e.g., emotional weakness) was more important to becoming "a great gentleman" (Buddhist teachers) than cultivating a non-effeminate appearance; see Grant, "Da Zhangfu: The Gendered Rhetoric of Heroism and Equality in Seventeenth-Century Chan Buddhist Discourse Records," *Nan Nü: Men, Women and Gender in Early and Imperial China* 10.2 (2008): 177–211.

39. Judith Williamson, *Consuming Passions: The Dynamics of Popular Culture* (London: Marion Boyars, 1995), 47.

40. Charlotte Suthrell, *Unzipping Gender: Sex, Cross-Dressing and Culture* (New York: Berg, 2004), 6.

41. *Ibid.*, 2–3.

42. Examples are Luce Irigaray (*mimicry*) and Barbara Babcock (*symbolic inversion*). Their terms for coding strategies belong, in a broader sense, to the category of "appropriation," a term used by Joan N. Rader and Susan S. Lanser to mean an adaptation "to feminist purposes" of "forms or materials normally associated with male culture or with androcentric images of the feminine." See Radner and Lanser, "Strategies of Coding in Women's Cultures," in *Feminist Messages: Coding in Women's Folk Culture*, ed. Joan Newlon Radner (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 10–13.

43. See LZWKYY, 438. The original text is "梁山伯 (白) 他们取笑贤弟峨眉秀脸, 身材娇小, 不象个大丈夫. 祝英台 (白) 胡说, 我就是个身材娇小的大丈夫, 这是爹娘给我生的."

44. The exception to this rule is the theater. For example, in Renaissance theater, cross-dressing on stage received cultural approval, and became a necessary part of comedy, such as the Italian *commedia dell'arte*; see Laura Giannetti, "On the Deceptions of the Deceived: Leila and the Pleasures of Play," *MLN* 116.1 (2001): 54–55.

45. Dorothy Ko, "The Body as Attire: The Shifting Meanings of Footbinding in Seventeenth-Century China," *Journal of Women's History* 8.4 (1997): 12.

46. The record is seen in statutes of "Jinzhì shìwú xiéshù" 禁止師巫邪術, in vol. 18 of Xue Yunsheng's 薛允升 (1820–1901) *Du lì cùn yì* 讀例存疑; see Hu Xingq-

iao and Deng Youtian, eds., *Du li cun yi dian zhu* 读例存疑点注 (Beijing: Zhongguo renmin gong'an daxue chubanshe, 1994), 298.

47. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 139.

48. *Ibid.*, 140.

49. Pauline Greenhill, “Neither a Man nor a Maid’: Sexualities and Gendered Meanings in Cross-Dressing Ballads,” *Journal of American Folklore* 108 (1995): 165.

50. Lou Cheng 婁逞 and Huang Chonggu 黃崇緞 are examples. These women dress up as male students and become high officials. However, when their true gender is discovered, they are unable to continue their official careers. They both return to their home villages and live in seclusion. The two tales are found in the *History of the Southern Dynasties* (Nanshi 南史) and *Extensive Records of the Taiping Era* (Taiping guangji 太平廣記), respectively. For an English translation of each tale, see Idema and Grant, *Red Brush*, 678–79, 362–64.

51. The most famous example is the legend of Hua Mulan. Lan Dong argues that the ballad reflects the non-Chinese origin of the legend of Mulan, and embodies both gender crossing and social and ethnic blending; see Dong, *Mulan’s Legend and Legacy in China and the United States*, 55–61.

52. *Xie Xiao’e zhuan* 謝小娥傳 (The Story of Xie Xiao’e) by Li Gongzuo 李公佐 (ca. 770–848) serves as an example of this case. When Xie’s father and husband are killed by bandits, she disguises herself as a manservant in order to avenge the deaths of her loved ones. Her actions, which demonstrate both filial piety and wifely devotion, are described as not only virtuous but brave. The story is found in *Xin tangshu* 新唐書 (The New History of the Tang Dynasty, 36) and *Taiping guangji* (chap. 491, 1881–82).

53. Rong Zhaozu, “Zhu Yingtai gushi jixu,” in *LZWDXL*, 1–6; see also Keith McMahon, “The Classic ‘Beauty-Scholar’ Romance and the Superiority of the Talented Woman,” in *Body, Subject, and Power in China*, ed. Angela Zito and Tani E. Barlow (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 233–36.

54. See Feng Menglong’s *Yushi mingyan* (Hong Kong: Zhonghua shuju, 1965), 28:416–27.

55. Shuhui Yang and Yunqin Yang, trans., *Stories Old and New: A Ming Dynasty Collection* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000), 490; I have slightly modified their translation.

56. Feng, *Yushi mingyan*, 416.

57. “Liang Shanbo ge,” in *LZWDGG*, 517.

58. The full title of this version is “Liang Zhu shenghuan jie fuqi” 梁祝生還結夫妻 (Liang and Zhu Return to Life and Become Husband and Wife; hereafter “Liang Zhu shenghuan”), in *LZWDGG*, 374–75.

59. Qian Nanyang, “Zhu Yingtai,” in *Liang Zhu xiju jicun*, 1.
60. Susan Mann, “Presidential Address: Myths of Asian Womanhood,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 59.4 (2000): 836–42.
61. Wang Ningbang and Zhang Tingting, “Lun Liang Zhu xiqu zhong de nüquan-zhuyi jingshen,” *Fujian luntan: Renwen shehui kexue ban* 4 (2006): 100–103.
62. Altenburger, “Is It Clothes that Make the Man?” 172. This article presents an in-depth analysis on Zhu’s cross-dressing and its hidden, disruptive quality, with most of which I agree. In this chapter, I also look at Zhu’s motivations in light of some fundamental issues that complicate the gender issues of Liang-Zhu, for example Zhu’s aspiration for study and autonomy.
63. “Jieyi gongshu,” in *LZWDGG*, 544.
64. Yang and Yang, *Stories Old and New*, 490. I have slightly modified their translation.
65. Feng, *Yushi mingyan*, 416.
66. “Jieyi gongshu,” in *LZWDGG*, 544.
67. In *Xixiang ji*, for example, peonies are used as a literary trope to announce the advent of spring and the sparking of sexual desire: “Spring has come to the realm of men, flowers sport their color! / Gently she adjusts her willow waist / And lightly splits the flower’s heart: / Dew drips; the peony opens” (春至人間花弄色。將柳腰款擺，花心輕拆，露滴牡丹開。). “Flower heart” (花心) refers to the vagina. Translation from Stephen H. West and Wilt L. Idema, *The Story of the Western Wing* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 228.
68. Other examples of peonies as a symbol are found in all the *baojuan* versions and “Liang Zhu Shenghuan.” In many versions, including “Quanshi” and “Liang Shanbo ge,” Zhu uses a piece of red silk that is buried under the flowers, oftentimes named *yueyuehong* 月月紅 (Chinese Rose or American Beauty). The silk turns to ashes when Zhu loses her virginity.
69. This example appears in the *muyu shu* (wooden-fish books) version; see the original text, in *LZWDQX*, 185–243.
70. See Sherry J. Mou’s introduction to her *Presence and Presentation: Women in the Chinese Literati Tradition* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), xix. Ban Zhao’s works are said to have inspired women from later periods to write moral primers themselves. These include the Song sisters’ (Song Ruoxin 宋若莘 and Song Ruozhao 宋若昭) *Nü Lunyü* 女論語 (Analects for Women) and Mrs. Zheng’s 鄭氏 *Nü Xiaojing* 女孝經 (The Classic of Filial Piety for Women) from the Tang dynasty; *Neixun* 內訓 (Teachings for the Inner Quarters, 1404) by Empress Xu 徐后 (or Renxiao 仁孝皇后) from Ming China; and *Naehun* 內訓 (Teachings for the Inner Quarters, 1475) by Queen Sohye (1437–1504) from Chosŏn Korea.

71. Feng, *Yushi mingyan*, 416.

72. *LZWDGG*, 545.

73. See *BJCJ* 34: 390 “内房嫂嫂問知得，来見公婆說元因，姑娘要到杭州去，必然尋个丈夫身，衆孝男子他是女，男混女雜不相应，公婆你要生志童，休听姑娘去孝文。” Other *baojuan* versions such as “Yingtai,” “Shanbo,” and “Fangyou” also include this element.

74. In the case of “Liang Zhu shan’ge,” Zhu’s sister-in-law plays a very important role in inspiring Zhu’s study at an academy. Though she encourages Zhu to marry another, she remains a good model of a female supporter. This image, however, appears only infrequently in Liang-Zhu.

75. *LZWDGG*, “Zhu Yingtai zhongqing Liang Shanbo” 祝英台钟情梁山伯, 29–30; “Quanshi,” 303–4; “Jiaogu mudan nüer xin” 焦骨牡丹女儿心, 142–43.

76. *LZWDGG*, 300, 350.

77. Daria Berg, “Miss Emotion: Women, Books and Culture in Seventeenth Century Jiangnan,” in *Love, Hatred, and Other Passions: Questions and Themes on Emotions in Chinese Civilization*, ed. Paolo Santangelo and Donatella Guida (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 314–30, esp. 321–22.

78. Paolo Santangelo explores the allusive power of classical poetry in evoking and transmitting emotions in relation to the development of the cult of passionate love during the Ming dynasty. See his “The Cult of Love in Some Texts of Ming and Qing Literature,” *East and West* 50.1 (2000): 439–99.

79. The employment of dreams, believed to have no influence on reality, is widely acknowledged as a safe device for fulfilling sexual desire in this play; see Santangelo, “Cult of Love in Some Texts of Ming and Qing Literature,” 495. In her analysis of the dream and awakening motifs of *Mudan ting*, Tina Lu points out that the use of dreams to represent an individual’s interiority (“what happens inside a person” as opposed to “what happens outside”) was a popular trend in the late Ming and early Qing periods; see her *Persons, Roles, and Minds: Identity in “Peony Pavilion” and “Peach Blossom Fan”* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 66.

80. Martin Huang, “Sentiments of Desire: Thoughts on the Cult of Qing in Ming-Qing Literature,” *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews (CLEAR)* 20 (1998): 168–69; see also his *Desire and Fictional Narrative in Late Imperial China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2001), esp. 35–85.

81. The emergence of this tendency under the influence of Neo-Confucian philosophy during the Song dynasty can be seen in the records of county gazetteers honoring exemplary local women, as discussed in chapter 1. This binary thinking was further reinforced during late imperial China through the nationwide employment of elaborate judicial sanctions and social rewards systems. See Susan Mann, “Widows in

the Kinship, Class, and Community Structures of Qing Dynasty China,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 46.1 (1987): 37–56; see also Katherine Carlitz, “Shrine, Governing-Class Identity, and the Cult of Widow-Fidelity in Mid-Ming Jiangnan,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 56.3 (1997): 612–40.

82. This view, first presented by Liu Jihua (see her “Zhongguo zhenjie guannian”), is broadly accepted in the field. For a discussion of this view, see Mann, “Widows in the Kinship, Class, and Community Structures of Qing Dynasty China,” 37–38.

83. Liu Xiang’s *Biographies of Virtuous Women*, as an earlier model of its kind, presents various models of female virtues, such as maternal rectitude (*mu yi* 母儀), sage intelligence (*xian ming* 賢明), benevolent wisdom (*ren zhi* 仁智), purity and obedience (*zhen shun* 貞順), chastity and righteousness (*jie yi* 節義), and skill in argument (*bian tong* 辯通). The translation of each term is borrowed from Lisa Raphals, *Sharing the Light: Representations of Women and Virtue in Early China* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 20.

84. The revalorization and legitimization of the concept of *qing* (passion) in fiction and drama during the period can also be interpreted partially as an effort on the part of the Confucian literati to reinstate genuine Confucian morality and thus reconfirm their status as the Confucian elite. See Huang, “Sentiments of Desire.”

85. Weijing Lu, *True to Her Word: The Faithful Maiden Cult in Late Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 3–4. Lu’s research, convincingly presents how Confucian literati, starting from the mid-Ming, dramatized and intensified the performance of female virtue.

86. This tendency is easily found in the *caizi jiaren* 才子佳人 (scholar-beauty) romances of the Qing. Chloë F. Starr aptly demonstrates important characteristics of the female figures in these stories. One aspect is that the stories present an enhanced implementation of female virtues—not bound to orthodox Confucian concepts of gender and space—by showing that these women pursue their virtues by ardently adopting male moral standards and culture and by rivaling men; see her *Red-Light Novels of the Late Qing* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 40–42.

87. See *LZWDGG*, 588 and 541, respectively. “Liang Zhu shan’ge,” although it shares many elements with “Liang Shanbo ge,” lacks the oath motif.

88. See *LZWDGG*, 453–501.

89. See An Sanghun’s translation, *N. G. Garin-Mikhailop’usuki’i ka 1898-yön kaül e ch’ærokhan Chosön sörhwa* (P’aju: Han’guk haksul chöngbo, 2006), 252. The “Söyak” version was collected by Russian railroad engineer Garin-Mikhailovsky (1852–1906) during his travels to the northern part of Korea, and later included in his collection of sixty-four Korean folktales, called *Koreiskie skazki* (1904). For more information on this Korean version and its Korean translation, see An, *N. G. Garin-Mikhailop’usuki’i*.

90. In China, Confucianism and Neo-Confucianism have never been separate from each other. But the dominance of Neo-Confucian ethics in late Chosŏn Korea has been well documented by many scholars. The absence of the virginity theme in Korean versions of Liang-Zhu therefore makes it doubtful that the addition of the theme in late Ming versions was due to the influence of Neo-Confucian realities in local places in China. Hua Wei, in her discussion of commentaries on *Caizi Mudanting* 才子牡丹亭 (Genius Peony Pavilion), emphasizes the role of literary conventions, more than that of other external factors, in engendering new meanings and themes; see Hua, “How Dangerous Can the ‘Peony’ Be? Textual Space, ‘Caizi Mudanting,’ and Naturalizing the Erotic,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 65.4 (2006): 741–62.

CHAPTER 3

1. For more information on these dramatic versions, see Qian Nanyang, *Liang Zhu xiju jicun*, 105.

2. This comes from Aristotle’s discussion of three types of friendship; see book VIII of his *Nicomachean Ethics*. He says that the first two types of friendship (of utility and pleasure) are incidental, but the last one, the friendship of the good, is the best form—what he calls the “perfect (or complete) friendship.” See A. W. Price, *Love and Friendship in Plato and Aristotle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 104; see also Lorraine Smith Pangle, *Aristotle and the Philosophy of Friendship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 37–45.

3. See Martin Huang, “Male Friendship in Ming China: An Introduction,” *Nan Nü: Men, Women and Gender in Early and Imperial China* 9.1 (2007): 2–33; also see Paul Rouzer, *Articulated Ladies: Gender and the Male Community in Early Chinese Texts* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2001), 96–97.

4. Martin Huang, “Male Friendship in Ming China,” 3. Male bonding is characterized by strong emotional attachment between males and exclusion of females. See Robin Fox, “Male Bonding in the Epics and Romances,” in *The Literary Animal: Evolution and the Nature of Narrative*, ed. Jonathan Gottshall and David Sloan Wilson (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2005), 126–27. Concerning the case in premodern China, Paul Rouzer, discussing the social significance of the intimacy of the male literary community, warns us against interpreting this intimacy as the sign of a homosexual relationship in a modern sense. See Rouzer, *Articulated Ladies*.

5. According to Ma Zichen, the names of each of the servants not only indicates the story’s development as a popular narrative but also represents its hidden theme. For example, the name Renxin refers to human or benevolent hearts, while Shijiu means

that “this event took place a long time ago”; see Ma, “Liang Zhu lishi yu chuanshuo,” in *LZWKLY*, 67. Yet some names in prosimetric versions (such as Chunxiang and Yaoqin in “Xinbian dongdiao da shuang hudie”) seem to have been borrowed from other stories.

6. “Liang Zhu shan’ge,” in *LZWDGG*, 460.

7. The names of places vary, but the fact that Liang and Zhu are from the same region is treated as an important factor in the credibility of their friendship. Their age, another important factor in determining a relationship, performs in a more delicate way. Some prosimetric versions, such as “Shuang hudie baojuan,” “Shuangxian baojuan,” and “Shanbo baojuan,” present them as different ages (Liang is seventeen years old, Zhu sixteen) but render the relationship very special by presenting “Double Seven” (the meeting day of the legendary couple known as the Weaving Girl and the Cowherd) as the birth date of both Liang and Zhu. Being born at the same hour of the same day of the same month, they are supposed to share the same fate; indeed, their karmic affinity is presented as the ultimate reason for their doomed relationship in these versions. On top of that, “Yingtai baojuan” presents both Zhu and Liang as being seventeen years old, which further strengthens their karmic bond.

8. In the original text, Liang refers to *jinlan* 金兰, meaning the friendship of Metal and Orchid. The term is widely used throughout Liang-Zhu texts. This allusion originates in the ancient belief that the sharpness of the shared minds of the two can cut even metal, and the words of the shared minds are as fragrant as the orchid flower. Later the expression came to indicate sworn brothers who are supposed to share their minds and words. See also *LZWDQX*, 526.

9. “Liu yin ji” (*chuanju*), in *LZWDXY*, 144–45.

10. See Martin Huang, “Male Friendship in Ming China,” 2–33.

11. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*; *Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics*, Trans. Robert C. Bartlett and Susan D. Collins (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 166–70.

12. My use of the term “brotherhood” pertains to the relationship of sworn brothers (*yixiongdi*). It has the same connotation as the friendship bond or male bond that I refer to throughout this book, and differs from the concept of brotherhood, meaning the philanthropic love of God in Christianity.

13. *LZWDGG*, 305–6.

14. *Ibid.*, 306.

15. C. S. Lewis, *The Four Loves* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1960), 96.

16. *Ibid.*, 96–97.

17. *Ibid.*, 98.

18. “Jieyi gongshu,” in *LZWDGG*, 552.

19. *Ibid.*, 553.

20. “Yingtai hen,” in *LZWDGG*, 451. This version originated in Henan Province and has long been performed by local entertainers. Although it departs from the versions from Zhejiang and Jiangsu Provinces in its employment of different perspectives and episodes, it follows the popular ending of Liang-Zhu, featuring Liang and Zhu’s tragic deaths and butterfly transformation.

21. *Ibid.*, 433.

22. *Ibid.*, 435.

23. *Ibid.*

24. This view seems to be well accepted in both West and East. In her introduction to the *History of Emotion (Qingshi 情史)* by Feng Menglong, Hua-yuan Li Mowry demonstrates the significance of “reciprocation” to the Chinese understanding of friendship, and many Western philosophers, such as Irving Singer, also regard “reciprocity” as the key factor and outcome of love in the West. See Mowry, trans., *Chinese Love Stories from Ch’ing-shih* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1983), 17; and Irving Singer, *The Nature of Love: Plato to Luther* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009), 6.

25. *Zhiyin*, literally meaning “understanding the sound,” refers to close friends, along with the term *zhiji* 知己 (understanding self). These terms originate from the story of the zither player Yu Boya 俞伯牙 of the Spring and Autumn period (770–481 BCE), and his friend Zhong Ziqi 鍾子期, who understands Boya’s music very well. The two enjoyed such a close friendship that Boya stopped playing music after Zhong Ziqi died.

26. “Shanbo fangyou” 山伯访友, in *LZWDQX*, 120.

27. “Liu yin ji” (*guci*), in *LZWDQX*, 263.

28. “Jieyi gonghu,” *LZWDGG*, 555.

29. This term refers to friendship that remains strong and unchanged, like metal and stone.

30. Gan Bao 干寶 (fl. 315–36), “Fan Juqing Zhang Yuanbo,” *Soushen ji* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985), 144–45.

31. Zhang Shao calls Fan Shi “a friend even after death” (*siyou* 死友), whereas he refers to other friends from his hometown as “friends during lifetime” (*shengyou* 生友).

32. A Yuan *zaju* (variety play) entitled *Xinkan sisheng jiao Fan Zhang jishu* 新刊死生交範張雞黍 (Newly Cut Life-and-Death Friendship, Fan and Zhang Chicken-Millet), composed by Gong Tianting 宮天挺 (ca. 1260–1330), is the earliest and best known of these later renditions. Its plot is complicated by the addition of a third character, Wang Zhonglüe 王仲略, who serves as a counterexample to the true friendship of Fan Shi and Zhang Shao.

33. The title of this text is *Fan Juqing jishu sisheng jiao* 范巨卿雞黍死生交 (Fan Juqing’s Chicken-Millet Life-and-Death Friendship); for the original text, see Feng

Menglong, *Yushi mingyan*, 239–45. According to Kimberly Besio, this vernacular short story intensifies the theme of reciprocity embedded in the earlier version of *Soushen ji* to such an extreme that both parties give up their lives to embody a true sense of friendship, thus displaying true Confucian virtue (moral heroism) in the face of a failed political system. For more information of the evolution of the Fan-Zhang story, see Besio, “A Friendship of Metal and Stone: Representations of Fan Juqing and Zhang Yuanbo in the Ming Dynasty,” *Nan Nü: Men, Women and Gender in Early and Imperial China* 9.1 (2007): 111–45.

34. Wolfram Eberhard, *Moral and Social Values of the Chinese: Collected Essays* (Taipei: Ch'eng-wen Publishing Company, 1971), 209.

35. Martin Huang, “Male Friendship in Ming China,” 2. Friendship is the last one of the “Five Relationships” (*wulun*) in Chinese society. Women’s friendship was not visible in history, so the friendship I mention here refers exclusively to men.

36. Norman Kutcher, “The Fifth Relationship: Dangerous Friendships in the Confucian Context,” *American Historical Review* 105.5 (2000): 1615–16.

37. *Ibid.*, 1616–20. Kutcher presents examples of Confucian writings in which friendship was made analogous to relationship.

38. Susan Mann, “The Male Bond in Chinese History and Culture,” *American Historical Review* 105.5 (2000): 1600–1614. The recent study by Anna Shields presents an in-depth and overarching examination of close friendship among literati in the complex social realities of the mid-Tang era; see *One Who Knows Me: Friendship and Literary Culture in Mid-Tang China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2015).

39. Martin Huang, “Male Friendship in Ming China,” 30.

40. Martin Huang presents an increased mobility during the sixteenth century (due largely to the commercialization and development of transportation systems) as important for the popularity of friendship; see Martin Huang, “Male Friendship and *Jiangxue* (Philosophical Debates) in Sixteenth-Century China,” *Nan Nü: Men, Women and Gender in Early and Imperial China* 9.1 (2007): 149–50. The term “homosocial” is analogous to “homosexual” in that it can imply erotic desire for the same sex, as found in Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s phrase “the potential unbrokenness of a continuum between homosocial and homosexual.” I nevertheless use each term with a different focus, with “homosexual” indicating the sexual desire and practice, and “homosocial” focusing more on mental and emotional bonding with someone of the same sex that may also involve erotic desire. For Sedgwick’s discussion of homosocial desire, see the introduction to her *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 1.

41. See Joseph McDermott, “Friendship and Its Friends in the Late Ming,” in

Jinshi jiazuo yu zhengzhi bijiao lishi lunwen ji, ed. Zhongyang yanjiu yuan jindai shi yanjiusuo (Taipei: Zhong-yang-yanjiu yuan jindai yanjiusuo, 1992), 68–75.

42. If there is no duty of fidelity involved, the connection, in many cases, tends to end up as a relationship based on convenience. As a modern version of this connection, known as *guanxi*, implies, such a relationship tends to be associated with various kinds of factionalism, such as nepotism and regionalism. Scholars such as Gu Yanwu 顧炎武 (1613–82) criticized this baneful influence of the male connection on culture. For more information, see Martin Huang, “Male Friendship and *Jiangxue* (Philosophical Debates) in Sixteenth-Century China.”

43. See Lionel Tiger, *Men in Groups* (New York: Random House, 1969), esp. 41–125. Tiger’s analysis of the formation of male bonding within the context of social change and historical development supposes that male bonding has endured and will persist.

44. See Wah-shan Chou (Zhou Huashan), *Tongzhi: Politics of Same-Sex Eroticism in Chinese Societies* (New York: Haworth Press, 2000), 23.

45. Geng Song, *Fragile Scholar*, 172–83. A number of works have explored the practice of homosexuality in late imperial China within the context of fashionable community-building or fashion itself; see, for example, Sophie Volpp’s two articles on seventeenth-century male love, “Classifying Lust: The Seventeenth-Century Vogue for Male Love,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 61.1 (2001) 77–117, and “The Literary Consumption of Actors in Seventeenth-Century China,” in *Writing and Materiality in China: Essays in Honor of Patrick Hanan*, ed. Judith T. Zeitlin and Lydia H. Liu (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2003), 153–83; Brett Hinsch, *Passion of the Cut Sleeve: The Male Homosexual Tradition in China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Matthew H. Sommer, *Sex, Law, and Society in Late Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000); and Wu Cuncun, *Homoerotic Sensibilities in Late Imperial China* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004). The various forms of male indulgence with other males explored in these works demonstrate that there was much wider practice and tolerance of homosexuality than is commonly assumed. I use the term “homosexual” throughout this book in contrast to the normative “heterosexual” love, but the term is generally avoided in these works for its derogatory overtones; instead, “male to male” or “same sex” is used.

46. Joseph S. C. Lam and Giovanni Vitiello particularly highlight the efforts of the literati to legitimize the homosexual bond through tactical use of the concept of *qing* (love, passion, feeling, and so forth). See Lam, “Male Bonding in Ming China,” *Nan Nü: Men, Women, and Gender in Early and Imperial China* 9.1 (2007): 70–110; Vitiello, “Exemplary Sodomites: Chivalry and Love in Late Ming Culture,” *Nan Nü: Men, Women and Gender in Early and Imperial China* 2.2 (2000): 227–37; and Martin Huang, *Desire and Fictional Narrative in Late Imperial China*, 176–83.

47. See Sookja Cho, “Within and between Cultures,” 238–40.
48. One example of this case in which Liang’s suspicions are aroused during the crossing of the river can be found in the *guci* version “Liu yin ji.” For the river-crossing scene, see *LZWDQX*, 247.
49. “Shuangxian baojuan,” in *LZWDQX*, 301.
50. *Ibid.*, 302.
51. *Ibid.*, 302–3.
52. *Ibid.*, 303.
53. *LZWDQX*, 335.
54. “Yingtai ge,” in *LZWKMGI*, 231.
55. The term “public construction of relationship” is borrowed from folklorist Richard Bauman’s intriguing analysis of the storytelling of a hound dog, which shows how lying comes into play in the performance of oral narratives. Bauman points out that “the lying is overwhelmingly licensed as part of the fundamental ethos of sociability,” granting another party who does not challenge it (i.e., its truthfulness) the same license. See Bauman, “Any Man Who Keeps More’n One Hound’ll Lie to You: A Contextual Study of Expressive Lying,” in his *Story, Performance, and Event: Contextual Studies of Oral Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 11–32.
56. For example, when the students compete at urinating on the wall, Zhu asks the master to forbid the behavior on the grounds of its bad hygiene and indecency. Whenever Zhu makes such requests, the master accepts them, not only because he is already aware of the reason behind Zhu’s requests (i.e., that she is female) but also because what Zhu says makes sense.
57. “Yingtai ge quanben,” in *LZWDMG1*, 205.
58. “Yintai hen,” in *LZWDGG*, 435.
59. “Jinzhuan ji,” in *LZWDXY*, 669.
60. *Ibid.*
61. “Jieyi gongshu,” in *LZWDGG*, 560.
62. *Ibid.*, 556.
63. *Ibid.*, 560.
64. The former plot seems more popular. However, some popular versions have Zhu reveal her identity before she leaves, either in her parting poem to Liang, which Liang reads after seeing Zhu off (see “Yingtai ge quanben,” for example) or through the words of her master or the master’s wife, who tells Liang the truth after Zhu’s departure (see “Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai” in *yueju*, for example). The important thing is that Liang doesn’t know the truth until he comes back to the academy after seeing Zhu off; this “parting journey” is discussed in chapter 4.

65. McDermott aptly shows that friendship is often defined by Chinese writers in terms of the virtue of trust rather than equality; see his “Friendship and Its Friends in the Late Ming,” 95.

66. The rendering of Liang’s visit varies. Some versions say that Liang simply forgets or miscalculates the date, or procrastinates due to his dedication to study; in others, Liang takes and passes the exam before visiting Zhu; and still in others, Liang arrives on time, but Zhu’s engagement to the son of the Ma family has nonetheless already occurred. While each elaboration of the situation helps to craft the character of Liang, none of them makes him culpable. In a most practical sense, Liang prioritizes correctly.

67. Patrick Hanan, in his discussion of the predominance of themes of romantic love in vernacular stories collected by Feng Menglong, points out that the premodern Chinese culture in favor of the family and arranged marriage feeds the aspiration for and glorification of romantic love in the domain of literature. He also explains that, for this reason, romantic events are full of realistic details in literature, even though such events are unlikely to happen in real life. The insertion of the motif of Zhu’s engagement to a different man in Liang-Zhu can be understood in this context. See Patrick Hanan, introduction to Hanan, trans., *Falling in Love: Stories from Ming China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2006), vii–xii.

68. The passage that first refers to her is as follows: “The fishhawks sing gwan gwan/ on sandbars of the stream. / Gentle maiden, pure and fair / fit pair for a prince” (关关雎鸠，在河之洲。窈窕淑女，君子好逑). Stephen Owen, ed. and trans., *An Anthology of Chinese Literature: Beginnings to 1911* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1996), 30.

69. Some online sources introduce Liang-Zhu as a typical *caizi jiaren* story. Altenburger, based on the similarities in themes, plot twists, and characterizations, also suggests the possibility of the influence of scholar-beauty romances on the evolution of the Liang-Zhu narrative (and vice versa); see his “Is It Clothes that Make the Man?” 172–173. Rather than contextualizing inter-textual influence between the Liang-Zhu narrative and scholar-beauty romance fiction, which certainly seems plausible, I have instead focused on the character models of *caizi* and *jiaren*, and their influences on the Liang-Zhu narrative during and since the Qing. This focus on character development serves as a tool to analyze the characteristics the Liang and Zhu characters embody and their impact on the evolution of Liang-Zhu narrative.

70. Geng Song, *Fragile Scholar*, 89–90.

71. Daniel Gardner, *Zhu Xi’s Reading of The Analects: Canon, Commentary, and the Classical Tradition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 69–70.

72. Benevolence is also the key virtue in the moral claims of friendship; see McDermott, “Friendship and Its Friends in the Late Ming,” 72.

73. Chenyang Li, in his theoretical attempt to reconcile Confucian and feminist ethical virtues, presents the central idea of *ren* as “caring” (or “caring for the world”). In so doing, he emphasizes that this Confucian virtue of *ren* and the “caring” of feminist ethics have common ground for mutual benefit. See Li, “The Confucian Concept of *Jen* and the Feminist Ethics of Care,” in *The Sage and the Second Sex*, 23–42.

74. *Lunyu* 論語 (The Analects), 12:1. Translation from James Legge, *The Chinese Classics: With a Translation, Critical, and Exegetical Notes, Prolegomena, and Copious Indexes* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1960).

75. In both East and West, the sublimation of the sexual drive is viewed as proof that social aims have been placed higher than individual sexual ones. In Freud’s terms, this is the demand of civilization and the important disposition of the noblest human. See Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. James Strachey et al. (London: Hogarth Press, 1953–74), 2347.

76. *The Analects* frequently appears as the text Zhu and Liang are learning. In a modern adaptation, “Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai” by Zhao Qingge, it is adopted as the main source Zhu relies on when she provides excuses.

77. “Jieyi gongshu,” in *LZWDGG*, 566.

78. *Ibid.*, 565.

79. Wang Yong’en, *Ming Qing caizi jiaren ju yanjiu* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 2014), 3.

80. *Ibid.*

81. Geng Song, *Fragile Scholar*, 38.

82. According to Kam Louie, the vulnerable character of *caizi* culminates in an exaggerated representation of the effeminate male character *sheng* (生) on stage. Louie also presents a framework of the dyad of *wen* (cultural attainment) and *wu* (martial valor) in the discourse of Chinese masculinity, instead of the binary conception of femininity and masculinity. See Louie, *Theorising Chinese Masculinity: Society and Gender in China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 9–21.

83. Geng Song, *Fragile Scholar*, 110–18.

84. Scholars have construed the *caizi*’s feminization as echoing the cultural trend of blurring gender boundaries and revalorizing the notion of *qing* that took place during the seventeenth century and that was caused largely by the expansion of female mobility and courtesan culture. The cultural trend that underlies the effeminate *caizi* image reveals defiance of power and hegemony in social and moral order, and, according to Zhou Zuyan, is indicative of the marginalization of the literati authors of the period. See Kang-I Sun Chang, *The Late-Ming Poet Ch’en Tzu-lung: Crises of Love and Loyalty* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 11–13; Ko, *Teachers of Inner Cham-*

bers, 142; and Zhou Zuyan, *Androgyny in Late Ming and Early Qing Literature* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2003), 3.

85. Sometimes written as *zhicheng* 至誠.

86. For example, in the “Liu yin ji quanzhuan” (ballad version), Zhu says “Who would expect that Brother Liang is a handsome, talented, and truly faithful gentleman?” (有誰得知，想梁兄才貌雙全，真篤志誠君子); in *LZWKMGI*, 70. Liang’s truthful character is also revealed in Zhu’s remarks that “My brother Liang, you are truly a faithful man (lover)” (梁兄真是至誠人) and that “Sanbo/Shanbo is innately faithful” (三伯生來是志誠). See “Liang Zhu shan’ge,” in *LZWDGG*, 463; “Liang Shanbo ge,” in *LZWDGG*, 521; and “Liang Sanbo zhuan” 梁三伯傳, in *LZWKMGI*, 440.

87. Wang Yong’en, *Ming Qing caizi jiaren ju yanjiu*, 3. Alongside this positive connotation, the term *jiaren* was also used in a negative sense, referring to a seductive woman who brings about the collapse of the state or the destruction of a powerful man, similar to the femme fatale archetype.

88. *Ibid.*, 4.

89. Li Zhihong, *Mingmo Qingchu caizi jiaren xiaoshuo xushi yanjiu* (Taipei: Da’an chubanche, 2008), 176–77. The poem “*Gaotang fu*,” attributed to Song Yu (290–223 BCE), describes an amorous encounter between King Xiang of Chu (r. 298–263 BCE) and a *shennü* of Mount Wu.

90. In many extended versions of the story, Liang’s feelings of friendship shift to those of love when he first sees Zhu in female dress: when Zhu reverts to her original gender, she becomes a fetish object. One example of this objectification is the increase in descriptions of Zhu’s bound feet.

91. For the common plots and themes of these *caizi-jiaren* romances over time, see Wang Yong’en, *Ming Qing caizi jiaren ju yanjiu*, 7–10, and Keith McMahan, “The Classic ‘Beauty-Scholar’ Romance and the Superiority of the Talented Woman”; see also Qiu Jiangning, *Qingchu caizi jiaren xiaoshuo xushi moshi yanjiu* (Shanghai: Sanlian shudian, 2005).

92. Representative examples include “Mudan ji” (*nanyin*), “Liu yin ji” (*guci*), “Chongzheng,” “Xinzhao shuangzhuangyuan Yingtai zi” (新造雙狀元英台仔), and “Liang Shanbo Zhu Yingtai quange” 新造梁山伯祝英台全歌 (*chaozhou ge*) (*LZWKLY*, 138–39), and “Yang Sanbaek chön” (Chöng), *LZWKGX*, 5–12.

93. To some extent, the relationship between Liang and Zhu becomes almost identical to the famous model of the hero and heroine in the *Xixiang ji*, *Pipa ji* 琵琶記 (The Lute), and *Yutang chun* 玉堂春 (Spring of the Jade Hall). Similarities in the plots include the exchange of poems, the prescription for lovesickness, and the heroine’s search for her husband in the capital after he has left home to take the civil service exams.

94. McMahon differentiates the chaste romance from male-centered erotic romance. The former contains no explicit description of sexual intercourse and typically features a monogamous marriage, or at most a bigamous one in which a man marries two wives, whereas the latter explicitly includes sexual relations and polygamous marriages in which men acquire three or more wives. Based on this view, extended Liang-Zhu versions show a wide range of attributes related to both chaste and male-centered erotic romances. McMahon, “Classic ‘Beauty-Scholar’ Romance and the Superiority of the Talented Woman,” 233.

95. Janice A. Radway, *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 62.

96. As previously discussed, the extended versions have been harshly criticized for their blind espousal of traditional values. However, Rey Chow, in her discussion of the Mandarin Duck and Butterfly (*yuanyang hudie* 鴛鴦胡蝶) school, which deals with the classical *caizi-jiaren* love stories, tries to find the meaningful challenge in these popular romantic stories. She argues that although these romances reaffirm traditional Confucian ideology, they also contain a rupture or *iterability* that can invoke a different discourse. Though Chow’s argument is somewhat compromised by her view of Confucianism as a singular entity, it does suggest a rationale for further study of these neglected Liang-Zhu versions. See Chow, *Woman and Chinese Modernity: The Politics of Reading between West and East* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 34–83.

97. This point is also addressed in chapter 1, which discusses the basic format that ties the different Liang-Zhu versions together.

98. In modern versions such as “Liu yin ji” (*chuanju*), for example, Zhu articulates her confidence in her scholarly ability: “There are women superior to men” 也有女比男儿强 (*LZWDXY*, 199). Zhu also enters into debates about several Confucian terms concerning women, such as “petty man/woman” vs. “gentleman/gentlewoman” (*ibid.*, 148).

99. In the early twentieth century, the Yue opera group’s performance of Liang-Zhu did not include the butterfly transformation. Instead, the performance often ended with Zhu committing suicide by jumping into Liang’s tomb or hitting her head against his tombstone. The reasons for this omission vary; one of them was the sense that the butterfly scene reduces the effect of the tragedy. For debates on this matter, see Yu Tong, “Liang Zhu san yi,” in *LZWDXL*, 388.

100. *LZWDXY*, 71–72, 92; *LZWKYY*, 387. See also Jin Jiang, *Women Paying Women*, 49–51.

101. Xiaomei Chen refers to this effort to “construct China based on the Western construction of China” as part of “discursive practice of occidentalism” common among

modern Chinese intellectuals. Though problematic (and inevitable to some sense), this practice has remained a dominant discourse, and played an instrumental role in the development of Chinese theatre, prompting cross-cultural adaptations and self-reform. See Xiaomei Chen, introduction to *Occidentalism: A Theory of Counter-Discourse in Post-Mao China* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 4–5.

102. Zong-qi Cai, “The Influence of Nietzsche in Wang Guowei’s Essay ‘On the Dream of the Red Chamber,’” *Philosophy East and West* 54.2 (2004): 177–78. One major criticism of Chinese traditional drama as presented by early twentieth-century scholars (particularly Japanese scholars) is its lack of tragedy. The Chinese intellectuals’ complex about tragedy has led to severe criticism of the conventional “grand denouement” (*da tuanyuan*).

103. *Ibid.*, 172–78.

104. Xiaobing Tang, *Chinese Modern: The Heroic and the Quotidian* (Durham: Duke University, 2000), 27.

105. *Liang Zhu tongshi* is a silent film made in 1926 by Tianyi 天一 film studio, the Shanghai forerunner of the Hong Kong Shaw Brothers. This version is faithful to how most early modern scholars interpreted the story. The actors are dressed in the contemporary styles. The class difference between Liang and Zhu added in some later versions (see note 109 below) and the heroine’s dream of being a scholar are emphasized; Yingjin Zhang, *Chinese National Cinema* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 38. For the screenplay, see LZWDXY, 781–96; see also *Liang Zhu tongshi tekan* (Hong Kong: Xin shijie xiyuan), 9–32.

106. The comparison between Liang-Zhu and *Romeo and Juliet* became common in the 1950s. See Zhou Jingshu, “Bainian Liang Zhu wenhua fazhan yu yanjiu,” in LZWDXL, 742. Since then, there have been numerous articles on this point. Lin Fuli, for example, discusses the differences between the two works as the distinctive attributes of the cultures of the East and the West; see Lin Fuli, “Taiyang yu yueliang zhi mei: Luomi’ou yu Zhuliye he Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai zhi chayi ji qi wenhua chengyin,” *Hetian shifan zhuanke daxuexiao bao* 28.4 (2009): 71–72. In 2008, there emerged a *huaju* (spoken drama) version of *Romeo and Zhu Yingtai*, a love story adapted from the two classical tales.

107. Fei-Wen Liu, “Qingyi xingbie yu jieji de zaixian yu chaoyue: Liang Zhu xushuo yu wenti zhi yin,” *Xiu yanjiu* 5 (2010): 27–68.

108. Lu Gong, “Liang-Zhu gushi shuochang ji xu,” 138–39; Zhong Jingwen, preface to LZWDXL, 1.

109. In the versions from Yixing, for example, class difference plays a significant role in the plot development. In the *daqing* version “Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai,” Liang Shanbo and Ma Wencai are classmates from different backgrounds. Ma Wencai arranges

his own marriage with Zhu using his power and money, and Liang dies of anger. Overall, there are the two types of class conflict in Liang-Zhu: one is the conflict between Liang and Zhu's families, and the other is between Liang and Ma. Zhu's family is described as rich, but Liang's is a formerly wealthy gentry family. Liang's relative poverty is indicated by details such as his part-time job at the academy and his lack of travel funds. While Liang is depicted as a typical scholar who is poor, weak, and cultured, Ma is portrayed as the selfish, greedy son of a wealthy and powerful family. Since Ma is sometimes depicted as the son of a rich merchant, the conflict can be seen as a battle between opposing masculine ideals—those of a scholar and a merchant—over an ideal woman. Liang Shanbo's death symbolically represents his victory in this battle, since he ends up taking Ma's bride (Zhu) with him to his tomb. One may interpret this battle as reflective of either the changing hierarchy in late imperial China or the conflict between different masculinities. The important thing to note, however, is that the active role of Zhu disappears in this battle.

110. Liang Shanbo is not able to visit Zhu within the expected timeline because becoming an official through his success in the exam—so that he can be at least the equal of his friends—is more important to him than visiting Zhu. See Luo Yonglin, “Shilun Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai gushi,” in *MJLZ*, 18; see also his “Liang Zhu gushi,” in *LZWDXL*, 365.

111. “The failed recognition caused by the act of cross-dressing entails a situation of mutual unfulfilled desire: Liang Shanbo's desire for male companionship is paralleled by Zhu Yingtai's desire for love and marriage, but since the two different desires are placed on divergent social levels, referring to incompatible categories of social relationship, they both are bound to remain unfulfilled.” Roland Altenburger, “Is It Clothes That Make the Man?,” *Asian Folklore Studies* 64.2 (2005): 177.

112. *Ibid.*, 194.

113. *Ibid.*

114. Paola Zamperini, “Untamed Hearts: Eros and Suicide in Late Imperial Chinese Fiction,” *Nan Nü: Men, Women and Gender in Early and Imperial China* 3.1 (2001): 77–104.

115. Zhu Dake argues that the (female-only) Yue opera group adds layers of meaning to the story by questioning its gender politics. He points out that the actress's performance of the role of Liang Shanbo reverses the traditional gender setting of Liang-Zhu (to audiences' eyes, Liang and Zhu look like a female couple), and that this performance has rendered Liang-Zhu symbolically homoerotic. He further argues that the butterflies into which the two characters transform in death signify two same-sex persons. This view provides an interesting explanation of the emergence of a rainbow, which becomes a symbol of homoeroticism in other versions. Zhu Dake's essays on Liang-Zhu are available at <http://blog.sina.com.cn/zhudake>

116. Suo Shaowu, “Dui Liang Zhu gushi kancheng Zhongguo di yi aiqing chuan-suo de zhiyi,” *Xibei minzu daxue xuebao*, no. 5 (2004): 125–28.

117. Santangelo, “The Cult of Love in Some Texts of Ming and Qing Literature,” 488.

CHAPTER 4

1. The parting scene described here is derived from the opera-based film and TV versions of Liang-Zhu, such as *The Romance of Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai* (1953), *The Love Eterne* (1963), and *Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai* (1985).

2. Ding Yi and Sun Shiji, “Yueju Liang Zhu de youlai yu fazhan,” in *LZWDXL*, 726; see also Chen Huawen, “Liang Zhu de xiandai shengcun yu yingxiang-yi yi ci daxuesheng zhong de diaocha weili,” in *LZWKLY*, 741–42.

3. The popularity of the theme is demonstrated by the titles of famous repertoires during the period, such as “Shanbo songbie” 山伯送別 (Shanbo Sees Off Yingtai), “Shanbo qianli qi yue” 山伯千里期約 (Shanbo Keeps His Promise to Visit despite the Long Distance), “Heliang fenmei” 河梁分袂 (Saying Goodbye on the River’s Bridge), “Yingbo xiangbie huijia” 英伯相別回家 (Yingtai Returns Home after Parting from Liang), and “Shanbo saihuaiyin fenbie” 山伯賽槐蔭分別 (Shanbo Parts from Zhu under the Shade of the Pagoda Tree). See Zhao Jingshen, “Mingchao de Liang Zhu,” in *LZWDXL*, 32–33.

4. The official record by Zhang Jin from the twelfth century has no description of the friends parting from each other. Even in an earlier account dedicated to the shrine of Liang Shanbo and written by Li Maocheng, the prefect of Mingzhou, which has elements of popular storytelling, there is no treatment of their actual parting. For more information on the two accounts, see chapter 1.

5. For the original text of this nineteenth-century version, see *YXLZSC*, 155–56.

6. Maram Epstein, “Sons and Mothers: The Social Construction of Filial Piety in Late Imperial China,” in *Love, Hatred, and Other Passions: Questions and Themes on Emotions in Chinese Civilization*, ed. Paolo Santangelo and Donatella Guida (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 285.

7. Fei-Wen Liu, for example, demonstrates that popular *changben* (songbook) ballad versions of Liang-Zhu contain “emotional niches of articulation, transposition and empowerment.” This generic feature allows the story to embrace and accommodate more dissenting voices, rites, emotions, and other demands from the audience. See her “Narrative, Genre, and Contextuality: The Nüshu-Transcribed Liang-Zhu Ballad in Rural South China,” *Asian Ethnology* 69.2 (2010): 245.

8. Chasan, *Sipch'osi*, 40.
9. *Ibid.*, 40–41.
10. Epstein, “Sons and Mothers,” 285–300.
11. The *Sipch'osi* version has several parts marked as “*yunyun*” 云云 (et cetera), which seems to indicate that it omits some passages. See chapter 1.
12. “Huadie Yingtai diao,” in *LZWDGG*, 844.
13. *Yaozhuang* (also known as 遙裝 or 搖樁) is said to date from the period of Northern and Southern Dynasties (386–589) and to have been popular until the Ming dynasty. Its practice also appears in literature, for example, in the poet and critic Shen Yue's 沈約 (441–513) poem “Que dong xi men xing” (卻東西門行): “搖裝非短晨，還歌豈明發，” and in the Yuan dramatist Ma Zhiyuan's 馬致遠 (1250–1321) play *Hangong qiu* 漢宮秋, act 3: “早是俺夫妻悒快，小家兒出外也搖裝。” See Huang Yishu, “Nanxi zhong de minsu wenhua yanjiu” (MA thesis, Wenzhou University, 2011), 7–8.
14. *Ibid.*, 8.
15. Charles Stafford, *Separation and Reunion in Modern China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 55–69.
16. “Jieyi gongshu,” in *LZWDGG*, 556.
17. *Ibid.*
18. *Ibid.*
19. *Ibid.*, 555; see also chapter 3.
20. Antoinet Schimmelpenninck, in her study of Wu folk songs, states that most love songs of the Wu area are about women (girls, wives, or widows) waiting and longing for their lovers; see her *Chinese Folk Songs and Folk Singers: Shan'ge Traditions in Southern Jiangsu* (Leiden: CHIME Foundation, 1997), 145.
21. For a detailed discussion of the ways that powerless, vulnerable, and sad emotions are culturally attached more to women than to men, see Leslie R. Brody, “The Socialization of Gender Differences,” in *Gender and Emotion: Social Psychological Perspectives*, ed. Agneta Fischer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
22. Colin S. C. Hawes, *The Social Circulation of Poetry in the Mid-Northern Song: Emotional Energy and Literati Self-Cultivation* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 70.
23. “Liang Shanbo ge,” in *LZWDGG*, 520.
24. *Ibid.*, 464.
25. In fact, in the “Jieyi gongshu” version, Liang expresses his wish to leave together with Zhu (to serve his parents as well), but he gives up the idea in favor of his plan to study; see “Jieyi gongshu,” in *LZWDGG*, 556. The scene of Liang's leaving with Zhu in “Liang Shanbo ge” and “Liang Zhu shan'ge” seems to be a projection of, or a positive

reaction to, Liang's (unfulfilled) desire in "Jieyi gongshu," where he subordinates his personal emotions to his goal of academic success.

26. "Liang Shanbo ge," in *LZWDGG*, 520.

27. In fact, the two friends' cheerful parting journey resonates with a general shift in the tone of literati's parting poems since the Northern Song period (960–1126). According to Colin Hawes, Northern Song poets tended to add optimistic or comical attitudes to their parting poems (mostly dedicated to close friends), out of a sense that excessive sorrow and weeping have a negative effect on people; see Hawes, *The Social Circulation of Poetry in the Mid-Northern Song*, 70–71.

28. *Ibid.*, 521.

29. This scheme to use a fake (sometimes twin) sister, which is prevalent in many Liang-Zhu versions, can probably be traced back to this "Liang Shanbo ge" version.

30. The scene of "Hui shiba" in *Liang Zhu aishi* 梁祝哀史 (The Tragedy of Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai), directed by Yuan Xuefen 袁雪芬 (1922–2011) in 1945, was one of the most famous *yueju* scenes of that period. The actress Fan Ruijuan 范瑞娟 (b. 1924), who played the role of Liang Shanbo, also earned fame for her performance in the scene; for more information, see Fan's essay "Tantan wo dui 'hui shiba' changqiang de chuli," in *Manhua Yueju*, ed. Zhu Yufen and Shi Jinan (Beijing: Zhongguo guangbo dianshi chubanshe, 1985), 214–19. The scene has been performed under the title of "Huiyi" 回忆 ([Shanbo's] Recalling) since the early 1950s, but the 2006 version changed it to "Si Zhu xia shan" 思祝下山 (Longing for Zhu and Going Down the Mountain).

31. The "Shiba xiangsong" scenes of the *yueju* versions are considered the best representatives of the form, due to the long performance history of the scene and the commercial success of the version "Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai" and its film adaptation in the mid-twentieth century. See Ding and Sun, "Yueju Liang Zhu de youlai yu fazhan," 726–27; see also Qian Hong, *Zhongguo Yueju dadian* (Hangzhou shi: Zhejiang wenyi chubanshe; Zhejiang wenyi yinxiang chubanshe, 2006), 77.

32. Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), 9.

33. Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1991), 95.

34. *Ibid.*

35. *Ibid.*, 1–68.

36. This is based on the example of the famous *huangmei xi*-based film, *The Love Eterne* (1963), directed by Li Hanxiang and starring Ivy Ling Po (Ling Bo, b. 1939; Liang Shanbo) and Betty Loh Tieh (Le Di, 1937–68; Zhu Yingtai). This is also true in the *yueju*-based TV show *Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai* (1985). In the 1953 film of the classic *yueju* version performed by Yuan Xuefen (Zhu Yingtai) and Fan Ruijuan (Liang

Shanbo), the parting scene runs longer than the average run time for the other twelve acts.

37. Stephen Owen, “Introduction: The Lure and Its Origin,” in his *Remembrances: The Experience of the Past in Classical Chinese Literature* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), 3.

38. “Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai” (the 1949 *yueju* version), in *Liang Zhu wenhua daguan: Xiju yingshi juan*, ed. Zhou Jingshu (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1999; hereafter LZWDXY), 104.

39. See James J. Y. Liu, *Essentials of Chinese Literary Art* (North Scituate, MA: Duxbury Press, 1979), 5–7.

40. LZWDXY, 151.

41. *Ibid.*

42. *Ibid.*

43. Tan Ye, *Historical Dictionary of Chinese Theatre* (Plymouth, MA: Scarecrow Press, 2008), 294.

44. *Ibid.*, xxx, 4–5.

45. “Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai,” in LZWDXY, 104.

46. *Ibid.*, 103.

47. For more information on the famous romantic couple Lü Bu and Diaochan, see chapter 2, n. 21.

48. “Liu yin ji” (*huangmei xi*), in LZWDXY, 284.

49. The God of the Soil, widely worshipped in Chinese culture, appears in all scenes of Liang and Zhu’s parting journey. Examples from opera versions include “Liang Shanbo songbie,” in LZWDXY, 243; “Liu yin ji,” in LZWDXY, 285; “Shang tian tai” 上天台 (Ascending to the Heavenly Altar), in LZWDXY, 315; “Liang Shanbo fangyou” 梁山伯访友 (Liang Shanbo Visiting a Friend), in LZWDXY, 527; “Liang Shanbo songyou” 梁山伯送友 (Liang Shanbo Seeing Off a Friend), in LZWDXY, 534; and “Shanbo Yingtai” 山伯英台, in LZWDXY, 763.

50. “Liu yin ji” (*huangmei xi*), in LZWDXY, 285.

51. “Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai,” in LZWDXY, 105.

52. “Liu yin ji” (*chuanju*), in LZWDXY, 153.

53. “Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai,” in LZWDXY, 105.

54. See Jin Jiang, *Women Playing Men*, 102–4. Apart from the need to maintain a certain level of decency on the commercial stage, the elegant, delicate, emotive acting of the all-female *yueju* troupe may have affected the representation of Zhu’s character, especially with respect to her diction, language, and affect. Zhu’s femininity was further reinforced in *yueju* performances from the mid-1920s on, slowly at first, and then more rapidly from the 1940s on. The *yueju* style put emphasis on feminine aesthetics,

often expressed in the terms “beautiful and soft” (*meirou* 美柔) or “mild and euphemistic” (*weiwan* 委婉). As a result a number of expressions and objects that appeared in previous versions were removed. This shift is said to have contributed to the wide success of Liang-Zhu in the early and mid-twentieth century; see Jin Jiang, *Women Playing Men*, 216–18, and Xu Hongtu, *Zhejiang xiqu shi* (Hangzhou shi: Hangzhou chubanshe, 2010), 268. See also Zhu and Shi’s *Manhua yueju*, 346–48.

55. *Li* 里 has had different values across time and regions. In modern China, one *li* means half a kilometer (five hundred meters). By the modern standard, the distance of eighteen *li* is therefore about nine kilometers. Considering that a healthy young man could normally walk up to four kilometers an hour on a paved road, it would take three or four hours—possibly more—for Zhu and Liang to complete the journey together as they walked over mountains and crossed rivers, enjoying the scenery and visiting sites. My thanks to Professor Zeng Yongyi, who provided important information about the use of numbers in Chinese culture.

56. The Runan County of Zhumadian City (Henan Province) has preserved sites claimed to be the places that Liang and Zhu visited during their parting journey, such as *yuanyang chi* 鸳鸯池 (The Pond of Mandarin Ducks), *shili ting* 十里亭 (The Ten-*li* Pavilion), and the Eighteen *li* Road. Hongluo Shuyuan frequently appears as Liang and Zhu’s studying place in versions that were popular in Henan Province. See Yu Maoshi, “Liang-Zhu gushi qiyuan yu,” 109–27; see also Chen Qinjian, ed, *Dongfang de Luomi’ou yu Zhuliye: Liang Zhu koutou yichan wenhua kongjian* (Ha’erbin: Heilongjiang renmin chubanshe, 2005), 36–38.

57. Ding and Sun, “Yueju Liang Zhu de youlai yu fazhan,” 726–27.

58. In this account, Liang and Zhu pass eighteen bays before parting from each other. Each bay, and the natural objects contained there, serves as a backdrop that facilitates their conversation during the journey. See Zhou Jingshu, *Liang Zhu de chuanshu* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2001), 187–90.

59. “Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai,” in *LZWDXY*, 103.

60. This usage is common in the versions from Henan Province such as “Yingtai hen,” “Jinzhuang ji” 金砖记 (The Story of Gold Bricks; *Dingxian Yanggeju* 定县秧歌剧), “Liang Zhu qing” 梁祝情 (The Affection of Liang and Zhu; *yuju* 豫剧), “Zhu jiu hong pumu” 祝九红扑墓 (The Ninth Daughter of the Zhu Family Throws Herself into the Grave; *guci*), “Liang Zhu” (*dagu quzi* 大调曲子), “Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai” (*benan zhuizi* 河南坠子), and “Liang Zhu yinyuan” 梁祝姻缘 (The Marital Fate of Liang and Zhu; *yudong qinshu* 豫东琴书).

61. Liang’s age is given as eighteen years in “Quanshi,” “Liang Zhu shan’ge,” “Shanbo fangyou,” “Shanbo yingtai” (*dongxi* 侗戏), and “Shanbo lin zhong lian Yingtai” 山伯临终恋英台 (Shanbo Takes His Last Breath, Missing Yingtai; *caidiao xi* 彩

调剧). Zhu is eighteen in “Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai” (*qingqiang* 秦腔 and *zhuban ge*) and “Liang Zhu shenghuan.”

62. Although in most versions Zhu’s age at her marriage and death is only implied, some folktales mention that Zhu is eighteen at that time. For an example, see “Qianwan yinbing zhu Kangwang” 千万阴兵助康王, in Zhou Jingshu, *Liang-Zhu de chuanshuo*, 168–70.

63. “Liang Shanbo ge,” in *LZWDGG*, 538. In this version, Zhu’s parents set the eighteenth day of the month for her marriage to the man from the Ma family. The number eighteen was thought to be auspicious because it is the combination of two nines. Since nine represents perfection and auspiciousness, eighteen is thought to double these merits.

64. *Ibid.*, 541. These eighteen layers comprise the entirety of hell in Chinese Buddhism, Daoism, and folk religion, as detailed in Buddhist sutras such as *Shiba nili jing* 十八泥犁经. In “Liang Shanbo ge,” Zhu’s marriage partner, Ma Hong, is angered by Zhu’s death, so he holds an indictment ritual at the temple of the Emperor of the Eastern Peak (Dongyue Dadi 東嶽大帝), in which he accuses Liang Shanbo of stealing his wife. He ends up being brought to the afterworld (Fengdu 酆都), where, instead of achieving vengeance, he is punished by being sent to the eighteen-layered hell.

65. Kim Tong’uk, *Ch’unhyang chôn yôn’gu* (Seoul: Yönse taehakkyo ch’ulp’anbu, 1985), 258–59.

66. In Korea, the number eighteen is commonly used in a negative sense because it is a homonym for an insulting remark.

67. According to Yi Chongmuk at Seoul National University, in premodern Korean vernacular literature, there are about 390 cases of “ten *li*” being used in a similar context (searched with the keyword *sip-ri* 十里). I thank Professor Yi for conducting this search, and for his insightful comments on the theme of parting in Korean literature.

68. Paolo Santangelo suggests that the cult of emotion (passionate or romantic love in Santangelo’s discussion) actually started during the Yuan period and was further developed in late Ming literature; see his “Cult of Love in Some Texts of Ming and Qing Literature,” 447.

69. Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1984), 132–68, esp. 150–51.

70. Bai Yan, “Liang shanbo miaomu yu fengsu diaocha,” 302–3.

71. In her discussion of Li Yu’s theory on drama, Jing Shen states that *chuanqi* drama focuses on developing sad elements, though it favors happy endings. She posits that this is due to the artistic taste of the *chuanqi* author-audience group, who are mostly members of the cultural elite and tend to distinguish their plays from popular

ones that focus more on entertainment value; see Shen, *Playwrights and Literary Games in Seventeenth-Century China* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2010), 152.

72. Mei Chun, *The Novel and Theatrical Imagination in Early Modern China* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 1–6.

73. *Ibid.*, 155.

74. The phrase “Gaoshan liushui” refers to the true friendship between the zither player Yu Boya and his friend Zhong Ziqi; see chapter 3, n. 25. “Gaoshan” and “Liu shui” are the titles of the musical pieces that Boya performed.

75. See *Liang Zhu wenku: Yueju yishu juan*, ed. Zhou Jingshu (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2007; hereafter *LZWKY*), 180, 654–56. The new version, entitled “Xin Liang Shanbo Zhu Yingtai” 新梁山伯祝英台 (New Love Story of Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai), was performed by the Zhejiang Xiaobaihua Yue Opera troupe led by Mao Weitao 茅威涛, who also performed the role of Liang Shanbo. This version is often said to be the finest product of the long collaboration between Mao Weitao and her husband, the director Guo Xiaonan. Eliminating or combining some of the acts from the earlier 1950s *yueju* version, it consists of seven acts plus a coda. For more information on this version and its text, see *LZWKY*, 181–86, 477–502.

76. Guo Xiaonan, *Guan/Nian: Guanyu xiju yu rensheng de daoyan baogao (B)* (Shanghai: Jinxiu wenzhang chubanshe, 2010), 245–46.

77. The performance of this new version was very successful and earned numerous major awards, including the Chinese Drama Plum Blossom Award (Meihua jiang) and the Chinese Drama Society Award, from 2006 to 2009.

78. Donald Wesling, *Joys and Sorrows of Imaginary Persons: On Literary Emotions* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2008), 16.

79. “Imaginary persons” here refers not simply to fictional characters but also to the human beings who are defined socially and performed in literary narratives—for instance, author, character, narrator, reader, actor, and scholar; see Wesling, *Joys and Sorrows of Imaginary Persons*, 23.

CHAPTER 5

1. See Jack Zipes, introduction to his *The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), xvi–xvii. According to Zipes’s definition, a fairy tale is a written, literary appropriation of oral wonder tales, and one of the important characteristics of these oral wonder tales is wish fulfillment, often manifested as a happy ending.

2. John Bowker, *The Meanings of Death* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 5–6.

3. Liang-Zhu versions (mostly folk ballads) from ethnic minorities present the most diverse forms of Liang and Zhu's transformation. The Tu people (Monguor) believe that Liang and Zhu transformed into birds after death. The Yi people say Liang and Zhu transformed into peacocks (or geese) that soon change into a rainbow. Other examples include bamboo trees (Buyi), grindstones (Zhuang), and mandarin ducks (Dong). Zhu's fiancé, the son of the Ma family, is often transformed into a harmful insect or animal.

4. Following Emily M. Ahern's definition, I use the term "ritual" in a broad sense, to signify the human behaviors that are patterned according to social custom and that involve more than one person in a social group at the same or different times; see Ahern, *Chinese Ritual and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 1.

5. China was hardly atheistic before the twentieth century, when a new era of rationalism began. Republican China and the Nationalist government took steps to reform popular religions and their practice, favoring institutionalized religions. Beginning in 1949 (and especially during the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976), the communist government's Marxism-based rejection of religion virtually destroyed all kinds of religious practice in China. Under these circumstances, research on religion was conducted largely in the name of folklore studies. However, since 1982, when restrictions on religion were loosened, popular religion has become increasingly visible in Chinese academia. After the reforms of the 1980s, the Chinese people also began to rebuild temples and to promote temple-based religious activities as a local enterprise. Yet academic discussion of popular religions still does not seem to thrive; and critical work has preferred to regard the Liang-Zhu story's superstitious or religious elements as irrelevant, or as indicative of the backwardness and ignorance of traditional Chinese or East Asian culture. For more information on the reemergence or reinvention of popular religions in late twentieth-century China, see Adam Yuet Chau's introduction to his *Miraculous Response: Doing Popular Religion in Contemporary China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 1–15.

6. Beata Grant, "Women, Gender and Religion in Premodern China: A Brief Introduction," *Nan Nü: Men, Women and Gender in Early and Imperial China* 10.1 (2008): 3.

7. Margaret Chan uses the Chinese expression "shenme dou bai" 什么都拜 (praying to any gods) to designate this polytheistic attitude of the Chinese; see Chan, *Ritual Is Theatre, Theatre Is Ritual: Tang-ki, Chinese Spirit Medium Worship* (Singapore: Wee Kim Wee Centre, Singapore Management University, 2006), 156–57.

8. Ronald A. Gagliardi, "The Butterfly and Moth as Symbols in Western Art" (MA thesis, Southern Connecticut State College, 1976), 16–28; see also his "The Butterfly and Moth as Symbols in Western Art," *Cultural Entomology Digest* 4 (1997): 22–31.

9. See Jean C. Cooper, *Dictionary of Symbolic and Mythological Animals* (London: Thorsons, 1995); Clare Gibson, *Signs and Symbols: An Illustrated Guide to Their Meaning and Origins* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1996); and Jack Tresidder, *Dictionary of Symbols: An Illustrated Guide to Traditional Images, Icons, and Emblems* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1997).

10. See Gene Kritsky and Ron Cherry, *Insect Mythology* (New York: Writers Club Press, 2000), 9; see also Gibson, *Signs and Symbols*, 115.

11. Zheng Zhenduo, “Hudie de wenxue,” in his *Zheng Zhenduo gudian wenxue lunwen ji* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1984), 275.

12. Charles Alfred Speed Williams, *Chinese Symbolism and Art Motifs: An Alphabetical Compendium of Antique Legends and Beliefs, as Reflected in the Manners and Customs of the Chinese*, 4th rev. ed. (Rutland, VT: Tuttle, 2006), 51–52.

13. Wu Gong, “Liang Zhu gushi de fasheng he yanbian,” in *LZWDXL*, 106.

14. He Qifang, “Guanyu Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai gushi,” in *LZWDXL*, 43.

15. The original text is from “Zhuang Zhou Dreamed He Was a Butterfly” 莊周夢蝶, in *Qiwulun* 齊物論 (Uniformity Theory), chapter 2 of *Zhuangzi*; “昔者莊周夢為蝴蝶，栩栩然蝴蝶也。自喻適其志與，不知周也。俄而覺，則蘧蘧然周也。不知周之夢為蝴蝶與，蝴蝶之夢為周與，周與蝴蝶則必有分矣。此之謂物化。” For a full translation of this text, see Burton Watson, trans., *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), 49.

16. Jung Lee, “What Is It Like to Be a Butterfly? A Philosophical Interpretation of Zhuangzi’s Butterfly Dream,” *Asian Philosophy* 17.2 (2007): 185–202, esp. 188.

17. Hans-Georg Möller, “Zhuangzi’s ‘Dream of the Butterfly’: A Daoist Interpretation,” *Philosophy East and West* 49.4 (1999): 439–50.

18. *Ibid.*, 443–47.

19. Its full title is *Lao Zhuang Zhou yi zhen hudie meng* 老莊週一枕胡蝶夢, in *Maiwangguan chaojiaoben gujin zaju ben* 明脈望館鈔校古今雜劇本.

20. The full title of this play is *Bao daizhi sankan hudie meng* 包待制三勘胡蝶夢 (Judge Bao Thrice Ponders the Butterfly Dream). A full English translation of the earliest text included in the collection titled *Yuankan zaju sanshi zhong* 元刊雜劇三十種 (Thirty *Zaju* in Yuan Edition) is available in Wilt Idema and Stephen H. West, eds. and trans., *Monks, Bandits, Lovers, and Immortals: Eleven Early Chinese Plays* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2010), 37–76.

21. This episode is found in the last part of the second volume of the tale (*wanp’an* edition); see vol. 2 of *Cho Ung chön* 조웅전 (도웅전) (Tokyo University edition, n.d.), 30.

22. In this song, the matriarchal butterfly, born from the heartwood of the sweet gum tree that transforms into myriad beings, lays twelve eggs after her twelve-year

marriage with Wave Form on the river. Her eggs, hatched by the Ji Wi bird, which is also born from the same mother (the sweet gum tree), become the origin of human-kind and other creatures. The song is performed during sacrificial worship dedicated to the Ancestors by ritual specialists, and a later part of the song narrates how necessary ritual objects, such as sacrificial drums, the sacrificial ox, and the sacrificial vestments, could be obtained. For an English translation and more information on the epic, see Mark Bender, trans., *Butterfly Mother: Miao (Hmong) Creation Epics from Guizhou, China* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2006).

23. See Kim Hyunsuk, *Pulkyo yonghyang ūl padūn Han'guk muyong ūi hūrūm* (Seoul: Samsin'gak, 1991), 52–65; Kim Malbok, *Uri Chūm* (Seoul: Ihwa yō ja taehakkyo ch'ulp'anbu, 2005), 123. The butterfly dance is one of the eight performances in this ceremony. The scene in which monks extend their arms like butterflies is the most impressive aspect of the performance. This ritual was almost lost due to the restrictions imposed on Buddhist rituals during the Japanese control of Korea. It has been revived recently. For information on a recent performance, see <http://articles.latimes.com/2009/oct/19/local/me-beliefs-buddhist19?pg=2>

24. It seems that this folk belief remains common in many parts of the world. For example, the annual late October migration of monarch butterflies from eastern Canada to the forests of western-central Mexico coincides with the Mexican holiday known as “The Day of the Dead” (Dia de los Muertos), and local people have believed that the returning monarchs (often sixty million to one billion strong) are the souls of deceased people, a belief also frequently seen in China and Korea, as we will see. For more information on the migration of the monarch butterflies, see <http://www.visitmexico.com/en/michoacan-where-monarch-butterflies-migrate>; see also <http://www.nbc.com/journey-with-dylan-dreyer/video/amazing-migrations/3415698>

25. See vol. 2 of *Lin Hejing shiji* 林和靖詩集 (Hangzhou: Zhejiang guji chubanshe, 1986), 8b–9a. With the next line narrating Zhuang Zhou's dream (傲吏齊來夢亦勞), this poem is similar to—or likely to have been influenced by—Luo Ye's butterfly poem, in the annotation to which the *Sip'ch'osi* version is found (see chapter 1). Whereas Luo Ye's poem focuses on the transformation of a woman's skirts into butterflies, this poem implies that butterflies are the transformed souls of lovers. Both poets lived in Hangzhou and other areas in Zhejiang Province.

26. Zheng Zhenduo, “Hudie de wenxue,” 282.

27. Examples are *Jianhu ji* 堅瓠集 (Collection from Hard Gorge) by Chu Renhuo 褚人獲 (fl. 1681) and *Huayang guozhi* 華陽國志 (Records of the Countries to the South of Mount Hua) by Chang Qu 常璩 (fl. 265–316).

28. Lai Jizhi, “Hudie yu sangji zhi shi,” in part 2, vol. 8 of *Tanghu qiaoshu* 倘湖

樵書, in *Xuxiu sibu congkan: Zibu, zajia lei* 續修四部叢刊: 子部雜家類 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe 1995), 252–53.

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid., 252.

31. Ibid. The story originally comes from *Huaman lu* 畫墁錄 (The Record of the Newly Painted Walls) by Zhang Shunmin 張舜民 (*jinsi* 1065).

32. Ibid.

33. See Han'guk munhwa sangjing sajön p'yönch'an wiwönhoe, *Han'guk Munhwa Sangjing Sajön 1* (Seoul: Tong'a ch'ulp'ansa), 142.

34. Most recently, a white butterfly appeared during the funeral service of former Korean president Roh Moo-hyun in 2009 and settled on his picture for a few minutes. People who were there recalled Roh's tragic death by suicide and considered this white butterfly to be the transformation of the late president. Supporters connected the white butterfly to Roh's love for the Korean people and to his well-known affection for butterflies. This shows that the popular belief in the link between human souls and butterflies is still producing captivating narratives in Korea. Pictures and related information are available online; for example, see <http://news.joins.com/article/5761441>. For more information on the folktales of white butterflies, which have been popular in Puyö, Ch'ungchöng Province, see Im Sök-chae, *Han'guk kujön sörhwa*, 6: 353–54.

35. Han'guk munhwa sangjing sajön p'yönch'an wiwönhoe, *Han'guk Munhwa Sangjing Sajön 1*, 143.

36. “Liang Zhu shan'ge,” in *LZWDGG*, 500.

37. Anne E. McLaren, *Performing Grief: Bridal Laments in Rural China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008), 7–8.

38. For example, see Im Sökchae, “Hwin nabi üi yorae,” in *Han'guk kujön sörhwa* 6:354: “If you have divine efficacy, you must recognize me. If you are letting me go, then just remain where you are. But if you wish to keep me, please open the tomb.” For more Korean examples, see Im Sökchae and Chang Chugün, comp. and ed., “Mun kut,” in their *Chungyo muhyöng munhwajae chijöng charyo: Kwanbuk chibang muga* (Seoul: Munhwajae kwalliguk, 1965), 146, and Kim T'aegon, ed., “Ch'i Wöndaeyang Sanbok,” in his *Han'guk mugajip* (Seoul: Chimmundang, 1971–80), 3:110.

39. The spell is as follows: “Yan Sanbok (Liang Shanbo), Yang Sanbok! It's me, Su Yangdae (Zhu Yingtai)! So please open the door!” (복아복아 양산복아, 수양대 내왔네. 문이나 좀 열어주소!); see “P'atchosi wa kyemo,” in vol. 7 of *Han'guk kubi munhak taegyë* (Söngnam: Han'guk chöngsin munhwa yön'güwön, 1980–88), 6:196–99. In the tale of “P'atchosi wa kyemo” (from Yöngdök, Kyöngsang Province, collected in 1980), the heroine is brutally abused by her stepmother and stepsister. On a cold

winter's day, her stepmother tells her to find some fresh vegetables. When she is in despair because she can't find any, her deceased mother appears to her in a dream and tells her where to find the vegetables and also the spell to open the gate of that place.

40. The oral formulaic theory presented by Milman Perry and his disciple Albert Lord is still useful in explaining the preservation of similar phrases we see across Liang-Zhu versions. It illuminates the roles of formulas and formulaic variations in passing down oral literature over time; see, for example, Lord's *The Singer of Tales* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960). Walter J. Ong explains how the formula works in oral performance, suggesting that in an oral culture one's thoughts must come into being in "formulary expressions, in standard thematic settings, to retain and retrieve carefully articulated thought"; see Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London, 1982), 34. Scholars such as Richard Bauman and John Miles Foley revisit and complicate the oral formulaic theories with the emphasis of ethnopoetics and immediate features of performance; see Foley, "Word-Power, Performance, and Tradition," *Journal of American Folklore* 105.417 (1992): 275–301; see also his *The Singer of Tales in Performance*, 1–28.

41. "Quanshi," in *LZWDGG*, 351.

42. Jiang Bin and others note that the lamentations of the ancient Wu-Yue 吳越 area (modern-day Zhejiang Province, where Liang-Zhu enjoyed particular popularity) are derived from a shamanistic culture; see Jiang Bin, *Wuyue minjian xinyang minsu* (Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 1992), 224.

43. See Gu Jiegang, "Huashan ji yu Zhu Yingtai," originally included in *Minsu zhoukan*; see *LZWDXL*, 25–26.

44. Anne E. McLaren and Qinjian Chen, "The Oral and Ritual Culture of Chinese Women: Bridal Lamentation of Nanhui," *Asian Folklore Studies* 59.2 (2000): 206.

45. *Ibid.*, 210.

46. Despite this stereotype, in China male shamans perform the majority of rituals, perhaps because female bodies, regarded as the essence of *yin*, are considered to be a source of contamination. This strongly held notion of female pollution has limited women's religious and shamanistic activities, not to mention women's involvement in Confucian orthodox rituals; see Wang Zhaoqian, *Anhui Guichi nuoxi juben xuan* (Taipei: Minsu wenhua jijinhui, 1995), 605. McLaren and Chen posit the tradition of female lamentation as a little-studied exception to this male dominance of ritual in China; see McLaren and Chen, "Oral and Ritual Culture of Chinese Women," 206.

47. McLaren and Chen, "Oral and Ritual Culture of Chinese Women," 206. For example, the section on female shamans (*nüwu* 女巫) in *Zhouli* 周禮 (vol. 26: 5) says that "when there was a disaster in the state, [female shamans asked Heaven] for help by singing and lamenting" (凡邦之大災，歌哭而請). The link between voice and

miracle is well known in many ancient world cultures, and in China and Korea, the power of lamentation has traditionally been associated with all kinds of superstitions, collectively called *yinsi* 淫祀.

48. Ch'oe Inhak, *Kujŏn sŏrhwa yŏn'gu* (Seoul: Saemunsa, 1994), 119–20; see also his *Han'guk sŏrhwa rŏn* (Seoul: Hyŏngsŏl ch'ulp'ansa, 1982), 224–29.

49. The story is particularly popular in the southeastern part of Korea (coincidentally, the area is known for its affinity for Liang-Zhu folktales and for the couple's common grave). In Miryang, there is Yŏngnamnu, a tower built to memorialize Arang. Texts are available in many Korean folklore collections; for an English translation, see Seo Daeseok, comp., and Peter H. Lee, ed., *Oral Literature of Korea* (Seoul: Jimoondang, 2005), 114–16.

50. See Burton D. Fisher, ed., *Puccini's Madama Butterfly* (Miami: Opera Journeys, 2001), esp. 14–23.

51. This different understanding of the association between woman and butterfly was criticized in the context of orientalism and colonialism. David Henry Hwang, for example, arguing that *Madama Butterfly* is loaded with sexism and racism/orientalism, presented a counternarrative, *M. Butterfly* (Monsieur Butterfly), to subvert this stereotypical notion of Asian women. Basing the story on the true scandal of French diplomat Darnard Bouriscot (who passed on classified information to his Chinese lover, who was in fact a male spy dressed as a woman), Hwang places the Caucasian man in the position of Madama Butterfly in Puccini's opera, and in so doing challenges the linear understanding of culture, sexuality, and humanity; see his *M. Butterfly: With an Afterword by the Playwright* (New York: Plume, 1988), 94–100.

52. Wang Yaping, “Minjian yishu zhong de Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai,” in *LZWDXL*, 34.

53. In the 2006 *yueju* version “Xinban Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai,” Liang and Zhu meet for the first time at the grass bridge (草橋) while catching butterflies with their fans. In the final scene, the fans, which become a pair of butterflies ascending to Heaven, they represent Liang and Zhu themselves. For more information, see Guo Xiaonan, *Guan/Nian: Guanyu xiju yu rensheng de daoyan baogao (B)* (Shanghai: Jinxu wenzhang chubanshe, 2010), 252–55.

54. Siu Leung Li, *Cross-Dressing in Chinese Opera* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2003), 117. In early *yueju* performances, before the 1920s, the roles of Liang and Zhu were performed by male actors. Later the *yueju* form, and thus performances of Liang-Zhu, came to include only female performers.

55. According to Siu Leung Li, the Liang-Zhu story has resonated with modern writers and inspired homoerotic imagination (of male-student lovers) in some modern works, including the intriguing transgender performance in David Henry Hwang's *M. Butterfly*; see Li, *Cross-Dressing in Chinese Opera*, 119.

56. Li, *Cross-Dressing in Chinese Opera*, 117. Raymond To Kwok-wai's 1998 musical *The Lover* depicts Liang as gay. In a later musical version directed by Yan Yan Mak in 2005, Zhu is rendered as a man.

57. The increased use of the butterfly as a symbol of homosexuality is especially salient in contemporary films (e.g., Yan Yan Mak's 2005 film *Butterfly*). For more information, see Howard Chiang and Ari Larissa Heinrich, eds., *Queer Sinophone Cultures* (New York: Routledge, 2014), esp. 201–20.

58. Qiu Wenkang and Wang Guanlong, "Yinxian Liang Shanbo miao ji qi fengsu," in *LZWDXL*, 510–11; see also Ying Changyu, "Liang Zhu yu Ningbo minsu," in *LZWKLY*, 540–41. During my field trip to this region in the summer of 2012, all the roads were closed due to lightning and heavy winds. Some local people told me they used to pray for Liang Shanbo whenever such bad weather threatened them. Now the entire temple location (Liang Zhu Wenhua Gongyuan) has turned into a place for sightseeing and dating. This trend toward commercialization has become far more extreme since my first visit to the site in 2000.

59. Mo Gao, "Jiangnan Liang Zhu minsu qing," in *LZWKLY*, 531.

60. See Qian Nanyang, "Ningbo Liang Zhu miaomu xianzhuang," in *LZWDXL*, 16–20. The related record reads as follows: "The temple has *Yushui jing* (The Rainwater Sutra), which has a long history. In the beginning, seven people living below the shrine, such as Mr. Shi, Mr. Xu, Mr. Lu, Mr. Zhang, and Mr. Shen, who were shamans by vocation, were well aware of *Fabualian jing* 法華連經 (The Wonderful Dharma Lotus-Flower Sutra). In early mid-autumn, they would recite sutras and pray for rain at the rear of the temple. When the rain came, the region enjoyed happiness and peace. People from everywhere, hearing the news, would marvel over this and bringing their own requests, asking shamans to recite the sutra on their behalf" (本廟之有雨水經也，由來久矣，初祠下施徐陸張沈等七人，業巫祝，精熟法華連經，每於仲秋初旬，在廟后殿虔誦祈禱，雨暘時若，合境平安，於是四方聞而慕之，各將經願，來請代誦). Original texts from Qian Nanyang, "Ningbo Liang Zhu miaomu xianzhuang," 17.

61. *Ibid.*, 18.

62. Mo Gao, "Qi yue shi wu song zhideng," in *LZWDGG*, 256–57.

63. Huang Shang, "Liang Zhu zaji," in *LZWDXL*, 93.

64. He Xuejun, *Zhongguo sida chuanshuo* (Hangzhou: Zhejiang jiaoyu chubanshe, 1996), 146. Zheng Tuyou argues that this expression and the related local customs exemplify how folk-religious beliefs (*suxin*) and culture contributed to the vitality of the Liang-Zhu story; see his "Ruoyao fuqi tong daolao, Liang Shanbo miao dao yi dao—cong Liang Zhu gushi kan minjian gushi yu suxin de hudong guanxi," in *LZWKLY*, 556–59.

65. Ibid., 138–39; Zhou Jingshu, “Liang Zhu huadie chengyin ji qi wenhua yiyi,” in *LZWDXL*, 376.

66. Ibid.; see also Ding Hua, “Liang Zhu he shuanghu die,” in *LZWDGG*, 254–55.

67. In 2005, the festival was renamed Aiqing jie 愛情節 (Love Festivals). In Ningbo, variations of the festivals have appeared as the story has been incorporated into commercial business. For more information on the festivals, see http://js.cnnb.com.cn/zt2009/5_lzaqj/

68. For the original text, see Im Sökchae and Chang Chugün, *Chungyo muhyöng munhwajae chijöng charyo: Kwanbuk chibang muga*, 137–48.

69. For the original text, see Kim T’aegon, *Han’guk mugajip*, 3:98–101.

70. Boudewijn Walraven states that these two versions represent cases of a Chinese folktale of nonshamanic origin being adopted into Korean shamanic ritual; see his *Songs of the Shaman: The Ritual Chants of the Korean Mudang* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1994), 113. However, as discussed earlier, the Liang-Zhu tale had long been incorporated to local religious activities.

71. See Kim T’aegon, *Han’guk mugajip*, 3:101.

72. For more on the concept of this bad death and the function of shamanic rites for the dead, see Charlotte Horlyck and Michael J. Pettit, eds., *Death, Mourning, and the Afterlife in Korea: From Ancient to Contemporary Times* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2014), esp. 137–54. The story’s adaptation reminds us of the custom of matchmaking for the dead (*yinpei* 陰配) seen in Chinese Liang-Zhu folklore, in that it helps both the dead and the living; see chapter 1.

73. Kim T’aegon, *Han’guk mugajip*, 3:101.

74. For more information on these North Korean Liang-Zhu adaptations and other Korean Liang-Zhu versions, see Cho, “Within and between Cultures.”

75. See *Chongding Liang Shanbo Mudan ji nanyin* 重訂梁山伯牡丹記南音 (Hong Kong: Wuguitang shuju, 1900?), 2, 6. Both Lu Gong’s *Liang Zhu gu shi shuochang ji* and Zhou Jingshu’s *Liang Zhu wenhua daguan* (*LZWD*) seem to include the same edition of “Mudan ji,” but the parts related to the superstitious elements that are seen in the Wuguitang edition—including Mungoksöng’s appearance, Zhu’s meeting with a shaman, and her traveling to ten halls in the underworld—are missing in the collections by Lu Gong and Zhou Jingshu. Further research is needed to know whether there are multiple editions of this version of “Mudan ji.” For information on Mungoksöng (Wenqu Xing), see Ju Yueshi and Gao Fujin, *Zhongguo xiangzheng wenhua tuzhi* (Jinan: Shandong huabao chubanshe, 2010), 238–39.

76. This study relies on Choi Won-oh’s recent translation of the original text, included in Hyön Yongjun’s *Cheju-do musok charyo sajön* (Cheju: Kak, 2007). See

Choi Won-oh, *An Illustrated Guide to Korean Mythology* (Folkestone, UK: Global Oriental, 2008), 64–82.

77. Paekchung is also known as the (hungry) ghost festival or Uran (Yulan 盂蘭), among Koreans, and is held on the fifteenth day of the seventh month in the lunar calendar. On that day, all the realms are open and ghosts and spirits come back to visit the living. The living are obliged to pay homage to these returned ghosts and safely guide them. The day is also known as a good harvest day: “Paekchung” literally means “hundreds of seeds.” Cheju people catch seafood on this day and dedicate it as sacrificial food to their local deities.

78. For the patriarchal aspects reflected in this version, see Kwön Ogyōng, “Tong’asia koxsin sinhwa yŏn’gu,” *Ōmunhak* 102 (2008): 207–8.

79. See, for example, “Liu yin ji” (*chuanju*), in *LZWDXY*, 144–45.

80. The literary trope of special or remarkable events happening to women as they are washing clothes is pervasive in both China and Korea. A famous Chinese model is *Huansha ji* 浣紗記 by Liang Chenyu 梁辰魚 (ca. 1521–94). In a North Korean Liang-Zhu version called “Ch’i Wōndae Yang Sanbok,” two women doing laundry by the river become the mothers of Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai. For the original text of this version, see Kim T’aegon, *Han’guk mugajip*, 3:98–101.

81. Choi, *Illustrated Guide to Korean Mythology*, 63.

82. One example of this usage is found in the story of Queen Changhwa, who marries Wang Kōn, founder of the Koryō dynasty. The legend also shares the element of a woman doing laundry: Changhwa is washing clothes by the river when Wang passes by, and when Wang asks her for a drink of water to drink, she floats willow leaves in the gourd before handing it to him. The adoption of this willow-leaf trope in the “Segyōng pon p’uri” indicates that this version conceives of the relationship between Liang and Zhu as a heterosexual romantic pairing more than as a friendship. For an English introduction of the story of Wang Kōn and Queen Changhwa, see Lee Bae-yong, *Women in Korean History*, trans. Lee Kyong-hee (Seoul: Ewha Womans University, 2008), 149–52.

83. It is made clear that Chach’ōngbi is very talented: she is depicted as the top student among the thousand students at the school. Mun even feels a sense of inferiority and tries to defeat her in other areas, but always fails to surpass her. See Choi, *Illustrated Guide to Korean Mythology*, 65.

84. The characterization of Mun Toryōng in “Segyōng pon p’uri” is similar to that of Liang in most Chinese Liang-Zhu versions, but is distinct from many other Korean Liang-Zhu versions, in which Liang discovers Zhu’s sexual identity shortly after they meet and then proposes marriage to her.

85. Choi, *Illustrated Guide to Korean Mythology*, 66.

86. In most Liang-Zhu tales, it is Zhu Yingtai who is supposed to marry someone else and Liang Shanbo who dies from lovesickness. This reversal of the plot in the “Segyöng pon p’uri” is unique.

87. Choi, *Illustrated Guide to Korean Mythology*, 72.

88. According to Yi Suja, the Söchön (supposedly meaning “Western Spring or Sky”) garden appears in many shamanic ritual narratives from Cheju as an exotic place where a dead human body is revived. See her “Cheju-do musok sinhwa yön’gu” (PhD diss., Ewha Womans University, 1988), 188–91.

89. Some scholars interpret this scene as an expression of Chach’öngbi’s outrage at Mun’s belated appearance; see O Chöngmi, “Yösöng üi hwansang munhak Segyöng pon p’uri,” *Kyörye ömunhak* 37 (2006): 216.

90. Choi, *Illustrated Guide to Korean Mythology*, 78.

91. *Ibid.*, 80.

92. See Kim Söngnye, “Han’guk mosok e nat’anan yösöng ch’ehöm,” *Han’guk yösöngbak* 7 (1991): 7–43.

93. Based on the fact that the “Segyöng pon p’uri” version has a large number of literary expressions and episodes, Boudewijn Walraven assumes that it has been influenced by Korean fictional narratives such as *Sukhyang chön* (The Story of Sukhyang); see Walraven, *Songs of the Shaman*, 113–14. While I agree with his point, I also suggest that the “Segyöng pon p’uri” reveals many other literary influences. The Chach’öngbi character and her relationship to Mun show more affinity to other religious storytelling (shaman myths) and to Chinese prosimetric versions, particularly those that are deeply engaged in religious tellings and performances, such as “Mudan ji” (*muyu shu*) or “Liu yin ji” (*guci*). Further research is needed to verify this point.

94. See Kang Chöngsik, “Cheju muga igongbon üi kubi sösjök sönggyök” (MA thesis, Chöngsin munwa yön’guwön, 1987).

95. During the Yuan dynasty, the Mongol rule of China had great influence on Korea, prompting “Monggol p’ung” 몽골風 (Mongolian customs) to become popular among Korean people. Concomitantly, Korean (Koryö) culture, known as “Gaoli yang(zi)” 高麗樣(子) (Koryö style), became fashionable in China. Chön Yöngjun’s recent research on the local history of Cheju Island shows that during the Yuan dynasty marriage between Chinese (immigrants) and Korean people was popular not only in the upper class, but even among commoners. It is likely that under the enhanced cultural exchange between the two countries the numbers of Chinese immigrants may have been much greater than was previously thought. See Chön Yöngjun, “Koryö hugi Cheju igö Wön ijumin kwa t’onghon,” *Tamunhwa kont’enchü yön’gu* 15 (2013): 395–425.

96. The scope of the literary activities of the common people, including shamans, in spite of their limited literacy, is astounding. The huge scope of raw literary sources

utilized by the Cheju people in their local narratives may indicate that the literary sources on Cheju came from everywhere. The Cheju area boasts plenty of popular stories that circulated. Their content ranges from myths, legends, and accounts of historical events to popular religious tales. See Yi, “Cheju-do musok sinhwa yŏn’gu,” 33.

EPILOGUE

1. The summary is available at <http://news.sohu.com/20100705/n273279404.shtml>
2. See Wang Xin, “Jingcai Chaoban Liang-Zhu Zhongguo zhi xing zai Qing wanman luomu,” *Zouxiang shijie* (Openings) no. 2 (2012): 36–41; see also <http://ent.sina.com.cn/j/2011-10-26/12093461071.shtml>. For a local advertisement for the performance, see http://ent.ifeng.com/a/20111116.10691016_0.shtml
3. Ibid. See also online reviews: http://www.cando360.com/ess/opus_0_6012.html
4. Li Yongchun and Wen Zichun, “Xu Yulan, Wang Wenjuan zai Chaoxian zhan-chang shang,” *Dangshi wenhui*, no. 2 (2001): 45–46.
5. For information on North Korean leaders’ interest in Chinese operatic forms and Liang Zu, see http://news.ifeng.com/shendu/nfzm/detail_2011_12/23/11524014_0.shtml
6. Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Routledge, 2001), 215–22.
7. Ibid., 217.
8. Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (Boston: Unwin Hyman 1990), 221–38.
9. Margaret L. Andersen and Patricia Hill Collins, *Race, Class, and Gender: An Anthology* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1998), 7.
10. Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 18. This concept of intersectionality is used by Crenshaw to highlight the fact that the forms of oppression are not separable or exclusive; see Kimberlé W. Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color,” *Stanford Law Review* 43.6 (1991): 1244. I use this notion to denote the complexity and intertwining of the forms of oppression enacted upon the character of Zhu Yingtai.
11. Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 143.
12. Wilt L. Idema, “Changben Texts in the Nūshu Repertoire of Southern Hunan,” in *The Eternal Storyteller: Oral Literature in Modern China*, ed. Vibeke Børdal (Richmond: Curzon, 1999), 110.

13. Beatrice Spade, in her discussion of model women (women of intelligence and capability) during the Southern Dynasties, indicates that the return of a woman like Lou Cheng or Zhu Yingtai to her home as a mere woman would not have been considered a shame. Such a woman did not return empty-handed, in that she achieved and demonstrated skills of her own. See Spade, “The Education of Women in China during the Southern Dynasties,” *Journal of Asian History* 13.1 (1979): 35.

Bibliography

ABBREVIATIONS

- BJCJ* *Baojuan chuji* 寶卷初集. Edited by Zhang Xishun 張希舜. Taiyuan: Shanxi renmin chubanshe, 1994.
- LZWD* *Liang Zhu wenhua daguan* 梁祝文化大观. Edited by Zhou Jingshu 周静書. 4 vols. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1999.
- LZWDGG* *Gushi geyao juan* 故事歌谣卷
- LZWDQX* *Quyì xiaoshuo juan* 曲艺小说卷
- LZWDXL* *Xueshu lunwen juan* 学术论文卷
- LZWDXY* *Xiju yingshi juan* 戏剧影视卷
- LZWK* *Liang Zhu wenku* 梁祝文库. Edited by Zhou Jingshu 周静書. 4 vols. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2007.
- LZWKGW* *Guowai wenyi juan* 国外文艺卷
- LZWKLY* *Lilun yanjiu juan* 理论研究卷
- LZWKMG* *Minjian geyao juan* 民间歌谣卷 (2 vols.)
- LZWKYY* *Yueju yishu juan* 越剧艺术卷
- MJLZ* *Mingjia tan Liang Shanbo Zhu Yingtai* 名家谈梁山伯祝英臺. Edited by Tao Wei 陶璋. Beijing: Wenhua yishu chubanshe, 2006.
- YXLZSC* *Yixing Liang Zhu wenhua: Shiliao yu chuanchuo* 宜兴梁祝文化: 史料与传说. Edited by Yixing shi zhengxie xuexi he wenshi weiyuanhui 宜兴市政协学习和文史委员会 and Yixingshi huaxia Liang Zhu wenhua yanjiuhui 宜兴市华夏梁祝文化研究会. Beijing: Fangzhi chubanshe, 2003.

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