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WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

Department of Asian and Near Eastern Languages and Literatures

ENVISIONING MORALITY IN TIMES OF DYNASTIC CHANGE

- A STUDY OF *PIPA JI* AND *TAOHUA SHAN*

by

JIN Huan

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Part 1 Foreword

From both historical and cultural perspectives, the emphasis placed on morality became increasingly remarkable during late imperial China, especially because morality has always been related to other important topics such as history and identity. At the junctures of dynastic change, the questions of how to establish moral standards and maintain moral correctness in periods of turmoil seriously demanded the literati's contemplation, and among all the moral issues that concerned late imperial literati, loyalty became the most pressing one.

This thesis explores the problem of the construction of morality, and I focus on two plays in which the idea of morality is presented in complicated ways: the late Yuan play *Pipa ji* 琵琶记 (*The Lute*) which primarily circulated during Ming and Qing Dynasties, and the early Qing play *Taohua shan* 桃花扇 (*The Peach Blossom Fan*) which deals with the late Ming period. Though created at the end of Yuan as a *Nanxi* 南戏 play, *Pipa ji* was not only performed broadly, but was also printed as an *antou ju* 案头剧 (script on the desk) for reading during Ming and Qing, which function is similar to *chuanqi* plays in late imperial China, such as *Taohua shan*. Moreover, Gao Ming 高明 (1305-1369) and Kong Shangren 孔尚任 (1648-1718), respectively the author of *Pipa ji* and *Taohua shan*, are both highly educated literati, therefore from these plays we can also examine how late Imperial literati's thoughts on morality are reflected in literary works.

Pipa ji was celebrated as a morality play during Ming and Qing, and *Taohua shan* has been one of the most famous romantic and historical plays ever since it was produced. In this thesis, I primarily treat these two plays as texts, and I try to answer how ideas of morality are constructed in them by analyzing their construction of characters, structural designs, as well as narrative perspectives. In both plays, I notice anxieties engendered by individual's awareness of the crisis of the original value system. Therefore I inquire how Gao Ming and Kong Shangren deal with these feelings of anxiety in their works. Moreover, I situate these two plays in the time periods in which they were produced, that is, the end of the Yuan Dynasty and the beginning of the Qing Dynasty, and discuss how different historical periods shape the way morality was represented. Finally, I try to link the way they construct morality in their works with persistent human concerns about sincerity and moral correctness.

Part 2 *Pipa ji*

1.1 Introduction to *Pipa ji*

As it has been for many literary classics, the establishment of *Pipa ji*'s status was neither simple nor smooth. While defining *Pipa ji*'s position in theatre history, the Ming literary critics were bothered most by its problematic discordant musicality as well as its "too refined" language style. However, the most influential evaluation on *Pipa ji* during Ming and Qing times turned out to be esteem for its promotion of morality: "utter loyalty and sheer filial piety" (*quanzhong quanxiao* 全忠全孝). For example, Hu Yinglin (1551-1602) compared *Pipa ji* to Du Fu's 杜甫 (712-770) poetry because of its concentration on morality and ethics.¹ Mao Shengshan (fl. ar. 1735) compared *Pipa ji* to poems in the *feng* 风 or "Airs" section of *Shijing* (*The Book of Songs*).²

Yet among all the comments about *Pipa ji*, what interests me most is a frequently-mentioned anecdote in local histories and *biji* 笔记 which endows this play with much orthodox authority. It is said that after reading *Pipa ji*, Ming Taizu Zhu Yuanzhang commented, "For the common people, the Four Books (*sishu* 四书) and Five Classics (*wujing* 五经) are as indispensable as food grains, while delicacies

¹ Hu Yinglin 胡应麟, "Shaoshi shanfang bicong" 少室山房笔丛, in *Pipaji Ziliao Huibian* 琵琶记资料汇编, ed. Hou Baipeng 侯百朋, (Beijing: Shumu wenxian chubanshe, 1989), 124.

² Mao Shengshan 毛声山, "Introduction to Huixiang diqi caizi shujuan zhiyi" 绘像第七才子书卷之一, *Ibid.*, 275.

like this (*Pipa ji*) are indeed necessary among ceremonial dishes” (四书、五经在民间，譬之五谷不可无，此如珍馐之属，俎豆间亦不可少).³

Leaving aside the issue whether this comment is historically true or simply made up, its existence in many works conveys to us important messages: First, one emphasis in this anecdote is the glorification of the ethical function of *Pipa ji*. By comparing *Pipa ji* to *zu dou* 俎豆 which are meat containers used in sacrificial ceremonies as well as feasts - always referring to ancient ritual performance, the recorders of this story laud the play's moral function in the Confucian value system. Second, such a comparison between *Pipa ji* and the Confucian ritual performance categorizes this play as one that appeals to the elite more than to common people, which point can also be told from the frequency that scenes from the play appear in Ming and Qing drama anthologies.⁴ Third, the role of the commentator is designated as the founder of the Ming Dynasty, who possesses the authority to set up standards for every aspect of social life while establishing a new empire. Hence the speaker's identity justifies the unquestionable “political and moral correctness” of the quoted remark about *Pipa ji*. In sum, this anecdote about *Pipa ji* and the Emperor writes *Pipa ji* into an indisputable morally correct play which was particularly appreciated by elite literati.

³ This story is recorded in many places, such as Huang Puyan 黄溥言's *Xianzhong jingu lu* 闲中今古录, *Ruian xianzhi* 瑞安县志 during the Jiajing Period, as well as *Wenzhou fuzhi* 温州府志 during the Kangxi Period. There are different versions of this anecdote, and the piece I have cited here is from *Wenzhou fuzhi*. See Hou Baipeng, *Pipa ji ziliao huibian*, 47.

⁴ Wang Zhifeng 王志峰, "Ming Qing shiqi *Pipa ji* de chuanbo" 明清时期琵琶记的传播, *Wenyi yanjiu* 文艺研究, (August 2008): 86-92.

Nonetheless, is the claim of *quanzhong quanxiao* 全忠全孝 unquestionably justified in the *Pipa ji* play? I don't think so. In the following pages, I will primarily focus on the character of Cai Bojie and unravel this so-called *quanzhong quanxiao* story. I first analyze how Gao Ming shaped a filial image for Cai Bojie by adapting the original version of the Cai Bojie story. Then I explore the "loyal" aspect of Cai Bojie and question Gao Ming's success in constructing this side of Cai. I suggest that the moral theme in *Pipa ji* is so complicated that this play can even be read into a narrative against filial piety and loyalty.

Moreover, there is a conflict between the *quanzhong quanxiao* 全忠全孝 claim and the actual violations of this claim in the text, which exposes a paradox between the ideas of filial piety and loyalty in the Confucian value system of the time. Having observed such a paradox, however, Gao Ming intentionally emphasized his declaration of "*quanzhong quanxiao*", and I believe Gao Ming's gesture originates from his identity as a late Yuan intellectual.⁵ By placing Gao Ming in his historical context, I argue that precisely because Gao Ming personally experienced the trauma of the Yuan collapse, insisting on Confucian moral ideals was his means to resist uncertainty about his moral identity as an intellectual. Yet Gao Ming intentionally avoided dwelling upon the issue of loyalty but concentrated instead on filial piety because of his disillusion over the fall of the Yuan. I conclude that as an inconsonant

⁵ Most scholars agree that Gao Ming started his creation of *Pipa ji* after his seclusion, which begins from 1358. Around the year when Ming regime was founded (1368), *Pipa ji* was already being circulated.

moral play, *Pipa ji* unveils the late Yuan literati's disillusionment and visions of morality during that turbulent time.

1.2 Rewriting Cai Bojie's Story

The play begins at the time when Cai Bojie, our male protagonist, and Zhao Wuniang have been married for two months. It happens that the court restarts the civil service examination to recruit capable intellectuals; but concerned for his aged parents, Cai Bojie refuses to leave home to participate in the examination. However, his father Cai Gong forces him to take the examination in order to glorify their family and ancestors. Unable to withstand Cai Gong's demand and their neighbor Zhangda Gong's persuasion, Cai Bojie heads for the capital and ranks first in the examination. To his surprise, disregarding his rejection, the Emperor mandates a marriage between him and Miss Niu, the daughter of the Prime Minister.

Meanwhile, Cai Bojie's hometown is plagued by famines. Though Wuniang withstands all hardships and labors industriously to support her in-laws, both of them die during a famine. At the same time, having been detained in the capital, Cai constantly thinks of his parents and Wuniang, yet he dares not reveal this to his present wife. Nonetheless, one day when Cai Bojie is venting his longing and melancholy for his original family, Miss Niu overhears his words. After learning the truth, she informs her father, who is moved by his daughter and summons Cai Gong's parents and wife to the capital.

On the other hand, after Cai's parents pass away, Wuniang cuts and sells her

hair to earn the sum of money necessary to bury them, collects soil with her dress, and builds their tomb with her own hands. She brings the portraits of Cai's parents and a lute to the capital to search for her husband. Upon arrival at the capital, she goes into a temple to beg for food, and places Cai's parents' portraits in front of the Buddha statue. Coincidentally Cai also comes to the temple to worship and pray for the safety of his parents on their journey to the capital. Seeing his parents' portraits, he brings them back to Niu's place and hangs them in his room. In search of Cai Bojie, Wuniang comes to Niu's place, and upon realizing that Niu's daughter is indeed a soft-hearted woman, she tells her their story. Miss Niu asks Wuniang to go to Cai's room and write a poem on his parents' portraits, which has implications on Wuniang's experiences.

When Cai comes back, he sees the poem on the portrait. Then Wuniang shows up and tells him what happened to their family. Filled with grief, Cai immediately resigns from his position so that he can return to his hometown to mourn for his deceased parents. Later the emperor issues a statement to praise the Cai family, the message of which is conveyed by Prime Minister Niu.

In Chinese literature, abandoning one's first wife and marrying a second one who has a more celebrated background is not an uncommon choice for young scholars after they have succeeded in the civil service examination. In fact, in the original version of this story, it is Cai Bojie's own choice to betray his parents and Wuniang. What is worse, on seeing Wuniang again in the capital, Cai makes his horse trample

her, which leads to Wuniang's death. Finally, conforming with the classic formula of retribution, Cai is killed by thunder, which is a typical ending for evil characters in Chinese literature.⁶

Though this anecdotal story cannot be dated precisely, it seems that during the Song Dynasty, this story line was already well known among common people. A poem composed by the famous Southern Song poet Lu You 陆游 (1125-1210) illustrates the popularity of this story: "Who can control his fame after death? /All over the village I hear the song of Cai Zhonglang (Cai Bojie)" 身后是非谁管得，满村听唱蔡中郎。⁷ Other than telling us that the story about Cai was on everyone's tongue, Lu You also implies that by Lu You's time Cai Bojie's reputation is tarnished by this widely-known anecdotal story. Hence it is rather understandable that Confucian intellectuals such as Lu You and Gao Ming, who shared similar aspirations to serve the state and same concerns about their reputation after death, would defend him against such an unjust judgment in popular culture, which is a possible reason for Gao Ming to rewrite Cai Bojie's story.⁸ Then the question arises: how and why did

⁶ "Luoluo qiang" 啰啰腔 in *Xikao* 戏考, see Lan Fan 蓝凡, *Gao Zecheng he Pipa ji* 高则诚和琵琶记, (Shanghai: shanghai guji chubanshe, 1989), 26.

⁷ Lu You 陆游, "Xiaozhou youjincun shezhou bugui" 小舟游近村舍舟步归, in Hou, *Pipaji ziliao huibian*, 63. In Fan Ye's 范晔 (398-445) *History of the Later Han Dynasty* (Hou Han shu 后汉书), there is a "Biography of Cai Yong (Cai Bojie)". According to this material and other peripheral records, the actual historical character of Cai—a filial, upright, and devoted administrator had nothing in common with the Cai Bojie in the anecdote except for the name. Fan Ye 范晔, "Hou Han shu" 后汉书 [History of the late Han Dynasty], Ibid., 60.

⁸ This viewpoint can be seen in many Ming *biji* 笔记, for example, Tian Yiheng 田艺蘅 (fl. ar. 1570), "Liuqing rizha" 留青日札; Yao Fu 姚福 (Ming), "Qingxi xiabi" 青溪暇笔; Xu Wei 徐渭 (1521-1593), "Nanci xulu" 南词叙录. See Hou Baipeng, *Pipaji Ziliao Huibian*. Another popular speculation about Gao Ming's motivation of creating *Pipa ji* is that Gao Ming is satirizing one of his friends who had an experience similar to that of Cai Bojie in *Pipa ji*. Yet even so, Gao Ming's labeling of Cai Bojie as "quanzhong quanxiao" 全忠全孝 is undeniable.

Gao Ming create a moral model based on a character notorious for his disgraceful behavior?

Comparing *Pipa ji* and the earlier version of the Cai Bojie story, we find that except for the ending, some major plot elements remain the same in *Pipa ji*. Since abandoning one's first wife, remarrying a second wife to climb up the social ladder, and allowing one's parents to starve to death are judged wicked conduct by any moral standard, the only possible way for Gao Ming to shape Cai Bojie into an acceptable character is to win sympathy from the audience for Cai's actions. And in *Pipa ji*, I would argue, Gao Ming made many efforts to achieve the goal of legitimizing Cai's unfilial behavior.

On the one hand, Gao Ming made some specific changes to the actions taken by Cai Bojie and the circumstances he is facing to demonstrate his filial piety. I argue that some major changes Gao Ming made on Cai Bojie's actions are the foundation for the emergence of a radical new personality for Cai. At the very beginning when Cai Bojie shows up, he clearly states his ideal, "Carry out filial piety in your own life and leave the reward to Heaven".⁹ Later on in the play, although limited in number, Cai's several attempts indeed illustrate his attachment to his parents and thirst to return home. First, he tries to persuade his father to exempt him from taking the examination; secondly, thinking of Wuniang and his parents, he refuses the Prime

⁹ Gao Ming 高明, *Yuanben pipaji jiaozhu & Nankemeng ji jiaozhu* 元本琵琶记校注·南柯梦记校注, ed. Qian Nanyang 钱南扬 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2009), 5; Jean Mulligan, trans. *Pipa-chi [The Lute]*, (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1980), 34.

Minister's proposal for his daughter to marry him after being ranked as the first in the examination and awarded an official position; thirdly, he refuses to take the post and begs the emperor to let him return home; finally, he tries to send a message back to his hometown while trapped in the capital. These scenes of Cai Bojie's resistance highlight the subsequent contradiction between Cai and the external power exerted on him, making his later psychological moods reasonable for the audience.

Indeed, throughout *Pipa ji*, Cai almost has no control over his fate in the sense that he is always forced to take action, and almost every step he takes is against his genuine desire to serve parents. After *Pipa ji* was performed, the character Cai Bojie became famous as "a victim of the three refusals of parents and ruler".¹⁰ All those in positions having power over him, namely his father, Prime Minister Niu, and the emperor, refuse his petition to return to his parents, and these rejections finally result in Cai Bojie's failure to fulfill his filial responsibility. In this way, Cai can be exempted from being accused of performing "selfish" behavior, since it is not his conscious choice which has led to the tragic end of his parents, and all that has happened to his family has been against his original intention. Actually, the sufferings of Cai's parents in *Pipa ji* are not much different from what they were in the earlier version of Cai's story, yet the people who are responsible for the tragedy are different. In *Pipa ji*, the responsibility for Cai Gong and Cai Po's death is largely shifted to Cai's superiors, that is, his father, Prime Minister Niu and the emperor, so that now

¹⁰ Gao Ming, *Yuanben pipaji jiaozhu*, 215; Jean Mulligan. trans. *The Lute*, 269.

Cai could be pardoned for his absence when his role as a son was most needed.

Aside from purposefully focusing on Cai's actions and his external circumstances, Gao Ming made efforts to elaborate Cai's monologues to reveal his internal thoughts and longings which show his sincere concerns about his family. As I mentioned above, there is a contradiction between Cai Bojie and his surrounding environment, which actually provides an advantageous situation for the development of Cai's character. Indeed, the tougher the demand Cai receives from his superiors, the more painfully he should suffer as a filial son, which may presumably evoke more sympathy from the audience.

Considering Gao Ming's frequent depiction of Cai's internal psychological states, there is no doubt that he was aware of this effect. Ever since Cai Bojie's departure from home, he never cheers up, and his heart is always filled with reluctance, worries (for his parents), regrets (over leaving home) and anxieties (because of his failed attempts to obtain news about his parents). For example, in the party scene when officials and newly ranked students get together to celebrate, Cai Bojie sings, "As cups are passed, my heart's stricken by its old pain. The wine may be sweet—but how hard to swallow! They—all alone with no one to offer even pulse and water; I—here amid the clamor of passing cups".¹¹ After marrying Miss Niu, Cai sighs, "How was this ever my desire? For my parents are all alone. How sad that

¹¹ Gao Ming, *Yuanben Pipaji jiaozhu*, 63, Jean Mulligan. trans., *The Lute*, 95.

surrounded by laughter and talk, the bridegroom is unable to see his loved ones' tears".¹² Apart from these lines, similar monologues of Cai Bojie can be seen in almost every scene after he leaves home. For instance, scene 7 when Cai is on his way to the capital, scene 12 when he refuses the marriage, scene 15 when he is rejected by the emperor, as well as scenes 23, 27, 29 when he is in Niu's mansion.¹³ Whenever this character appears, he regrets and sighs. Though sometimes these depictions give us the impression that Cai is cowardly and irresolute, his utterances portray a more filial image of Cai Bojie.

1.3 *Quanzhong quanxiao* 全忠全孝: A Successfully Rewritten Story?

However, has Gao Ming succeeded at nullifying the unjust charges against the historical character Cai Bojie? Has Cai Bojie been accepted as a filial son ever since *Pipa ji* was first staged?

Apparently, negative opinions about Cai did not disappear after they were rewritten in *Pipa ji*. In the preface to the play printed by Ling Mengchu 凌濛初 (1580-1644), Ling wrote about his argument with his guest concerning *Pipa ji*,

Bojie is treated tremendously unjustly. If able to rise again from his tomb, he would surely be furious. How could that not be so? According to *Pipa ji*, 'truly, a tale without moral teaching, no matter how finely written, is useless'. However, it is said that Bojie leaves his parents without a look back, abandons his wife to remarry. All of these violate morality, what do they have to do with mere manners? 伯喈受屈十朋冤，九原如可作，怒气定冲天。岂不信哉！本《记》云，不关风化体，纵好也徒然。又谓伯喈弃亲不顾，弃妻别娶，

¹² Gao Ming, *Yuanben Pipaji jiaozhu*, 63, Jean Mulligan, trans., *The Lute*, 150.

¹³ According to the scene divisions in Gao Ming, *Yuanben Pipaji jiaozhu*.

事戮彝伦，何关风化。¹⁴

By focusing on what actually has happened to Cai's parents and Wuniang, Ling Mengchu denies the filial image Gao Ming imposes on Cai Bojie. In Hou Fangyu's 侯方域 (1618-1654) *Zhuanghuitang wenji* 壮悔堂文集, he recorded how Li Xiangjun 李香君 enjoined him when they were about to part. She sang a song from *Pipa ji* for Hou and said,

Talented and famous, a young scholar like you is not at all inferior compared with Zhonglang (Cai Bojie). (However,) Zhonglang's scholarship cannot compensate for his (improper) behavior. Though the *Pipa* songs being circulated today are untrustworthy, it is true that Zhonglang's serving Dong Zhuo (d. 192) cannot be covered up. You are bold, generous, inhabited, yet frustrated. Who can tell when we can meet again, and I hope you can stand on dignity, without failing (the intention of) my singing *Pipa* songs. I will not sing this again for you.

公子才名文藻，雅不減中郎，中郎學不補行，今《琵琶》所傳詞固妄然，嘗昵董卓不可掩也。公子豪迈不羈，又失意，此去相見未可期，願終自愛，無妄妾所歌《琵琶》詞也，妾亦不復歌也。¹⁵

Compared with Ling Mengchu's remark which still focuses on the perspective of filial piety, Li Xiangjun shifts her viewpoint to the issue of loyalty. Though the credibility of the assumption that *Pipa ji* was written to satirize the historical figure Cai Bojie's forced association with the traitor Dong Zhuo is meager, I emphasize Li's reading *Pipa ji* into a story in which the protagonist's unfilial behavior alludes to the historical act of disloyalty. Considering the context of Li and Hou's separation at the dynastic change, Li's remark is both serious and meaningful. Her connecting

¹⁴ Ling Mengchu 凌濛初, "Pipa ji (4 volumes) xu" 《琵琶记》四卷序, in Hou, *Pipaji ziliao huibian*, 151.

¹⁵ Hou Fangyu 侯方域, "Zhuanghuitang wenji" 壮悔堂文集, *Ibid.*, 163.

disloyalty to impiety, I would say, indicates a crucial understanding about the relation between loyalty and filial piety in 17th century Confucian thinking, in which loyalty and filial piety are considered as two sides of a coin.

Now let us reconsider the “*quanzhong*” claim in *Pipa ji*. Is Cai’s loyalty fully manifested in *Pipa ji*? I don’t think so, since Cai shows very little serious concern about the state or his official career. In fact, Cai’s reluctance to take an official post is underscored by Gao Ming to represent his longing for family. For instance, he complains to Miss Niu,

You say that I have clothes to wear... I can’t move freely in those purple gauze robes; I can’t step lightly in those black court boots. You say that I have food to eat... I grab a few mouthful, then rush in a panic off to work; Drinking a single cup of wine while I tremble that I might offend the law, and all I want is to return to see my parents.¹⁶

Judged by any standard, Cai can hardly be called a dedicated official. Then why does Gao Ming so confidently announce Cai’s loyalty?

Above all, indeed, Cai has physically remained in the capital as an official despite the fact that his reluctance renders his loyalty dubious. Yet if we concede that Cai Bojie’s physical presence does represent his loyalty, a more serious question will arise. As Ling Mengchu mercilessly pointed out, after all, Cai’s absence is the direct reason for his parents’ deaths (e.g., if he didn’t leave home, the food distributed during the famine would not have been snatched by others from Wuniang). If we calculate the actual contribution and consequences of Cai Bojie’s acts, we will come

¹⁶ Gao Ming, *Yuanben pipaji jiaozhu*, 63; Jean Mulligan. trans., *The Lute*, 214.

to a disturbing conclusion: Cai's physical "loyal" presence in the capital is at the expense of the death of his parents. Then can we still call Cai a true filial son? If we can, by what standard?

It seems that answers to these questions can be found in *Classic of Family Reverence* (*Xiaojing* 孝经), where it is stated, "distinguishing yourself and walking the proper way (*dao* 道) in the world; raising your name high for posterity and thereby bringing esteem to your father and mother—it is in these things that family reverence finds its consummation. This family reverence, then, begins in service to your parents, continues in service to your lord, and culminates in distinguishing yourself in the world" 立身行道，扬名于后世，以显父母，孝之终也。夫孝始于事亲，中于事君，终于立身。¹⁷ Connecting filial piety with loyalty, this statement argues that the higher form of filial piety is embodied as service to the ruler. Hence Cai Bojie's "loyal" behavior justifies his absence from his parents. However, when the situation is pushed to its extreme in *Pipa ji*, there emerges an exposure of the paradoxical relationship between filial piety and loyalty within the Confucian ethical system: is it acceptable for one to sacrifice the lives of his parents in order to be loyal? Is it reasonable to replace one's family obligation with that of the state, and under what circumstances?

¹⁷ Henry Rosemont and Roger T. Ames, *The Chinese Classic of Family Reverence: a Philosophical Translation of the Xiaojing* (Honolulu, HA: University of Hawaii Press, 2009), 105. *Xiaojing* 孝经: a piece of classic in Confucianism produced around the dynastic change of Qin and Han. In this work, the meaning and practice of filial piety in Confucian discourse is well defined, and also, the relation between exercising filiality and loyalty is demonstrated.

Though having observed the paradox between filial piety and loyalty, Gao Ming did not go further in disclosing the irreconcilability of this paradox in Confucian moral discourse. Neither was he willing to negate either filial piety or loyalty, which movement could also be a threat to Confucian value system. If we bear these facts in mind, Cai's neighbor Zhang Dagong's surprisingly ready forgiveness for Cai Bojie on hearing the messenger's explanation is comprehensible. Having witnessed what had happened to Cai's family, the character Zhang Dagong in *Pipa ji* is one who has almost spotless moral conduct. Though he has urged Cai to take the examination, this action can be compensated by his good deeds such as giving Wuniang food to support her parents-in-law during the famine, burying Cai Gong and Cai Po after their deaths, as well as taking care of their tombs after Wuniang leaves. Hence Zhang Dagong's judgment on Cai is more convincing to the audience both because of his uprightness and his role as witness. Having originally despised and accused Cai, however, Zhang pardons him with this conclusion, "He was a victim of the three refusals of parents and ruler. Seen in this way, though thrice unfilial, he is not to blame".¹⁸

Then whose faults are the "thrice unfilial"? The responsibility for the death of Cai's parents, as I explained above, is shifted to Cai Gong, Prime Minister Niu, and the emperor. This imputation of the bearers of responsibility, however, cannot be carried further. It is not only because of the danger of reproaching those who have superior status in Confucian social hierarchy, but also due to the indisputability of the

¹⁸ Gao Ming, *Yuanben pipaji jiaozhu*, 215; Jean Mulligan. trans., *The Lute*, 269.

insistence of Cai's reputation as a loyal subject in Confucian terms. Zhang Dagong chooses to forgive, and the end of his reproach leaves the legitimacy of Confucian value system untouched, which betrays Gao Ming's position while facing the paradox between filial piety and loyalty. Instead of openly casting doubt on these ethical values or even on Confucianism, Gao Ming was determined to pin a "*quanzhong quanxiao*" label on *Pipa ji*, no matter how arduous the process of constructing such a story would be.

1.4 Gao Ming as a late Yuan (1329-1368) Intellectual

Gao Ming's supportive attitude towards Confucianism, however, is not only rooted in his identity as a Confucian intellectual. The end of Yuan Dynasty, I would argue, exerted a great influence on Gao Ming's reflection on the issues of loyalty and filial piety, two essential concepts in Confucianism. In this part, I will first introduce the historical backdrop of late Yuan Dynasty, and then examine the situation for Confucian literati at that time. After drawing an outline of the historical context, I look into Gao Ming's specific life experiences. Finally, I explore the reason why Gao Ming chose to pursue the "*quanzhong quanxiao*" ideal by emphasizing the filial aspect of Cai Bojie rather than portraying a subject utterly loyal to the emperor.

As it has been for almost all dynasties, it is hard to decide from which date the Yuan Dynasty began to fall. Yet I agree with most historians that 1329 was a

watershed in Yuan history.¹⁹ In the *Yuan Dynastic History* (*Yuan shi*, 元史), we see that the late Yuan period was strikingly filled with disasters and chaos. Countless famines happened in various places, and the frequently appearing phrase “people suffered from great famine” (民大饥) conveys an anxious feeling throughout society, which can also be seen in *Pipa ji*'s depiction. Several times, the Yellow River breached its dikes, and finally shifted its course, creating widespread havoc and ruin. Those famines and floods, however, were merely a fraction of the problems the Yuan government had to face. By the late Yuan, the central government was faced with financial difficulties, which was partly caused and definitely aggravated by the piratical operations led by Fang Guozhen 方国珍 (1319-1374). Also, there was a tension between the central and local government while they were handling local affairs. Moreover, the dismissal of Toghto (1314-1355, the last but two prime minister in late Yuan) finally nullified the possibility of the restoration of Yuan government.

Indeed, even during the painful decades of Yuan Dynasty decline, there were still assumptions both inside and outside of the court that with the right men in charge and the right decisions being carried out, the Yuan regime could revive itself. For historians nowadays, the fall of the Yuan regime was inevitable considering its disorders in numerous aspects. However, late Yuan literati did not necessarily think this to be so. Probably, they didn't take the Yuan's downfall for granted, and even if

¹⁹ John Dardess, "Shun-ti [Shundi] and the end of Yuan rule in China," in *Alien Regimes and Border States, 907-1368*, ch. 7, vol. 6, *The Cambridge History of China* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 105.

some of them had foreseen it, they could not know when it would happen. In many writings by late Yuan literati, aspirations for restoring the Yuan government coexist with their criticism about society. For instance, born in a distinguished Jiang'nan official family and exerted a great influence on the circle of late Yuan literati, Gu Ying 顾瑛 (1310-1369) zealously cheered for the Prime Minister Toghto's punitive expedition against Fang Guozhen, "Like thunder the sound of army shocks Huai and Si,/ furiously the spirit of war rushes to heaven./ May you soon carry his skull to show our wise Emperor,/ then the Four Seas will celebrate and sing for your success. 军声如雷震淮泗，杀气上天干斗牛。早提骷髅见明主，四海一日同歌讴".²⁰ The desire to serve the state can also be seen in famous intellectuals' works. For example, Yang Weizhen 杨维桢 (1296-1370), one of the most famous late Yuan poet explained his desire for official position to the court: "It is not that I am anxious to seek to be known, but I am eager to realize my ideals" 非急于求知也，急于伸志也.²¹ Despite these advocates, criticisms of the society and disappointment about the court are also vented by late Yuan literati: "Government levies make people suffer deeply,/ in the village the corpses of the starved have no clothes" 官府征求苦到骨，村落饿莩寒无裳",²² "Please don't blame Scholar Jia for his frequent crying,/ For long, ours has

²⁰ Gu Ying 顾瑛, "Yushan pugao" 玉山璞稿, *Congshu jicheng chubian* 丛书集成初编, vol. 2275 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985).

²¹ Yang Weizhen 杨维桢, "Shangbao xianggong shu" 上宝相公书, in *Dongwei ziji* 东维子集, *Wenyuange sikuquanshu ben* 文渊阁四库全书本, vol. 1221 (Taipei: Shangwu yinshuju, 1983).

²² Gu Ying, "Yushan pugao". Written on the Winter Solstice in 1354, when Gu Ying was serving in Jiang Zhe area as a staff officer working on military affairs.

been a nation plagued by worries” 莫怪贾生偏善哭，从来杞国最多忧”。²³ When these conflicting attitudes are reflected on late Yuan literati’s concerns and choices about their political careers, we find many of them had the experience of taking an official post and only to resign from it later. Actually, some of them even withdrew from officialdom repeatedly, which action clearly illustrates their ambivalent attitude towards the possibility of restoring the Great Yuan Empire. Having oscillated between service and reclusion, many most celebrated late Yuan literati chose to withdraw from officialdom. For example, Gu Ying, Yang Weizhen, and Zhang Yanghao 张养浩 (1269-1329) as well as Gao Ming, all went into retirement voluntarily.

As one of the late Yuan literati, Gao Ming also took the path from service to reclusion. The civil service examinations were reinstated in 1314 when he was ten. Though already famous for his talent and erudition during his youthful years, Gao Ming was unsatisfied with mere fame, “If one is not dedicated to one classic and to winning in the examinations, what would be the point of erudition ? ”人不专一经取第虽博奚为。²⁴ In the year 1345, in his forties, Gao Ming succeeded in the examinations, earned the *jinshi* degree, and started his official career. At the beginning, his work went smoothly, and it seems that he indeed made some achievement. In the local history, it is recorded that when he left his first post, people glorified him by

²³ Liu Ji 刘基, "Liu Chengyi Bo quanji" 刘诚意伯全集, in Hou, *Pipaji Ziliao Huibian*, 32.

Scholar Jia: Jia Yi 贾谊 (BC200-BC168), a talented Han intellectual who is famous for his resentment and sadness due to unfair dismissal.

²⁴ "Gao Zecheng Zhuan" 高则诚传 [Biography of Gao Zecheng], in *Ming Yongle: Rui'an xian zhi* 明·永乐《瑞安县志》, Hou, *Pipaji Ziliao Huibian*, 35.

erecting a stone tablet to him. Later, for his service at a post in Zhejiang, Gao Ming was also known for his capability and uncompromising uprightness. It was said that:

Confucian scholars applaud his [Gao Ming's] literary and artistic talent, government officials hold his rich experience in esteem ... Referring to classics and books, deciding rights and wrongs, he performs flowingly. Once rejected, he would come up to the government hall and ask to leave. 儒生称其才华，法吏推其练达...君指典册，定是非，酬应如流。意所不可，辄上政事堂慷慨求去。²⁵

Gao Ming's unyielding attitude, however, was not so welcome when he participated in putting down the Fang Guozhen rebellion. Because of the dissension between him and his chief commander, Gao Ming refused to attend to administrative affairs. In 1352, when the court decided to reconcile with Fang Guozhen, Gao Ming left his post since his mission was terminated. The whole experience of taking and leaving this post apparently went against his aspiration to be the "strong wind [that] gives flight to ten thousand ships" 长风翼万轴.²⁶ From then on, he realized the "worries and uncertainties" 忧患 in officialdom, and switched to enjoy his unemployment. This period, however, didn't last long. In the same year, Gao Ming was again assigned an official post, and in the subsequent five years, he was on the move to four different posts in various places, which finally resulted in his firm resolution to become a recluse. In 1358, Gao Ming refused to teach for Fang Guozhen for the reason of his sickness, and retired on account of his age. From then on, Gao Ming's reclusion

²⁵ Zhao Pang 赵沅, "Song Gao Zecheng gui Yongjia xu" 送高则诚归永嘉序, in Hou, *Pipaji ziliao huibian*, 33.

²⁶ Liu Ji 刘基, "Congjunshi wushou song gaozecheng nanzheng" 从军诗五首送高则诚南征, *Ibid.*, 32.

formally began, together with his creation of *Pipa ji*.²⁷

Once we connect it to Gao Ming's personal experiences, Cai Bojie's indifferent attitude towards governmental issues should not surprise us. However, Gao Ming's disillusionment over his political aspirations is not only due to the unsatisfactory side of his career path. The more important reason is, I believe, that Gao Ming witnessed too much of the agony that the dying Yuan Dynasty went through both while in and after his post. Inside the court, Toghto was dismissed in the year 1354 when Gao Ming was on his post, marking a major turning point for the Yuan court which finally lost the opportunity to restore itself. Outside the court, countless uprisings rose in all directions, resulting in persistent social disturbances throughout the realm. Hence like many other late Yuan literati, Gao Ming pondered deeply over the problem of loyalty as well as how to execute it. He has a famous poem on Yue Fei 岳飞²⁸ (1103-1142), in which he commented, "If the court did not send a decree to recall the army, /the entire northern area would have been conquered by the general./ Willingly the Yue family yield to loyalty,/ separating thousands of miles of our land" 内廷不下班师诏，朔漠全归大将旗。父子一门甘伏节，山河万里竟分支。²⁹

²⁷ Lan Fan 蓝凡, *Gao Zecheng he Pipa ji* 高则诚和琵琶记 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1989).

²⁸ Yue Fei, a famous Chinese patriot and military general who fought for the Southern Song Dynasty against the Jurchen armies of the Jin Dynasty. Since his death, Yue has been admired as a standard model of loyalty in Chinese culture.

²⁹ Gao Ming 高明, "He zhaochengzhi ti yuewangmu yun" 和赵承旨题岳王墓韵, in Hou, *Pipaji Ziliao Huibian*, 24.

Instead of regret for the Song Dynasty and worshiping the loyal subject Yue Fei, Gao Ming criticized both of them by judging them by the standard of national interest, which viewpoint does not exactly accord with the orthodox definition for loyalty in Confucianism. Another example is Gao Ming's glad acceptance of Yuyao local people's request to write an article commemorating how the city wall was built with Fang Guozhen's leadership when he was passing by Ningbo area.³⁰ Objectively, Gao Ming recorded Fang Guozhen's capability and local people's admiration for him, even though he was a rebel bandit in the eyes of most conservative Confucians. From these two instances, we can tell Gao Ming's attitude towards loyalty: opposing blind loyalty, he insists on making judgments based on one's contribution to the common people and the state. Such an enlightened attitude, however, was not only held by Gao Ming at his time. Under the Mongol regime, most Han literati secured the legitimacy of their service to the alien rulers by adopting such a perspective to interpret "loyalty" in 14th century Confucian discourse. Yet at the end of Yuan, there was no wise emperor to serve, neither was there a peaceful environment in which one could work for the common people's interest. Hence without an object for his loyalties, like many other contemporary intellectuals, Gao Ming withdrew himself from whole-hearted celebration of loyalty, leaving his feeling of alienation well represented in *Pipa ji*.

Gao Ming's attitude towards loyalty, nonetheless, did not lead him to question Confucianism. Perhaps for literati like Gao Ming who were living during times of

³⁰ Gao Ming 高明, "Yuyaozhou zhucheng zhi" 余姚州筑城志, *Ibid.*, 24.

dynastic change, the fractured uncertain reality makes the possibility of the crisis of faith far too real if one were to cast doubt on his entire original belief system. It is specifically at those critical junctures that people need to justify the existence of the world as well as themselves by finding a stable set of values to which they can hold on. Such a ground Gao Ming found, it turns out, is the traditional idea of filial piety. However, in 17th century Confucian discourse, the mutually dependent relationship between loyalty and filial piety makes Gao Ming's advocacy of the latter less simple.

Now let us reconsider Cai Bojie's statement at the beginning of *Pipa ji*: "Carry out filial piety in your own life and leave the reward to Heaven". Here, Gao Ming states exercising filial piety as the way to fulfill his responsibility to Heaven, which mostly refers to loyalty in literary works. Therefore from the very beginning in *Pipa ji*, there appears a concern about loyalty, though indirectly. As it has been discussed before, throughout this play the primary focus is put on filial piety rather than loyalty, although according to the *Classic of Family Reverence*, the relation between these two should be turned the other way around. That is, exercising loyalty can substitute for filial piety since the former is the higher form of the latter.

Moreover, aside from *Pipa ji*, Gao Ming has also ardently written to acclaim filial sons in poetry, prose and local history. If we put those works together with *Pipa ji*, we will find that Gao Ming's clinging to filial piety can be interpreted into the method he chose to project his loyal ideal. Among those presentations, one most powerful example is his "Record of the Former Home of Filial Son Hua" 华孝子故

址记 in which he unambiguously connect filial piety with loyalty and dynastic changes:

If the ones holding titles of nobility at that time acted under imperial orders and performed on their posts like son of the Hua family, then the Jin would not have been succeeded by Song, Song shouldn't have been replaced by Qi, and it would be inappropriate to use "Qi" to title the filial son" 使当时有爵位者，其奉君命、恪官守，亦咸若华氏子，则晋不当为宋，宋不当为齐，而孝子亦宜不曰齐孝子也。³¹

Explicitly, this statement demonstrates the fact that Gao Ming considered filial piety as the ultimate manifestation of Confucian ideals, and if the subjects were acting in this way toward their rulers, dynastic changes would have been avoided. Hence this piece of work contextualizes filial piety in the narration of history, an issue essentially related to the motif of loyalty. Therefore I argue that although *Pipa ji* is a "dubious" loyalty play, loyalty never failed to be a crucial concern for Gao Ming.

Yet how was such a complicated play accepted by its audiences? Is it only Gao Ming's wishful thinking that *Pipa ji* could be understood as a manifestation of Confucian values? It must also be pointed out that though plays as a genre did not enjoy the superior status that poetry did in classical Chinese literature, during the Ming and Qing times a textual tradition of dramatic texts to be read (*antou ju* 案头剧) was created. According to the research that has been done about the reception and spread of *Pipa ji* in late imperial China, the most frequently selected scenes from *Pipa*

³¹ Gao Ming 高明, "Huaxiaozi guzhi ji" 华孝子故址记, *Ibid.*, 22. In official history or records, there is a practice to categorize a deceased person to the Dynasty in which he lived for the longest time. Hua Xiaozi, a filial son born in Jin Dynasty and lived through Liu Song (420–479) and the Southern Qi (479–502) Dynasties. At that time, there were frequent dynastic changes in China.

ji in Ming and Qing play anthologies were the lyrical ones. Based on this aesthetic tendency, one scholar concludes that it is reasonable to consider literati as the primary readers of *Pipa ji* as a text during Ming and Qing times.³² Such an observance, I think, illustrates the fact that all the hesitant, paradoxical, yet supportive attitudes towards Confucianism generated by Gao Ming as a Confucian intellectual were able to find their echoes from other Confucian intellectuals living in late imperial China. And this fact adds even more significance for our exploration about how the moral motif was intricately constructed in *Pipa ji*.

In sum, in the context of the dying Yuan Dynasty, the way Gao Ming and most Confucian intellectuals perceived the issue of loyalty was rather complicated. They found that both the ruler they could be loyal to and the opportunity to demonstrate loyalty were absent, hence a sense of disorientation can be seen in many late Yuan literary works, and reclusion became a common choice for most late Yuan literati. Aside from embracing reclusion, Gao Ming set his Confucian ideals on filial piety as a stable ground of his belief system. And Gao Ming's emphasis on "*quanzhong quanxiao*" despite the paradox he has noticed between filial piety and loyalty, I conclude, manifests Gao Ming's insecurity over his own beliefs during his turbulent times. Moreover, Gao Ming's complicated response to Confucian discourse in 14th century China was understood and shared by other Confucian intellectuals living during Ming and Qing times.

³² Wang Zhifeng, "Mingqing shiqi *Pipa ji* de chuanbo".

Part 3 *Taohua shan*

2.1 Introduction to *Taohua shan*

Interestingly, there is a direct connection between *Pipa ji* and *Taohua shan* in *Taohua shan*. In scene 31 of the latter play, when Su Kunsheng, the pleasure music teacher who in the end turns into a woodcutter comes to Zuo Liangyu's camp to send a message on Hou Fangyu's behalf, he gains an audience with Zuo by singing arias from the scene of "Viewing the Moon" from *Pipa ji*. Less interested in exploring how relevant the content of "Viewing the Moon" is with its context in *Taohua shan*, I focus on the transition of Su Kunsheng's purpose while singing the arias as well as how his singing is represented with the transition. At first, Su simply sings to amuse himself, "Faced with 'this thing in the cup' (i.e. wine), I will make an effort to sing an aria to dispel boredom".³³ Then a coherent piece of song is sung by Su until he pauses to ponder about his audience. Relinquishing the idea of considering Ruan Dacheng (a vicious character who knows music well) as his *zhiyin* ("knower of the tone" or true friend), Su turns to think about the possible audience in his present context: Zuo Liangyu. It is noteworthy that after Su decides to capture Zuo's attention by singing, his songs become inconsistent since he is first disrupted by the innkeeper's complains and then his songs are punctuated by Su's thinking aloud as well as Zuo and other

³³ Kong Shangren 孔尚任, *Taohua shan* 桃花扇, ed. Su Huanzhong 苏寰中 (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 2005), 25, trans. and quoted in Wai-ye Li, "The Representation of History in *The Peach Blossom Fan*," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 115, no.3 (Jul.-Sep.1995): 425.

Generals' responses to his singing. Those discontinuities, I suggest, constantly remind us the "performative nature" of Su's singing in the sense that Su consciously takes the role as a performer and deliberately utilizes his arias to evoke attention from his intended audience, Zuo Liangyu. From coherent to discontinuous, Su's singing invites us to think about how his "real" intention of amusing himself gradually retreats once he takes up the role to provoke the others' attention.

How is such an observation related with our discussion about morality? In *Taohua shan*, I find that morality functions mostly as a means by which characters define and defend their positions in relation to the others or achieve some contingent, practical goals in the turbulence of dynastic change in *Taohua shan*. Precisely because morality is a means, the characters have to make it take effect in relation to the others. While they execute actions in front of the others, spectatorship/audience calls our attention, and hence the idea of performance is brought up. In this part of my thesis, I analyze how loyalty and chastity are bonded with the idea of performance in *Taohua shan*. By "performance", I don't mean the theater that occurs on the stage. Instead, I employ this term to discuss the other two situations related with the theatrical artifice in the "real" world in *Taohua shan*. The first situation is that one consciously wears a mask of morality and pretends to be morally correct while bearing his spectators in mind. The other one accords with Judith Butler's argument that in the public discourse, inner is manifested on the outer through a consistent play of acts, gestures and desire, and "the appearance of substance is precisely that, a constructed identity, a

performative accomplishment which the mundane social audience, including the actors themselves, come to believe and to perform in the mode of belief”.³⁴ More specifically, in *Taohua shan*, the characters sincerely immerse themselves in moral roles, and morality essentially consists their identity. Yet at the same time, awareness of being watched is the primary reason that compels them to take moral roles, therefore a sense of performance emerges.

After examining the relation between morality and performance in *Taohua shan*, I question if there is a possible way for one to avoid picking up a moral position or playing moral role in this play. By looking into the theme of “Peach Blossom Spring” in *Taohua shan*, I conclude that Kong Shangren refuses to offer any retreat for his characters, and I connect such a disposal with his perception of history which I try to understand by looking into his life experiences.

2.2 Moral Behavior as Performance

As one of the greatest *chuanqi* plays, *Taohua shan* has an extensively complex plot due to the chaotic historical events it represents. The play starts with a prelude in which an old keeper of rites looks back at the late Ming period from the year of 1684, when the play was first staged. Then the narrative of the main story departs from the March of 1643, a time right before the fall of Beijing. Hou Fangyu, a young scholar with a decent background yet short of money, lodges in Nanjing and socializes with

³⁴ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 185, 192.

Fushe (复社, the Restoration Society) members.³⁵ Financially supported by his friend Yang Wencong, Hou buys the first night of Li Xiangjun, a teenage prostitute living with her adoptive mother, the Madame Li Zhenli 李贞丽. After a “marriage ceremony” with the presence of other prostitutes and entertainers, the couple pledge their troth on a fan and spend the night together. The next morning, Yang Wencong comes and admits that the dowry is actually provided by Ruan Dacheng, an official in disgrace because of his association with the notoriously corrupt eunuch Wei Zhongxian. Upon hearing this, Li Xiangjun resolutely insists on returning her dowry, which action wins her praise from Hou and the *Fushe* members.

However, three months later, their romance is interrupted by Yang who brings the news that General Zuo Liangyu is going to move his troops to Nanjing. Unaware of Zuo’s true loyalty, Hou composes a letter by assuming his father’s name to persuade Zuo not to come, which is sent by Liu Jingting, a storyteller who later becomes a fisherman. Though he successfully convinces Zuo to stay in Wuchang, this letter later brings disaster to Hou, since in the court Ruan Dacheng slanders him based on this correspondence. Under such circumstances, Hou is forced to flee the city and take refuge with Shi Kefa, a loyal general. When they are about to part, Li Xiangjun expresses her love and protests her loyalty to Hou.

Then it comes to March, 1644. The peasant rebel Li Zicheng’s army captures

³⁵ *Fushe* 复社, a group formed by Jiang’nan literati dedicated to literary and political reforms in late Ming Dynasty. Their political pursuit was to fight against the notorious eunuch Wei Zhongxian (1568-1627).

Beijing, and Emperor Chongzhen hangs himself in the chaos. Loyal generals weep in deep sorrow but Ma Shiying and Ruan Dacheng in Nanjing are busily plotting to welcome the new Emperor and to set up a new regime. Though Ma and Ruan's candidate Prince Fu is clearly not a suitable choice, Shi Kefa and Hou Fangyu fail to prevent their enthroning of Prince Fu, who now becomes Emperor Hongguang. After the establishment of the Southern Ming regime, a newly appointed official Tian Yang attempts to marry Li Xiangjun but she violently rejects his proposal, so that Ma Shiying and Ruan Dacheng use their political power to enforce Li Xiangjun's marriage with Tian Yang. Determined to keep herself chaste for Hou Fangyu, Li Xiangjun resists leaving when the sedan bearers arrive to carry her away. Finally she disfigures her own face by beating it against the ground. With the servants knocking at the door, her adoptive mother Li Zhenli has no choice but to go in the name of Li Xiangjun. Several days later, Yang Wencong comes to visit Li Xiangjun and notices that the fan with Li Xiangjun and Hou Fangyu's troth on has been spattered by Li Xiangjun's blood. As a skillful painter, Yang Wencong paints the blood-stains into peach blossoms, turning the fan to a peach blossom fan.

However, due to Emperor Hongguang's interest in plays, all entertainers are required to register at the Court, including Li Xiangjun. Therefore when Hou Fangyu returns to Nanjing, he fails to find her, and when meeting with his *fushe* friends, Hou Fangyu is arrested together with them by Ruan Dacheng. To save Hou Fangyu, his friend Su Kunsheng, the music teacher of Li Xiangjun, goes to seek help from Zuo

Liangyu. Nonetheless, persuaded to move his troops, Zuo Liangyu leaves the Yangtze River open to Qing army's attack, which results in the Yangzhou massacre and Shi Kefa's suicide. Faced with all these turbulences, Hongguang flees from Nanjing and seeks protection with Huang Degong. However, Hongguang is quickly captured by his traitors. Meanwhile, both Li Xiangjun and Hou Fangyu seek refuge in the same Daoist temple deep in the mountains without knowing that either one would be there too. Recognizing each other in the temple, they are overjoyed. However, Zhang Wei, the erstwhile Ming official-turned-Daoist priest reprimands the young lovers, rips up the fan and requests them to seek *dao* through separate lives of religious reclusion.

Compared with Cai Bojie whose agony originates from his dilemma of conflicting requirement of loyalty and filial piety, the characters in *Taohua shan* are too occupied to grab a taste of the feeling of oscillation. Against the backdrop of cataclysm, an individual is urged to pick up a side in order to acquire his/her identity at the time when distinguishing between "loyal" and "disloyal", "true" and "false" suddenly become the most fundamental questions for one's existence. Nonetheless, precisely because of the compelling situations, the characters in *Taohua shan* are not allowed to base their decisions on thorough consideration, and I suggest that in *Taohua shan*, claiming loyalty or chastity becomes a rather convenient and expedient choice for one to secure his/her position and legitimize his/her behavior among all the chaos.

In the play, the "righteous" characters protest their rightness to draw a clear

distinction between themselves and the “treacherous” side, yet at the same time, conspiracies are also conducted in the name of loyalty by vicious characters. How do we understand those loyal/chaste actions or claims then? Does morality also function as the ultimate ideal to be realized in *Taohua shan*, as it does in *Pipa ji*? In this part, I will examine how moral behaviors and assertions are utilized by both righteous and treacherous sides. Based on this examination, I pose question about the “inner” intention (*shi* 实) and the “outer” moral claims (*ming* 名) in *Taohua shan*.

Let me begin my analysis with scene 16, when the new Southern Ming regime is set up hastily under the leadership of Ma Shiyong and Ruan Dacheng. The legitimacy for this regime is rather dubious since Prince Fu, the one who has been crowned as Emperor Hongguang, does not possess an unchallengeable legitimacy as the successor to the throne. Instead of going further to explore relevant historical events about Hongguang and his disputable regime, I focus on what is represented in *Taohua shan* about Hongguang’s succession. In the play, the reason for Prince Fu’s undeserving succession is explicitly announced by Hou Fangyu in scene 14, where he states Prince Fu’s “three unpardonable vices” and lists five reasons why he cannot be elected (*San dazui, wu bukeli* 三大罪，五不可立). However, Shi Kefa and Hou Fangyu’s attempt to block Ma Shiyong and Ruan Dacheng’s enthroning of Prince Fu turns out to be a vain pursuit. Later, we find Hongguang an unwise and irresponsible emperor manipulated by his courtiers, namely, Ma Shiyong and Ruan Dacheng. Collaborating through the whole process to set up the Southern Ming regime, Ma and

Ruan are the veritable “worst last ministers”. Ignoring all the emergent situations, they seize power for the sake of power: Ma Shiying uses his power to plant his relatives and followers in the court, and Ruan Dacheng viciously employs any means necessary to seize political advantage and take revenge on *fushe* members. Hence overall, Southern Ming is an irresponsible regime due to its unreliable ruler and bad ministers.

However, interesting enough, in the scene when Prince Fu is supported to ascend the throne, responsibility for the previous regime becomes the decisive reason for both the ruler and the subjects to justify the farce that they self-directed and self-performed. Like many other emperors who are requested to ascend the throne by the subjects, Prince Fu at first rejects their petition (though he is more than happy to accept it) by declaring that all he can do is to supervise affairs under the title of Chongzhen since revenge has yet to be carried out. But “to revenge” is in turn used by the subjects to plead because “revenge should be fulfilled as soon as possible, and the central plain shouldn’t be lost for long” 大仇不当迟报，中原不可久失。³⁶ The petition works this time. Prince Fu accepts his new identity as Emperor Hongguang. What interests me in this scene is the claim of revenge, which signifies loyalty to the deceased Emperor and the Ming regime. Nonetheless, as discussed before, such a claim of loyalty is indeed questionable if we consider the real purpose for the

³⁶ Kong, *Taohua shan*, 108. My own translation.

enthroning, “new generals and ministers must be appointed as soon as possible” 将相不宜缓设.³⁷ Obviously, “loyalty” embodied as the intention of “revenge” in this scene is simply used as a pretense to legitimize the new regime in which everyone has his own motivation which is not necessarily about moral correctness.

If it is unambiguous that loyalty is performed as a disguise by Ruan Dacheng and Ma Shiyong to usurp political power, then do Li Xiangjun’s firm rejections against Ruan and Ma safely anchor her on the morally solid ground? Or, are there any possible readings of Li Xiangjun other than crystallizing her as a purely chaste and loyal figure?

Let me begin my analysis with an exploration of Li Xiangjun’s “real” feeling about Hou Fangyu. In scene 5, in a party where prostitutes gather, Hou Fangyu meets with Li Xiangjun. As far as we know, there is almost no communication between Hou and Li aside from their throwing gifts to each other without seeing each other.³⁸ When Li Xiangjun comes out, she does not talk to Hou. During their facsimile wedding ceremony in scene 6, Li Xiangjun finally is given a chance to render her voice on the whole affair. She starts her aria with this line, “Flowers tremble on the terrace, curtains flutter in the wind. [Yet] I am leaning on my outstanding and excellent hero” 楼台花颤，帘栊风抖，倚着雄姿英秀。³⁹ I would say this is the most

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ We do not know if the gift exchange is prompted by Li Zhenli, who has been promised a considerable dowry upon Li Xiangjun and Hou Fangyu’s marriage.

³⁹ Kong, *Taohua shan*, 48. My own translation.

direct and “real” expression from Li Xiangjun that betrays her hope and perception about her relationship with Hou, since this character will soon be occupied by loyal or upright assertions and actions in subsequent scenes. Originally like a vulnerable flower in the wind, now she feels secure and proud because of her “heroic” “husband” Hou Fangyu.

However, it must be pointed out that *shulong* 梳拢⁴⁰ only means a temporary “marriage” between the prostitute and her customer in late imperial China. Such a relationship is very unstable since it mainly depends on the customer’s financial situation, and it always terminates when the customer runs out of money. Therefore we cannot say Li Xiangjun has found a life-long reliable partner once she is “married” to Hou Fangyu, and I will add that having been raised in the brothel, Li Xiangjun would not be so naive as to be unaware of this rule. Then why does she feel secure now?

To answer this question, we should turn to the prostitute culture in late Ming. In “*Ti yudanxin banqiao za ji*” 题余澹心板桥杂记, Qin Jitang 秦际唐(fl.ar.1870) vividly describes the close relationship between literati and the prostitutes along the Qin and Huai River as “every household’s husband belongs to the *donglin* Party” 家家夫婿是东林.⁴¹ Indeed, in late Ming, prostitutes were proud to socialize with the

⁴⁰ *Shulong*, a term used to describe a customer’s purchase of a young prostitute’s first night in Ming and Qing China.

⁴¹ Qin Jitang 秦际唐, “*Ti yudanxin Banqiao za ji*” 题余澹心板桥杂记 (Introduction to *Banqiao zaji*), in *Banqiao zaji* 板桥杂记 (Miscellaneous Records of the Plank Bridge), by Yu Huai 余怀 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2000), 6.

donglin Party, which stood for uprightness and loyalty in the corrupt political environment. Like members in the *donglin* Party, *fushe* members also actively participated in political movements and fought against treacherous court officials, and hence they acquired a similar reputation as *donglin* members. From Yu Huai's (1617-1696) *Miscellaneous Records of the Plank Bridge* (*Banqiao za ji* 板桥杂记), we learn that once a prostitute is "appreciated and given a poem" (品题) by a member from *donglin* or *fushe*, her fame as well as price will be enhanced, so that we can imagine how important a *fushe* member's *shulong* 梳栊 is for a young prostitute. Therefore I agree with Zuyan Zhou that Li Xiangjun perceives her marriage as one with *fushe* rather than merely with Hou Fangyu.⁴² Or to push this point further, she is married to the reputation for righteousness and loyalty a *fushe* member stands for.

However, it seems that Hou Fangyu does not understand Li Xiangjun's expectation for him judging from his inclination to compromise in scene 7. Hence Li Xiangjun's fierce refusal of the trousseau Ruan Dacheng offers provides us with another layer of meaning: as a prostitute who has no social or political say, she will lose more than Hou Fangyu if his fame is tarnished. A gentleman like Hou Fangyu has more opportunities to find a position in the society, but it is unlikely to be so for Li Xiangjun. Therefore Hou Fangyu's unprincipled pliability will seriously threaten Li Xiangjun's future fate which heavily relies on his reputation. Hence though generally,

⁴² Zhou Zuyan, *Androgyny in Late Ming and Early Qing Literature* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2003), 132.

I agree with Wai-yee Li that in *Taohua shan*, “the individual is powerless and uncomprehending”, I would say Li Xiangjun is the one who consciously exerts power based on her personal concerns at the moment when she refuses Ruan Dacheng’s dowry.⁴³ Her employment of morality as an agency is rendered more clearly in scene 23. After Hou Fangyu’s departure, Li Xiangjun stays upstairs and refuses to entertain any other customer. When Yang Wencong visits Li Xiangjun and questions her if she will come downstairs when Hou Fangyu returns, Li Xiangjun’s answer is very interesting, “At that time [when Hou Fangyu comes back], glorious future will spread in front of me. Then I can go anywhere I want to, let alone downstairs” 那时锦片前程，尽俺受用，何处不许游耍，岂但下楼。⁴⁴ I won’t push my argument so far as to suggest that Li Xiangjun’s chaste actions are because of her sophisticated calculation about future rewards, but I underscore how her chaste behavior is promised with a beneficial result in her mind. To conclude, I think Li Xiangjun in these scenes is consciously utilizing morality to defend her own interests, which is different from Cai Bojie who is stuck by moral requirement and fails to take action.

Thus in scene 7, Li Xiangjun performs a resolutely upright role in front of the audience of Hou Fangyu, who is then compelled to assume an unyielding role to resist Ruan Dacheng.⁴⁵ However, Li Xiangjun also establishes a chaste and righteous image

⁴³ Wai-yee Li, “The Representation of History in *The Peach Blossom Fan*,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 115, no.3 (Jul-Sep1995), 428.

⁴⁴ Kong, *Taohua shan*, 173. My own translation.

⁴⁵ This point is discussed thoroughly in Steven Owen’s article. Tina Lu has also elaborately examined the “reciprocity” (*bao*) relation between Hou Fangyu and Li Xiangjun which also assist our understanding on this

for herself from then on. After Hou Fangyu is forced to flee, she rejects Tian Yang's proposal twice, and it is very interesting that in both scene 17 and scene 22, physical violence is involved. In scene 17, refused and humiliated by Li Xiangjun, the old prostitute Zheng Tuoniang tries to drag her downstairs, and in scene 22, Li Xiangjun dashes her head on the ground to disfigure herself. In the "dragging" scene, Li Xiangjun is explicitly treated as a commodity whose value simply lies in its physical presence. In scene 22, when the trade is forced again, Li Xiangjun exerts her most powerful resistance by destroying her peerlessly beautiful face (or perhaps originally she intends to commit suicide), which results in an ultimate termination of the value of the commodity.⁴⁶ In a trade, two sides must be involved, and I argue that a more important function of Li Xiangjun's counter side in these scenes is their role as the audience, since Li Xiangjun's performance of the resolute and chaste role can only acquire its meaning with the presence of others. Here I am not identifying Li Xiangjun as a hypocrite; on the contrary, I emphasize her complete immersion in this role. At the same time, I maintain that such an immersion is largely due to her awareness of her audience, who are the precise reason for the performative nature of her actions. Actually, Li Xiangjun's eagerness to be watched when she imposes herself on the chaste role is unambiguously illustrated in scene 23. She stays alone in

issue. See Tina Lu, *Persons, Roles and Minds: Identity in Peony Pavilion and Peach Blossom Fan* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), 191-4.

⁴⁶ And let's not forget that the price to purchase Li Xiangjun has always been three hundred taels of silver, which is mentioned each time when Li Xiangjun is (or is to be) traded.

her chamber (one of those rare moments when she is on the stage yet not surrounded by the others in *Taohua shan*) and sighs,

To think about my beloved Hou Lang, I don't know where he has drifted to ever since his flight. How can he know I am staying alone in the empty house and preserving my chastity for his sake 想起侯郎匆匆避祸，不知流落何所，怎知奴家独住空楼，替他守节也。⁴⁷

Such a regretful feeling of Li Xiangjun is not only because of Hou Fangyu's absence, but also because of the absence of any witness of her chastity who may testify it to Hou Fangyu later. Compared with Cai Bojie who keeps silent about his inner moral concerns, Li Xiangjun has to make her moral performance known to people around her in order to justify and protest her position, which tells us how morality functions as a means to mediate individual's relation with the others rather than a pure ideal in *Taohua shan*.

Then how do we understand the meaning of morality for the incorruptible loyal general Shi Kefa? I would like to start my analysis by examining to whom he projects his loyalty. As discussed before, originally, he is against Ma Shiyong and Ruan Dacheng's proposal of placing Prince Fu on the throne. However, curiously, when the new regime is established, he participates in the ceremony and accepts the appointment. If we accept such an action as an expedient means for him to take revenge for the previous Ming regime to which he is utterly loyal, then when Yangzhou falls, his attempts to return to Nanjing to conduct his loyalty to Hongguang renders this interpretation unsustainable. Hence there emerges an inconsistency

⁴⁷ Kong, *Taohua shan*, 154. My own translation.

among the objects of his loyalty. I would argue that the reason for such an inconsistency is because the gesture of “loyalty” is the entire identity of Shi Kefa, so that the specific object of his loyalty is not as important even though he knows his loyalty is being projected to an unqualified ruler. Such a persistence of loyalty, I think, reminds us how Gao Ming takes great efforts to write an “utterly loyal and completely filial” play despite of all the paradoxes he has noticed. Though one is a character being represented in *Taohua shan* and one represents his characters in *Pipa ji*, Shi Kefa and Gao Ming as two subjects positioned against the background of dynastic change show us how morality is employed as a means to justify individual’s existence in the calamitous period.

Nonetheless, if we compare the ways Gao Ming and Kong Shangren construct morality in these plays, we find two distinct approaches. The way Kong Shangren depicts Shi Kefa’s loyalty is closely tied with the idea of performance, which resembles Li Xiangjun’s inhabitation in her chaste and upright role. For example, I consider scene 35 in which Shi Kefa’s loyalty touches his troops as one of the most dramatic scenes in *Taohua shan*. Having overheard the soldiers’ discussion about surrender, Shi Kefa decides to muster his men at midnight. However, they do not respond to him, which is an explicit signal of mutiny. Shi Kefa first sighs and weeps, and later beats his chest and cries loudly. Then it is found that his tears are all blood, which impresses his troops and they finally agree to fight the enemy. The performative nature of Shi Kefa’s behavior is very obvious since it is only by being

watched that Shi Kefa can exert the power of his loyalty, which is manifested as tears of blood. Even when Shi Kefa throws himself into the river, the keeper of rites is on the spot as a witness who later proves Shi Kefa's loyalty to the others. Hence I conclude that loyalty is represented as a means for Shi Kefa to justify his existence in all the chaos, though he completely immerses himself in the loyal role. Also, as it is for Li Xiangjun, an audience is necessary for Shi Kefa to fulfill his morally correct identity, which turns his behavior into performance in front of the others.

To sum up, personal interest is a major reason for both vicious and righteous characters to claim moral stands or execute moral behaviors, though to which extent the characters are conscious about this fact vary. Ma Shiyong and Ruan Dacheng are completely driven by their desire for power and fame; Li Xiangjun utilizes her resolute rejection to protect herself; Shi Kefa essentially relies on loyalty to maintain his identity though he probably is unaware of it. Hence to assert one's moral correctness is a means for both negative and positive characters to achieve some goals among all the chaos. What is more, all the moral behaviors have a performative nature because a means can only function in relation to the others, and from Li Xiangjun and Shi Kefa, we observe how moral performance in turn functions as a prescription for one's identity

2.3 Nullification of Peach Blossom Spring⁴⁸ and Kong Shangren's Historical

⁴⁸ There is a famous prose piece by Tao Qian (365-427), named *Taohua yuan ji* 桃花源记 (Record of Peach Blossom Spring). In this piece, a fisherman serendipitously enters a calm and peaceful community that is isolated from the rest of the world whose ancestors settled there to escape from the Qin upheaval. After leaving this

Concern

Since all moral assertions or actions are tied with the idea of performance, what are the consequences of these moral performances?

When the play approaches its end, we find a scattered world in which both pretentious and sincere claims/behaviors of loyalty are proved futile along with the fall of the Southern Ming regime. In scene 40, we learn from Zhang Wei (an official-turned-Taoist) that Ma Shiyong and Ruan Dacheng die miserably after their flight from Nanjing. In scene 38, Shi Kefa commits suicide after Yangzhou's fall, and his death in *Taohua shan* renders even more clearly the powerlessness of loyalty at the time of dynastic change, which to some extent assists our understanding of Gao Ming's lopsided emphasis on filial piety instead of loyalty in *Pipa ji*. Yet is it possible for Li Xiangjun to continue inhabiting in her role as a devoted, chaste lover when she rejoins with Hou Fangyu? Unrelentingly, Kong Shangren terminates any possibility for his characters to carry on their previous performance, especially for the lovers Hou Fangyu and Li Xiangjun. When Hou Fangyu defends his intention to marry Li Xiangjun,

Men and women have always created households together; that is the great principle of mankind, coming together and going apart, sorrow and happiness, to have someone to love—how can you meddle with that?" 从来男女室家，人之大伦，离合悲欢，情有所钟，先生如何管得

he is refuted by Zhang Wei,

Where is the country? Where is the family? Where is the Emperor? Where are

community, the fisherman cannot find his way back to the community again. And the idea of "peach blossom spring" became a frequently used metaphor for utopia in classical Chinese literature.

the fathers? And all you have is this root of passion in flowers and moonlight, and you can't sever it?" 你看国在那里，家在那里，君在那里，父在那里，偏是这点花月情根，割他不断么。⁴⁹

Therefore Li Xiangjun's chaste performance is fruitless as well since it also fails to enable her escape from the turbulent world. In addition to annihilating Li Xiangjun and Hou Fangyu's identity as lovers, Zhang Wei's statement also cancels the possibility that Hou Fangyu and Li Xiangjun can dwell in their romantic relationship as in the Peach Blossom Spring.

In fact, though for numerous times the longing for Peach Blossom Spring in which individuals are not bounded by their roles of loyalty or chastity is directly mentioned or indirectly alluded to in *Taohua shan*, Kong Shangren does not hold an illusion on it. The only scene where we see an explicit comparison between the characters' situation and Peach Blossom Spring is scene 33. When Hou Fangyu and other *fushe* members are thrown into jail, they find that their friend Liu Jingting is also in prison. Behind the high walls and watching the moon in the quiet midnight, they chants "It is indeed a Wuling Peach Blossom Cave; like those who escaped from the Qin upheaval, we are talking at ease as on a fishing boat" 也似武陵桃洞，也似武陵桃洞；有避乱秦人，同话渔船。⁵⁰ It seems that they are gathering at a place isolated from the topsy-turvy world, but let us not forget that as prisoners in jail, they are precisely at the center of political turmoil at that moment, and in this way a sharp

⁴⁹ ———, *Taohua shan*, 257, trans. Tina Lu, *Persons, Roles and Minds: Identity in Peony Pavilion and Peach Blossom Fan* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), 158-9.

⁵⁰ Kong, *Taohua shan*, 220. My own translation.

irony is created by Kong Shangren. However, even such a delusion is not allowed to last long by Kong Shangren, since soon this tranquility is broken by a warder's arrival, who comes to bind Zhou Biao and Lei Yanzuo, two *donglin* members, for execution. Hence Kong Shangren not only refuses to make Peach Blossom Spring possible, but also directly satirizes the ones who deceive themselves with this idea among all the chaos.

To briefly summarize, in *Taohua shan*, individuals have to perform certain moral role to defend and protest themselves, and by declining the vision of Peach Blossom Spring, Kong Shangren makes it impossible for one to eschew moral performance during the time of turbulence. If we say that to be a Daoist recluse is the exit Kong Shangren designs for his characters, the appearance of a minor Qing official in sequel to scene 40 challenges the assumption that a world beyond history and politics can be found.⁵¹

Why does Kong Shangren construct morality as individual's contingent performance? Why does he relinquish the fantasy of Peach Blossom Fan? What can these disposals tell us about Kong Shangren's attitude toward Ming-Qing transition and history as a whole?

Perhaps Kong Shangren's personal experience can help us understand these questions. Born in 1648, forty years after Qing regime's replacement of Ming, Kong Shangren was raised up in a new dynasty as a Qing subject. In 1684, Emperor Kangxi

⁵¹ Li, "The Representation of History", 433.

visited Qufu to offer a sacrifice to Confucius. As a descendant of Confucius, Kong Shangren delivered a lecture on *Daxue* (*Great learning*) for the emperor. After that, he was promoted to be an Erudite in the imperial academy by a special imperial favor.⁵² Later, Kong Shangren was appointed to regulate Huang and Huai Rivers in Yangzhou, Gaoyou and Jinling. Hence politically, Kong Shangren was in debt to the Kangxi Emperor and the new regime, and in “The Unusual Events Whereby I Came Down Out of the Mountain” (“chushan yishu ji”), he expresses his deep gratitude towards the Emperor and the Qing regime. Yet at the same time, while he was in the Jiangnan area, Kong Shangren socialized with many famous Ming loyalist subjects (*yimin* 遗民), from whom he learnt a lot about the fall of Ming and collected plenty of materials for *Taohua shan*.⁵³ I would say by adopting the traumatic experiences from many Ming remnants, Kong Shangren became a subject who was bearing and representing postmemories of late Ming and Southern Ming periods. As Hirsch has pointed out, “[P]ostmemory characterizes the experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are displaced by the stories of the previous generation”.⁵⁴ Thus Kong Shangren’s identity as a Qing subject is also incorporated by his postmemory of late Ming, which is unambiguously

⁵² Kong Shangren 孔尚任, “Chushan yishu ji,” in *Kong Shangren shiwenji* 孔尚任诗文集, ed. Wang Weilin 汪蔚林 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962), 437-8.

⁵³ Tobie Meyer-Fong, *Building Culture in Early Qing Yangzhou* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), 72-4.

⁵⁴ Marianne Hirsch, “Projected Memory: Holocaust Photographs in Personal and Public Fantasy,” in *Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present*, ed. Mieke Bal, Jonathan Crewe, and Leo Spitzer (Hanover, MD: University Press of New England, 1999), 8.

reflected on his creation of *Taohua shan*. In 1699, nine years after he was resummoned to Beijing, *Taohua shan* was finalized and circulated in the capital.

Kong Shangren's utilization of performance as the way to represent the idea of loyalty towards Ming Dynasty renders the assumption that *Taohua shan* is a nationalistic piece to advocate nostalgia towards Ming regime unconvincing, especially considering his disposal of the outcome of those loyal performances. Yet at the same time, I do not think *Taohua shan* is a play that promotes the legitimacy of the Qing regime either, and I agree with Wai-yee Li that it is not a play which "acknowledges the rationality of the Ming-Qing transition".⁵⁵ The most powerful example to illustrate this point is the sequel to scene 40. At the very end of the play, when a minor official representing the order of the new regime shows up to seek out (actually, track down) recluses, the three Ming remnants, Liu Jingting, Su Kunsheng and the keeper of rites refuse to participate in the new regime, and quickly, they disperse and disappear. Hence the entire extensively complex play in which chaotic historical events are represented ends with a minor official, who once is a wealthy and eminent noble in scene 1, standing alone on the stage, which somehow foreshadows the ending line in "Twelve Songs of *Honglong meng*": "Blankly, leaving a vast expanse of whiteness" 落了片白茫茫大地真干净.⁵⁶ Obviously, from this finale we

⁵⁵ Li, "The Representation of History", 432.

⁵⁶ Huhua zhuren 护花主人, Damo shanmin 大某山民, Taiping Xianren 太平闲人 commented, *Honglou meng sanjia pingben* 红楼梦三家评本, (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1988), 84.

cannot find a championship of the Qing regime either.

I don't agree with Lynn Sturve that Kong Shangren primarily focuses on negotiating historical facts and the present political power.⁵⁷ Neither do I read *Taohua shan* as a Qing historical play merely about late Ming history. I suggest what is represented in *Taohua shan* is a philosophical rather than epistemological concern about history, and this concern is based on yet transcends the traumatic period of late Ming and the newly-established Qing regime. This point can find its support in "Short Preface to *The Peach Blossom Fan*" ("Taohua shan xiao yin" 桃花扇小引), where Kong Shangren defines the characteristic of *chuanqi* play: "Its purport is really grounded on *Shijing* (*The Book of Songs*), and its meaning is from *Chunqiu* (*The Spring and Autumn Annals*)" 其旨趣实本于三百篇，而义则春秋。⁵⁸ By comparing *chuanqi* play to the most hallowed of all the literatures and histories which are attributed to his ancestor Confucius, Kong Shangren expresses a desire to manifest eternal historical laws using the specific period represented in *Taohua shan*. Therefore I would not interpret the last words spoken by the keeper of rites, "It is still not too late to avoid calamity, and I regret not having hide ourselves thoroughly enough" 避祸今何晚，入山惜未深" as a simple refusal towards new political power. And I argue that by "huo" (calamity 祸), Kong Shangren is referring to all historical and political movements and events in human society, which is represented as the "rise and fall" of

⁵⁷ Lynn A. Struve, "History and *The Peach Blossom Fan*," *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews* vol.2, no.1 (Jan 1980): 68.

⁵⁸ Kong, introduction to *Taohua shan*, 1. My own translation.

Southern Ming in *Taohua shan*.⁵⁹ Moreover, Kong Shangren negates a possible retreat from “*huo*” for his characters, and to push this point further, an escape from historical trends for individuals. Hence I argue that *Taohua shan* conveys Kong Shangren’s understanding of history as an inescapable and ubiquitous power for individuals involved in it.

⁵⁹ ———, *Taohua shan*, 268. My own translation.

Part 4 Conclusion

One of the most popular evaluation of *Pipa ji* is its function as a moral play promoting filial piety and loyalty. However, by examining specific scenes and the spoken lines of the protagonist Cai Bojie, I highlight the lopsided emphasis on the motif of filial piety and the actual violation of the orthodox idea of loyalty, together with the paradox between filial piety and loyalty disclosed in this play. I argue that under the circumstances that loyalty had lost the object to which it could be exercised, Gao Ming as a late Yuan subject found filial piety as the ground to secure his identity as a Confucian intellectual living at the end of an age of turmoil, which in fact determined the development of two moral themes in *Pipa ji*.

However, such an anxiety over seeking justification for one's value system during dynastic changes is not exclusively seen in Gao Ming's works. In *Taohua shan*, we find characters such as Li Xiangjun and Shi Kefa also insist on moral correctness to position themselves in the turbulence. Nonetheless, the way Kong Shangren construct morality in *Taohua shan* is to utilize the idea of performance to represent individual character's moral actions. Moreover, loyal or chaste claims also functions as an expedient means for individual to achieve some contingent goals other than realizing moral ideals in *Taohua shan*. Hence we can see morality is not represented as an ultimate ideal for the characters in *Taohua shan* as it is in *Pipa ji*. Such a different attitude towards moral correctness in *Pipa ji* and *Taohua shan*, I suggest is

due to Kong Shangren's identity as an early Qing subject who bears postmemory of late Ming period. But I do not take *Taohua shan* as a play merely about Ming and Qing history, and I argue that Kong Shangren tries to emulate his ancestor Confucius to represent eternal historical law in *Taohua shan*.

History is created and participated by individuals. While one is going through such a traumatic period as dynastic change, morality can be utilized as the backbone of his value system since it is precisely a manifestation of the individual human being's power in history, which is illustrated by Gao Ming's creation of *Pipa ji* and the perseverance on loyalty by numerous characters in *Taohua shan*. Yet at the same time, in *Taohua shan*, we find morality a compelling force that forces characters into loyal or chaste roles, so that it conspires with history to dominate individual's action. What is more, by planning the final futility of moral performances, *Taohua shan* also represents individuals faced with unpredictable historical trends as powerless subjects. However, can we find some similar attitude towards history or morality between Gao Ming and Kong Shangren as two late imperial literati? I would say that both of them are concerned with the question of how individuals could find continuity at times of historical changes. For Gao Ming, such a concern is represented by his efforts on protesting Confucian moral ideals even if paradoxes are noticed. Yet for Kong Shangren, I argue that his action of composing *Taohua shan* is the precise indication of his longing to discover and represent historical continuity.

By comparing *Pipa ji* and *Taohua shan*, I analyze how late imperial literati's

thoughts about personal existence as well as historical events in times of dynastic changes are represented in their literary works by their construction of morality.

Human being's persistent concern about moral correctness and history, I argue, are represented in both these works and the two authors' personal experiences. And I hope that such a reading can assist our understanding about the issues of morality and history in other late imperial literary works.

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