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Gaze into the Abyss: A Psychoanalytic Approach to the Footbinding Episode in “The Golden Cangue”

THESIS

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Hanbing Huang

Thesis Committee:
Professor David T. Pan, Chair
Professor Hu Ying
Associate Professor Anke Biendarra

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Dedication

To

Shihan and Shiqi

in recognition of their unconditional love

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Abstract of the Thesis

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Hanbing Huang

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Professor David T. Pan, Chair

Right after the romantic scene where Ch’i-ch’iao sheds her pearl tears in front of the window, the “lonely madness”—in C. T. Hsia’s words—of Ch’i-ch’iao’s later life unfolds. And its first episode is Ch’i-ch’iao binding her daughter’s feet. Ch’i-ch’iao bursts into anger when she suddenly spots her nephew Ch’un-hsi having intimate bodily contact with her daughter Ch’ang-an; but in fact Ch’un-hsi was only holding and lifting down Ch’ang-an when the latter tips backward on a tea table. After a long lesson that girls should take care of themselves and their money, Ch’i-ch’iao, still not believing that Ch’ang-an takes her teaching to heart, decides to bind her feet. However, at the time when this episode happens (around the early 1920s), footbinding is no longer fashionable. Ch’i-ch’iao’s relatives on her husband’s side, conservative though they are, are letting out women’s bound feet, and even the amahs (elder female servants) recognize that women with small feet would have trouble getting engaged. This episode, thus at first look, will be a manifestation of extreme conservatism.

Nevertheless, given the fact that Ch’i-ch’iao herself tucks cotton in her shoes to pretend that her feet are not bound, she is not deaf to new trends; instead, she herself participates in the imitation

of fashion to some degree. More strangely, after one year or so, Ch'i-ch'iao's own enthusiasm wanes, and she lets Ch'ang-an's feet loose after relatives' persuasion. Such an incomplete result forms a contrast against Ch'i-ch'iao's unstoppable passion before footbinding, and together with her peculiar divergence from the mainstream, it compels us to reconsider her motives.

Many scholars point out that Ch'i-ch'iao changes from a victim of "feudalism" to an oppressor in the system. Some other scholars believe the footbinding episode is caused by Ch'i-ch'iao's madness. However, the feudalism theory is too mechanistic to accommodate the subtlety of the story and it neglects Ch'i-ch'iao's own reformed feet, and the madness theory does not even care to explore the logic of the madness. More importantly, the tendency to tag Ch'i-ch'iao as feudal and mad without a deep investigation into the development of this character only banishes her from readers' sympathy into the alienated land of eternal evilness, rendering her the indestructible scar in the history of modern Chinese literature. All of this blocks our way to gain a deeper insight into the character and do justice to the story itself.

Yet, the footbinding episode is of importance in the structure of the story. It links the first and second halves of the story and constitutes the parallel of the Shih-fang episode, the one many scholars pay the most attention. Therefore, an analysis of it would offer us possible insights into both Ch'i-ch'iao's past life and the later episode, especially the Shih-fang one.

Introduction

Hailed by C. T. Hsia (1921–2013)—one of the most famous literary critics of modern Chinese literature—as “the best and most important writer in Chinese” of his day, Eileen Chang (1920–95) is often reckoned as a literary icon comparable to Lu Xun (1881–1936) (389). Born into a declining gentry family in Shanghai, Chang witnessed how the “leftovers” of the Qing dynasty (1644–1912) lived their life in her early years. In 1939, about 18 months after she escaped to the house of her mother from that of her father, who had brutally beaten her and confined her for half a year for her impertinent behavior towards her stepmother, Chang entered the University of Hong Kong as a student of English literature (Kingsbury xi). In 1941, however, the Japanese invasion into Hong Kong interrupted her studies and obliged her to return to Shanghai, where she shined as a literary supernova in the silent Parnassus during the war. From 1943 to 1945, she wrote most of her acclaimed works, including “Love in a Fallen City” (1943); “The Golden Cangue” (1943); “Red Rose, White Rose” (1944). After the war, nevertheless, her brief fame waned. In 1952, as the political pressure increased in Shanghai, she fled to Hong Kong first and then emigrated to the United States in 1955. From the end of the war to her de novo rise to fame in the 1960s because of the appreciation of literary critics, she was for the most time a forgotten writer. With her quintessential works written in a few years early in her career, and her posthumous fame parallel to that of Lu Xun, Chang is indeed a rare example in Chinese literary history.

“The Golden Cangue” is deemed by Hsia as “the greatest novelette [or novella in some scholars’ words] in the history of Chinese literature” due to its “happy” combination of both traditional domestic novels and Western psychological sophistication (398). Fu Lei (1908–1966), an influential translator and critic, regards it as “the most perfect and positive answer” to the

shortcomings of literary works since the May Fourth Movement to date: A full and fascinating portrayal of how the protagonist fights passion, the greatest source of human tragedy, the story avoids the tendency to attribute evilness to such external factors as patriarchy, Confucianism, and capitalism, and thus does justice to struggles in life (49). Both these two comments point out the unique artistic effect of this novella and place it above many other literary works.

The footbinding episode is tucked in the middle of the story; like a bridge, it links together the former and latter halves of Ch'i-ch'iao's story. It all begins with accidental body contact between Ch'ang-an, Ch'i-ch'iao's daughter, and Ch'un-hsi, her nephew. The latter is holding Ch'ang-an so that she does not tip over from a tea table, but Ch'i-ch'iao catches sight of it and mistakes it for sexual teasing. In a fit of rage, she kicks Ch'un-hsi out of her house and lectures to Ch'ang-an on the importance of keeping away from men. Although her timid daughter shows signs of apprehension, Ch'i-ch'iao, suspicious that Ch'ang-an would disobey, decides that her feet must be bound. Despite the amahs' (old maids') advice that this practice is no longer fashionable, her enthusiasm ends up concretized into reality in Ch'ang-an's body. This act, however, is largely dominated by Ch'i-ch'iao's momentary enthusiasm, and after a year or so, persuaded by her relatives, she lets loose Ch'ang-an's feet, yet it is impossible to remove the corporeal trace on the body.

Many scholars pay little attention to this episode because it seems too "normal." Unlike the seemingly sudden, reasonless, and irrational "attacks" of Ch'i-ch'iao in the Shih-fang episode, this one provides a clearer logic chain: Chang tells us how Ch'i-ch'iao gets angry and what she thinks before the decision of footbinding, which looks like a common disciplinary punishment imposed by a mother on her daughter. But Ch'i-ch'iao's unspoken motives here might reveal her subtle, secret emotions or attitudes towards Ch'ang-an or other members of the Chiangs, thus offering us

hints to both her past life and the later episodes in this story, especially the Shih-fang one. In fact, the footbinding and Shih-fang episodes might form parallels: in both cases, there is a potential mate for Ch'ang-an, the mother's suspicion that this mate is a money-hunter, and her subsequent counteractions. If readers are startled by Ch'i-ch'iao's sudden vicious lie at the end of the novella, they might be less perplexed if we get to know the hidden motives of Ch'i-ch'iao in the footbinding episode and its implications thereafter in the mother-daughter relationship. Therefore, while many scholars pursue the study of other episodes, this thesis would satisfy itself with digging into the footbinding one.

“Woman of the Past”

The footbinding episode is undoubtedly one of the scenes most provoking to many modern eyes and a representative detail of “feudal” elements in this story. In modern readers' eyes, the notion of male-female segregation, the very act of binding girls' feet, the deviation from progressive idea, the cruel infliction on others' body, the disregard of others' will for one's own pleasure, together delineate an image of a despotic and self-righteous matriarch that only exists in the imagination of a distant past.

Even Chang herself is aware that the footbinding is closely related to time, or the past time. In *Honglou mengyan* (*Nightmare in the Red Chamber*), Chang discusses whether female characters in *Honglou meng* (*The Dream of the Red Chamber*) bind their feet. She argues that the author, Cao Xueqin (1715–1763), is ambiguous with most of the girls' feet in the novel, especially those of the female protagonist Lin Daiyu, without pointing out whether they are bound—because footbinding existed in a specific temporal span, and Cao intentionally makes an aura that these characters could belong to all ages and transcended specific ages (Chang, *Honglou Mengyan* 24).

The same motif of time appears again when Chang reflects on one of her mother's old photos—her eyes are drawn to nothing else than her mother's bound feet (See Fig. 1). She then mentions that her mother (born in 1899), and her aunt (born in 1901) were both children of conservative families, yet her mother has bound feet, while her aunt does not (Chang, *Duizhao ji* 20). In the very transitional period from old to new, time is truly a sensitive matter—only two years would make a difference. When Chang whole-heartedly observes her mother's bound feet, there is another time flowing out of the photo: the very time of her mother's history. Her thought jumping from the bound feet of the young girl in the photo to the later woman who skied across the Alps with bound feet, she sees from the photo the history of a woman who struggled to survive in the new age with marks of the old age.

While she longingly observes the bound feet as an entrance into the history of her mother's generation, Chang is also aware of the negative connotations of the bound feet. In *Xiao tuanyuan* (*Little Reunions*), a novel widely recognized as an autobiographic fiction, she records a visit by her and her mother to a swimming pool in Hong Kong. Harboring anger against her mother, Julie, the incarnation of Chang, observes mockingly how her mother walks to and plays in the pool with a pair of bound feet (Chang, *Xiao Tuanyuan* 42–3). Even though Chang admires her mother's adventurous ski across the Alps, her mother's bound feet—as the entrance into vivid personal and generational history—could become a “laughing stock” from the condescending daughter



Fig. 1. Eileen Chang's mother (left) at a young age. (From *Duizhao ji*, by Eileen Chang, 1994.)

belonging to a new generation. In other words, women with bound feet, the scar imposed by the old age, however brave they could be in integrating themselves in the new age, could still be the target of mockery on some occasions.

In the end, Chang's attitude towards footbinding is multilayered: the bound feet are firstly a historical product of a certain age that could be manifested in literary arts in juxtaposition with

other bodily modification or adornments. Also, the bound feet are a recorder of family history that she consciously returns to and pores over. It is noteworthy that Chang does not evince particular attitude towards footbinding. And in *Duizhao ji (Mutual Reflections)*, the disparagement of the old age is generally spoken by Chang's mother and aunt, while she herself, like a historian, writes down the struggles in sweat and blood of her mother's generation, the generation most directly influenced by the May Fourth Movement. Yet meanwhile, as one of the beneficiaries of the anti-footbinding movement, she also knows well that footbinding does and should belong to the past age.

Indeed, many scholars believe that "The Golden Cangue" is a story of the past, especially of past feudalism. David Wang argues that Ch'i-ch'iao is the victim of "feudal family," and that the story is a manifestation of how *lijiao* (indoctrination of rituals) could "eat" woman (6). Chuan-chih Kao further elaborates that the male-dominated "feudal" society not only satisfies man's desire of power but offers opportunity to some women to control others (93). Their arguments may make sense in the degree that many elements in the story—unconditional submission to patriarchs and matriarchs, arranged marriage, binding norm of filiality, concubinage, cult of chastity as well as footbinding—are related to how a "feudal" family functions in our mind. I agree that many of these elements are products of a certain historical background and are unique to that past historical period and argue that the reason why footbinding could produce dramatic effect is that for readers in a "post-footbinding" era, footbinding belongs to a backward age.

Yet, if we believe that the story is determined by "feudalism," then our interpretation would be problematic. In fact, Wang does not clarify what he means by "feudal family system." His evasion might be due to the common belief that almost all Chinese have in mind what "feudalism" is like. Unfortunately, however, the notion of feudalism in today's China includes anything related

to “retrogression, the outdated, the anti-revolutionary” characteristic of the past (Wong 82). But not all “retrogression, the outdated, the anti-revolutionary” belongs to the past, because, for example, among the elements I mentioned, many, such as arranged marriage and cult of chastity, still remain in various forms in modern society—could we be “feudal” as well, or are we as modern people still haunted by the “remains” of “feudalism” that could not be easily removed from our society? Thus, we would only be too optimistic if we believe that Ch’i-ch’iao’s story belongs to and only happens in the past, whereas the term “feudal” might precisely indicate this.

Also, if “feudalism” evokes a total disparagement of the past, an imagined ideal modern era, a complete division between past and present by a specific political date, then the story about the “feudal” past would be only about the oppressions and struggles under the feudal system, and “The Golden Cangue” in particular would be about Ch’i-ch’iao, the oppressed in the feudal system against the representatives of the oppressive system. The oppressors would include: the male Eldest and Third Masters and T’sao Ta-nien as well as the female Old Mistress and the paternal sisters-in-law. The second half of the story would witness a change of position: Ch’i-ch’iao’s children and children-in-law as the oppressed against the oppressor Ch’i-ch’iao. Thus, the story would turn itself into a mere annotation to the law “the eaten becomes the eater,” and many details in the story, such as the action of gossiping between the maids, the complicated relationship between Ch’i-ch’iao and her brother are all opaque to interpretation. Therefore, I in this thesis will avoid the use of the feudal framework and try to point out the specific mechanism in question rather than roughly subsuming it under the category of “feudalism.”

Although I concede that the footbinding episode is highly related to the past time, my specific concern about the “feudal” interpretation in the footbinding episode is that it would exactly lead to a neglect of this episode due to the belief that the blind adherence to footbinding was

common in the past “feudal” society, or would give rise to an oversimplified understanding that the footbinding act is initiated by a “feudal” matriarch that is to indiscriminately revenge her sufferings. In either case, it would result in an equal neglect of the complicatedness and importance of the footbinding episode, which is more than systematic feudalism. Moreover, the “feudal” interpretation overlooks a very detail that Ch’i-ch’iao herself has let loose her feet—she is definitely not living in the “iron house” of Lu Xun that resists new trends.¹ This hence breaks any illusion that this episode suits the “feudal” narrative perfectly.

“The Mad Woman”

Another kind of argument potentially as misleading as the “feudalism” one is the one on madness. This view finds its support firstly in the repetitive appearances of “mad” in the story per se and secondly in Chang’s own comment that among all characters she creates only Ch’i-ch’iao is an extreme one (“Writing of One’s Own” 17). Yet, the assurance that Ch’i-ch’iao is mad only leads to research that stays on the outside manifestations of madness without digging deeper into its internal logic. For example, a scholar named Guo Yuwen, when referring to Ch’i-ch’iao’s madness, has this following claim: ‘. . . later she even becomes accustomed to using [the golden cangue] as a lethal weapon, chopping people surrounding her without distinction. She is so irrational that she becomes a madwoman’ (my trans.; 158). Here, the analysis of Ch’i-ch’iao’s madness only centers on her irrational external manifestations without approaching the essence of “madness”—a psychological disorder. See also this claim of Guo’s: Ch’i-ch’iao ‘uses a crazy means to protect her dignity that has been trodden to pieces. Mere survival is difficult for her, not

¹ See Lu 37: “Imagine an iron house having not a single window and virtually indestructible, with all its inmates sound asleep and about to die of suffocation. Dying in their sleep, they won’t feel the pain of death.” The “iron house” here could be analogous to the old China deaf to new trends.

to mention acting as a model mother' (my trans.; 165). Here she mentions a cause of Ch'i-ch'iao's madness, her need to protect the damaged dignity, but again, she does not dig into the idea of "crazy." What counts as a "crazy means"? As "mad" and "crazy" become common designations for our protagonist, scholars do not think much before they write down the term "the mad woman," leaving the causes, development, and scope of her madness in obscurity.

My special concern for madness about the footbinding episode is that since Ch'i-ch'iao and the idea of madwoman are closely related together, her madness then becomes an easy way out as we explain the causes of the footbinding episode. In any case, the madwoman could do anything beyond the imagination of normal people, and it would be agreeable if we attribute footbinding, such a violent and outdated act in disregard of Ch'ang-an's future welfare, to Ch'i-ch'iao's madness. That said, we could still move one step further from the diagnosis of her madness into etiology and consider why the causes would lead to symptoms such as footbinding. Yet the readers are only satisfied with the spectacle of a madwoman; to put themselves in the madwoman's shoes would be too condescending for them.

"A Character Unlike Us"

Tragedy "is mimesis of an action . . . through pity and fear accomplishing the catharsis of such emotion," so said Aristotle (47). More specifically, pity is "felt for the undeserving victim of adversity," and fear "for one like ourselves" (71). Ch'i-ch'iao, despite her adversity in the first half of the story, undermines the evocation of pity due to her cunning evil in the second half. Considered as a feudal matriarch and a madwoman, she is then excluded from the ranks of characters "like ourselves" by some modern readers. The magic of Chang's art in this story, in fact, partly resides in her ability to mix those factors inviting pity and fear and those that deter pity and fear together,

thereby creating an image exciting the uncanny feelings down our spine. However, some readers, overwhelmed by the part of Ch'i-ch'iao that prevents the two emotions, abruptly reject their identification with Ch'i-ch'iao. For example, after reading the adapted script for "The Golden Cangue" by Wang Anyi, an actress who was invited to play the role of Ch'i-ch'iao implied to Wang that she was not as bad as the character (Wang A., "Gaibian 'Jinsuoji'" 62). This actress, who had had some experience in playing bad roles, could not understand how a mother would behave like Ch'i-ch'iao, and thus refused the identification with the character—a job that an actress should have done.

Apart from the tendency to exclude Ch'i-ch'iao from "good" people, "normal" people, and "modern" people, there is also an inclination to banish her to the land of unhuman. C. T. Hsia, in the analysis of the Shih-fang episode, points out: "At the complete success of her strategy she evinces no guilt or pleasure because, in the degree she has successfully stamped out normal human impulses in herself and in those around her, she has ceased to be human" (405). Hsia's argument has a loophole in that not only in the Shih-fang episode, but throughout the second half of the story, Ch'i-ch'iao seldom evinces guilt or pleasure after the success of her strategy; and near the end of the story, before Ch'i-ch'iao passes away, she indeed feels "a flicker of self-pity, a sorrow, and regret over her wasted years"—as Hsia himself analyzed—that are typical of human beings (405). But my point here is Ch'i-ch'iao's unhuman appearance. I agree with Hsia to the degree that on some occasions Ch'i-ch'iao appears unhuman. For example, in the dark scene before the footbinding decision, as the flame of the opium lamp ducks at the wind gust, the shadow on Ch'i-ch'iao's face bespeaks her ghostly, and unhuman appearance. In fact, Ch'i-ch'iao's ghostliness here is even the intersection of two different ghostly traits: one of the *yangui* (opium ghost), and the other of the ghost in tradition whose presence would be signaled by an uncanny change in

light.² Yet, rather than depicting Ch'i-ch'iao as "having ceased to be human" and excluding her from the group of humans, I'd rather argue that Ch'i-ch'iao demonstrates how a normal healthy young woman can degenerate into the shriveled mad old woman, given certain circumstances, and to what extent a human can appear unhuman—in other words—to what extent our humanity could be unimaginably obscene and irrational. The reason why I insist on maintaining Ch'i-ch'iao within the ranks of human while emphasizing how she could appear unhuman is that we as humans need to reflect in what circumstances we humans could appear unhuman, and never imagine that we ourselves are immune to "unhuman" behaviors. In other words, we have good reason to identify with Ch'i-ch'iao, and take her life story seriously, instead of deeming it as a mere nonsensical drama.

My special concern for the footbinding episode comes from my desire to understand it. As is indicated by the proceeding of this Introduction, I was attracted by this episode originally because footbinding does not exist anymore. My first intuition is also that this episode is connected with feudalism, yet further scrutiny reminds me that feudalism is not a perfect answer to this. The alternative of madness, as is demonstrated above, is not satisfying, either. Thus, the goal of this thesis is to find a better explanation of this episode.

Also, it would be worthwhile to probe into the footbinding episode because of its significance in the story. Located in the middle of the story, it contains, on the one hand, the concentrated experience of Ch'i-ch'iao's love story in her first life; on the other hand, it predicts Ch'ang-an's fate of marriage and prefigures the development of the mother-daughter relationship

² The "opium ghosts" depicts the situation where opium addicts refuse to "live by standards of health" and are therefore reckoned as a nonhuman Other (McMahon 326). And for the ghost in tradition, Judith Zeitlin wrote that "[u]ncanny behavior in a candle or lamp conventionally signals a ghostly presence" (3). Shen Fu (1763-?) in *Fusheng liuji* (*Six Chapters of a Floating Life*) specifically describes the movement of candle flame as he waits for the return of the soul of his deceased wife: it first turns green and shrinks to the size of a pea, then leaps up so high as to almost scorch the ceiling before it finally shrinks back (Zeitlin 3).

in the second half of the story. Understanding this bridge episode thus helps us avoid the dangerous division between the past Ch'i-ch'iao and the later Ch'i-ch'iao and get a better sense of her motivations to harm people surrounding her. In other words, the research on this episode is also an effort to establish an identification with this character who is notoriously evil in the history of modern Chinese literature.

My thesis would therefore center on understanding the causes of the footbinding episode. I will introduce in Chapter 1 relevant historical facts about whether footbinding was still fashionable when the episode is supposed to happen and argue against the argument that the footbinding episode is a result of the adherence to feudalism. The next chapter delves into Ch'i-ch'iao's self-esteem destroyed in the first half of the story, which requires an elevation in the second half. Chapter 3 investigates the causes of the footbinding episode through the logic of madness and Ch'i-ch'iao's pursuit of acquisition. In Chapter 4, I look at the aftermath of the footbinding episode: the formation of the doubling and find that the footbinding episode uncannily predicts the Shih-fang episode.

Chapter 1: Footbinding in Vogue or Not?

Whether footbinding was still fashionable or not is an important question in the footbinding episode. It is related to the legitimacy Ch'i-ch'iao holds for the footbinding act and could thence influence our understanding of this character. Apart from the factual discussion on whether the practice was still in fashion, the formation of this very question also deserves our attention: when talking about this practice, the amahs use no other word than “fashionable” itself. Could it mean that when referring to the disappearance of a once common practice, the amahs, an old-aged female group without distinctive education, regard it as an effect of changing tide, in a manner similar to how they view outfit style? And through the prism of fashion, when we look at Ch'i-ch'iao's “reformed feet”—a term infused with political color—what can we get from it? This chapter tries to deal with these three points through the elaboration of relevant history: footbinding being out-of-fashion, footbinding as fashion, and Ch'i-ch'iao's reformed feet. Through this discussion, we can find that although Eileen Chang does not explicitly talk about history, the words, behaviors and appearance of her characters evoke our sense of history. In the footbinding episode, Ch'i-ch'iao and the amahs together convey such a historical message: the political anti-footbinding slogan has already metamorphized into a fashion motto.

To know whether footbinding was fashionable or not, it is imperative to know first when this episode happens, since fashion is sensitive with time. At the beginning of the novella, the narrator says, “The last couple of years had been busy with the changing of dynasties” (Chang, “The Golden Cangue” 171). From when Shanghai became a treaty port in 1843 to precisely one century later, when the story was published, there was only one historical event that deserved the title: “changing of dynasties”: the 1911 Revolution. Therefore, the story might begin a couple years after the Revolution. The Chinese version uses “那兩年” *na liang nian* (literal meaning: those two years),

instead of "the last couple of years" in the English version (Chang, "Jinsuo ji" 140). Thus, the year when the story starts to unfold might be 1913. The footbinding episode happens a decade later, so that should be 1923. If we allow some inaccuracy that words referring to time tend to carry (think of *na liang nian* — the "liang" might in fact refer to more than two years, as is conveyed by the English version), the footbinding episode might be some years later than 1923 and before the next decade. Generally speaking, it happened around the mid-1920s.¹

About half a century before Ch'i-ch'iao bound her daughter's feet, Western missionaries already began to promote the term *tianzu* (heavenly feet or natural feet) in China. In 1875, Rev. John MacGowan (d. 1922) of the London Missionary Society called a meeting that would lead to the establishment of the Heavenly Foot Society. In the meeting, he encouraged nine out of the sixty to seventy women who showed up to sign a pledge to eradicate the "heathen" practice of footbinding in their hometown and beyond. The term newly invented by him, "heavenly foot," could be directly translated into *tianzu*. This term is indeed a reflection of MacGowan's theological perspective: the divine Nature endowed women with natural feet. Yet the use of "heavenly," rather than "natural" in later popular translation, indicates an effort in indigenization. MacGowan wrote that the Chinese "Heaven" is analogous to God in some degree, and that "[t]he sages in ancient times had declared that men were offspring of Heaven . . . If so, then women also were the product of the same great Power, and consequently the feet of the little girls when they were born had been designed with their exquisite beauty by It" (MacGowan 64–65). Later on, some Chinese writers would catch the subtle connection between the Christian "Nature" to the Chinese naturalness, *zhen*, and relate the natural feet to the *suzu* (unadorned feet) sung in Li Bai's poems, evoking a longing

¹ This timeline is confirmed by Chuan Chih Kao in his *Zhang Ailing xue (Eileen Chang Reconsidered)*, 81. Kao pushes the time from when the novella was published back to "thirty years ago" in the opening paragraph of the story, that is, from 1943 to 1913. And "two years" before 1913 was exactly the 1911 Revolution.

for a simple state without the excessive adornment cherished by the scholar-official class (See Ko, *Cinderella's Sisters* 18-19).² However, despite its possible rich connotations and potential to popularize among Chinese people, the term *tianzu*, familiar only to churchgoers, did not enter the Chinese lexicon until mid-1890s, and the missionary influence in footbinding remained for a long time limited (Ko, *Cinderella's Sisters* 16; Huang 118; Zhang M. 66).

It was around the Hundred Days' Reform of 1898 that the anti-footbinding movement reached a climax. According to Zhang Ming, the ban on footbinding was the most supported measure during the Reform. After the Sino-Japanese War from 1894 to 1895, the scholar-officials were pressed by a widespread anxiety to change. Since footbinding is not that politically sensitive and owns a historical precedent in early-Qing, it was warmly welcomed by the scholar-official as a hallmark of reform (Zhang M. 66–67; Lin 139). Meanwhile, against the backdrop of national crisis, the anti-footbinding rhetoric was heavily colored by nationalist pathos, and the act of footbinding became so condemnable that the binding cloth seemed to have the power to even choke the nation itself.

One or two years right before the Reform, a leading reformist, Liang Qichao (1873–1929) had already linked footbinding with the future of the nation. In his seminal essay, “Lun nüxue” (On Women's Education), Liang criticized footbinding as a corporeal punishment that renders women crippled in favor of erotic pleasure yet in disfavor of women's education.³ Citing a saying by Mencius that “those who dwell in leisure without an education are close to beasts,”⁴ Liang claimed that since women, the half of population “with round heads but pointy feet” (*yuan qi shou*

² It is found that Li Bai made three separate eulogies to a plain-footed girl (*suzu nü*). For two of the three eulogies, see the first and fourth poems in “Yuenü ci” in *Li Bai xuanji*, 541–2.

³ As if often pointed out by scholars, the essay “Lun nüxue,” though usually cited separately, is in fact a section of a longer essay “Bianfa tongyi” 變法通議.

⁴ Liang, “Lun nüxue” 30. Mengzi/Mencius, *Mengzi [yijie]*, “Tengwengong zhangju shang” 滕文公章句上, 118: “. . . yiju er wujiao, ze jinyu qinshou” (逸居而無教, 則近於禽獸).

er jian qi zu 圓其首而尖其足), not only were unschooled but took the profit from the six main occupations without laboring, no wonder men kept them “as dogs, horses and slaves” (*yi quanma nuli xu zhi* 以犬馬奴隸畜之); what is worse, they were not even ashamed of it. In contrast, if women were educated, they would become capable of producing profits, and the quality of family education would be guaranteed, and the nation strengthened. Hence, footbinding as an obstacle should be abolished (Liang, “Lun nüxue” 30–33). Liang’s argument, while treating women as parasites and erasing their labor in history, provoked a social demand to make use of women’s body in both reproduction and production in the service of both family and nation. Echoing his earlier claims, Kang Youwei (1858–1927), Liang’s teacher, submitted a passionate memorial “Qing jin funü guozu zhe” (“Memorial to your majesty on banning footbinding” 請禁婦女裹足摺), to the Guangxu Emperor (r. 1875–1908), urging him to ban footbinding. His rationale especially points to the connection between the female body and the nation: footbinding, by blocking the circulation of blood and *qi* (vital energy), weakens the female body; and from the woman’s womb, the *zhong* (seed) of weakness passes down to later generations, making Chinese nationals and army the “sick men” in comparison to the Europeans and Americans (Kang 336). Thus, the female body is enlarged to such an extent that it seems like a Gargantua: woman’s body predicts the nation’s body, and woman’s look is indeed the nation’s look. With such an importance attached to women’s feet, footbinding gradually became an evil and backward custom in the eyes of many nationalistic scholar-officials.

The Reform only lasted about a hundred days, but the male elite did not stop approaching footbinding in their nationalist framework. Tang Yisuo (fl. 1904), a man of letters living in the 1900s in Shanghai, began to publish a novel “Huang Xiuqiu” in *Xin xiaoshuo* (*New Fiction*) in 1904 or 1905. *Xin xiaoshuo*, a monthly literary journal founded by Liang Qichao in 1902 in

Yokohama, was the earliest and one of the most influential among its kind. And the novel in question itself was one of the better-known late-Qing progressive fictions. (Ko, *Cinderella's Sister* 23) It focuses on the so-named heroine, Huang Xiuqiu, who unbinds her feet and works with her enlightened husband to modernize their village's customs. Inspired by her husband, she also wants to “make some deeds” (*zuoshi* 做事) and “become a person” (*chengren* 成人) (Tang 116). To make some deeds, muses she, she has to firstly learn to walk, and to walk, she has to unbind her feet (113). Faced with her husband's warning of the inability to walk after unbinding, she declares that although it would be inconvenient in the first two days, after a dozen days she would “walk as fast as to fly” (117). Like the aforementioned discourse, Xiuqiu's declaration involves an impetus to put her body out of idle leisure to productive use and to regard the body as a machine to support her work to cure the political body. Yet, as the novel quickly moves from the act of unbinding to the busy use of the machine-body, it overlooks how Xiuqiu's body grows to the “natural” state, and the heroine seems to regain her lost mobility without much trouble. Hence, as a continuation of the reformist discourse, the novel helped to establish a new cult of an unrestricted, robust, agile and productive female body that could be easily regained with spiritual determination.

By the first decade of the twentieth century, footbinding had been gradually losing its prestige. Ko observes that around the turn of the century, anti-footbinding societies initiated by Chinese proliferated on the local level (*Cinderella's Sisters* 244). Though they might lack support from the local elite and proved to be ineffective in ending footbinding, as is indicated by Wei-Hung Lin, the flourishing of anti-footbinding organizations in smaller administrative units reflects an infiltration of anti-footbinding discourse across different levels (178). Also, the aforementioned Tang Yisuo provides textual evidence with regard to widespread anti-footbinding discourse. In the 1900s, he regretted that one maid with natural feet of his had died too early to see natural feet

“becoming fashionable”: “If she had lived a little longer, I could have remonstrated in front of our relatives and friends that in my house we have a maid who was ahead of the times” (qtd. in Ko, *Cinderella’s Sisters* 21). Tang’s words, “ahead of the times,” indeed manifest the aspect of natural-feet-as-fashion. The “times,” however, refers not just to the one-way temporal passage, but also to the crowd that infuses the “times” with meanings. “[A]head of the times” hence also connotes “ahead of the crowd,” and being ahead gains Tang the right to boldly “remonstrate.” Footbinding is not just a practice that shapes the relationship between the woman to the nation, it is also a fashion that is closely related to the crowd.

Tang’s “times” also impels us to ask which temporal “time” he refers to. Ko argues, despite the crushed prestige of footbinding, this practice might still thrive as a social practice. In fact, she postulates that cultural prestige, social practice, together with individual embodiment, have three different kinds of time (11). That is to say, the evolutions on the three separate levels are not subject to a sole temporal continuity; the changes on one level do not necessarily give rise to similar ones on another. For example, Yan Xishan (1883–1960), the warlord in Shanxi from the late 1910s to 1920s, had been a student in Japan and was adamant about eradicating footbinding in his home province. On his temporal level, he inherited from the aforementioned reformists the shame at the gaze of advanced regions and nations and the correlation between the female body and collective strength,⁵ and he put into reality the unrealized measures proposed by Kang to curb footbinding by establishing anti-footbinding organizations, dispatching foot inspectors into people’s homes, and imposing penalties upon the disobedient.⁶ Yet, the local people seemed to be standing on a

⁵ See Yan’s speech qtd. in Ko, *Cinderella’s Sisters* 51–52: “[N]owhere is the Han custom of footbinding more severe than in Shanxi. This is why our population is dwindling, our bodies are becoming frail, and our people are sinking into deeper poverty,” “China occupies a part of the world, and Shanxi occupies a small part of China. Now, the habit of footbinding has been eradicated in all of China’s other provinces. If Shanxi does not pull itself up, how can we stand tall on the surface of the earth?”

⁶ See Kang 336. At the end of his memorial, Kang begged emperor Guangxu to ban footbinding, and put forward a crude plan: those women who with bound feet should let their feet out; those women who are unwilling to unwrap

different temporal level: they are more preoccupied with female morality and marriageability endangered by the anti-footbinding campaign and with the protection of women against intruding inspectors (57). As a result, many women just took off their wrapping cloth when the inspectors came to their home and put it on again as soon as they were gone, and Yan's mass campaign, while conspicuously reducing the number of young girls binding feet, still tapered off in the 1920s. While Yan's campaign transformed anti-footbinding discourse into decrees and demonstrated its increasing legitimacy in Chinese society in the early twentieth century, its implementation below his expectations warns us of an oversimplistic judgement on whether footbinding was still in fashion or not in a certain period and favors a close observation of the specificity of the locale.

Shanghai, Yan's beacon, had been the frontier of the anti-footbinding movement since its early thriving in China. Two most important anti-footbinding organizations, *Tianzu hui* (The Natural Feet Society) founded by a British traveler, Mrs. Alicia Little (d. 1926) and *Bu chanzu hui* (Anti-Footbinding Society) established by such Reformists as Liang Qichao, Tan Sitong (1865–1898), Kang Guangren (1867–1898) and others were both based in Shanghai. With Shanghai as the center, they then radiated towards the whole country. *Bu chanzu hui*, for example, planned to set up branches at all provincial capitals across the country and smaller branches at other cities that witnessed a high fervor to join in the society (Liang, "Jianming zhangcheng" 105). In 1907, *Wanguo gongbao/Wan Kwoh Kung Pao* published the report of the Tenth Annual Meeting of the "Ten Tsu Hui" (*Tianzu hui*), in the first part of which the author recorded the speech of Mrs. Little, who commented that now branches of the society were flourishing across the country, spreading

their feet will cause their husbands and sons either to lose official posts or to pay fines if they are not officials; those girls younger than twelve years old should not have their feet bound; those who bind their young girls' feet will be heavily punished (乞特下明诏, 严禁妇女裹足: 其已裹者, 一律宽解; 若有违抗, 其夫若子有官不得受封, 无官者, 其夫亦科鍰罚; 其十二岁以下幼女, 若有裹足者, 重罚其父母). Kang was not able to see his propositions put into effect. Yan's decree would include a much more sophisticated distinction between "bound feet" and "unbound feet" according to age differentiation and more detailed regulations of penalties.

from as close as Suzhou, to as far as Gansu and Shanxi (“Tianzu hui nianhui jilüe” 43). The report is even attached with separate reports from branches at Chongqing, Fuzhou, Hankou, Tianjin and other cities, which demonstrates that at that time *Tianzu hui* was already a well-organized society with Shanghai as its headquarters (“Xu Tianzu hui dishici baogao” 45–51). It is noteworthy that this report called those places in the inner land “yuanfang” (the faraway) (“Tianzu hui nianhui jilüe” 43). Such an appellation on the surface describes the geographical sense of the meeting participants, with Shanghai as the closest, and the inner land as the faraway. But “yuanfang” is also the antonym of “guxiang” (hometown). Hence Shanghai becomes the hometown, the familiar, and the inner land an exotic place abundant in strange customs. “Yuanfang” also reminds us of *yi*, barbaric tribes living at the faraway margins of the Central Kingdom. Thus, Shanghai is regarded as a civilized modern city, while the inner land a place indulged in barbaric, premodern practices. The importance of Shanghai in the anti-footbinding movement therefore goes without saying.

If the activities of anti-footbinding societies are still limited within the groups of missionaries and scholar-officials, then the popular trends will tell us a lot about the ideal of female body at that time. Zhu Wenbing (courtesy name Qianfu; fl. 1913), a man of letters from Jiaxing, Zhejiang who lived in Shanghai around the Revolution of 1911, recorded in his *zhuzhi ci* (bamboo twig songs)—a genre of poetry originating in folk songs—that early at that time women in Shanghai had begun to go to school. They wore golden metal-framed glasses, short hair, leather shoes, black socks; with a pair of natural feet, they laughed at those shameful bound feet (Zhu 21). Part of the physical appearance, natural feet, together with the outfit, constitute a civilized, free, modern, and Westernized image of female students, who showed a conspicuous pride towards other women.

In this period, however, education was still a privilege of a minority of women. Only after



Fig. 2. The female figure in an advertisement for Vigoron tablets in the 1920s. From Wang Runnian, *Yuwang de xiangxiang*, p. 225.

the May Fourth discussion of women's right to education, especially university education, did more and more women step into schools despite obstacles (Zhang W. 63–65). And into the second decade, the female student with unbound feet had become an ideal appreciated by the masses. A historian named Wang Runnian “randomly picked” pictures from *Shen Bao/Shun Pao*, a newspaper that was so popular in Shanghai that native Shanghainese (*lao Shanghai*) called all newspapers “Shen baozhi/Shun Pao Chih”

(Shen/Shun newspapers), and one of them is Figure 2 (57, 225). Fig.

2, published in 1922, is an advertisement for Vigoron tablets, a kind

of tonic that “nourishes” (*yang*) the body of young women. As we can see, the female figure in this picture wears short hair and a sport outfit typical of students, with her lower arms and legs exposed. Her feet are apparently unbound, in a pair of simple Western-styled shoes with slightly high heels, a stark contrast with exquisite and high-heeled shoes designed for bound feet (See Fig. 3). And her body is suspended in a gesture so that all energies to be charged are locked in this moment. Wang interprets that this figure manifests the female ideal of the Shanghai “bourgeois” in the 1920s: apart from being civilized, she is also tall, healthy, lively and energetic (224–225). In reality, the mere fact that this is a Vigoron advertisement reflects that there was a need to energize the body among young women. If we recall the heroine Xiuqiu in Tang's novel, who would “be able to fly and run” a couple of days after unbinding, we can find that the ideal of a mobile female body in a political fiction is transformed into reality (Tang 117). The simplified female shoes indicate a shift of erotic focus from the feet to the whole energetic body, with special

attention to the exposed limbs. The unbound feet, in connection with a civilized and healthy female student, bespeaks a change in Shangnese' concept of beauty in the 1910s and 1920s.



Fig. 3. Northern-style shoes in 1890–1910. From *Ko*, *Every Step A Lotus: Shoes for Bound Feet*, p. 8.

Overall, the anti-footbinding movement from the mid-19th century to the second decade of the 20th century is a vivid embodiment of how gaze, desirability and judgement influence the prevalence of footbinding. The judgement on footbinding of Western missionaries affect the attitudes of some local people and some male elites. The disparaging gaze of foreigners pushed the sensitive elite reformists to appeal to eliminate footbinding. Around the Revolution of 1911, female students in Shanghai look contemptuously at bound feet. And by the 1920s, natural feet have taken the place of bound feet as that which was desirable. All in all, the gaze from outside

makes people inside the customary sphere feel uneasy, dampens their desires for the custom and influences their judgement on ideal practices.

With the challenge of gaze to female body and its influence on desirable appearance in mind, we can thus have a better understanding of Ch'i-ch'iao's "reformed feet" (*gailiang jiao*)—feet half bound half let out. Living in the 1920s, when the reformist appeal had already become a common message, Ch'i-ch'iao, even if she was not interested in the meaning of bound feet in the political discourse, could not avoid the gaze around her.⁷ Ironically, the anti-footbinding gaze was originally formed during political campaigns, but as it was instilled into daily life and across different social classes, it gradually loses the original political urgency, and when it finally touches upon the face and body of a common woman, it only transmits to her a pressing demand to catch up with time and with people surrounding her in order to avoid appearing backward and inferior. In Ch'i-ch'iao's case, the gaze of her relatives is an important factor in her management of physical appearance. Her "reformed feet" indeed reflect her submission to the powerful fashion. That she allowed Ch'ang-an to unbind her feet at the advice of relatives is another manifestation. Hence the decision of footbinding, due to its peculiar defiance of the mighty fashion, necessitates exploration in another direction.

⁷ According to Eileen Chang's brother, Zhang Zijing (1921–97), "The Golden Cangue" is based on the true story of a granddaughter-in-law of Li Hongzhang (1823–1901), a most famous mandarin in late Qing dynasty (195–6). Mrs. Little mentioned in 1908 that Li's mother, the wife and daughters of Li's eldest son Li Jingfang (1855–1934), as well as the granddaughters of Li's eldest brother Li Hanzhang had unbound feet (qtd. in Lin 171). The following year, Mrs. Little said that Li told her in person: 'Although I cannot make all Chinese women not bind their feet, the wife of my son Li Jingfang, insists not binding her daughters' feet' (my trans.; qtd. in Lin 177). With regard to Mrs. Little's words, the Li family could be counted as quite open-minded and progressive. However, in "The Golden Cangue," the narrator calls the Chiangs a "conservative" family that might have lagged behind in letting out women's feet (Chang, "The Golden Cangue" 208). Either such difference is brought about by artistic production, or it is because even within the same family, there are inconsistent attitudes towards footbinding—the Chiangs in the story are based on the life of the offspring of Li's second son.

Chapter 2: Half a Lifelong Tragedy

If we want to talk about the reasons for footbinding, we need to start with Ch'i-ch'iao's life story, because the footbinding episode is not an isolated event, but located in the middle of the story and influenced by previous events. For example, the prologue to this episode, the Ch'un-hsi event, is clearly foreshadowed by the Chi-tse episode: Ch'i-ch'iao, traumatized by Chi-tse's deception (in which he pretended to love her in order to gain access to her money), is suspicious of all men potentially craving money. And her lecture to Ch'ang-an on rotten men is then a continuation of the same thread. More specifically, the fact that Ch'i-ch'iao pinches her numb foot and suddenly remembers the flirtation between her and Chi-tse many years ago directly proves that the footbinding episode is affected by Ch'i-ch'iao's memory of the past. Indeed, Wang Anyi, when adapting this novella into a drama, deleted the appearance of Ch'un-hsi, and made Ch'i-ch'iao's frenzy in footbinding immediately ensue upon her anguish after Chi-tse's departure (Wang A., "Jinsuo ji"). However, my concern is that the footbinding episode is not the aftermath merely of the Chi-tse event—in other words—it is not just a story about a broken-hearted woman trying to preclude other women's possibility of love. It also involves Ch'i-ch'iao's self-esteem—the act of footbinding is one of Ch'i-ch'iao's efforts to elevate her sense of self. While this chapter will elaborate on Ch'i-ch'iao's crisis of self-esteem in the first half of the story, Chapters 3 and 4 will discuss how self-esteem is relevant to the footbinding episode.

In Search of Lost Self-Esteem

In the story, Ch'i-ch'iao recalls twice her life at the age of eighteen or nineteen; and from the vantage point of review, her past image is infused with sexual appeal. Her memory does not spare the vision of her appearance at that time: she is "in a blouse and pants of blue linen trimmed with mirror-bright black silk," with her "lavishly laced sleeves" rolled up, "revealing a pair of snow-white wrists" (Chang, "The Golden Cangue" 193, 234). The blue linen, adorned with silk and laces, though simpler than the miscellaneous colors of "pale pink," "flickering blue," "greenish-white," "lavender silk" on her body after she became a lady, is a delicate design showing that the owner likes to and knows how to appear pretty (178). Moreover, her "round arms," "snow-white wrists," the flesh half exposed, and half veiled in the lavish laces, reveal her in an eye-catching feminine light.

This kind of Ch'i-ch'iao is not only the object that she herself repetitively conjures up and observes in her memory with limitless narcissistic emotions, but also the focus of the gaze of men: at that time, "[a]mong those that liked her were Ch'ao-lu of the butcher shop; her brother's sworn brothers, Ting Yü-ken and Chang Shao-ch'üan, and also the son of Tailor Shen" (234). In the mingling of common people, gazes, sexual appeal, and consequently the number of the males attracted are vital indicators of the desirability of women. "Little Miss Cao," walking through the gaze of men, might harbor a sense of pride for her sexual appeal. The slap she gives to Ch'ao-lu, by which she sends "all the empty hooks swinging across to poke him in the eye," for example, is both a playful response to Ch'ao-lu's flirtation, and a kind of reservation to keep some distance from her courter and show her pride (194). Ch'i-ch'iao, not only able to attract the male gaze, but also able to control it in some sense, surely dominates the man-woman game before her marriage.

One part that cannot be ignored is the opening scene in Ch'i-ch'iao's first recollection: the sesame oil shop with its special fragrance, the well-organized layout inside the shop, and the familiar transactions between owner and customers. . . Unlike what the maidservants imagine of the life in the sesame oil shop—"the big attraction" of the shop being the fact that Ch'i-ch'iao has to deal with the obscene gaze and words of "all kinds of customers"—the sesame oil shop in Ch'i-ch'iao's memory has its own order and she herself is the mistress of the order, because she bears in mind every detail in the shop and in the transactions. Thus, apart from physical beauty and sexual appeal, her deft management of the order in the shop is also a source of her self-esteem.

Although the narrator does not directly point out Ch'i-ch'iao's high self-esteem in her youth but hides it in her recollections, her self-esteem is important to our reading of her experience, because her previously having self-esteem would highlight her tortuous situation in the Chiang family. Also, the two facets of her self-esteem, the mistress of the order and the woman full of sexual appeal, are exactly the same facets that would suffer a crash after her marriage. Thus, the following two sections will elaborate on the change in the two facets respectively.

The Abased in the *Guixiu* System

Ever since Ch'i-ch'iao marries into the Chiang family, she has been threatened by a set of conventions: the system of *guixiu*. The term "guixiu" comes from *Shishuo xinyu* (A New Account of Tales of the World) compiled by Liu Yiqing (403–44): both Xie Xuan (343–88) and Zhang Xuan (?–?) held their sister in very high regard and the contemporaneous people were curious who was the superior. A certain nun named Ji visited

both families and commented: the “spirit and feelings” of Xie’s sister “are relaxed and sunny; she certainly has the manner and style of (the Seven Worthies) beneath the (Bamboo) Grove,” as for Zhang Xuan’s sister, “her pure heart gleams like jade; without a doubt she’s the full flowering of wifely virtue,” i.e., the *guixiu* (Liu 380). *Guixiu* literally means the full flowering of the boudoir, a metaphor for woman outstanding in womanly or wifely virtues. It forms a contrast with *xianyuan* (worthy Beauties), who, “with literary and artistic talent, broad learning, intellectual independence, moral capacity, and good judgement,” “extend[ed] intellectual and physical movement beyond inner-chamber boundaries” in the Wei-Jin era (220–420) (Qian 14–5). The most famous example of *xianyuan* is exactly Xie’s sister, Xie Daoyun (?–?), who was commended as “*nü zhong mingshi*” (famous gentlewoman), with her manner and style differing from common “residents of boudoir” and resembling the Seven Worthies beneath the Bamboo Grove (*zhulin qixian*). Contrary to the *xianyuan*, *guixiu* strictly abide by the “women’s Way,” which, according to Ban Zhao (circa 49–120), included four traditional aspects: womanly virtue, womanly words, womanly bearing and womanly work. She defines womanly virtue as to behave serenely and quietly and to comply with rules and morality; womanly words as to speak after thrice-thinking, to avoid evil words, and not to cause others’ dissatisfaction or disgust; womanly bearing as to keep appearance tidy; and womanly work as to concentrate on weaving, to prepare good food for guests and not to play around (14b–6a).

Near the beginning, the story depicts three typical *guixius*. As a newly married wife, Lan-hsien busies herself in making up her face in front of the mirror, afraid of missing the time of paying respects to Old Mistress, which bespeaks her care about keeping herself well-groomed and her compliance with rituals. Lan-hsien, Tai-chen, and Yün-tse, the three

young ladies from respectable homes take the pain to crack walnuts by hand, a chore usually done by servants, to convey their filial concern while having friendly little talks—what a peaceful image of highbred ladies. Here, tidiness, rites, morality, hard work, and peaceful conversations reveal their fulfillment of the four aspects of “women’s Way”: womanly virtue, womanly words, womanly bearing and womanly work, all of which work together to constitute an ideal image of *guixiu*.

The appearance of Ch’i-ch’iao, however, dissipates the pleasant aura surrounding the three *guixius*. “Second Mistress is here” is like a signal, an alarm, to impose a pause to the preceding floating aura (Chang, “The Golden Cangue” 178). Ch’i-ch’iao’s debut gesture: “one hand on the doorway and the other on her waist” immediately reveals a tint of aggressiveness and defies the elegance boasted by the *guixiu*. And her being late for the ritual meeting goes against a *guixiu*’s proper comportment. Her then accusation of the unjust distribution of rooms tears off the appearance of peace among the sisters-in-law and the family branches. Her vulgar language also disturbs the “pure” ears of the sisters-in-law and makes them uneasy in the conversation. Moreover, the assortment of colors she puts on her body: “pale pink blouse,” “mauve trousers,” “flickering blue scroll design,” “greenish-white incense-stick binding,” “lavender silk crepe” runs counter to Ban Zhao’s admonition against good looks (178). Without further elaboration, Ch’i-ch’iao reveals herself as an alien in the *guixiu* system just moments after her appearance.

Consequent to Ch’i-ch’iao’s alien position is the abasement by the “residents” of the system. She is firstly the destroyer of the peaceful aura of *guixiu* and the producer of disputes. All other ladies stand on the same side against her, covering up for Tai-chen and suffocating Ch’i-ch’iao’s request—a stance of hostility (*dishi* 敵視). Then, she is the

invisible one among the ladies—too vulgar to be “put on the stage,” and too base to be worth a glance. Even though she is “especially warm” to Lan-hsien, the latter, well understanding “her position at the Chiangs,” “kept smiling but hardly answered” (180). And as for her words to Old Mistress, the ladies repeat: “As if Old Mistress would listen to anything she had to say,” “Old Mistress . . . [is] not likely to share that person’s views” (181–2). Unanswered, unheeded, she is the object of neglect (*wushi* 無視). More importantly, she is the recipient of contempt (*bishi* 鄙視). In the words of Yün-tse, who is the initiator of filial practice and a “virtuous” one among the ladies and a model of the *guixiu* system, Ch’i-ch’iao becomes a “nuisance” (180). The counterpart to “nuisance” in the Chinese version is “討人嫌” (*tao ren xian*), which means “annoying, disagreeable” (Chang, “Jinsuo ji” 146). The English “nuisance,” however, in addition to Ch’i-ch’iao’s annoying characteristics, also conveys the significance of being an “object” that irritates “humans”—in the game of *guixu*, only the *guixiu* could have the privilege of being “humans,” whereas Ch’i-ch’iao is in reality only a tool of reproduction.

Not just Yün-tse believes that she has the right of contempt, but Little Shuang, a maidservant, thinks so. Little Shuang, though a maidservant, also knows the rite of “not a word goes from inside, nor comes in from outside” (*neiyan buchū, waiyan buru*), which comes from the ancient classic, *Liji* (*The Book of Rites*). The original passage indicates the separation between man and woman in space: the former in *wai* (outer), and the latter in *nei* (inner), which is prescriptively so strict that even words, which could fly high in the air, lose their mobility due to physical barriers (*Liji* 449). Quoting this classic, the maidservant underscores not only how blatantly Ch’i-ch’iao has violated the ancient teaching by transmitting vulgar words to the inner chambers, but also the environment where Ch’i-

ch'iao has acquired such base language. It is only in the mingling of man and woman, such as in the sesame oil shop, where the boundary between *nei* and *wai* is blurred, that a girl could know vulgar words. Thus, the birth of Ch'i-ch'iao and her consequent upbringing already presupposes the cleavage between her and the *guixiu*.

The sin brought by the class of origin is further manifested by such words of Little Shuang: “Dragons breed dragons, phoenixes breed phoenixes.” The story of Ch'i-ch'iao, at a distance, attracts “readers”—not just readers of the text, but “readers” of Ch'i-ch'iao's life in the story per se—as a Cinderella story characterized by a swift climbing on the social ladder, with Ch'i-ch'iao herself as an embodiment of sparrow-turned-phoenix. But under the scrutiny of Little Shuang—who though a participant in Ch'i-ch'iao's story as she is, could also stand by and watch at some time, serving as reader and commentator of the seeming fairy tale—although a sparrow has flown onto the high branch, it cannot become a phoenix as it desires; and Ch'i-ch'iao, though with the title of Lady, could not conceal her essence as the daughter of a sesame oil shopkeeper. The content of the story surely comforts other envious sparrows, especially Little Shuang, who is no common sparrow—maidservant of a respectable home, she knows *li* (rites) even better than Ch'i-ch'iao and serves as auxiliary of the *guixiu* system. Such a maidservant then on the one hand adds more glory to this respectable home, because even a servant in the home knows *li*; on the other hand, the servant further accentuates Ch'i-ch'iao as unfit for the family, because not knowing *li*, she is even worse than a servant.

No wonder Little Shuang says: “How could she afford me!” (Chang, “The Golden Cangue” 174). In the Chinese version, the same sentence is “她也配” (*Ta ye pei*) (142). “配” (*pei*) is a verb of measure: it signifies “to match (things).” *Yupian* (Jade Chapters)

(circa 543), an ancient Chinese dictionary, uses five words to explain *pei*: 匹 (*pi*), 媿 (*pi*), 對 (*dui*), 當 (*dang*), 合 (*he*). Together, all the five words share the significance of “match” (qtd. in *Kangxi zidian* 176a). Approximately, there are two kinds of “配”: the first is of a relative equality, such as the match between a well-read male and a beautiful female, because the knowledge and the beauty match each other. And the second is of a lesser person or thing to join and match another person or thing, such as the match between accessories and clothes. Accessories, though not as significant as clothes in the outfit, do not randomly suit every piece of clothes. Some expensive earrings would decrease their value if suited to a cheap dress. Similarly, Little Shuang takes herself as such a pair of expensive earrings that deserve better clothes—who could have thought that the daughter of a sesame oil shopkeeper would become her mistress?

With the name of mistress but without the reality of mistress, Ch’i-ch’iao thus resides on the blurred boundary of the *guixiu* system. As Julia Kristeva wrote, it is “what disturbs identity, system, order” that “causes abjection” (4). The abjection is the culminating form of the loss of self-esteem of Ch’i-ch’iao, to whom it is revealed that her want of the characteristics of *guixiu* lays the foundations of her experience in the *guixiu* system. While she attempts to acquire treatment equal to other *guixius* by inquiring about the distribution of rooms, and tries to integrate into other *guixius* by making conversation, she knows well in her heart that she is not part of them: unlike the “young ladies from respectable homes,” she comes from a family of low status and marries a crippled husband—if they change places with her, they “couldn’t put up with it for even one night” (Chang, “The Golden Cangue” 179). And when she sinks into a helpless mire, she is in the habit of utilizing vulgar words to trouble other *guixius* and to protect herself, thereby

pushing herself further from the center of the *guixiu* system. Nevertheless, in the meantime, she grows a narcissistic emotion towards her own abjection, since the mention of it becomes a routine resort in the dangerous environment: “[W]e’re just waiting to be widow and orphans,” “Just try and change places with me, I’m afraid you couldn’t put up with it for even one night,” “Ever since I stepped inside the Chiang house, . . . who’s ever grateful to me?” (178, 179, 183). Discomfited, she, while “fortified by abjection,” tries to extricate herself from difficulty (Kristeva 6). In this context, she develops a unique set of abject emotions: anger, resentment, self-abasement, self-pity, etc.—a complex expression of the loss of self-esteem.

Fu Lei, when criticizing “The Golden Cangue,” said: Ch’i-ch’iao, ‘as a daughter of a humble family, marries into a respectable family with titles. The mismatch between these two families plants the first cause of tragedy. Originally planned to be the concubine of the crippled Master, she is then elevated into the status of Lady due to the kind (or wrong) decision made by Old Mistress, which becomes the second cause of her tragedy’ (my trans.; 50). The reason why the two facts are respectively “mismatch” and “mistake,” and why the “mismatch” and “mistake” lead to the tragedy, is that they encompass a kind of inconsistency, nonconformity, and blurriness. Though with the name of “Lady,” Ch’i-ch’iao is not given treatment equal to the name in reality, and, standing on the boundary of the *guixiu* system, she is accepted while rejected, let in but perceived as intruding, allowed and expelled. In the tension between the two opposite movements, her self-esteem sinks and sinks.

The Rejected in Man-Woman Relationship

Sexual appeal, the most notable feature of Ch'i-ch'iao in her youth, gradually becomes unrecognizable and is finally lost after her marriage. This fact is conspicuously manifested in her two confrontations with Chi-tse. In the first one, Ch'i-ch'iao interrogates Chi-tse after her failed attempts to lure him: “[I]n what way I’m not as good as the others[?] What is it about me that’s no good” (186)? This question is asked in such a context: Chi-tse, in Ch'i-ch'iao's words, “wouldn't even mind having [his] wet nurse,” yet he would rather fool around with prostitutes—women of lower status than Ch'i-ch'iao—than having a sexual relationship with her. The “others” in this sentence, thus, designates both the *guixiu*, notably Lan-hsien, Chi-tse's wife, and women in the pleasure quarters. The “good” here refers to sexual appeal instead of wifely virtues, class, wealth etc. Behind this bold inquiry “in what way I’m not as good as the others,” there might already be concealed an anxiety of her own lack of sexual appeal, but her perception would be affirmed in her interpretation of Chi-tse's answer below.

“Good” and “no good” are two wordings that are too abstract, and Chi-tse cunningly transplants them from the framework of sexual appeal to the evaluation of a family member: “My good sister-in-law, you're all good” (186). The shift of the question then draws attention to the idea that Ch'i-ch'iao, as the sister-in-law, is ineligible to be admitted into the ranges of his sexual partners. With she thus foreclosed from the range, Chi-tse, though later smitten by her beauty, seeing her as beautiful as “a butterfly specimen in a glass box, bright-colored and desolate,” maintains his affirmation or denial of her sexual appeal in silence (186).

Although he answers nothing in Ch'i-ch'iao's framework, for Ch'i-ch'iao to answer nothing does not signify "not to answer"—in fact, to answer nothing might just signify "to answer: nothing (no good)." Despite the fact that Chi-tse's silence is by no means a positive judgement, Ch'i-ch'iao, compelled by his evasion of her question, might be just as anxious as to take on the role of the judge by herself and interpret the silence as a denial of her sexual appeal: he would not answer the question in her framework because she has no sexual appeal for him (nothing).

Her next question proves that her mental activity goes exactly in this direction, because she gives her own judgement a further explanation: "Could it be that staying with a cripple, I smell crippled too, and it will rub off on you" (186)? The disease of the Second Master is not contagious, but a bedridden patient for long years, in people's perceptions, could somehow begin to disseminate a *qi* (air) of disease and pollute others. More specifically, it is the ill *qi* of a crippled body, a dwarf monstrosity that when sitting up is not even as tall as a three-year-old. It thus bears a "nonconformity with corporeal identity" and appears improper, unnatural, and impure (Kristeva 102). It is also a body-to-become-corpse, a transitional body between animate and soulless, a mass of soft, heavy, numb flesh that spreads a sticky, dead, lifeless smell; a fountain of pollution: apart from the ill *qi*, it also disseminates a deadly *qi*. This body is therefore the most unclean in the family, but, bound by the marital norms, Ch'i-ch'iao has to take care of it and sleep with it. She has to have part of the sick, crippled, dead body inside her; and its bodily fluid, a flow already unclean by itself—"anything leaks out of the feminine body or masculine body defiles"—projects into her genitals and heavily fouls the main symbol of sexual appeal (102). Her humor, made unclean by the unclean body, thus deters Chi-tse's approach in her perception.

A disgust is then brewing inside her, a disgust against the hateful body and her unclean self. So, when she vomits, she is indeed trying to exclude the views, smells and other sensations of her contact with the body, and more importantly the unclean lurking inside her body. Being unclean, she has no good, no sexual appeal.

The second confrontation with Chi-tse further confirms her judgement on her decreased sexual appeal in the most dramatic and painful way. Over the years, Chi-tse has been “playing hide-and-seek” with her, never letting her get close to him (Chang, “The Golden Cangu” 201). One day love finally comes, and she seems to be in a glorious coronation ceremony, “basking in glory, in the soft music of his voice and the delicate pleasure of this occasion”—it seemed like the efforts of many years are finally paid off (201). But it turns out that Chi-tse is only cheating her with sweet talk to cheat her out of money. In contrast to the first confrontation, where Chi-tse refuses to get into Ch’i-ch’iao’s mode of talking, now he proactively talks about love, only with the aim that is not love but money. For Ch’i-ch’iao, however, a pretense of love is much more humiliating than a straightforward denial of love, because a fake affirmation of her sexual appeal is indeed an aggravated denial: this implies that all her sexual appeal combined are not as important as money, and that for him, besides money, she has nearly nothing to envy. A disguised spark of hope that turns out to devour all hope, this episode breaks all Ch’i-ch’iao’s remaining confidence in sexual appeal.

In both layers, the layer of *guixiu*, and that of sexual appeal, the loss of Ch’i-ch’iao’s self-esteem works from two directions: hostility, neglect, contempt and rejection of others, and the self-perception as base, impure, and bad. The loss of self-esteem, and these two

working directions, lay the conditions for Ch'i-ch'iao's need to elevate her self-esteem in the second half of the story and require that the elevation be fulfilled in the interactions between self and others.

Chapter 3: Madness, Truth, and Acquisition: The Footbinding Episode

The footbinding episode, as readers would easily find, is the continuation of the Ch'i-tse episode. In the latter is brewed Ch'i-ch'iao's suspicion towards Ch'un-hsi and Ch'ang-an, which finally leads to the footbinding. Yet, there are still some points to be considered: How does Ch'i-ch'iao's distrust of Ch'un-hsi and Ch'ang-an develop, and why does it explode into footbinding? Is the ultimate leap toward footbinding, as some scholars say, a manifestation of feudal adherence or madness? And what does Ch'i-ch'iao's traditionally toned justification convey? This chapter thus revolves around the gradual development towards footbinding, from Chi-tse's deception, Ch'i-ch'iao's judgement of Ch'un-hsi, her doubt about Ch'ang-an, to her justification for and the final concretization of the footbinding. It first starts with Ch'i-ch'iao's theory about men and her determination to apply it to reality, which makes her appear socially improper, or even mad. Then it moves from Ch'i-ch'iao's anxiety of the deceptive cloak and opaque body of people to her attitude towards truth in order to find what she is looking for in the footbinding—a truth, or a substitute for truth? Finally, it analyzes Ch'i-ch'iao's justification for footbinding, and concludes that Ch'i-ch'iao is using the traditional narrative for footbinding to express her own purposes. Let us, firstly, move on to Ch'i-ch'iao's appearance of madness.

Sinking Into Madness

In “The Golden Cangue,” the characters' perception of madness is closely related to social behaviors. In the story, the first person that is called “mad,” contrary to what many readers would have thought, is not Ch'i-ch'iao, but Little Shuang. Old Mrs. Chao, hearing her gossip, says she is “talk[ing] crazy and act[ing] silly” (Chang, “The Golden Cangue”

175). The “madness” of Little Shuang is manifested in her behaviors that transgress the prescribed order. Although Ch’i-ch’iao does not fulfill the ideal of *guixiu*, she is still nominally the Lady. Little Shuang, by speaking evil against Ch’i-ch’iao, defies the norms that a servant has to stick to, and is scolded by Mrs. Chao as “mad.” “Mad” here firstly refers to the surprising behaviors of Little Shuang, and then insinuates her abnormal mental functioning.

The “madness” of Little Shuang could serve as the reference to the “madness” of Ch’i-ch’iao. The other “madnesses” in the story all designate Ch’i-ch’iao, and most of them spread across the first half of the story. The second instance of “mad” in the novella appears in the conversation between Ch’i-ch’iao and Yün-tse. By recklessly grabbing the latter’s pigtail, commenting that it is thin, and calling out that Yün-tse is pining for a man, Ch’i-ch’iao, although trying to behave in a friendly manner with her sister-in-law, turns out to intrude into the social comfort zone of the latter by such bodily contact. Hence, in Yün-tse’s words, she had “really gone crazy” (180). The third “mad” instance appears in her maternal sister-in-law’s comment. According to the sister-in-law, during their last visit Ch’i-ch’iao had “more of a temper” than when she was unmarried, “but there was still a limit. She was not silly as she is now, sane enough one minute and the next minute off again” (193). By exposing the true intention of this visit that seems to be a result of familial love via such words as “You didn’t come at the right moment,” “Just as well if you don’t [come]...I can’t afford it,” Ch’i-ch’iao makes her visitors lose their face and hinders the supposedly smooth and even seemingly warm familial communication and hence turns out to be “altogether disagreeable” (193). Calling her “silly and insane,” the sister-in-law is indeed indicating that Ch’i-ch’iao has lost sense of the normal way of social intercourse,

and her behavior in turn becomes nonsensical. The third instance of “mad” appears at the end of Ch’i-ch’iao’s confrontation with Chi-tse. After Ch’i-ch’iao makes “a spectacle” of herself, Ch’i-tse asks a maid to tell Ch’ang-pai to get a doctor for his mother (204). Because shouting and hitting a close family member clearly constitutes a behavior that goes against the behavioral norm of common people, Ch’i-ch’iao, by putting on an unusual and stunning show of less-than-rational-human behaviors, then turns herself into an acrobatic animal that invites all sorts of views.¹

The aforementioned three instances of “mad” are close to the “madness” of Little Shuang, since they all focus on the social, behavioral, or even performative side of “madness.” There is first of all a social interlocutor on the spot that could observe the display of “madness.” And the “madness” is shown via a set of behaviors against “normalness” that makes the person in question a spectacle. But what is uncanny is how easy one could be identified as “mad” by others. Some of the cases mentioned, especially that of Little Shuang, are just manifestations of social impropriety, yet still gain the title of “madness.”

More importantly, most of the identifications of Ch’i-ch’iao with mad persons happen in the first half of the story, while in the second half (after the Chi-tse episode and starting with the footbinding episode), Ch’i-ch’iao is immersed in an insulated state that isolates her from most social intercourse, and this is perhaps one of the reasons why only two designations of “mad” appear in the second half of the story—both in the Shih-fang episode, when an outside judge appears again. This time, Ch’i-ch’iao, without the “aid” of performative behaviors, just stands there, and Shih-fang “for no reason” instinctively feels

¹ Interestingly, madness is related to gaze, exhibition and spectacle. Until the early nineteenth century, there was the old custom to display the insane. See Foucault, *Madness and Civilization* 68–70.

that this is “a mad person” (231). The very last instance of “mad” in the story, however, does not come out of the mouth or thought of the characters, but of that of the narrator. The author, who believes that “it is better to let [the] story speak for itself”, in this case lets the narrator step in and comment that Ch’i-ch’iao has “the caution and quick wits of the insane” (Chang “Writing of One’s Own” 19; “The Golden Cangue” 231). The “madness” of Ch’i-ch’iao seems at last confirmed by the authority of the omniscient narrator. Ch’i-ch’iao’s madness in the second half seems to emanate from her core and forms a subtle and self-evident aura around her and thus is substantially different from the madness in the first half, which is largely interchangeable with social absurdity.

Yet from the behavioral spectacle to the final “diagnosis” of her mental state by the narrator, there is a long in-between that is invisible to outsiders and without a clear mention of “madness”—what exactly happens in the between and why does Ch’i-ch’iao’s madness develop from a behavioral level to a substantial level? The invisible in-between is thus a true “sinking,” a sinking below the visible area of social interlocutors, and when it is perceived, the object concerned is already sunken.

The Rotten Man

In *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity and the Age of Reason*, Michel Foucault spots that classical madness actually consists of three levels. At the first level of unreason, madness is still only “an intense movement” initiated by passion in “the rational unity of soul and body”; at the second level, this intense movement escapes the reason of the mechanism and becomes an irrational movement; at the third level, the level of the Unreal, this movement finally escapes truth and all its restraints (93). At the last level, he goes on to say, madness is more than imagination, since the imagination per se does not

err, while madness begins as the man, “surrender[ing] to its immediacy,” confers to it the value of truth. The faith of a madman, contrary to common belief, is indeed built upon “the most rigorous figures of logic” that seem to “mock that of the logicians” (94–95). Foucault also puts forward an example of a madman suffering from persecution delusions, whose faith is based on a logic of Syllogism: “A, B, and C are my enemies; all of them are men; therefore all men are my enemies” (95). Thence, Foucault asserts, “The ultimate language of madness is that of reason, but the language of reason enveloped in the prestige of the image” in imagination (95).

If the first half of the story only witnesses Ch’i-ch’iao’s inability to repress her true feelings and a consequent tension between her outbreaks of passion and the “rational” discipline of social behaviors, the second half, especially the plot related to the mother-daughter relationship, follows her into an indulgence in hallucinations for decades. The footbinding episode, as the beginning of the second half, exactly witnesses the beginning of hallucinations, and might even contain a symbol of the sinking into hallucinations: darkness. The footbinding episode happens in such circumstances: “[w]ith the velvet curtains drawn it was dark in the room” (Chang, “The Golden Cangue” 207). Jung Jeng-dau interprets the drawn curtain as a symbol of a barren sexual life and velvet as the substitute for private hair (69). Yet we could interpret it from a different angle. The profound shadow in the room is in the same relation to the brightness of daylight as delirium to reason, and the falling of darkness symbolizes Ch’i-ch’iao’s sinking into the Unreal (Foucault 109). Both the “cold white sky” that is occasionally revealed, and the flame of the opium lamp that illuminates the whole room with its sole power, only serve as the illusion of light and accentuate the dark further, making “the shadows on Ch’i-ch’iao’s

face [seem] a shade deeper” (Chang, “The Golden Cangue” 207). It is precisely against this backdrop of deep darkness that Ch’i-ch’iao utters the words of delirium, the words about rotten man.

The counterpart of the “rotten” in the Chinese version is “混賬” (*hunzhang*), a variant form of “混帳” (Chang, “Jinsuo ji” 166). Yan Minfen, when studying the use of “hunzhang” in *Honglou meng*, traces the origin of this swear word to the custom of sleeping on *kang* (a heat-able brick bed) in Northeast China. She argues that in families without enough *kang*, some family members have to sleep on the same *kang* in winter. Even so, they set up *zhang* (canopy) between those who should not have slept together. If someone sneaks into other’s canopy and sleeps with people he or she should not have slept with, then it is *hunzhang* (confusion of canopies), a phenomenon of confusion, sexual immorality, and even incest (Yan 141). However, Yan bases her argument on a citation that might not exist in the original source. The geographical book she cites, *Liubian jilüe* (*A Record of Beyond Willow Palisade*), might not contain information about *hunzhang*.² Nevertheless, Yan is right in connecting *hunzhang* with sexual immorality. She also points out wordings related to *zhang* in *Honglou meng/Shitou ji* (*The Dream of the Red Chamber/The Story of the Stone*) (115–6). For example, in Chapter 63 of this novel the maidservants refuse to fool around with one Master in the family, Jia Rong, saying that rumors would say they do such thing as “亂帳” (*luanzhang*, also meaning confusion of canopies) (Cao, *Liening gele*

² The version of *Liubian jilüe* I consult is in Gu Tinglong et al., editors. *Xuxiu Siku quanshu* 續修四庫全書 (Supplement to *Complete collection of the Four Treasuries*), *Shibu* 史部 (Histories), *Dili lei* 地理類 (Geography), vol. 731, Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, pp. 221–574.

Shitou ji 2771).³ Considering this textual evidence, it is reasonable that *hunzhang* connotes frivolity, wantonness, immorality in the sexual relationship.

Even though Ch'i-ch'iao might not be aware of this connotation of the swear word "hunzhang," her use of this word exactly coincides with its sexual significance. The prototype of the "rotten man," Chi-tse, is so frivolous with the sexual relationship and so perverse with moral standard as to pretend loving his sister-in-law to procure money. Apart from the original meaning of having a wanton sexual relationship not agreed to by society, the "hunzhang" used by Ch'i-ch'iao is also tainted with deception, cunning, greed and selfishness, because this sort of *hunzhang* attempts to conduct an unfair transaction: getting money at the price of fake love. He himself could swiftly retreat from the love game, leaving the woman rid of both money and love. Such a kind of *hunzhang* is not only frivolous, sexually immoral, but for Ch'i-ch'iao "rotten"—Chang's own translation of *hunzhang* in the English version—a word that evokes the image of the fruit that decays to its very core (Chang, "The Golden Canguie" 205).

The expansion from Chi-tse as the rotten man to all men under the sky as rotten is the crucial leap in the development of Ch'i-ch'iao's delirium. Over her life, she has only loved Chi-tse, and it is exactly this man who becomes the prototype of "rotten man." The traumatic experience brews in her mind, and after she gets "out of touch with reality," it gives birth to a reasoning empowered by the logic of syllogism: "Chi-tse is rotten; Chi-tse is a man; therefore, all men are rotten" (205).⁴ This syllogism operates exactly in a manner

³ In the "Zhiyanzhai" version of *Shitou ji*, the *zhang* is written as "賤" (836).

⁴ "[M]en are all rotten without exception" are Ch'i-ch'iao's original words. I propose that by "men" she is not referring to men as a natural gender, but as courtiers and potential mates who are sexually meaningful and who are indication of uncertainty and harbinger of danger. For example, Ch'un-hsi, before the body contact with Ch'ang-an, is of course considered as a man in a natural sense but not as a sexually dangerous man; Ch'ang-pai, though thought by Ch'i-ch'iao as "the only man in her life," is not deemed as a threat (Chang,

similar to the aforementioned mad person in Foucault's work. The image of such "rotten man" does not err; yet armed with such rational organizing form as syllogism, it is extended and in the meantime eroded. The consequent reasoning, with this logic, presents the expanded image to the brain of Ch'i-ch'iao with great insistence and commands the firmest belief of it on her part and a sedimentation of it in actions. If her belief in the reasoning, in the readers' eyes, only amounts to the sphere of prejudice, then her determination to prove and protect its righteousness in action regardless of reality bespeaks both her psychological illusion and physiological and social absurdity. The diagnosis of her madness, now besides the outer manifestation of social behaviors, is filled with some interior substance.

Ch'un-hsi, the first man Ch'i-ch'iao encounters after the Chi-tse episode in the narration, and the son of another man who thirsts for her money as well (blood relation, in Ch'i-ch'iao's story, is a vital factor),⁵ becomes the first object to apply her reasoning. Despite the fact that this young man knows his place, Ch'i-ch'iao, having merely glanced at his body contact with Ch'ang-an, believes that she could penetrate the opaque body of Ch'un-hsi and reach all the way to his essence: "You wolf-hearted, dog-lunged creature, . . . you wolf-hearted, dog-lunged thing," the son of "those two wolf-hearted, dog-lunged, ungrateful, old addled eggs" (206). The "rotten" quality of the man is thus exposed at his

"The Golden Cangue" 213). The "men" here therefore is ambiguous and points towards a specific yet broad group with any potential resemblance with Chi-tse.

⁵ For example, Ch'i-ch'iao herself, from the view of rank and virtue, is not as "good" as her sisters-in-law, her husband not as "good" as other people, and her children, deep in her heart, might not be as "good" as other children in the Chiang family as well. In her later talking to the third sister-in-law, she brags first about her daughter's goodness: "A girl I dug out my heart and liver to train, as it were, she shouldn't have no takers," but then follows the acknowledgement of the bad: "But this girl was born an Ah-tou that can't be propped up (Chang, "The Golden Cangue" 222). Ah-tou/Adou is the infant name of Liu Shan (207-71), the inept heir of Liu Bei (161-223), founder of the Shu Han kingdom during the Three Kingdoms period. Though entrusted to such accomplished statesmen as Zhuge Liang (181-234), he still appeared incapable. In this story, the Ah-tou that cannot be propped up is the daughter of a husband that cannot be propped up (both physically and socially).

very core: the organs of such fierce and voracious animals as wolf and dog. An animal deep at heart with a human form, the rotten man seeks opportunity to defy sexual morals and therefore reveals his cunning, greedy, selfish and deceptive face, not to mention that this rotten man in Ch'i-ch'iao's view has already received benefits from her without paying off.

The Wretched and Rotten Daughter

However, behind Ch'i-ch'iao's condescending judgement of "rotten man" is hidden a wretched "woman endangered by rotten man." Her disparagement of men reminds us of a stunning remark in *Honglou meng*, which Chang greatly admired. At only seven or eight years old, the male protagonist Jia Baoyu claims against all men: the bones and flesh of woman are made of water, while those of man of mud; woman, in his eyes, is pure and pleasing, whereas man corrupt, foul and repelling (Cao, *Zhiyan zhai Shitou ji* 30).⁶ In Baoyu's remark, the traditional order of man-woman is reversed, and woman, because of her purity, becomes the superior and venerated Other of the base man. While Ch'i-ch'iao's maxim also points to the base instincts of man, the woman in her mouth is not superior at all. Instead, the woman is man's prey, in danger of being cheated out of her chastity, love and wealth. In the love game, woman with wealth is a well sought after game. Once she is caught by a man and ruins her good name, she would be subject to the voracious hunter and be robbed of any flesh, fur or organ that is valuable in her. In Ch'i-ch'iao's superior tone hides a fear of losing superiority and a de facto inferiority in the love game. "Who's not after your money" therefore is both a boasting of wealth and a fear of losing wealth, a

⁶ The original text: "他說女兒是水作的骨肉，男人是泥作的骨肉。我見了女兒我便清爽，見了男子便竟濁臭逼人。"

bragging of superiority in money and an indication of inferiority in sexual relationships (Chang, "The Golden Cangue" 207).

And the change of pronoun from "I" to "you" reveals a transference in work. Suddenly, Ch'ang-an also turns into a threatened game surrounded by all sorts of men without clear face, who are not definitely defined by the "who." Ch'ang-an, as both a woman-to-be-wealthy and as Ch'i-ch'iao's daughter, becomes susceptible to the threat of rotten man as well. If the maxim on man has a logical form, then the one on woman is no exception. The syllogism could go as this: "I, a woman with wealth, was cheated by man; Ch'ang-an would also be a woman with wealth; therefore, she would be cheated by man." This syllogism could even be complemented by such syllogism as: "I was cheated by man; Ch'ang-an is my daughter; therefore, she would be cheated by man."

Yet while in Ch'i-ch'iao's mind Ch'ang-an could be on her side, a turn of thought portrays the daughter as "rotten" as well. Self-perceived as a woman threatened by rotten men, Ch'i-ch'iao suffers from a certain impression of fear, which is originally limited to an object, but gradually expands its area as it persists. As the soul grants the fear more attention, it tends to "attach to it a whole series of more or less remote ideas," joining to this simple idea all possible elements that could nourish, strengthen and empower it, and finally makes it irresistible (Foucault 91). And the fear of being cheated by Chi-tse, firstly via syllogism, expands into the fear of all rotten men, and gradually into the fear of all potentially money-hunting and deceptive people. Against this backdrop, there appears a variant of the "rotten man," the "rotten daughter." Over a decade later, to hinder the marriage of Ch'ang-an and Shih-fang, Ch'i-ch'iao would scold Ch'ang-an in front of relatives, saying "all the young ladies" of the Chiangs—especially Ch'ang-an—"know is

to grab money and want men – worse than pigs and dogs.” Corresponding to the “rotten man,” such kind of “rotten daughter” is greedy for money and improper in sexual morals. For both rotten man and rotten daughter, the romantic affairs could be means to gain money: the daughter could utilize the marriage to get dowry from her mother. The images of money-hunting daughter and money-hunting man thus overlap—both to the disadvantage of Ch’i-ch’iao. Therefore, the daughter, like the rotten man, is full of threats as well—the threats of deception and cunningness.

The ambiguous position of Ch’ang-an in Ch’i-ch’iao’s eyes corresponds to the position of daughter in traditional family values: daughter is both an “insider” and “outsider.” Because Ch’ang-pai is a son, there is “no danger of his being after her money—it [is] his anyway” (213). Yet it would be possible that Ch’ang-an could ally with outsiders to trick Ch’i-ch’iao out of her money. From this point of view, it is no wonder that in the footbinding episode, elements of motherly education and alert precautions are mixed. Yet both these two aspects of “insider” and “outsider” together contribute to the act of footbinding. In Ch’i-ch’iao’s mind, Ch’ang-an, as a to-be-rich woman endangered by man, needs protection, should “know how to take care of” themselves; and as an outsider, she demands alert precautions (207). The latter aspect is especially manifested in Ch’i-ch’iao’s adamant determination to hunt down and suffocate any possibility of Ch’ang-an being rotten.

From Chi-tse as the rotten men, to all-men-as-rotten, and then to Ch’ang-an as the rotten daughter; and from Ch’i-ch’iao as the endangered woman to Ch’ang-an as the threatened woman as well, Ch’i-ch’iao’s mind is busy in multiple activities of projection.

And her staunch belief in her mental product and her consequent actions to sediment that product into reality bespeak her madness.

What Is Real, What Is False?

Although Ch'i-ch'iao is suspicious that Ch'ang-an would cheat her, this does not necessarily mean she is morbidly obsessed with truth. Despite the fact that she indeed searches for truth in the Chi-tse episode, she would rather grasp the substitute for truth than the truth itself in Ch'un-hsi and the foot-binding episodes. And what the substitute is is not important, as long as it could satisfy her. The syntax of acquisition plus satisfaction thus peculiarly constitutes the term *deyi* 得意, which I will explain later. The key of *deyi*, however, is why and how behaviors such as footbinding could satisfy her, in other words, what is her *yi* 意? The following section will thus move from Ch'i-ch'iao's attitude towards truth and then to the discussion of *deyi*.

From Truth to Its Substitute

In Chi-tse's visit, Ch'i-ch'iao reveals a desire to grasp his true intention, which, adorned and covered with ambiguous language, is deeply hidden under his opaque body. The difficulty in an immediate judgement of the believability of Chi-tse's words resides in their ambiguity. Chi-tse is excellent in confusing the appearance of reality with words. He is frank with his playing around and shunning Ch'i-ch'iao, but he attributes it to his secret love for her instead of his own interests. Mixing the real and the false, and with the aid of vivid acting, he succeeds in making the truth hard to probe into. What he makes use of here is exactly the opacity of body and the depths of the psyche. For example, he says: "I'm just

asking you to understand the way I felt”—in the Chinese version: “我只求你原諒我這一片心,” which literally means “I’m just asking you to understand my heart” (Chang, “The Golden Cangue” 201; “Jinsuo ji” 161). But the heart itself is enveloped by the opaque body and is depicted with great liberty by its owner. Using sight, Ch’i-ch’iao could not even penetrate Ch’i-tse’s eyes, usually the window to the soul. His irises, though covered with bright water, are two “black pebbles at the bottom of a bowl of narcissus,” hard, cold, expressionless, and defying deep investigation of mental activities (Chang, “The Golden Cangue” 200).⁷ Ch’i-ch’iao, aware of the fact that the heart hidden beneath the opaque body is at the disposal of descriptive language, knows well that she has to lure the psyche out of the depths of the body precisely via language: She has to “prove first whether he really meant it” (Or, a more literal translation: “She had to prove first whether his heart was real” 她得先證明他是真心不是), and utilizes her quick-wits to set up a trick in a few minutes to test his intention (Chang, “The Golden Cangue” 202; “Jinsuo ji” 162). From the hesitation in believing, the attempt to read the interlocutor’s look, and the linguistic trick to procure Ch’i-tse’s true intention, Ch’i-ch’iao reveals her desire for truth and tries to satisfy it.

When it comes to Ch’un-hsi and Ch’ang-an, however, Ch’i-ch’iao’s patience in figuring out the truth is totally lost. In the former case, her own version of the truth—Ch’un-hsi being a rotten man in the purpose of luring Ch’ang-an—usurps the throne of truth. Thus, the trial to figure out the truth is omitted, the judgement is too easily made, and

⁷ The Chinese version uses “shuiwangwang” (水汪汪 watery) to describe the surface of Ch’i-tse’s eyes. In Chinese, “water waves” is usually a metaphor for “eye waves” (emotional looks, especially looks full of affectionate emotions). The surface of Ch’i-tse’s eyes thus constitutes a contrast with the bottom, which accentuates the binary of appearance/essence.

the sentence of expulsion is pronounced even before the suspect defends himself. A similar suspicion goes towards Ch'ang-an as well. Ch'ang-an's affirmation of Ch'i-ch'iao's words is dismissed as potentially unfaithful expression of her own will that is hidden in her heart. And Ch'ang-an's relatively mature age, unbound feet as well as hypothetical wanton will, in Ch'i-ch'iao's eyes, all speak for her "true" will in the place of her own words. Here, likewise, an invented truth takes the place of truth.

Acquisition

If we step further and look into Ch'i-ch'iao's insight into truth in the between, we will get a better understanding of this shift. Right after Chi-tse's leaving, there appears for two times the same sentence "What is real, what is false" in the story: one following Ch'i-ch'iao's mental struggles, the other following the narrator's description of the scene outside the window. The two sentences, though with the same words, indeed express different meanings.

The omniscient narrator had an insight into the illusion of life. She sees through Ch'i-ch'iao's eyes, and the window in front of Ch'i-ch'iao turns into a camera that captures the life of different people. In the camera, policeman, ricksha rider, little boy, postman come and go, just as people come into and go out of life. From the angle of the camera, their images run over each other, exactly in the same way that ghosts without tangible bodies go through each other's floating souls. The narrator then moves to the uncanny conclusion: all these people captured by the window are just ghosts—"ghosts of many years ago or the unborn of many years hence" (Chang, "The Golden Cangue" 205). Humans' life is no more than the reproduction of past stories and the prophecy of future stories. Through different reincarnations, human life turns into various illusions that are to

be broken in the future. The things of the present, however “real” they seem, will in the end become empty, void and “false.”

This insight reminds us of the Buddhist thinking on reality in some way. Sengzhao (Monk Zhao) (384–414), in *Bu zhenkong lun (Non-Absolute Emptiness)*, extrapolates that the world is not empty, since people feel the existence of myriad phenomena; therefore, existence “is.” Yet the “is” is not “truly is,” but “falsely is,” because existence is only phenomenon (qtd. in Wang Ranran. 266). Thus, *The Vimalakirti Sutra* says, “All phenomenon are the product of deluded vision, like dreams, like flames, like the moon in the water or an image in a mirror, born of deluded thoughts” (47). The worldly phenomenon, though looking real, tangible, and attractive, will end up being nothing, just like ephemeral bubbles. Chang’s access to this Buddhist thinking is likely through *Honglou meng*. In the first chapter, the novel depicts that on each side of the stone portal of “Tai Xu Huan Jing” (The Visionary limits of the Great Void) is a scroll with these two lines: “When falsehood stands for truth, truth likewise becomes false, / Where naught be made to aught, aught changes into naught” (Cao, *The Dream of the Red Chamber* 9). These two lines set the tone for the whole novel: the prosperity, affluence, exhilaration in as grand a family as the Jia’s, are no more than a great void, a “dream” of the red chamber.

While the narrator, like a God, has complete knowledge of the laws of worldly phenomenon and shares with the Buddhist thinking a sober attitude towards the world and a certain disillusionment, the character Ch’i-ch’iao though likewise realizing the false characteristic of life, does not detach herself from the world. She, too, finds that life is like an aggregate of falsehood and people often have to pretend ignorance and put up with its fake cloak so that life goes on smoothly. Nevertheless, her discovery of falsehood is in fact

in service of her desire of *de* (acquisition). Now that life is full of false images, why not just succumb to Chi-tse's false language so that she could acquire some moments of pleasure? Just as what He Xifan writes about this scene: 'For Ch'i-ch'iao, though fake love is detestable, . . . it is better than no love in the end' (my trans.; 50). Ch'i-ch'iao's insight is thus not elevated onto the ontological level; it is at most a description of her observation of life, which is aimed to help her smoothly navigate the psychological and physiological obstacles in life. Although she stands in front of the window, she is in fact a member of the ghosts, who are concentrated on the acquisition and loss of this life. Even when she reflects on her life before passing away, her thoughts focus on another possibility of life, in which she could acquire more happiness. At the end of the story, the narrator exclaims, "the people of thirty years ago are dead but the story of thirty years ago is not yet ended—can have no ending" (Chang, "The Golden Cangue" 234). Ch'i-ch'iao, like a ghost walking in the window, predicts new incarnations of the same stories in the future life—the stories of acquisition and loss.

For Ch'i-ch'iao, Chi-tse's love, like money, is something that could be and needed to be acquired. Some scholars judge Ch'i-ch'iao's subordinating love to money as narrow-minded. For example, Chen Sihe writes the following words in a touchy tone: 'The lack of love is more terrible than the lack of money . . . the lack of love will lead to a lack of vital elements, and the life will thus be incomplete and unhealthy; a life without love is a paralyzed, withered life' (my trans.; 15). Yet in my point of view, for Ch'i-ch'iao both money and happiness are equally objects of "acquisition." Life is indeed a process of calculation and acquisition, and when the binary of love and money are exclusive to each other, the decision to give up the acquisition of either becomes rather difficult. The money

is an acquisition for her as a result of long years' suffering, and to opt for love at the price of money is indeed a huge sacrifice that does injustice to her past efforts. But to part with the possibility of acquiring love is also a regret, and the exclamation "what is real, what is false" is therefore a lament for the lost chance to gain the enjoyment of love. In a final analysis, is it real that love is more valuable than money in Ch'i-ch'iao's story? Is it possible that it is precisely because Ch'i-ch'iao could not obtain love in this life that love thus turns out to be of a special importance? The literary trend since the May Fourth Movement often preaches "Love is best" (*lian'ai zhishang*) and depicts it as transcendental over all other things, especially money, which is despised in literati and romantic cultures. But could it be possible that for Ch'i-ch'iao, a woman definitely without highly spiritual and intellectual visions, love and money are both objects of acquisition to be achieved through hard work across time? For her, even love, such an abstract and mysterious emotion in some eyes, could be obtained through years spent together and by giving birth to children (Chang, "The Golden Cangu" 234). In analyzing Ch'i-ch'iao's story, we might not just look at the essence of either love or money, but the very acquisition of the two.

Thus, it is more important for Ch'i-ch'iao to acquire something—even though the thing in question is fake love or substitute for truth—and to secure the thing she has acquired. Therefore, while the Chi-tse case is ostensibly characterized by maneuvering language to acquire the truth in order to secure the acquisition of money, the Ch'un-hsi and Ch'ang-an episodes are marked by the satisfaction at the substitute of truth for the same purpose, or a self-belief of having attained the truth, which somewhat ironically amounts to the state of *deyiwangxing* (the acquisition of meaning and the subsequent getting rid of words). While this term originally designates an epistemological methodology, here I use

it as the acquisition of truth and the subsequent getting rid of the words that help find the truth.⁸

The Acquisition of Yi

Footbinding for Ch'i-ch'iao is several acquisitions in one act. After she has taken her interpretation of Ch'ang-an's will as the truth, Ch'i-ch'iao dismisses any effort to gain Ch'ang-an's true intention—a form of *deyiwangxing*—and uses footbinding to “besiege” Ch'ang-an's malevolent will in her imagination and to prevent it from becoming true. With footbinding, Ch'i-ch'iao, as the parent, punisher, and receiver of promise, wants to fulfill her purpose (意圖 *yitu*) and gains other multiple *yis* at the same time.

Due to the long chain between the manifestation of the will and the actual discharge of the will, Ch'i-ch'iao is not sure about either Ch'ang-an's true intentions or whether the promised will would become true. By deforming Ch'ang-an's feet and constricting the range of her activities, Ch'i-ch'iao, while undermining Ch'ang-an's free will, makes sure to gain the insurance for the discharge of the promised will (意志 *yizhi*) as a substitute for the true intentions (意圖 *yitu*) of Ch'ang-an.

In the sense of gaining the discharge of the promised will, we could interpret one more layer of meaning. Footbinding is a means that transforms the shape of part of the body, and the permanent trace it leaves upon the body is a good reminder of the cause of

⁸ See in *Zhuangzi/Chuang Tzu*: “The fish trap exists because of the fish; once you've gotten the fish, you can forget the trap. The rabbit snare exists because of the rabbit; once you've gotten the rabbit, you can forget the snare. Words exist because of the meaning; once you've gotten the meaning, you can forget the words. Where can I find a man who has forgotten the words so I can have a word with him” (302)? The acquisition of meaning and getting rid of words in this passage in *Zhuangzi* is a clarification of a certain epistemological methodology which was the basis of the “arcane learning” (*xuanxue*) in Wei-Jin period. Here I will use the term *deyiwangxing* in a different meaning and play a word game of *yi* 意 with its various senses.

the scar. “If something is to stay in the memory it must be burned in: only that which never ceases to *hurt* stays in the memory,” as is told by Friedrich Nietzsche (61). Ch’i-ch’iao not only tries to obtain insurance for the fulfillment of the will, but with the means of bodily imprint, repetitively reminds Ch’ang-an of her promise. The bodily trace is thus not only the container of the meaning (意義 *yiyi*), but also the repetition of the promised will (*yizhi*).

Also, footbinding could be regarded as a double punishment for the defiance of the promised will: a punishment for the past defiance (the bodily contact with Ch’un-hsi),⁹ and a punishment for future possible defiance (failure to fulfill the promised will). Via the double punishment, the wrongs committed by the punished are again affirmed and accentuated, and on the contrary, the righteousness of the punisher’s proposition is underscored. The punished, hence, is expected to act according to the punisher’s proposition, and the authority of the punisher is thus emphasized. The punisher then achieves a state of *deyi* (*deyi* itself could mean “pleased, proud”).

Moreover, Ch’ang-an, as the child, is responsible for obeying the parent’s will and make her satisfied. The money of Ch’i-ch’iao is the reward for her long years of suffering, and the child, enjoying welfare because of the parent’s commitment, is analogous to the debtor who has the responsibility of paying back to her parent, the creditor. As the old Chinese saying goes, the crow feeds its parents back since it has grown mature, and the lamb kneels as it sucks the milk from its mother’s breasts. Even animals know the duty of paying back, not to mention the man. Moreover, Confucius said: “If a man can for long adhere to the correct principles formerly advocated by his father, he may be considered a

⁹ Immediately after Ch’un-hsi leaves, Ch’ang-an thinks she would be hit. She is not hit in the end, but the footbinding is taken as substitute for beating.

filial son” (三年無改於父之道，可謂孝矣) (*Analects* 32–3). In the Confucian framework, obeying the will of parents is part of filial norms, part of the responsibility of paying back. If Ch’ang-an does not defy the will of the parent, then Ch’i-ch’iao might be content (滿意 *manyi*), which could be counted as another form of *deyi* 得意.

In theory, Ch’ang-an herself also acquires some *yi* as well, since both fake intention (*yitu*) and promised will (*yizhi*) are imposed upon her. Yet upon closer observation, we find that her true intention or will is superimposed and obscured by the *yi* inscribed by people other than herself and is hereby lost. Therefore, it is rather that she does not gain *yi*, if she has not lost any. Ironically, Ch’i-ch’iao initiates footbinding with the proclaimed concern for Ch’ang-an, while the person who ends up being content (*manyi*) is exactly herself. Thus, one cannot help asking: what is real, what is false?

By criticizing the rotten men, Ch’i-ch’iao raises herself to a moral high ground. In the “carnavalesque” acquisition of *yi*, she gains authority as a parent, punisher, and an experienced woman endangered by men. Both processes serve to boost her self-esteem. The footbinding episode hence becomes the initial successful defense of Ch’i-ch’iao’s self-esteem, but it is not the last one—there are still many more to come.

Chapter 4: Aftermath: The Double

The footbinding episode leaves Ch'ang-an a pair of half-bound, half-loose feet. Similar to Ch'i-ch'iao's "reformed feet," they are the first resemblance between the mother and daughter clearly presented in the narrative. As the narration moves on, the similarities between the two characters would further increase, and the daughter becomes the mother's "double." The phenomenon of the "double," in Sigmund Freud's words, could denote the situation where "there is the constant recurrence of the same thing" between two subjects—either "the same features or character-traits or vicissitudes," or where one subject identifies with the other so that he is in confusion as to which one is his own self ("The Uncanny," 234). Resembling Ch'i-ch'iao in physical features, personality-traits, and the fate of love and in the meantime being taken by Ch'i-Ch'iao as a similar figure threatened by man, Ch'ang-an, according to this definition, is a perfect double of her mother. However, "The apple doesn't fall far from the tree," comment some readers, indifferent to so many similarities between the mother and the daughter, which are often taken for granted. Yet as the daughter from a respectable family, Ch'ang-an faces different possibilities from that of Ch'i-Ch'iao, a sparrow married into the flock of phoenixes. This being said, the fruit of the last generation finally grows to be the reflection, the shadow of her mother, not simply as a reproduced version, but as a subordinated guarding spirit for her mother's survival. Behind the seemingly common generational recurrence is in fact concealed a long existential history full of tragic struggles and soaked with uncanniness.

The footbinding episode, then, as the embryo of the double, is not simply a temporal beginning, but in it almost all similarities between Ch'i-ch'iao and Ch'ang-an are already revealed in varying degree. Hence, it occupies a significant position in the story structure,

as it could be counted as a prediction of all incoming resemblances and future relationship between the mother and daughter. And when the narration moves to the end, it turns out that all major episodes between the two characters are no more than the rewriting of the past memory of that afternoon.

Ch'i-ch'iao's Spit and Image

The most conspicuous similarities between the mother and daughter are, of course, their physical resemblances. Apart from the bound feet, the two also share similar looks, airs, body gestures: Every time Ch'ang-an "wore a pair of unlined trousers and sat with her legs apart and the palms of both hands on the stool in front of her, her head tilted to one side, her chin on her chest . . . she appeared Ch'i-ch'iao's spit and image. She wore a pigtail and her eyes and eyebrows had a tout expressiveness about them reminiscent of Ch'i-ch'iao in her prime" (Chang, "The Golden Cangue" 211).

Just as Ch'i-ch'iao, Ch'ang-an also suffers from the lack of self-esteem. She is so sensitive to other people's views that she would prefer letting her body "disappear" so as to prevent future humiliation and to sustain her self-esteem. This tendency is vividly represented by such a line describing her mood when she first meets Shih-fang: "She had come to be looked at. She felt. . .her body was altogether superfluous and could as well be shrunk in size and put away if she knew how to do this" (221). Her recurrent avoidance of being looked at is best shown by her two "beautiful desolate gestures." To avoid facing her schoolmates in case that her mother might go to school and make a scene, she decides to quit school on her own initiative; to avoid the trouble in the probable meeting between Shih-fang and her mother and the possible pejorative opinion of the former, she summons

up determination to break up with him. On these occasions, what she faces are either teachers and students from modern school, or Shih-fang, a typical young man grown up under the influence of the May Fourth Movement, who has studied abroad and pursued “freedom of love” (*ziyou lian'ai*).¹ At the opposite of the embodiments of civilized modernity is Ch'ang-an, whose social presentiment is to be stained by her barbarous mother, and who is never educated to properly present her own self socially. She is unable to enter the Symbolic of civilized modernity, because closely interlocked with the maternal figure, she is repetitively “playing the game of the disappeared ego” throughout her whole youth (Meng and Dai 211). Overwhelmed, she has the urge to flee back to the *chora*. Even though without manifest pressure from outside, she, feeling abject, excludes herself out of the boundary. Her and Ch'i-ch'iao's low self-esteem are hence both marked by an abjection in the face of the ideal with ineffaceable traces of maternal origin/birth.

Another similarity resides in their desire for an oral discharge, because both Ch'i-ch'iao and Ch'ang-an have trouble releasing their emotions and have to repress them inside. During her life with the Chiang family, Ch'i-ch'iao has the impulse to speak out her bitterness over her sexual life. As a result, the vulgar words she has acquired from her early life persist in her daily intercourse even in the respectable Chiang family and are constantly

¹ *Ziyou lian'ai*, the binary of *baoban hunyin* (arranged marriage), is a compound of two words, *ziyou* (freedom) and *lian'ai* (love). It is argued that there was no such thing as Western romantic love in China before the early twentieth century. Chinese men and women were united not on the basis of love, but on family arrangement. Although Chinese men in premodern times went to the pleasure quarters for romance, for intellectuals that was still not true love since it was not based on man-woman equality and on free choice (Pan 2). The term *lian'ai* came to China via the transit in Japan. During the late 1880s and 1890s, to denote the European concept of love, Japanese coined the term *ren'ai*, which in Japanese *kanji* is written in the same form as in Chinese *hanzi*. This same compound would become a currency in Chinese in the twentieth century but only be pronounced in a different way (115). In the 1920s, when the debates on *ziyou lian'ai* ascended to top theme, in many literary works, such as *Shangshi (Remorse)* (1925) by Lu Xun, and *Lüxing (Voyage)* (1924) by Feng Yuanjun (1900–74), the female protagonist would take *ziyou lian'ai* as the weapon against family coercion and “feudal” marriage. In “The Golden Cangue,” it is obvious that Shih-fang is influenced by the discussion on *ziyou lian'ai*: he would rather break with his parents than submit to the arranged marriage. This is one manifestation of his “civilized modernity.”

preparing to shift the direction of conversations into her unsatisfactory sex with her husband. For example, when Lan-hsien tries to cover up the injustice in the distribution of rooms for the eldest branch with the pretext of the size of the family, Ch'i-ch'iao grasps the point and shifts the conversation to the sexual life of the two newlyweds, Lan-hsien and Chi-tse, and then to that of hers. However, living in a grand family famous for its learning, her words about sex would not be listened to by the other ladies and maidservants, people she most often interacts with. Just as her words wind their way into the details of "how the children got born," Tai-chen abruptly cuts the verbal rein and stops the conversation (Chang, "The Golden Cangue" 179). Thus, Ch'i-ch'iao's desire of oral discharge is again repressed near the edge of release. However, there is still one person who receives the content of her discharge: Chi-tse, a most undisciplined Master in the family. Yet this discharge is not easy, either: she firstly complains of the exhausting labors of nursing the Second Master day and night, but the words are intercepted by the indifferent Third Master; then on the topic of health, her words finally find an outlet and swerve to the description of the sick, lifeless and disgusting body of her husband. This rare discharge then grows into a bout of weeping resembling vomiting—another form of oral discharge, which in the end scare Chi-tse away. According to Freud, a purely psychological excitation could be translated into physical symptoms on favorable conditions—the process he terms as "conversion"—so that the unconscious excitation is discharged ("A Case of Hysteria" 53). Ch'i-ch'iao's disgust of her sexual life, always repressed by decent social language, could not be properly uttered. But once it finds an outlet, it floods, and rushes to be discharged. The meager language, incapable of describing the disgust in detail, and unable to resist its preponderance, gives way to physical expression through the same channel,

mouth. Her whole body is then working together for the overwhelming discharge, her back convulsing, her bowels churning and pumping, and though the language is submerged, the body reaction is still a strong signal of disgust, disgust, disgust . . .

Ch'ang-an suffers a stifled oral discharge as well. She would not speak out her real and full emotions in response to the question "Why?" in the two major episodes affecting her destiny: giving up education and breaking up with Shih-fang. In both episodes, she believes from the very first that others could not understand her worries and does not dare to tell. Her reticence here is reminiscent of her vague complaints to her cousin-in-law: "Every family has its own troubles, Cousin-in-law—every family has its own troubles" (Chang, "The Golden Cangue" 211)! But what the troubles are, she does not have the courage or the ability to bring up. Thus, while the clear awareness of the existence of troubles drives her to speak out, the unclear expression of troubles muddles her voice. Her desire for oral discharge could then only be satisfied with another oral means—blowing the harmonica. Blown out on the harmonica, the sentimental tune and lyrics of "Long, Long Ago" become the substitute for language, as a means to convey the subtle feelings incomprehensible to others. Yet even such means could only be conducted at midnight and the sound of the harmonica should be held so low that people would not hear. Perhaps, her stifled oral discharge was already told on her face — her small and overtly sunken mouth . . .

Different from most of the other similarities, the similarity with regard to their fate of love is caused by an imposed conception. It all starts with Ch'i-ch'iao's sudden discovery of Ch'ang-an's sexuality. Seeing Ch'ang-an in the arms of a young man, she realizes that Ch'ang-an, though looking "only about seven or eight, being small and thin,"

is now sexually attractive according to the norm, and therefore able to attract males (205).² Her past experience of sexual relationship thereby triggered, Ch'i-ch'iao then inundates Ch'ang-an with her lesson on sexual relationship: “[M]en are all rotten without exception. . . . Who’s not after your money” (207)? When conferring the lesson that she believes to be the truth to her daughter, she expects her to approve of and accept it. However, her anxiety of seeking agreement and submission obliges her to force an immediate implementation of her conception, instead of beginning a long-term education that might involve a series of tests and trials, which would mean the future repetition of the same anxiety she is experiencing at this moment—hence the action of footbinding.

For Freud, that parents impose their conception on children is a reflection of narcissism. Parents, says Freud, would confer their wishful dreams to their child, who as the surrogate is expected to fulfill the dreams never carried out by their parents. They are also inclined to “suspend in the child’s favor the operation of all the cultural acquisitions which their own narcissism has been forced to respect, and to renew on his behalf the claims to privileges which were long ago given up by themselves” and as a result the child would “have a better time than his parents” (“On Narcissism” 91). Freud therefore asserts that parental love is nothing but a revival and reproduction of the parents’ narcissism, and

² The age of thirteen years old, in Chinese tradition, is called *doukou nianhua* (budding beauty). This idiom comes from the verse line of Du Mu (803–852): “So slender and so graceful not much more than thirteen / the tip of a cardamom branch in spring just about to bud” (娉娉嫋嫋十三餘，豆蔻梢頭二月初) (106). This poem is dedicated to a young prostitute. Even though “not much more than thirteen,” she already shows a sexually attractive figure and invokes associations with a cardamom bud, which expects future blossom and fruit—analogy of sexual maturity. After Du, the image of cardamom bud became deeply connected with young girls. And Yang Huakun, when studying this image in ancient Chinese poetry, finds that later poets tend to use “jiao” (嬌; tender, delicate, adorable, seductive) to complement this image (55). From the prostitute in Du’s poem, to many more young girls under other poets’ pen, and to the established sexual connotation related to young girls at this age, it goes without saying that young girls at thirteen were conventionally deemed as with sexual appeal.

comments: “At the most touchy point in the narcissistic system, the immortality of the ego, which is so hard pressed by reality, security is achieved by taking refuge in the child” (91).

Apparently, Ch’i-ch’iao does not belong to the “affectionate parents” that Freud describes, but Ch’i-ch’iao, like these parents, attempts to tag her personality to her daughter, or we can say, she is trying to initiate a transference between her and Ch’ang-an, because she wants to impose her feelings towards men and her conception about the essence of sexual relationship (deception) upon Ch’ang-an. To enforce the successful “transmission” of her ideas, she goes as far as to mutilate Ch’ang-an’s body so as to secure an alternative to heartfelt acceptance by Ch’ang-an and an assurance that her conception be implemented by the latter.

Both Freud’s parents and Ch’i-ch’iao want to see their attitude live in the child without interruption, but their means are very different. While the parents under Freud’s pen create an environment for children where they are exempt from restrictions and have access to privileges, Ch’i-ch’iao places all kinds of restrictions—direct or indirect—so that her attitude towards men and sexual relationship could live in her daughter. Although her lesson for Ch’ang-an is “Men . . . leave them alone,” that is to say, to avoid all men; her actual actions are mostly aimed at weakening Ch’ang-an’s sexual appeal so that men would avoid Ch’ang-an as the choice of mate (Chang, “The Golden Cangue” 207). Its examples abound: she binds Ch’ang-an’s feet, tricks her into opium-smoking, spreads rumors about her being slutty, and at last lies to Shih-fang that she still smokes opium. Instead of fulfilling in her daughter her consistent wish of sexual satisfaction—just as Freud’s parents do as with their wishful dreams—she denies the possibility of a satisfactory sexual relationship with man in the world and is in a craze to prove that she is right, not only with her words,

but also with Ch'ang-an's life. Therefore, for the sake of her conception, Ch'i-ch'iao, while unable to truly turn all men rotten, weakens Ch'ang-an's sexual appeal so that the men attracted by her seem to have other purposes. Hence, if the parents under the pen of Freud want to mold their child into their idealized self, Ch'i-ch'iao, by contrast, makes all efforts to shape Ch'ang-an as similar to her true self.

Like Freud's parents, Ch'i-ch'iao takes refuge in the child as an effort to maintain the immortality of her ego, which is so hard pressed by reality. By making sure that the men interested in Ch'ang-an are all for money, she could be able to maintain the "truthfulness" of her claims, and thus comforts herself that her own dissatisfaction of sexual impulses is not her fault. However, this refuge is not eternal by essence, as Ch'i-ch'iao might have wished. Freud points out that the "double" could serve as "the insurance against the destruction of the ego," "an energetic denial of the power of death" ("The Uncanny" 235). The loss of double, as a consequence, becomes the harbinger of death, just as the disappearance of shadow indicates the substance's not being a live human. If Ch'ang-an could depart from Ch'i-ch'iao's self-restricted world into a new home, where she could enjoy a pleasant sexual relationship with a man who is truly attracted by her, then Ch'i-ch'iao's ego would be extremely threatened, the truthfulness of her belief being crushed, because men, contrary to what she claims, could still be attracted by women without aspiration for money. This fact only underscores the lack of sexual appeal on the part of Ch'i-ch'iao and aggravates her sense of humiliation, her ego hard beaten. To safeguard the largely endangered ego, she then launches a most deadly attack on Ch'ang-an's sexual appeal—a most blatant lie—to exterminate Shih-fang's gentle feelings towards Ch'ang-an. Shih-fang's love being killed, the reality seems to swerve back on the "right" track

conforming to Ch'i-ch'iao's conceptions. However, the reality is the reality behind the door—the small world constructed by Ch'i-ch'iao is a world self-sufficient in her values.

Footbinding as the Embryo of the Double

Retrospectively, the footbinding episode is where all the resemblances between Ch'i-ch'iao and Ch'ang-an start. The “start” resides not only in the temporal precedence of this episode over the others where the two are to show their similarities, but in the fact that this sole episode contains the embryo of major similarities that are to be fully developed later. Ch'ang-an's bound feet, her refraining from speaking, and her ego that might be endangered on possibly hearing relatives' gossips all correspond to the similarities we talked about above.

Yet more importantly, the footbinding episode is also where the two's fate in sexual relationships begin to converge. The mother's lesson on men at that time requires the daughter's implementation year after year. As the narration moves on, they grow more and more similar, and the correctness of the mother's conception even depends on its realization in the daughter. Due to the mother's repetitive attempts to interpret and change reality in favor of her conception, even as far as to decrease her daughter's sexual appeal, the daughter's fate turns out to be on the parallel track to that of her mother's: both end up being without man's love. Looking back, all later efforts to fulfill the conception thus come back to the lesson in the footbinding episode. The mother, by eagerly rewriting the lesson over and over again, indeed rewrites her own fate on Ch'ang-an's life.

Here, I borrow the concept of “rewriting” from David Wang for the purpose of underscoring Ch'i-ch'iao's tendency to re-present the same lesson she gives to Ch'ang-an

in the footbinding episode over and over again. Wang points out that different from most Chinese writers from the 1940s to the 60s who busied themselves depicting the reality at their present moment, Eileen Chang was obsessed with returning to and reorganizing her past memories. For example, she rewrote “The Golden Cangue”—the story now in analysis—three times, in two different languages in total. In the 1960s, she rewrote “The Golden Cangue” into *The Rouge of the North* in English, and then translated the latter back into Chinese. Later, in the 1980s, her own English translation of “The Golden Cangue” was published. From when the Golden Cangue first appeared in a Shanghai literary magazine (1943) to the 1980s, Chang used different languages and different ways to deal with the same story, and the two characters she created, Ch’i-ch’iao and Yindi (the protagonist of *The Rouge of the North*), are consequently different (D. Wang 4–10). By putting Ch’i-ch’iao in a position similar to that of an author, I intend to accentuate her proactivity in throwing out her words embodying the lesson, and in relentlessly interpreting and fabricating the reality in favor of her lesson. In the meantime, of course, the original lesson would go through changes and be re-presented in different forms.

One specific example of rewriting the footbinding episode is the opium one. The direct reason why Ch’ang-an gets into the habit of smoking opium, according to the narration, is Ch’i-ch’iao’s indolence as to her daughter’s illness, as well as the expediency of taking the opium as an all-purpose painkiller—after all, opium is also called *yangyao* (Western medicine). Yet, if considered in juxtaposition with Ch’ang-pai’s addiction, which the narrator settles just before that of Ch’ang-an’s, this event might be Ch’i-ch’iao’s effort to retain her daughter at home after she successfully lures her son to stay at home by opium. Thus, echoing the footbinding episode nearly one decade ago, the enticement of opium

attaches Ch'ang-an to home, lessens her intercourse with men and decreases her sexual appeal at the same time, thereby contributing to the resemblance in the fate of love between the mother and daughter. Like footbinding, the introduction of opium to Ch'ang-an is also a kind of transmission that confers a new identity to the novice and integrates him or her into a certain group. Here, by transmitting the practice of opium smoking, Ch'i-ch'iao is not only transforming Ch'ang-an into a smoker—which act, according to McMahon, was common among addicts—but also into her double (340).

Another example is the Shih-fang episode. Previous to the decisive meeting between Ch'i-ch'iao and Shih-fang, the old lesson in the footbinding episode has already been deliberately “rewritten.” For example, Ch'i-ch'iao claims to Ch'ang-an: “You’re so sure he’s after your person? What vanity! Have you got a presentable spot on you? Stop lying to yourself. This man T’ung has his eyes on Chiang’s name and prestige, that’s all” (Chang, “The Golden Cangue” 226). Reminiscent of “who’s not after your money” in the footbinding episode, this comment, while further criticizing the man’s deceptive face, aims first at Ch'i-ch'iao’s own double: unlike its reserved predecessor in the footbinding episode that insinuates the inferiority of women without desirability, it comments in the clearest and most humiliating way on Ch'ang-an’s lack of sexual appeal. After the lesson, Ch'ang-an’s defiance is also rewritten: in the footbinding episode, Ch'ang-an’s “defiance,” though it ends up driving Ch'i-ch'iao to act, is only hypothetical in the mother’s mind; here, however, the bad “student” remains obdurate and submits to love, and this more than ever propels Ch'i-ch'iao to have the lesson proved, heard and obeyed. Therefore, the stage is set, the scene orchestrated, and Ch'i-ch'iao knows what she needs to say perfectly in her

mind.³ Not out of expectation, her lie successfully crushes the image of the charming “quiet and demure well-born Chinese girl” in Shih-fang’s head (232). By performing what she needs to perform, Ch’i-ch’iao thus makes sure that her lesson is proved by Shih-fang’s not being attracted to Ch’ang-an and is obeyed by the unmarriageable Ch’ang-an in the end. As a result, other elements in the footbinding episode are transplanted to here as well: the mother’s intervention to deter the courtship of a possible mate of Ch’ang-an; the relatively passive and submissive daughter in the face of fatal blows; and Ch’i-ch’iao’s actions to undermine Ch’ang-an’s appeal. Therefore, the Shih-fang episode, from Ch’i-ch’iao’s scolding before the meeting, to its very miserable end, constitutes a mimicry of the footbinding episode.

Yet the Shih-fang episode is not simply a reproduction of elements in the footbinding episode; echoing the footbinding episode, the original writing and the embryo of the double, it is the last and the most mature rewriting and presents the full development of the double. While other rewritings in the story only cover some portion of the footbinding episode—for example, the opium event only achieves the effect of lessening Ch’ang-an’s intercourse with men, decreasing her sexual appeal, and increasing the resemblance of the double, the Shih-fang episode, as is shown above, incorporates almost all elements. Moreover, as the last rewriting, it is also the answer to the original writing, confirming that Ch’ang-an finally becomes the double of Ch’i-ch’iao in the full sense. If the footbinding episode is where Ch’ang-an’s sexuality and marriageability are discovered by her mother, then the Shih-fang episode is where all of Ch’ang-an’s hope for marriage is

³ For Ch’i-ch’iao’s performance, see Su 173–4. Su argues that Ch’i-ch’iao’s weirdness is attributed to “the theatricality of psychopath” and specifically points out that the meeting between Ch’i-ch’iao and Shih-fang is analogous to a drama exquisitely designed by Ch’i-ch’iao herself.

exterminated: after that, Ch'ang-an, of course, gives up "all thoughts of marriage" (233). If we recall Ch'i-ch'iao's outrageous verbal explosion in reply to the amahs' advice in the footbinding episode—"If nobody really wants her and she has to be kept all her life"—we might be overwhelmed by an uncanny feeling in that what Ch'i-ch'iao says in fury more than a dozen years ago is finally concretized into reality, and that Ch'ang-an's fate seems to be already determined many years ago (208). Thus, the beginning of marriageability is answered with a most disheartening ending. With the beginning resembling the ending, the ending being the beginning, the two episodes, echoing each other, hence are linked together and form a circle. In the meantime, the double is at last settled into the place of the double.

As the beginning of the development of the doubling, the footbinding is also the turning point marking the shift from non-double to double, in other words, from Ch'i-ch'iao's own life story to the relationship between mother and daughter as one important aspect of the latter half of the story. Such a shift prepares for the extra space dedicated to the external description of and more importantly, the mental activities inside Ch'ang-an. As we gradually move along the narrative line, we will find that apart from Ch'i-ch'iao, there is also another character who has her own project and initiative.

Yet despite being the shifting point, the footbinding episode does not introduce to the readers much of Ch'ang-an's viewpoint. Even when she faces the torture of footbinding, the narrator only tells us that she howls "with great pain" (208). Although the Chinese version "鬼哭神號" (*guikushenhao*) might offer us more juicy interpretations of Ch'ang-an's mood, her inner activities still remain a blank for us (Chang, "Jinsuo ji" 167). The literal translation of *guikushenhao* is "to cry like a ghost, howl like a spirit." Compared to Kang's description of the pain girls suffered in footbinding: 'embittered by the suffering,

young girls weep every day' (童女苦之，旦旦啼哭), Chang's description gives out a thrilling atmosphere (my trans.; 335). The cries and howls of Ch'ang-an are too ear-piercing to sound like those of humans. In some ghost stories, the ghosts crying aloud at night might have suffered unfair treatment and born resentment. Ghosts in many myths are able to describe their anguish in human words as they encounter the human protagonist, but many more just pass long years howling their ineffable emotions that are felt but hard to discern. Howling with incomprehensible voice, Ch'ang-an has to wait until the modern school episode to possess a clear vision. That is to say, while the footbinding episode serves as the turning point in the structure, the shift of viewpoint between Ch'i-ch'iao and Ch'ang-an is in fact delayed.

Despite this fact, I still insist on the transitional function of the footbinding episode, which could be clearly evidenced by the narrator beginning the line of Ch'ang-an in this episode and pursuing the same line afterwards; and I attribute the narrator's reticence on Ch'ang-an's reaction to her own unclear understanding of footbinding at that time. As readers, we do find the irrationality of Ch'i-ch'iao in the decision of footbinding, yet due to its being legitimized by Ch'i-ch'iao's language, it is hard for the young Ch'ang-an to be aware of the consequences of footbinding at that time. The seemingly overtly concise description of her reactions might be a reflection of her unclear understanding on the one hand, and a vivid mimicry of the traumatic experience on the other hand: since many traumas do not leave a clear trace on the heart, but reflecting on them, we find that they nonetheless exert a long-lasting influence on us. While Ch'ang-an does not reveal a clear understanding and explicit attitude concerning footbinding at that moment, it might have influenced her sense of self-esteem in later life, as is evidenced by her fear of losing face

in the modern school episode. The reticence on this part as a result is hence out of the narrator's relatively realistic concerns to fit into the character's state at that instant.

Therefore, as the beginning of the doubles, the footbinding episode foretells the "rewriting" of Ch'i-ch'iao's conception in later episodes, and uncannily predetermines Ch'ang-an's fate in sexual relationships. Also, as the turning point between non-double to double, the footbinding episode emerges as a transition into the mother-daughter relationship, thus manifesting its unique significance in the story structure.

Conclusion

At the beginning of this thesis, I mentioned two existing interpretations of the footbinding episode: feudalism and madness. The former places the story in a distant past, while the latter does not examine in detail the development of Ch'i-ch'iao's madness, as if it is an acknowledged fact that antecedently exists. Both thus place Ch'i-ch'iao in the situation of a mystified Other, an incomprehensible quasi-human species. They hence reject a deep identification with Ch'i-ch'iao and refuse to understand how humanity could in certain circumstances expose its most evil side.

This thesis then has as its mission to identify with Ch'i-ch'iao and to understand her motives in the footbinding episode. It is firstly found that throughout the story Ch'i-ch'iao is haunted by a maimed self-esteem. From a capable daughter at home and a well sought-after girl in love games to a Lady secretly unrecognized by servants and a woman rejected by a most libertine man, Ch'i-ch'iao experiences a collapse of self-esteem in two major aspects of woman: woman as the family Mistress—a figure of power and authority—and as a sexual being. As a result, a deep anxiety about any goodness she owns begins to grow in her heart.

The consequences of the self-esteem crisis are as follows: in the first place, Ch'i-ch'iao begins a feverous pursuit of money and love, and the acquisition of either would elevate her own self-esteem. This explains her seemingly schizophrenic tendency to put love on top of money first and the converse at the next second. In her flirtation with Chi-tse, she says she would never frown even if Chi-tse squanders the money in the family account and gets into debt (Chang, "The Golden Cangue" 185). But just after Chi-tse goes away, she tells the Eldest Lady: "Isn't it the same with money? We're always told to save,

save it so others can take it out by the handfuls to spend” (187). And, secondly, because of her little possibility of gaining love, money becomes both her last defense of self-esteem and an emphasis on her lack of self-esteem—besides money, she has no other goodness. Moreover, Ch’i-ch’iao learns to put on the cloak of self-esteem. Apart from showing up her money, she reproaches others to gain a condescending stance: behind her reproach against the “rotten man” hides a self-depreciation—she has no other goodness than money to attract men.

The reproach against “rotten man” then transforms into Ch’i-ch’iao’s universal maxim and principle of actions. She believes she could penetrate the core of men despite their opaque faces or bodies and becomes obsessive about exposing men’s masks and precluding their tricks. Her wholehearted commitment to the blanket statement, in fact, bespeaks her psychological imbalance. And from the footbinding episode onwards, Ch’i-ch’iao relentlessly makes efforts to protect the authority of her maxim and goes so far as to change the reality in its favor. The two layers, both psychological imbalance and behavioral fanaticism, fill in the substance of her madness, which, in the first half of the story, is only limited to the framework of social impropriety.

Concurrent to the maxim on rotten man is her perception of endangered woman and suspicion of the “rotten” daughter. On the one hand, her blood tie with Ch’ang-an and the latter’s incoming wealth gives her the intuition that the same fate of the rich woman endangered by money hunters would fall on Ch’ang-an as well, which then, in turn, sparks her sympathy as a woman and worry as a mother, however little that could be. On the other hand, Ch’ang-an’s ambiguous position as both an insider and a to-be-outsider arouses her

suspicion that Ch'ang-an might be a “rotten” daughter who would be as deceptive as the rotten man and ally with male outsiders to cheat her.

The key of footbinding is to acquire the insurance that Ch'ang-an would not cheat and would fulfill her promise of keeping distance from man and keeping guard on money. Firstly, the footbinding is an effort to shorten the temporal chain between Ch'ang-an's promise and its actual discharge, because deforming Ch'ang-an's feet restricts her mobility, decreases her possibility of mixing with men, and thus partially realizes Ch'i-ch'iao's will. Moreover, footbinding, as a permanent corporeal deformity, leaves the trace of the promised will and would repetitively remind Ch'ang-an to fulfill it.

The insurance Ch'i-ch'iao acquires, thus, is not a linguistic clarification of Ch'ang-an's voluntary will, but a coercion exercised via bodily deformity. That is to say, Ch'i-ch'iao is not interested in Ch'ang-an's true will, but whether the outcome in real life would satisfy her. The footbinding, then, in one act, satisfies Ch'i-ch'iao on two other levels other than being the receiver of the promise—the levels of being the punisher and the parent. By punishing Ch'ang-an's past faults and her possible faults in the future, Ch'i-ch'iao propels Ch'ang-an to act according to the “right” maxim and accentuate Ch'i-ch'iao's authority as both the maxim-maker and the parent. And I term all these levels as *deyi*: the achievement of Ch'i-ch'iao's own purpose (*yitu*); the acquisition of the insurance for the promised will (*yizhi*); and the acquisition of contentment (*manyi*) as a result of the heightened authority and elevated self-esteem.

I chose the footbinding episode as the entrance to my identification with Ch'i-ch'iao because of its often overlooked significance. The footbinding episode is the beginning of Ch'ang-an as Ch'i-ch'iao's double. From it onwards, the mother and daughter

gradually grow similar in physical appearance, personality, lack of oral discharge, and most importantly, their fate of love. With footbinding as the beginning, Ch'i-ch'iao starts to interpret and change reality in favor of her maxim for more than a dozen years. She either interprets Ch'ang-an's male courtiers as rotten men or decreases Ch'ang-an's sexual appeal to deter her courtiers. Her mad obsession with applying her maxim to her daughter's case in the end originates from her crushed self-esteem. The suitable application would demonstrate the correctness of her maxim, and further attribute her romantic failure to the rotten man instead of herself. On the contrary, the possibility of Ch'ang-an's happy marriage, that is to say, the unsuitable application, and the imminent departure of the double, would expose her to the fact that she herself is to blame for her love tragedy and threaten her crushed self-esteem once more. Thus, the footbinding becomes the prototype of Ch'i-ch'iao's malevolent endeavors in the later story to destroy Ch'ang-an's possible marriages; and her final resort, a most evil lie to Shih-fang, spells the full realization of her maxim to Ch'ang-an because after that Ch'ang-an's fate is finally sealed as a rich woman without true love. Together, the two episodes connect each other and form a circle.

Ch'i-ch'iao's story, therefore, is a story about self-esteem. It reveals how social circumstances could crush a proud self-esteem into an impoverished state and how the crushed self then fanatically pursues satisfaction and elevation of self-esteem. The rule of thumb "the former eaten now eats" thus only points to the systematic mechanism of identity shift without digging into the individual details that fill the systematic change. Consequent to the self-esteem crisis, Ch'i-ch'iao is dominated by a self-centric order throughout the story. Apart from merely shunning pain and approaching pleasure—a basic instinct of animals, she also calculates pain and pleasure, compares her pain and pleasure with others,

and takes the outcome of calculation and comparison as the basis of her actions. Just look at these words: “‘How can I help myself?’ Ch’i-ch’iao said. ‘The whole family tread[s] me down . . .’” (192). “Even if she had him wrong there, could he have suffered as much for her as she did for him” (201)?

Under such a condition, even Ch’i-ch’iao’s most motherly (“motherly” in a caring, protective, and kind way) motives are tinged with selfishness. Thus, her maternal protection of Ch’ang-an ends up mixed with the intention of seeking satisfaction of self-esteem. The image of the mother as the sun, the tree, the womb, the haven, the selfless, the protective, the generous sung in Binging’s (1900–1999) works becomes a colorful illusion never concretized in Ch’i-ch’iao’s story. She also deviates from the mothers under the pen of Lu Yin (1898–1934), Feng Yuanjun, and Su Xuelin (1897–1999), who still convey their caring and kind aspects though they are spokeswomen of “feudal” patriarchy. We might subsume her under the category of the widowed mother, but the narrative of a strong, resilient, devoted widow mother exemplified by Mencius’s mother is utilized but eroded by Ch’i-ch’iao at the same time. The image of the mother Ch’i-ch’iao therefore defies any easy presumption based on tradition, ideal, and family role and thereby propels us to scrutinize the questions related to humanity. Even so, the inconsistency between the normal mother in readers’ imagination and the mother in the story makes some readers uneasy about Ch’i-ch’iao’s behaviors and easily attribute the uncommon motherhood to the evil feudal system or madness—proper excuses for abnormality.

Even though Chang herself claimed that “my fiction, with the exception of Cao Qiqiao [T’sao Ch’i-ch’iao] in ‘The Golden Cangue,’ is populated with equivocal characters,” her depiction of such an extreme character is still marked by her typical

“equivocal contrast.” Chang herself compares her “equivocal contrast” to “the conjunction of scallion green with peach red”, something not so intense as “the matching of bright red with deep green” (Chang, “Writing of One’s Own” 17). Most of the characters in her fiction, therefore, are “ordinary,” without either heroic feats or tragedy; they belong to the majority. Their personality is also equivocal: they have truth underneath hypocrisy and simplicity beneath frivolity (19). Compared to them, Ch’i-ch’iao inevitably appears too “intense” and “extreme.” However, although Chang calls Ch’i-ch’iao extreme, she herself when depicting this character still adds something equivocal, and the consequent literary product in fact does not deviate from her own writing style. Thus, this character is not starkly evil: in her personality, there is a mixture of the wretched, the abominable, the ugly, the beautiful, and even some tints of warmth. She is of course not “ordinary” human, but she is still human. Such an extreme dotted with and developed from the equivocal hence turns out to be more realistic and more as a “revelation”. A revelation of humanity that is so naked and so harsh that we hesitate to believe.

Though I appealed to identification with Ch’i-ch’iao in the Introduction, that is, the possibility of completely limiting my perspective to that of Ch’i-ch’iao’s, this thesis at most achieved a relatively close observation of the literary text. Despite the facts that I used “traditional” instead of “feudal” to eschew a total division between past and present, and that I tried to explore the logical development of Ch’i-ch’iao’s madness, I cannot avoid viewing Ch’i-ch’iao story from a modern and rational stance: I have it clear in mind that the foot-binding per se, and Ch’i-ch’iao’s justification are anachronistic, and I assessed her crazy pursuit of self-esteem with critical perspectives. In other words, trance, the temporary total identification with god of priests, seems to be limited to mysterious time and site and

inapplicable to a story clearly with educational values. But the question still haunts me: as a reader, or even as a writer, how and how far shall we approach an evil, morbid, unwelcome character or story? Shall we only look at them from different angles, just as a Chinese connoisseur would do to a mountain with multiple facets of beauty, or shall we step further and become part of the mountain? Yet even though we take the step, how far shall we proceed?

Glossary of Chinese Names, Terms, and Titles of Works

The 1911 Revolution 辛亥革命	<i>Fusheng liuji</i> 浮生六記
Ah-tou/Adou 阿斗	<i>fuxing/fudao</i> 婦行/婦道
Ban Zhao 班昭	<i>fuyan</i> 婦言
<i>baoban hunyin</i> 包辦婚姻	<i>gailiang jiao</i> 改良脚
Bingxin 冰心	Guangxu 光緒
<i>Bu chanzu hui</i> 不纏足會	<i>guixiu</i> 閨秀
<i>Bu zhenkong lun</i> 不真空論	<i>guxiang</i> 故鄉
Cao Xueqin 曹雪芹	<i>Honglou meng</i> 紅樓夢
The Central Kingdom 中原	The Hundred Days' Reform 百日維新
<i>de</i> 得	Ji 濟
<i>deyiwangxing</i> 得意忘形	Jia Baoyu 賈寶玉
<i>doukou nianhua</i> 豆蔻年華	Jia Rong 賈蓉
Du Mu 杜牧	<i>kang</i> 炕
Eileen Chang/Zhang Ailing 張愛玲	Kang Guangren 康廣仁
Feng Yuanjun 馮沅君	Kang Youwei 康有為
<i>fude</i> 婦德	<i>lao Shanghai</i> 老上海
<i>fugong</i> 婦功	<i>li</i> 禮
Fu Lei 傅雷	Li Bai 李白
<i>furong</i> 婦容	<i>lian'ai zhishang</i> 戀愛至上

Li Hanzhang 李瀚章	<i>qi</i> 氣 (vital energies; air)
Li Hongzhang 李鴻章	The Qing dynasty 清朝
<i>Liji</i> 禮記	Sengzhao 僧肇
<i>lijiao</i> 禮教	<i>Shangshi</i> 傷逝
Li Jingfang 李經方	Shen Bao/Shun Pao 申報
Liang Qichao 梁啟超	Shen Fu 沈復
Lin Daiyu 林黛玉	Su Xuelin 蘇雪林
<i>Liubian jilüe</i> 柳邊紀略	<i>suzu</i> 素足
Liu Shan 劉禪	Tan Sitong 譚嗣同
Liu Yiqing 劉義慶	Tang Yisuo 湯頤瑣
Lu Xun 魯迅	<i>tianzu</i> 天足
Lu Yin 盧隱	<i>Tianzu hui</i> 天足會
<i>Lüxing</i> 旅行	<i>wai</i> 外
<i>manyi</i> 滿意	<i>Wanguo gongbao/Wan Kwoh Kung Pao</i>
The May Fourth Movement 五四運動	萬國公報
Mrs. Alicia Little 立德樂夫人	<i>Wei-Jin</i> 魏晉
<i>nei</i> 內	<i>xianyuan</i> 賢媛
<i>neiyán buchū, waiyán buru</i>	Xie Xuan 謝玄
內言不出，外言不入	
<i>nü zhong mingshi</i> 女中名士	Xie Daoyun 謝道韞

Xin xiaoshuo 新小說

zhuzhi ci 竹枝詞

Yan Xishan 閻錫山

ziyou lian'ai 自由戀愛

yang 養

yangui 烟鬼

yangyao 洋藥

Yaoniang 宵娘

yi 夷

yuanfang 遠方

Yupian 玉篇

zhang 帳

Zhang Xuan 張玄

Zhang Zijing 張子靜

zhen 真

zhong 種

Zhuge Liang 諸葛亮

zhulin qixian 竹林七賢

Zhu Qianfu 朱謙甫

Zhuangzi/Chuang Tzu 莊子

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