# The Many Transformations of White Snake:
# Gender, Ritual, and Performance in Late Imperial China

By

Aaron Balivet

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The dissertation is approved by the following members of the Final Oral Committee:

Rania Huntington, Professor, Asian Languages and Cultures
Charo D'Etcheverry, Associate Professor, Asian Languages and Cultures
David Furumoto, Professor, Theatre and Drama
Joseph Dennis, Associate Professor, History
Mark Meulenbeld, Associate Professor, Chinese Culture, Hong Kong Polytechnic U.

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# ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the performance of *The Legend of White Snake* (*Bai she zhuan*) during the Qing dynasty (1644-1911). Like many other famous narratives of late imperial China, *White Snake* does not have a dominant version, and the plot has changed over time and across geographic region and literary genre. This variability is perhaps one of the reasons that previous research has often focused on tracing the story's development in full-length written texts. This dissertation focuses instead on how the story was actually performed, as short plays featuring the most popular scenes, and uses historical accounts and modern performance recordings to rebuild the visual experience of performance of Kunqu, *pihuang*, Sichuan opera, and storytelling versions from the Qing.

What does the performance of *White Snake* reveal about Qing society? Despite the quantity and variation of White Snake scripts and storytelling narratives, I show that there is a consistent focus on female virtue. As attitudes toward female social roles changed during the Qing, so too did White Snake's role within her own narrative. In versions from the late-eighteenth and nineteenth century, White Snake became the story's protagonist, and additional plot elements transformed her from a monster into a loyal wife and a mother. But while in many ways she became an embodiment of female virtue, White Snake never completely shed her persona as a monster. Rather, conflict within the story developed around White Snake's struggle to reconcile her contrasting identities. In this dissertation, I show how the performance of *White Snake* in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries reveals tensions in the construction of idealized female virtue through the development of White Snake's struggle to reconcile her monstrous nature and her roles as wife and mother.

# INTRODUCTION

In 1924, Thunder Peak Pagoda, one of the most famous structures in the city of Hangzhou, collapsed. The pagoda had been constructed during the Song dynasty and was in poor shape, but it had long held symbolic value for its role in *Bai she zhuan* 白蛇傳 (The Legend of White Snake – hereafter, *White Snake*).[1] News of Thunder Peak Pagoda's collapse reached Lu Xun 魯迅 (1881 – 1936), prompting him to write a reflection on the structure's significance in his own life:[2]

> Yet, among all of the names of the historical remains at West Lake, the one that I knew about the earliest was in fact this Thunder Peak Pagoda. My grandmother used to often say to me that Lady White Snake was being held underneath this pagoda. There was a person named Xu Xian who saved two snakes, one green and one white, and later White Snake changed into a woman to repay his kindness, and married Xu Xian. Green Snake changed into a maid and followed her. A monk, Zen Master Fahai, a Zen master who had achieved enlightenment, saw that Xu Xian's face had a monstrous aura over it—normally speaking, people who have monsters acting as their wives will have a monstrous aura over their faces, but only extraordinary people are able to see them—then he hid [Xu] behind his throne at Golden Mountain Monastery. Lady White Snake came to search for her husband and thereupon "flooded Golden Mountain."[3] The way my grandmother told it was much more interesting, probably from a lute ballad called *The Legend of the Righteous Monster*, but I have not seen that book before, so I do not know if "Xu Xian" or "Fahai" were actually written that way. To sum it up, Lady White Snake was caught by Fahai's scheme in the end and was packed inside a tiny little alms bowl. The bowl was buried in the ground, and over that a suppressive

[1] Different versions of the story of *White Snake* use different titles. "The Legend of White Snake" is commonly used in written narrative and performance versions of the twentieth century. Common earlier titles include *Leifengta* 雷峰塔 (Thunder Peak Pagoda) and *Yi yao zhuan* 義妖傳 (Legend of the righteous monster). In this dissertation, I will use the title "*White Snake*" to refer to all versions, broadly defined.

[2] Lu Xun is the pen name for Zhou Shuren 周樹人 (1881-1936), a famous writer and scholar of traditional Chinese literature and one of the leading figures of modern Chinese literature. "Lun Leifengta de daodiao 论雷峰塔的倒掉 [Discussing the fall of Thunder Peak Pagoda]," *Beijing Literature* no. 5 (2002): 19. Originally published: "Lun Leifengta de daodiao," *Yusi* 語絲 [Language thread], Nov. 17, 1924. An English translation of the full article appears in Lu Hsun (Lu Xun), *Selected Works of Lu Hsun*, trans. Xianyi Yang (1915-2009) and Gladys Yang (1919-1999) (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1956), 82-4.

[3] The quotation indicates the title of a popular scene from *White Snake*, known variously as "Flooding Golden Mountain," "Golden Mountain Monastery" (Jinshan si 金山寺), and "Water Battle" (Shui dou 水鬥).

pagoda was also built. This was Thunder Peak Pagoda. After this, it seems there were still many other matters, such as "First-Place Bai [Gives] Sacrifice at the Pagoda," but I have forgotten them all now.[4]

At that time, my only wish was that Thunder Peak Pagoda would fall down. Later I grew up and went to Hangzhou. When I saw that shabby, tattered pagoda, there was a discomfort in my heart. … So, there was no Lady White Snake inside, of course, but in my heart I still wished to see it fall down.

Now, it actually has fallen down. And so, all of the people under heaven, for what reason are they joyful about it?

This is a verifiable fact. Try to go exploring in the mountains and seashores of Wu and Yue to find the opinion of the people. Generally, among the old husbands working the fields and the common women of the villages working the silkworms, apart from those who have a bit of illness in their brains, who could there be that is not outraged for the sake of White Snake and does not blame Fahai for being meddlesome?

然而一切西湖勝蹟的名目之中，我知道得最早的卻是這雷峰塔。我的祖母曾經常常對我說，白蛇娘娘就被壓在這塔底下。有個叫作許仙的人救了兩條蛇，一青一白，後來白蛇 便化作女人來報恩，嫁給許仙了;青蛇化作丫鬟，也跟著。一個和尚，法海禪師，得道的禪師，看見許仙臉上有妖氣，———凡討妖怪做老婆的人，臉上就有妖氣的，但只有非凡的人才看得出，——— 便將他藏在金山寺的法座後，白蛇娘娘來尋夫，於是就"水滿金山"。我的祖母講起來還要有趣得多，大約是出於一部彈詞叫作《義妖傳》裡的，但我沒有看過這部書，所以也不知道"許仙""法海"究竟是否這樣寫。總而言之，白蛇娘娘終於中了法海的計策，被裝在一個小小的缽盂裡了。缽盂埋在地裡，上 面還造起一座鎮壓的塔來，這就是雷峰塔。此後似乎事情還很多，如 "白狀元祭塔"之類，但我現在都忘記了。

那時我惟一的希望，就在這雷峰塔的倒 掉。後來我長大了，到杭州，看見這破破爛爛 的塔，心裡就不舒服。…那麼，裡面當然沒有白蛇娘娘了，然而我心裡仍然不舒服，仍然希望它倒掉。

現在，它居然倒掉了，則普天之下的人民，其欣喜為何如？

這是有事實可證的。試到吳越的山間海濱，探聽民意去。凡有田夫野老，蠶婦村氓，除了幾個腦髓裡有點貴恙的之外，可有誰不為白娘娘抱不平，不怪法海太多事的？

[4] This is a reference to another popular scene, usually titled "Sacrifice at the Pagoda" (Ji ta 祭塔). I discuss this scene in depth in Chapter Three.

Lu Xun's recollection of the story of *White Snake* was probably similar to that of many other people who grew up in the late Qing, and is perhaps similar to how many people in China recall the story today.[5] His earliest memories of the story come not from a text but from a relative telling him the story—he supposes that his grandmother's telling came from a specific lute ballad, but he is uncertain and skeptical her version was the same.[6] He recalls the main characters of White Snake, Green Snake (Little Green), Xu Xian, and Fahai, and their relationship to each other. Most importantly, Lu Xun was completely sympathetic to White Snake. He wanted to see Thunder Peak Pagoda fall because he remembered White Snake was buried underneath.

There are also many details Lu Xun does not mention or seems not to remember. He remembers certain scenes, like "The Flooding of Golden Mountain," but for other scenes, like "First-Place Bai [Gives] Sacrifice at the Pagoda," he remembers only the title. Most importantly, he does not mention that, at the end of *The Legend of the Righteous Monster* and just about any version of *White Snake* from the Qing, White Snake is released from imprisonment under the pagoda. If White Snake was released from imprisonment, why did Lu Xun fantasize about the pagoda falling down? Like many audiences of *White Snake*, Lu Xun may not have paid much attention to the story's ending. In Qing China, audiences did not often experience dramatic literature as a complete story from beginning to end, but through excerpted performances of the most exciting scenes.

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[5] Since there is no definitive version, nor any way to objectively define narratives as "*White Snake*" or "not *White Snake*," throughout this dissertation, I will use "story" to refer to the plots presented collectively in all narratives of *White Snake*. I will also use the term to refer to the narrative generally, without reference to a particular version.

[6] Later in the essay, he recounts more of the story but suspects it did not come from the lute ballad: "It is just unfortunate that I did not inquire about the source of this story at that time, [as it is] perhaps not in *The Legend of the Righteous Monster*, but is instead popular legend. 只可惜我那時沒有打聽這話的出處，或者不在《義妖傳》中，卻是民間的傳說罷。"

This dissertation seeks to recreate some of the experiences of *White Snake* performance from the Qing by contextualizing specific scenes in specific settings. I will focus on manuscripts and woodblock prints of some of the most popular scenes in Kunqu, *pihuang*, Sichuan opera, and storytelling performance genres to explore how the story evolved across time, geographic region, and performance context. I will also use historical and literary records, such as "flower registers" and actors' written works, and modern performance recordings to rebuild the visual experience of performance. While many specific elements of the story change across different versions, audiences of *White Snake* were consistently drawn to conflict between the main character's dual identities of snake-monster and woman. I argue that the portrayal of conflict between these two identities reveals tensions in the construction of female virtue during the Qing. In this introduction, I will provide an overview of famous versions of *White Snake*, a brief summary of Chinese and English-language scholarship on *White Snake*, and a chapter outline.

**The Many Transformations of White Snake: An overview of *White Snake* literature**

As with many works from late imperial Chinese literature, *White Snake* appears in a diverse range of materials, including acted performance and storytelling, as well as written narrative.[7] Despite the diversity of media and the high quantity of materials, no single version can be regarded as the "original," "most popular," or "representative" version. Furthermore, the plot of *White Snake* has changed significantly over time and across genres and geographic regions. While this dissertation will focus on performance versions from the eighteenth and

[7] In this dissertation, I use the term "acted performance" to refer to dramatic performance in which actors use action to perform characters, such as *pihuang*/Beijing opera, Kunqu, and Sichuan opera. I use this term to distinguish performance that uses actors from other performance genres, such as storytelling.

nineteenth centuries, I will first provide a general overview of the story and its evolution to situate the Qing performance versions in the broader context of *White Snake*.[8]

Tales of men encountering beautiful women who turn out to be snake-monsters in disguise appear in Tang *chuanqi* 傳奇 and often function as cautionary tales.[9] In these tales, the male protagonist encounters a beautiful woman, or the servants of a beautiful woman, in a public place. He goes to her residence and experiences extreme pleasure as her companion or husband. When he returns to his family and servants, he appears quite ill, and even dies from illness in some stories. At that point, his remaining family learns that the residence of the woman had been an illusion, and the woman herself was a snake monster, but is nowhere to be found. Examples of these early tales include "Li Huang 李黃" and "Li Guan 李琯" from *Bo yi zhi* 博異志 [An abundance of amazing records], collected in *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記 (Extensive records of the Taiping era).[10] In the Southern Song tale "Xihu san ta ji" 西湖三塔記 [The record of the three pagodas at West Lake] from *Qingping shantang huaben* 清平山堂話本 [Plain tales from Peaceful Mountain Hall], a number of details appear that remain consistent with versions of

[8] For more detailed comparisons of dramatic versions from the eighteenth century, see Chapter One and Appendix II.

[9] "*Chuanqi*" could be translated as "transmitted strange [tales]" or "extraordinary [accounts] that have been passed down." This term refers to a genre of narrative from the Tang Dynasty, which often focused on encounters with unusual beings. It also refers to a genre of acted performance from the Ming and Qing, which I will discuss in greater detail in Chapter One.

[10] *Bo yi zhi* is attributed to Gushenzi 谷神子 ("Master Spirit of the Valley"). See Li Fang 李昉 (925-996), comp., *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記 (Extensive records of the Taiping era), 2003 ed., vol. 10, (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju: Xinhua shudian Beijing faxingsuo faxing, 1961), 3750-2. "Li Huang" is also recorded *Gujin shuohai* 古今說海 (Ocean of old and new tales), under the title "Bai she ji 白蛇記 [Record of the white snake]." See Lu Ji 陸楫 (1515-1552), comp., Gujin shuohai 古今說海 (Ocean of old and new tales), vol. 3 (Taipei: Guangwen shuju, 1968), 515.1a-3a. For an English translation of "Li Huang," see W.L. Idema, *The White Snake and Her Son* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2009), 113-7.

*White Snake* from the Ming and Qing. In this tale, a male protagonist encounters a young girl who had been separated from her family, so he helps her find her way home. The girl lives with her beautiful mother and grandmother, who turn out to be man-eating monsters. In gratitude for saving her, the girl saves the man from being eaten by them. Eventually, the man manages to get home and find an exorcist, who subjugates the three women. Upon being subjugated, the grandmother turns into an otter, the mother turns into a white snake, and the girl turns into a black chicken.[11]

In the Ming and early Qing, the story of *White Snake* became fully formed as certain details became consistent. The male protagonist, named Xu Xuan 許宣 (Xu Xian 許仙),[12] meets White Snake and her maid, Little Green, in Hangzhou during the Tomb-Sweeping Festival.[13] Xu and White Snake agree to be married, but Xu's newfound relationship with White Snake brings

[11] Collected in *Qingping shantang huaben* 清平山堂話本 (Vernacular tales from the Qingping Mountain Studio), compiled by Hong Bian 洪楩. Though tales in the collection are purported to be from the Song, Yuan, and Ming, the collection itself was printed in the mid-sixteenth century. This tale has been dated to the thirteenth or fourteenth century. See Hong Bian, "Qingping shantang huaben," in *Xu xiu siku quan shu* 續修四庫全書, vol. 1784, 1800 vols. (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1995), 9-14. For English translation of the tale, see Idema, *The White Snake and Her Son* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2009), 119-34. See also "Introduction," ibid., xv-xvi.

[12] Later Qing versions and modern versions tend to use the name Xu Xian, while earlier versions tend to use the name Xu Xuan, but the change of the male protagonist's name is hardly uniform. Some versions will even change between Xu Xian and Xu Xuan within a single text. In this dissertation, I will refer to this character using the more common name, Xu Xian (or "Xu"), regardless of version, for the sake of convenience and consistency.

[13] The character White Snake is known by a variety of different names and titles. She is often called "Madam White" (*Bai niangzi* 白娘子) or given the name "Bai Suzhen 白素貞" when depicted as a human, "White Snake" when she is depicted as a snake or monster, and "White-Cloud Female Transcendent" (*Baiyun xiangu* 白雲仙姑) when she is depicted as a spirit or transcendent. Throughout this dissertation, I will refer to her as "White Snake" for consistency. Little Green's name in Chinese, *Xiao Qing* 小青, refers to the color *qing*, which can be green, blue, or black depending on context. "Little Blue" would be an equally accurate translation, and I have chosen "Little Green" based on my own preference. The character is known under a variety of other names, such as *Qing'er* 青兒 [Greenling], *Qing She* 青蛇 [Green Snake], and *Qing Qing* 青青 [Greenie], but I will generally refer to her as Little Green for consistency. In some *chuanqi* and Sichuan opera versions of *White Snake*, this character changes from male to female and vice versa, but I will use the pronouns she/her/hers unless specifically discussing versions in which she is male.

him misfortune: on two occasions, he is arrested and exiled for possession of stolen items—items that White Snake gave to him. A couple of exorcists recognize that he has been possessed by a monster and attempt to subdue her, but they are unsuccessful. Only when Xu enlists the help of the Zen Master Fahai 法海 is he able to free himself from White Snake's possession. Fahai assists Xu in subjugating White Snake and Little Green, and buries them under Thunder Peak Pagoda. Xu becomes a monk and Fahai's apprentice. Representative versions from this period include "Bai niangzi yongzhen Leifengta" 白娘子永鎮雷峰塔 (Madam White is kept forever under Thunder Peak Tower – hereafter, "Madam White") from Feng Menglong's 馮夢龍 (1574–1645) *Jing shi tongyan* 警世通言 (Stories to caution the world); Mo Langzi's 墨浪子 narrative tale "Leifeng guai ji 雷鋒怪記" [The strange record of Thunder Peak Pagoda]; Huang Tubi 黃圖玭 (1700-1771)'s play, *Leifengta* 雷峰塔 (Thunder Peak Pagoda), and a Japanese version by Ueda Akinari 上田 秋成 (1734 – 1809), "Jasei no in 蛇性の婬 (A Serpent's Lust)."[14]

Beginning in the mid-to-late eighteenth century, new versions of *The Legend of White Snake* tended to focus on the marriage relationship between Xu and White Snake, and White Snake herself became the central character. These versions also added plot points that became standard for future versions. Xu and White Snake meet on boat ride during a storm on West

[14] For a reprint of a 1624 woodblock print of Feng's tale, see "Jingshi tongyan 警世通眼 (Stories to Caution the World)" in *Xuxiu siku quan shu* 續修四庫全書, vol. 1785, 1800 vols. (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1995), 135-54. an English translation of "Madam White," see Menglong 馮夢龍 (1574–1646) Feng, "Madam White Is Kept Forever under Thunder Peak Tower," in *Stories to Caution the World*, trans. Shuhui Yang and Yunqin Yang (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005), 474–505. "The Strange Record of Thunder Peak Pagoda" is collected in *Xihu jiahua* 西湖佳話, published 1673. For Huang's play, see "Leifengta 雷峰塔," in *Bai she zhuan ji* 白蛇傳集 [The legend of White Snake collection], Fu Xihua 傅惜华 (1907-1970), ed. (Shanghai: Gudian wenxue chubanshe, 1957), 281-338. For an English translation of "A Serpent's Lust," see Ueda Akinari, *Tales of Moonlight and Rain*, trans. Anthony H. Chambers (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 155-85.

Lake. Xu lends her his umbrella, which gives him a reason to meet with her again, at which point they are married. During the Duanwu Festival, Xu pressures White Snake to drink realgar wine, which causes her to revert to her original form as a giant white snake.[15] The shock of seeing his wife's true form scares Xu to death, so White Snake travels to Mount Kunlun to retrieve the Transcendent's Herb, which she later uses to revive him. Fahai convinces Xu to come to Golden Mountain Monastery and become a monk. White Snake and Little Green lead an army of sea creatures to attack the monastery. Although they are unable to free Xu, they are able to escape and reunite with Xu at Broken Bridge. After White Snake gives birth to a son, Fahai returns, subjugates White Snake and traps her under Thunder Peak Pagoda. *White Snake*'s son, through acts of filial piety and placing first in the civil examinations, convinces Fahai to release White Snake. The son gets married, White Snake and Little Green ascend to the Heavenly Palace (Tiangong 天宫), and Fahai and Xu Xian return to Buddha. Examples of important Qing versions include Fang Chengpei's 方成培 (1713-1808) play *Leifengta chuanqi* 雷峰塔 (Thunder Peak Pagoda), the narrative *Leifengta qizhuan* 雷峰塔奇傳 (The amazing legend of Thunder Peak Pagoda) attributed to Yushan Zhuren 玉山主人, Chen Yuqian's 陳遇乾 *tanci* (lute ballad) *Yi yao zhuan* 義妖傳 (The legend of the righteous monster), and *Leifengta baojuan* 雷峰塔寶眷 (The precious scroll of Thunder Peak Pagoda).[16]

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[15] Duanwu Festival is an ancient festival that combines traditions from multiple sources, celebrated on the fifth day of the fifth month of the lunar calendar (see Chapter Four). Realgar wine is an alcoholic beverage infused with realgar, an arsenic compound, that is traditionally consumed at Duanwu Festival.

[16] For Fang's play, see Fu, *Bai she zhuan ji*, 339-419; for an annotated version, see Fang Chengpei, *Leifengta* 雷峰塔 (Thunder Peak Pagoda) (Beijing: Huaxia chubanshe, 2000); for a reprint of the 1772 woodblock print, see Fang Chengpei, "Leifengta Chuanqi 雷峰塔傳奇 [The southern drama of Thunder Peak Pagoda]," in *Xuxiu siku quan shu*, vol. 1776, 202–323. For a reprint of *The Amazing History of Thunder Peak Pagoda*, see Yushan Zhuren, *Leifengta qi zhuan* 雷峰塔奇傳 (Taipei: Tian yi chubanshe, 1985) (originally printed 1806). For Chen Yuqian's 陳遇乾, *Xiuxiang yi yao zhuan* 繡像義妖傳 [The embroidered portrait of the legend of the righteous monster], 1809, *juan* 11. Available https://www.shuge.org/ebook/xiu-xiang-yi-yao-quan-zhuan/. For precious scroll versions, see

In the past fifty years century, *White Snake* has continued to be adapted to a wide variety of literary genres and media, inside and outside of China. Influential versions include Lilian Lee's 李碧華 novel *Qing she* 青蛇 (Green Snake) and the film it inspired, also titled *Qing she*, by director Tsui Hark 徐克; the television series *Xin Bai niangzi chaunqi* 新白娘子傳奇 (The new legend of Madam White Snake), the English-language play by Mary Zimmerman, *The White Snake: A Play*, and the computer animated film *Bai she: yuanqi* 白蛇：緣起 (White Snake: Origins).[17]

**Discussing the Fall of Thunder Peak Pagoda: *White Snake* in Chinese and English-language scholarship**

With so many different versions and so much variation in content, one of the greatest challenges to approaching *White Snake* as a research subject is determining where to begin. Perhaps for this reason, research on *White Snake* in Chinese and English-language scholarship has been limited in a few ways, such as a tendency to focus on tracing the story's origin and development, and imposing ideological values onto the story's development.[18] This section will

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Kuanchong 黃寬重 Huang et al., eds., *Su wenxue congkan* 俗文學叢刊 (Folk literature: materials in the collection of the Institute of History and Philology), vol. 355 (Taipei: Xin wen feng chuban youxian gongsi, 2001), 1-48; Fu, *Bai she zhuan ji*, 191-264; Idema, *The White Snake and Her Son*, 9-84.

[17] Lillian Lee (Li Pik-wah 李碧華), *Qing she* (Hong Kong: Tian di/Cosmo Books, 1986); *Qing she*, Tsui Hark, dir. (Hong Kong: Seasonal Film Corporation, 1993); *Xin Bai niangzi chaunqi*, produced by Cao Jingde 曹景德 (Taiwan: Wanda Production, 1992); Mary Zimmerman, *The White Snake: A Play* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2013); *Bai she: yuanqi*, Amp Wong and Zhao Ji, dir. (Beijing: Light Chaser Animation/Warner Bros: 2019). Liang Luo's book manuscript, *Gender, Media and Politics in the White Snake* (under review), discusses feminine performance, gender politics, and popular culture in recent versions of *White Snake*.

[18] In her literature review of *White Snake* scholarship, Gao Yanfang 高艳芳 identities two limitations of the current scholarship as excessively repeated research on the origins of the story and a lack of deep case studies ("过分的重复性源流研究 ,而缺乏深度的个案研究成果"). Gao Yanfang, "Bai she zhuan yanjiu de bai nian huigu yu fansi 白

discuss the successes and challenges presented in research on premodern *White Snake* literature and explain how this dissertation will address some of these challenges.

The first generation of modern scholarship on *White Snake* began shortly after Lu Xun's essay on the fall of Thunder Peak Pagoda in 1924 and continued into the early days of the PRC. Publishing short articles in newspapers and long essays in collections, many of the scholars of this generation combined Qing methods of evidential scholarship (*kaozheng* 考證) with the intellectual and political values of the May Fourth Movement and the Chinese Communist Party. Scholars from this era include Qian Jingfang 錢靜方, Qian Xingcun 錢杏邨 (pseud.: A Ying 阿英) (1900-77), Hu Shiying 胡士瑩 (1901—1979), Zhao Jingshen 趙景深 (1902 - 1985), and Fu Xihua 傅惜华 (1907-1970), and later Wang Xiang 王驤 (1915—2012) and Dai Bufan 戴不凡 (1922-1980).[19] The works of these scholars provided an important foundation of materials that are often still used today in *White Snake* research.

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蛇传研究的百年回顾与反思 (Reflections on the research on the white snake legend in the past hundred years," *Guangxi shifan daxue xuebao: zhexue shehuixue ban* 49.6 (2003): 51–7. For a literary review of more recent Chinese-language scholarship on *White Snake*, see Sun Jing 孫竟, "Jin shi ji nian Bai she zhuan yanjiu wenxian zongshu 近十幾年白蛇傳研究文獻綜述 [A summary of research documents on the Legend of White Snake from the last ten-twenty years]," *Kaifeng jiaoyu xueyuan xuebao* 36, no. 2 (2016): 21–23.

[19] Qian Jingfang, *Xiaoshuo congkao* 小說叢考[Collection and investigation of fiction], second ed. (Shanghai: Gudian wenxue chubanshe, 1957) [originally published 1929] 195-7; Hu Shiying, "Bai she zhuan" gushi de fazhan--cong huaben "Bai niangzi yongzhen Leifengta" tanqi 《白蛇傳》故事的發展——從話本《白娘子永鎮雷峰塔》談起 [The development of the story "The Legend of White Snake"--beginning from the vernacular tale "Madam White Is Kept Forever under Thunder Peak Tower"], *Zhejiang ribao*, December 16, 1956, reprinted in *Mingjia tan Bai she zhuan* 名家谈《白蛇传》 [Great names talk about The Legend of White Snake – hereafter, MTB] (Beijing: Wenhua yishu chubanshe, 2006), 18-21; A Ying [Qian Xingcun], *Leifengta chuanqi shulu* 雷峰塔傳奇敘錄 [Commentaries on the southern dramas of Thunder Peak Pagoda] (Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju, 1960), 1-88; Zhao Jingshen, *Tanci kaozheng* 彈詞考證 [A textual criticism of lute ballads] (Changsha: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1938), 1-44; Fu Xihua, *Bai she zhuan ji*, 1-6; Wang Xiang, "Bai she zhuan shenhua de Zhenjiang yi yuan 白蛇傳神話的鎮江一源 [The Legend of White Snake's singular origin of Zhenjiang], *Renmin ribao* June 5, 1962; Dai Bufan, "Shilun 'Bai she zhuan' gushi 试论《白蛇传》故事 [On the subject of the story of "The Legend of White Snake]," in MTB, 2–17.

One major point of discussion among *White Snake* scholars during this period was the story's origin. Some argued for an origin in the Tang (618-907 CE) or Song (960-1279), while others traced the origin to more ancient "totem worship" or suggested an origin for *White Snake* in India. With no definitive version, however, there is no objective point at which *White Snake* became *White Snake*, so disagreements from this period about the origins of *White Snake* often focused less on dating or contextualizing the materials and instead centered on differing perspectives on the relationship of Ming and Qing versions to older versions and ancient cultures. For example, Hu Shiying seemed to consider the Tang tale "Li Huang" as the origin of *White Snake*, whereas Dai Bufan saw the tale as not significantly related to *White Snake*, arguing instead for an origin in the Song.[20] Wang Xiang drew connections between White Snake and the creator goddess Nüwa 女娲, placing the story within the context of snake totem worship in China, a pattern that appears in modern scholarship as well.[21] Zhao Jingshen suggested that *White Snake* shares an origin with John Yeats' (1795 – 1821) poem "Lamia," which was based on Greek Mythology, arguing that both stories came from India.[22]

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[20] Hu, "'Bai she zhuan' gushi de fazhan," 18-9; Dai, "Shilun 'Bai she zhuan' gushi," 2–17.

[21] "Bai she zhuan shenhua de Zhenjiang yi yuan"; ""Bai she zhuan" chuanshuo gushi tanyuan--Lun bai she gushi yu Hangzhou Xihu de jiehe guocheng《白蛇传》传说故事探源——论白蛇故事与杭州西湖的结合过程 [Exploring the origins of the story of "The Legend of White Snake"--discussing the process of uniting the story of White Snake and Hangzhou's West Lake]," in MTB, 100–113. For moderns discussion of totem worship in relation to *White Snake*, see Fan Jinlan, *Bai she zhuan gushi: xingbian yanjiu*【白蛇傳故事】形變研究 [The story of White Snake: transformation research] (Taibeii: Wanjuanlou tushu gufen youxian gongsi, 2003), 15-52; Ma Zichen 马紫晨, "Bai she zhuan gushi yanjiu ji qi benyuan shixi《白蛇传》故事研究及其本源试析 [Researching the story of The Legend of White Snake and testing and analyzing its origins]," *Zhongzhou jingu*, no. 2 (2002): 41–42.

[22] According to Ting Nai-tung, the connection between *White Snake* and "Lamia" was first drawn by the Japanese literary critic Kuriyagawa Hakuson 厨川 白村 (1880 – 1923), who based the idea on a Japanese version of *White Snake* by Ueda Akinari. The connection was readily accepted by Chinese scholars, such as Zhao Jingshen, and is often still discussed in scholarship on *White Snake*. For Kuriyagawa's article, see "Jūjigaitō o iku 十字街頭を往く [Walking towards the crossroads]," in *Kuriyagawa Hakuson zenshu* [Kuriyagawa Hakuson collection], vol. 3 (Tokyo: Tokyo kaizo sha, 1929), 307-314. For Zhao's summary, see *Tanci kaozheng*, 3-5. For a more recent discussion of this explanation of *White Snake*'s origin, see Pan Jiangdong 潘江东, "Bai she gushi zhi dong xi liubo 白蛇故事之东西流播 [The spread east and west of the story of White Snake]" (Beijing: Wenhua yishu chubanshe,

The interest scholars of this generation had in tracing *White Snake* to ancient origins related to a more general interest in vernacular literature and folklore among intellectuals of the New Culture Movement. Intellectuals and scholars like Lu Xun, Hu Shi 胡適 (1891-1962), and Gu Jiegang 顧頡剛 (1893-1980) saw vernacular literature and drama as a means to access the beliefs of the common people, as separate from the Classical Chinese used by elites, who had been corrupted by Confucianism.[23] Of course, the assumption that the culture of common people could be completely separated from elite culture, and vice versa, is problematic. As I examine in Chapter One, some of the most famous versions of *White Snake* were written by members of the literati elite, and even the imperial court seems to have played an important role in the development of *White Snake* in acted performance in the eighteenth century. Furthermore, in the world of creative dramatic arts in late imperial China, boundaries between different classes were not rigid, and people of many different backgrounds contributed to artistic production and reception.[24] In this sense, *White Snake* grew out of a complex network of creators and consumers from all different levels of society that took the work in different directions and cannot be considered a creation of "common people" any more than it can be considered strictly the work

2006), 94–98. See also Chen Jianxian 陈建宪, "Cong yindang de sheyao dao ai yu mei de huashen--lun dongxifang 'Bai she zhuan' zhong renwu xingxiang de yanhua 从淫荡的蛇妖到爱与美的化身——论东西方《白蛇传》中人物形象的演化 [From a lewd snake monster to an embodiment of love and beauty--a discussion of the evolution of character and imagery in eastern and western versions of 'The Legend of White Snake']," *Huazhong shifan daxue xubao* 2 (1987): 101–5; Nai-Tung Ting, "The Holy Man and the Snake-Woman: A Study of a Lamia Story in Asian and European Literature," *Fabula* 8, no. 1 (1966): 145–91.

[23] For an overview of the intellectual movements from this period, see Benjamin Schwartz, "Themes in Intellectual History: May Fourth and After," in *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 12 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 406–50.

[24] For example, Catherine Swatek discusses the conscious combination of common and elite elements in the performance of *The Peony Pavilion*, in Catherine Crutchfield Swatek, *Peony Pavilion Onstage: Four Centuries in the Career of a Chinese Drama* (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 2002), 158-202.

of elite writers. This issue of generalizing so-called "folktales" as pure representations of popular culture has received attention in recent Chinese and English-language scholarship.[25]

Another point of discussion among the early generations of Chinese scholars of *White Snake* centered around ideology reflected in the story. Many early scholars tended to interpret the story as promoting a particular religious ideology but disagreed about which religion the story promoted.[26] For example, Qian Jingfang cites the relative strength of Fahai as evidence that the story promoted Buddhism, while Ouyang Yuqian 歐陽予倩 (1889－1962) argued White Snake's ultimate victory showed that the story promoted Daoism.[27] Huang Zhigang 黃芝岡 (1895-1971) suggested that *White Snake* depicted the struggle between Vinaya Buddhism (*Lü zong* 律宗), as represented by Fahai, and Chan (Zen) Buddhism (*Chan zong* 禪宗), as represented by White Snake.[28] Other scholars, such as Zhao Jingshen, see the work as promoting

[25] Idema points out that there is considerable inconsistency between "The Four Great Folktales of China (中國四大民間傳說)," a term which seems to have solidified in the 1950s, including *White Snake*, *The Cowherd and the Weaver Girl* (*Niulang zhinü* 牛郎織女), *Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai* (*Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai* 梁山伯與祝英台, also called *Butterfly Lovers*), *Lady Meng Jiang* (*Mengjiang nü* 孟姜女). See Idema, "Old Tales for New Times: Some Comments on Cultural Translation of China's Four Great Folktales in the Twentieth Century," *Taiwan Journal of East Asian Studies* 9, no. 1 (2012): 1–23. Haiyan Lee argues that Chinese scholar Gu Jiegang 顧頡剛 (1893-1980) "translated" his own evolution of the story in order to reaffirm his own "imperative of rebelling against a stultifying tradition in the name of sentimental emancipation" in his studies of the folktale *Lady Meng Jiang*. See "Tears That Crumbled the Great Wall: The Archaeology of Feeling in the May Fourth Folklore Movement," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 64, no. 1 (2005): 59; See also Shi Aidong 施愛東, "Niulang zhinü yanjiu piping 牛郎织女研究批评 [Criticism on research of the cowherder and the weaving maiden]," *Wen shi zhe (Journal of Literature, History, and Philosophy)*, no. 4 (2008): 77–86. Patrick Hanan also discusses the complicated relationship between popular and elite in vernacular stories form the late imperial period. See *The Chinese Vernacular Story*, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1981).

[26] For a summary of Chinese scholars' religious interpretations of *White Snake*, see Pan Jiangdong "Bai she gushi yu zongjiao zhi guanxi 白蛇故事與宗教之關係 [The relationship between the story of white snake and religion]," in MTB, 272–77.

[27] Ouyang Yuqian is quoted in Pan, "Bai she gushi yu zongjiao zhi guanxi," 273-4.

[28] Huang Zhigang, *Cong yangge dao difangxi* 從秧歌到地方戲 [From folk dances to regional operas] (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 2015)[Originally published 1951], 68-71.

a mixture of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism. Under the PRC, scholars interpreted *White Snake* as evidence of class struggle. Dai Bufan, for example, argued that the conflict between White Snake and Fahai represented "the people's struggle to oppose feudalism," and critiqued other scholars for oversimplifying the story as promoting of Buddhism or Daoism.[29] Activist and playwright Tian Han 田漢 (1898 – 1968) used a similar interpretation for his Beijing opera version of *White Snake*, one of the most influential versions of the twentieth century.[30]

Aside from their debates on the origins of *White Snake* and interpreting the story as an allegory for various ideologies, the early textual analyses of *White Snake* provided careful discussions of how the story changed during the Ming and Qing, using literary texts and historical records to carefully compare plots and language from a wide variety of texts. Zhao Jingshen provided a thorough overview of written narratives and dramatic versions from the Ming and Qing, including a detailed chart showing the relationship between different works (see Figure 1). Qian Xingcun focused his attention on changes between dramatic versions from the eighteenth century, using a scene-by-scene comparison of three

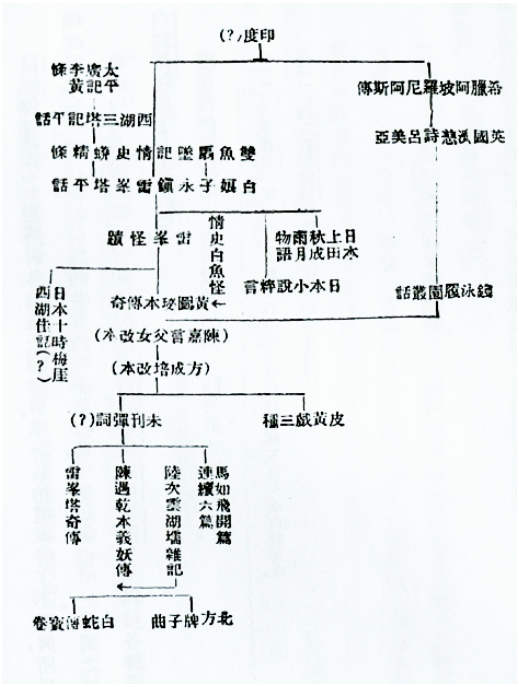


*Figure 1. Zhao Jingshen's chart explaining the development of White Snake and its connection to Lamia and Indian folktales. See* Tanci kaozheng, *44.*

[29] "人民反封建的鬥爭了," "Shilun 'Bai she zhuan' gushi," 5.

[30] For an analysis of the relationship between avant-garde and traditional performance in Tian Han's *White Snake*, see Luo Liang 羅靚, *The Avant-Garde and the Popular in Modern China: Tian Han and the Intersection of Performance and Politics* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan, 2014), 177-212.

scripts from this period to illustrate *White Snake*'s development. Qian's analysis seems to have informed later drama scholars, such as Guo Yingde 郭英德.[31] Fu Xihua's 1955 book, *Bai she zhuan ji* 白蛇傳集 [The legend of white snake collection – hereafter *Collection*], is perhaps still the largest collection of *White Snake* literature, including a wide variety of storytelling versions and full-length plays.[32]

A considerable proportion of Chinese-language scholarship on *White Snake* since the reform period has simply summarized earlier scholarship, but some research has contributed important new revelations in materials and introduced creative new perspectives. In contrast to the early textual analyses, which tended to focus on tracing the story's development by charting changes to details in plot and language, recent scholars have focused on grouping different versions according to stage or category in order to illustrate change.[33] One exceptional recent contribution to the textual history of *White Snake* was written by the Taiwanese scholar Wang

[31] Guo Yingde, *Qing chuanqi zonglu* 明清傳奇綜錄 [Comprehensive collection of Ming and Qing chuanqi dramas], vol. 2, (Shijiazhuang: Hebei jiaoyu chubanshe, 1997), 933-6; 1010-20. According to Guo, *Complete Collection of the Pavilion for Seeing the Mountains* was published in 1738. For translation, see Wilt Idema, *The White Snake and Her Son*, 141.

[32] Fu Xihua, ed., *Bai she zhuan ji*.

[33] For example, Duan Meihua 段美華 measures the changes in *White Snake* on a spectrum of monster (*yao*) and transcendent (*xian*; see below), dividing the progression into three phases: the early Tang and Song tales as "the period of Lady White as a snake monster (白娘子蛇妖期)," Feng Menglong and the early *chuanqi*'s as "the period of Madam White as half person, half monster (白娘子半人半妖期)," and Fang Chengpei's *chuanqi* and later versions as "the period of Madam White as a snake transcendent (白娘子蛇仙期). See "Bai niangzi shanbian de lishi jiazhi 白娘子嬗變的歷史價值 [The historical value of Madam White's evolution]," Hainan Daxue Xuebao, no. 1 (1992): 81–83. Fan Jinlan 范金蘭 provides one of the most comprehensive discussions of different versions of *White Snake*, which she arranges chronologically into four periods: "origins of the story of *White Snake*," which covers Tang and Song narratives, "period of development of the story of *White Snake*," which covers the late Ming and early Qing, "the period of maturation," which covers mid-Qing as well as regional operas, and "period of increase and differentiation," which covers late Qing and twentieth century works. *Bai she zhuan gushi: xingbian yanjiu* 【白蛇傳故事】形變研究 *(*The story of white snake: transformation research*)* (Taibei: Wanjuanlou tushu gufen youxian gongsi, 2003).

Shih-pe 汪詩珮. In her study of eighteenth-century *White Snake* plays, Wang revisits the works of Qian Xingcun, Fu Xihua, and others, disputes some of their analyses, and introduces new evidence from archives in Beijing. Wang reconstructs the timeline for the development of *White Snake* scripts from the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and disputes the relative importance of Fang Chengpei's play, arguing instead for the independent development of actors' versions.[34] I will discuss Wang's findings in greater detail in Chapter One.

Although the language and research methods have changed, much of the *White Snake* scholarship in China since the reform period continues to analyze the story through modern ideological lenses. Some scholars have used the theories of American anthropologist Robert Redfield (1897–1958) to discuss popular and elite culture in relation to *White Snake*.[35] A substantial number of Chinese scholars have argued that the development of White Snake reflected growing opposition towards feudalism and desire for women's rights, freedom of marriage, and/or gender equality.[36] Xie Qian 謝謙 is critical of this view, however, arguing that

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[34] "Qianji yu minzong: Qing zhongye Leifengta chuanqi yanbian xinlun 潛跡與明蹤: 清中葉《雷峰塔》傳奇演變新論 (The underlain footprints and revealed route: a re-examination on the development of Thunder Peak Pagoda in mid-Qing)," *Minsu Quyi* 199 (2018): 263–327. See also Wang Shih-pe, "Qing zhongye yi bu dianfuxing de Bai she xiqu 'xuji': Riben Tianli tushuguan cang hou Leifengta chaunqi chutan 清中葉一部顛覆性的白蛇戲曲「續集」: 日本天理圖書館藏《後雷峰塔傳奇》初探 (A subversive white snake drama sequel in mid-Qing: the preliminary analysis of post-Thunder Peak Pagdoa collected in Tenri Library," *Guowen Xuebao*, no. 62 (2017): 59–99.

[35] Xie Yanqing 謝燕清, "Da chuantong yu xiao chuantong - bai she gushi de san qi xing bian 大傳統與小傳統—白蛇故事的三 期型變 [Great traditions and little traditions - the three periods of changing patterns of the White Snake story]," *Minsu yanjiu*, no. 1 (2007): 230–38; Guo Juanjuan 郭娟娟, "'Bai she zhuan wenhua' de renleixue jiedu '白蛇傳文化'的人類學解讀 [An explanation of the anthropology of 'White Snake culture,'" *Changchun gongye daxue xuebao*, no. 11 (2009): 117–20. See also Robert Redfield, *Peasant Society and Culture; an Anthropological Approach to Civilization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956).

[36] See Chen Yiqin 陳毅勤, "Cong 'Xihu san ta ji' dao 'Bai she zhuan' 從《西湖三塔記》到《白蛇傳》[From 'The Three Pagodas of West Lake' to *The Legend of White Snake*," in MTB, 36–44; Luo Rongping 羅戎平, "Bai she zhuan: cong she tuteng dao juyou fanpanli de nüxing huayu 白蛇傳:从蛇圖騰到具有反叛力的女性話語 (The Legend of White Snake: from snake totem to feminine discourse rich in rebellious force)," *Zhenjiang Gaozhuan Xuebao* 19, no. 4 (2006): 33–35; Wang Chengxia 王澄霞, "'Bai she zhuan' de wenhua neihan he Bai niangzi xingxiang de xiandai chanshi《白蛇傳》 的文化內涵和白娘子形象的現代闡釋 (Modern interpretation: the image

considering the work anti-feudalist or promoting the desire for free marriage or gender equality is anachronistic and does not make sense within the historical context. Rather, Xie frames changes in the story as the absorption of Daoist, Buddhist, and Confucian ideas, and sees Qing versions of *White Snake* as religious morality stories focused on saving people through offerings and deliverance.[37] In this sense, Chinese scholarship has continued to emphasize the value of the story as an expression of the perspective of common people, a critique of feudal society, and a representation of religious expression.

English-language scholarship on *White Snake* is relatively limited, considering the popularity of the story in China, but several articles and dissertations have built on the textual analysis of Chinese scholars and provided case studies on specific versions, and translations have also provided a significant range of material for comparison.[38] Hsü Wen-hung provided an early English-language overview of change and development in the *White Snake* story complex.[39] Whalen Lai explores the origin of *White Snake* as a confluence of the sexual encounters with female spirits and demons that began in *Chu ci* 楚辭 (Songs of Chu) and myths about the water god He Bo 河伯.[40] More recent scholarship has presented thoughtful analysis of modern versions

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of white lady and the cultural connotation in the Legend of the White Snake)," *Yangzhou daxue xuebao*, no. 1 (2008): 3–7; Tang Moping 唐未平, "Bai she zhuan nüxing yishi he nanquan sixiang de duikang yu xiaozhang 白蛇傳女性意識和男權思想的對抗與消長 The opposition and decline of female awareness and ideology of male rights in the Legend of White Snake," *Jinri nanguo*, no. 6 (2010): 189–90.

[37] "Bai she zhuan: minjian chuanshuo de sanjiao yanyi 白蛇傳：民間傳說的三教演繹 (Bai she zhuan: transformation of folklore based on three religions)," *Sichuan shifan daxue xuebao*, no. 11 (2005): 59–63.

[38] Previous *White Snake* dissertations include Wu Pei-yi, "The White Snake: The Evolution of a Myth in China," Diss., Columbia University, 1969; Chang, Chia-ju, "The Chinese Snake Woman: Mythology, Culture and Female Expression," Diss., Rutgers University, 2004.

[39] "The Evolution of the Legend of the White Serpent (Part I)," *Tamkang Review* 4.1 (1973), 109–27, and "The Evolution of the Legend of the White Serpent (Part II)," *Tamkang Review* 4.2 (1973), 121–56.

of *White Snake.* Neil Khor shows how Southeast Asian versions of *White Snake* were used as a means to sustain Chinese identities in diaspora communities.[41] Liang Luo explores the dialectics of dancing and writing in Yan Geling's 嚴歌苓 novella *Bai she* 白蛇 (White Snake) and Lilian Lee's novel *Qing she*. Alvin Ka Hin Wong evaluates the category of *renyao* in "Miss White," *Qingshe*, and the television series *The New Legend of Madam White Snake* to show how modern versions of *White Snake* "reconfigure femininity as a mobile ground for imagining perverse sexuality and transgender femme subjectivity."[42]

Some of the best contributions in English-language scholarship on *White Snake* have appeared in translations of performance versions. Fan-Pen Li Chen's translation of a shadow puppet sequel to *White Snake*, titled *Ling yun du* 凌雲渡 (Cloud-Transcending Crossing), includes a substantial introduction that places the work within a tradition of Buddhist and Daoist subjugation of snake cults.[43] In the introduction to his collection of *White Snake* translations, Wilt Idema provides a concise but thorough overview of the story's development in drama, storytelling, and written narrative. Idema also compares changes in the White Snake story in the

[40] "From Folklore to Literature Theater: Unpacking 'Madame White Snake,'" *Asian Folklore Studies* 51.1 (1992), 51–66.

[41] "Lady White," *Indonesia and the Malay World* 42, no. 123 (2014): 286–303.

[42] "Transgenderism as a Heuristic Device: On the Cross-Historical and Transnational Adaptations of the Legend of White Snake," in *Transgender China*, ed. Howard Chiang (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 127–58.

[43] Drawing from hagiographies and tales from the second, third, and eighth century and a series of *nuo* 儺 plays, Chen suggests not only that snake cult worship was a common practice in Southern China, but also that, for Buddhist monks and Daoist priests, subjugating snake cults was a way to prove one's power. This long-standing tradition of religious leaders and the exorcism of snakes helps explain not only the tension between White Snake and Fahai, but also White Snake's origin on Mount Emei or Mount Qingcheng as a subjugated snake, on a path of cultivation of transcendence (*xian* 仙) or enlightenment. Fan-Pen Li Chen, "'Cloud-Transcending Crossing' ('Lingyun Du') or 'The Great Revenge of Blue Snake' ('Qingshe Da Baochou'), the Second and Final Installment of a Chengdu Shadow Play Scripts, Thunder Peak Pagoda (Leifeng Ta)," *Chinoperl* 32, no. 1 (2013): 30–71.

later eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to other tales of filial sons and to Alan Cole's study of Buddhist mothers and sons, which I discuss in greater detail in Chapter Three.[44]

In summary, research on *White Snake* has been successful in charting the development of texts over time, beginning with the evidential scholarship of the 1920s-50s, and continuing most recently with Wang Shih-pe. English-language scholarship has been sparse but includes thoughtful case studies and strongly contextualized translations of specific versions. I argue that a few important issues in methodology and approach have limited *White Snake* research. First, research on *White Snake* has been limited by the assumption that the story represents the values of common people. Rather, I argue that reducing the broad range of *White Snake* materials to simple categories of popular and elite diminishes their value as research subjects. Furthermore, although *White Snake* has often been considered a folktale and a representation of popular culture, discussion of the story has tended to focus on a limited set of source materials, especially versions created by educated elites, such as "Madam White," and *chuanqi* plays. Second, *White Snake* scholarship has tended to focus on allegorical interpretation of specific ideological values—often values that were projections of the scholars' own values. As with labeling *White Snake* as a representation of common people, interpreting the story as allegory has often been reductive and anachronistic. The Marxist interpretation of Fahai as a symbol of feudalism, for example, may have had political value for scholars and performers of the twentieth century, but it is both a limited view of the character and an oversimplification of feudalism that does not reflect the perspectives of people from the Qing. Third, despite considerable attention given to performance versions of *White Snake*, previous research has focused on textual comparison with

[44] Idema, *The White Snake and Her Son* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2009); Alan Cole, *Mothers and Sons in Chinese Buddhism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

little consideration to performance art and performance context. Many questions about the performance of *White Snake* in the Qing remain unanswered: how was the experience of watching the story performed different from reading a script? How do different media and genres change the way the story was told? How did the story change according to different performance contexts, and what does adaptation reveal about different audiences?

To address these questions, as well as the broader challenge of how to approach a work with no representative version, this dissertation examines a wide range of performance genres and contexts that have not been substantially discussed in previous research and applies methodologies that have not previously been applied to *White Snake*. The methodology of this dissertation builds on the work of Catherine Swatek and Andrea Goldman, exploring how the performance of plays changed over time, rather than focusing on static, written texts. By the Qing, plays were usually performed not as full-length plays, but as individual scenes, or groups of scenes, highlighting the most popular scenes from full-length plays. Swatek and Goldman have shown that, by tracing which scenes were chosen for individual performance and how scripts were changed over time, we can see which aspects of performance interested audiences and how their interests changed over time.[45] This study contributes to this methodology by

[45] In her study of *The Peony Pavilion* (Mudan ting 牡丹亭), Catherine Swatek compares excerpted scenes from different editions of two important Qing drama miscellanies, *Zhui baiqiu* and *Shenyin jianggu lu*, to show the "parallel contexts in which the Kun opera texts were transmitted—one refined and elite, the other more popular and theatrically based" and the "gradual shift from a theatrical literature controlled by playwrights to one that registered the creative efforts of performers." Andrea Goldman uses comparisons of close readings of excerpted plays in the *kunju* (Kun opera) and *pihuang* (a precursor to Beijing opera) performance styles to show differing interests of audiences based on genre in her study of "I, Sister-in-Law" plays, a genre of plays based on scenes from *The Water Margin*. *Kunju* versions of excerpted plays in the drama miscellanies of the Qing foregrounded the "sister-in-law" characters, focusing on their ability to seduce and downplaying the humiliation of their husbands and the punishment of the sister-in-law characters. *Pihuang* plays, considered low-brown in comparison to *kunju* for most of the Qing, restored focus to the husbands of "sister-in-law characters," downplayed seduction, and focused instead on the revenge exacted on the "sister-in-law" characters for their infidelity. See Swatek, *Peony Pavilion Onstage*, 101-257; Andrea S. Goldman, *Opera and the City: The Politics of Culture in Beijing, 1770-1900* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2012), 196-257.

incorporating a greater range of materials in a wider range of performance contexts, including Sichuan opera in addition to the more commonly studied Kunqu and *pihuang*, as well as storytelling versions. In addition to the elite acted performance genre of Kunqu, this dissertation looks at performance in regional genres, such as *pihuang* and Sichuan opera, and storytelling genres, such as bannerman tales and wharf tunes. This study includes scripts intended for performance in commercial playhouses, scripts intended for use in public rituals, and scripts that were intended for reading rather than performance.

What new perspectives does contextualizing *White Snake* as performance and examining the story from a wide range of materials offer to scholarship on *White Snake*? How and why did depictions of White Snake change over time and across genres and regions? How do changes in *White Snake* relate to broader questions about Qing society? Despite the quantity and variation of *White Snake* scripts and storytelling narratives, I will show that there is a consistent focus among performance versions on gender roles. As attitudes toward female social roles changed in Qing, so too did White Snake's role within her own narrative. In versions from the late-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, White Snake became the story's protagonist, and additional plot elements transformed her from a monster into a loyal wife and a mother. But while in many ways she became an embodiment of female virtue, White Snake never completely shed her persona as a monster. Rather, conflict within the story developed around White Snake's struggle to reconcile her contrasting identities. In this dissertation, I will show how performance of *White Snake* in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries reveals the expectations, limitations, and concerns of idealized female virtue through the development of White Snake's struggle to reconcile her monstrous nature and her roles as wife and mother.

**Chapter Outline**

The first chapter compares different acted performance versions of *White Snake* from the eighteenth century to important shifts in the story's plot and transmission, and contextualizes these shifts within Qing gender history. Comparison of the plots of two *chuanqi* plays, written about forty years apart, shows the transformation of *White Snake* from a cautionary demon story to an exemplary tale of a virtuous woman who overcomes her monstrous nature. Further comparison between the *chuanqi* plays and scenes that were excerpted for independent performance shows that the scenes added to later *chuanqi* were some of the most popular scenes. These scenes also reveal consistent interest in conflict between White Snake's contrasting identities as a monster and as a virtuous woman.

The second chapter focuses on the character Little Green. As a supporting character, Little Green is in some ways more variable and dynamic than White Snake. Throughout the Qing, the character of Little Green develops in two ways: she becomes more similar to White Snake in form and identity as a snake-monster on the path to becoming a transcendent, but she contrasts with White Snake by becoming more monstrous, aggressive, and confrontational. These two developments allow Little Green to serve as a foil to White Snake, representing a perspective that is less spiritually developed but is also less socially restricted. Through close readings of the scenes "Subduing Green" and "Broken Bridge" in Kunqu, *pihuang*, and Sichuan opera, I show that Little Green provides an alternative, potentially subversive, female perspective to White Snake that allows White Snake to maintain her female virtue.

In Chapter Three, I examine White Snake's role as a mother in the scenes "Sacrifice at the Pagoda" and "Joining the Bowls." "Sacrifice at the Pagoda" is the only popular scene in acted performance to include Xu Shilin, White Snake's son. Using texts written by opera

enthusiasts of the nineteenth century, I show that although Shilin represents all of the usual aspirations of the male literati audience, White Snake was still the main focus of the scene for the audience. While not especially popular in acted performance, "Joining the Bowls," was a comparatively popular scene in storytelling performance. I compare the scene in *chuanqi* and storytelling to show that storytelling versions used the scene to express, from White Snake's perspective, the injustice of her punishment and separation from her son.

Chapter Four explores the role of festival ritual in late-Qing Sichuan opera. Unlike the commercial performances of teahouses and theaters, festival performances in late imperial China were accessible to audiences of men, women, and children from different walks of life. In addition to entertaining the audience, festival plays also served the functions of communicating with gods and exorcising monsters, ghosts, and other malevolent spirits. The Sichuan opera play examined in this chapter includes scenes excerpted from *White Snake*, but unlike full-length versions, this excerpt play focuses entirely on Duanwu Festival. Temporally linked to the summer solstice, many symbols and rituals associated with Duanwu Festival express anxieties over drought, disease, and the threat of monsters and demons. Through comparison with a full-length version of *White Snake*, this chapter shows how one excerpt play was adapted to a festival ritual context and changed to increase ritual efficacy. I argue that rituals performed in the play are directed not only to characters in the play but also to the real-life audience watching the play. Furthermore, I argue that the play uses exorcistic symbols associated with Duanwu Festival to increase the efficacy of the ritual, both within the world of the play and the festival celebration for which the play was performed.

In the conclusion, I revisit different versions of *White Snake* from earlier chapters to discuss how the development of the story relates to Qing society. I show how performance of the

story reflects tensions in the construction of gender and point to shared themes regarding the conflict between White Snake's identities as monster and woman. Also, I discuss the how audience and performance context affect the plays' contents.

# CHAPTER ONE

## Slavishly Adhering to Old Conventions: *White Snake* on the eighteenth-century stage

How can a monster be a mother? How can one overcome his or her nature? This was the question of Huang Tubi 黃圖玭 (1700-1771), an official and author of the first extant dramatic version of *White Snake*. In the introduction to "Watching a Performance of the *Chuanqi* Play *Thunder Peak Pagoda* (Guan yan Leifengta chuanqi 觀演雷峰塔傳奇)" in his *Complete Collection of the Pavilion for Seeing the Mountains* (*Kanshange quanji* 看山閣全集 ), Huang bemoans how actors changed his version of the *White Snake* story:[46]

> Thereupon there were meddlers who continued the play with the White Snake giving birth to a son who achieves the first rank.[47] By slavishly adhering to the old conventions of the theater, they greatly pleased the eyes and ears of the audience. It became all the rage in Wu and Yue and even reached Yan and Zhao. Alas, it is the common feeling of this age that a performance can have no happy ending unless there is a top-of-the-list, and I too would not have been able to avoid this custom if I by chance would just follow the crowd. But why is it that in this play it definitely cannot be done? White Snake is a monster snake, and if [her son] would enter the ranks of the literati, where would that leave us? I thought the audiences would cover their nose to avoid this dirty stench, and I could not predict that all of a sudden at wine meetings and song parties the rewards for the actors would increase. This is something beyond my understanding. But in Suzhou there still are people who perform the play according to the text, without changing a single character, but alas, they do not find favor with the world, because there is no top-of-the-list happy ending.
>
> 遂有好事者，續白娘生子得第一節，落戲場之窠臼，悅觀聽之耳目，盛行吳越，直達燕趙。嗟乎！戲場非狀元不團圓，世之常情，偶一效而為

[46] Quoted in A Ying 阿英 [real name: Qian Xingcun 錢杏邨 (1900-77)], *Leifengta chuanqi shulu* 雷峰塔傳奇敘錄 [Commentaries on the southern dramas of Thunder Peak Pagoda] (Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju, 1960), 3-4, and Guo Yingde 郭英德 *Ming Qing chuanqi zonglu* 明清傳奇綜錄 [Comprehensive collection of Ming and Qing southern dramas] (Shijiazhuang: Hebei jiaoyu chubanshe, 1997), 935. According to Guo, *Complete Collection of the Pavilion for Seeing the Mountains* was published in 1738. For translation, see Wilt L. Idema, *The White Snake and Her Son* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2009), 141. I have followed Idema's translation but changed "Lady Bai" to "White Snake" and "demon snake" to "monster snake" for consistency.

[47] "First rank" here, as well as "top-of-the-list" later on in the passage, refers to first place in the imperial examinations.

> 之，我亦未能免俗。獨於此劇斷不可者維何？白娘，妖蛇也，而入衣冠之列：將置己身於何地耶？……然姑蘇仍有照原本演習，無一字點竄者，惜乎與世稍有未合，謂無狀元團圓故耳。

Huang's comments address some of the most important developments to the story of *White Snake*, all of which first appeared in eighteenth century dramatic versions: early versions like Huang's script conclude with White Snake subjugated and imprisoned under Thunder Peak Pagoda, but in later versions, she gives birth to a son who places first in the imperial examinations, and in the end, she is released from imprisonment and becomes a transcendent. For Huang, the thought of the son of a snake monster placing first in the imperial examinations was deplorable. How could a monster, whose very nature was flawed, produce an ideal son?

While Huang anticipated that "audiences would cover their nose to avoid this dirty stench [of White Snake having a son who places first in the imperial examinations]," all evidence seems to suggest that the exact opposite happened, that audiences of the late-eighteenth century became most interested in scenes in which White Snake takes on the roles of wife and mother. In this chapter, I will show that scenes that were added to *White Snake* in the latter half of the eighteenth century quickly became the most popular scenes and reflect the audiences' interest in the conflict between White Snake's identities as monster and woman. I also argue that, contrary to *White Snake*'s characterization as a folktale, male elites strongly influenced the development of the story's plot in the eighteenth century. This chapter is divided into four sections. The first section introduces the genre and performance context of the earliest scripts of *White Snake*. The second section focuses on changes to the plot of *White Snake* in *chuanqi* plays and excerpt plays to show which scenes were popular in performance. The third and fourth sections contextualize the identities of monster and woman in late imperial literature and culture.

**The Old Conventions of the Theater: The performance environment of the latter half of the eighteenth century**

*White Snake* first appeared as an acted performance in the style of Southern drama called *chuanqi* 傳奇.[48] *Chuanqi* were the preferred plays of the elite. Like other acted performance styles of the late imperial period, the performance of *chuanqi* plays included singing, recitation, and spoken dialogue, instrumental accompaniment, simple staging, elaborate makeup and costume, and conventional role types that provide archetypes for all characters.[49] *Chuanqi* plays emphasized singing over action, and all characters could sing in each act, unlike the northern *zaju* 雜劇 style of plays, which conventionally allowed only a single character to sing in each act. The scripts of *chuanqi* plays often followed a conventional sequence, beginning with a summary of the entire play and finishing with complete resolution of all conflict, often with the lead male character placing first in the imperial examinations and marrying a beautiful woman—

[48] "*Chuanqi*," which could be translated as "transmitted strange [tales]" or "extraordinary [accounts] that have been passed down." This term also refers to a genre narrative from the Tang Dynasty, which often focused on encounters with unusual beings. In this context, it is sometimes translated as "Southern drama," but this confuses it with the earlier genre of *nanxi* 南戲, which literally translates to "Southern drama." As such, I have chosen to leave the term untranslated.

[49] In most modern regional performance styles of Chinese drama, there are four or five role types: *sheng* 生, who are young male characters and often leading roles; *dan* 旦, who are female characters; *jing* 淨, or "painted faces," who are powerful male characters with broad builds, usually heroes or villians; and *chou* 丑, or "clowns," who are often humorous and/or corrupt. Some drama styles divide also include a fifth type, *mo* 末, who are older male characters, usually costumed with beards, whereas in other styles the *mo* is considered a *sheng*. Each role type is further divided into role subtypes, which vary by region and style, but can include divisions such as young/old (*lao* 老/ *xiao* 小) and civil/martial (*wen* 文/*wu* 武). Actors often train in all role subtypes of a given role type and do not restrict themselves to a single subtype, even though they may excel at one in particular. An actor learning the male role type may focus on the martial male role type (*wusheng* 武生), for example, but would still learn skills of the civil male role type. Qing *chuanqi* plays used the following role types and role subtypes: *sheng* (male lead), *xiaosheng* 小生 (secondary male), *dan* (female), *tie* (secondary female), *xiaodan* (young female), *laodan* (older female), *hundan* (ghost female), *jing* (painted face), *fujing* (second painted face), *mo* (eunuch, official, transcendent; by convention, recites the prologue), *wai* (older male), and *chou* (clown). See Zeng Yongyi 曾永義, "Zhongguo gudian xiju juese gaishuo 中國古典戲劇角色概說 (Overview of role categories in traditional Chinese drama)," in *Shuosu wenxue* 說俗文學 (Popular literature) (Taipei: Lianjing chuban shiye gongsi, 1980), 233-95, trans. by Catherine Swatek in *Peony Pavilion Onstage: Four Centuries in the Career of a Chinese Drama* (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 2002), 257-60.

as noted in Huang Tubi's critique of later versions of *White Snake*. In the late Ming, a specific style of melodies for *chuanqi* plays, *Kun qiang* 崑腔 (Kunqu), became the favorite among literati and merchants from the Jiangnan area.[50]

*Chuanqi* plays were often so long that they required multiple days to perform in their entirety. As such, these scripts may have only been performed in their entirety on occasion, if at all, and may have been intended more for reading or reference, so-called "desk copies" (*antou ben* 案頭本). The extensive publishing of scene compilations, or "miscellanies" (*xuanben* 選本), during the late-Ming provides evidence of the rising popularity of *zhezixi* 折子戲, or "excerpted plays,"[51] which were popular scenes from full-length plays edited to be performed as standalone plays.[52] Although performers would sometimes group two or three excerpted scenes from a single play for a performance, many performances consisted of the best individual scenes from multiple plays. While the performance of excerpted scenes included only a small selection of the play's plot, characters frequently summarized preceding plot events early in the play and, since most plays came from popular stories, much of the audience was familiar with the plot of the

[50] "*Kunqiang* 崑腔," and later "*Kunqu* 崑曲," originally referred only a style of music for *chuanqi*; later "*Kunju* 崑劇" or "*Kunxi* 崑戲 (Kun plays)" referred to the performance as well as the music. Nowadays, "Kunqu" often refers to the music, performance, and tradition of "Kun opera." While the music *Kunqiang* is used in *chuanqi* versions of *White Snake*, I will continue to use "*chuanqi*" to refer to these full-length eighteenth-century plays. I will use "Kunqu," however, to refer to performances of *Kunqiang* in excerpt.

[51] In this chapter, I will use the term "excerpted plays" to refer specifically to the Chinese term *zhezixi* and use the term "excerpted scenes" more broadly to include both *zhezixi* and storytelling versions that focus on particular scenes.

[52] Although publication of excerpted plays takes off in the late Ming, the practice of performing selected scenes from full-length plays likely began much earlier. Guo Yingde suggests the practice of performing excerpt plays to begin as early as the Yuan but places the rise in popularity of performance of excerpted plays to during the Jiaqing (1522 - 1566) and Wanli (1573 – 1619) reigns of the Ming. See *Ming Qing chuan qi shi* 明清传奇史 [History of southern dramas from the Ming and Qing] (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe: Jingxiao Jiangsu Sheng xinhua shudian, 1999), 498-507.

complete story as well as the scene that was being performed. The audience was not interested in finding out what happens in the story, since they likely already knew, but rather how well the actors performed the scene. Performing excerpted scenes allowed the actors to choose scenes that would display their talents, so many excerpted scenes focus on singing, dancing, martial arts, or other performance skills.

Audiences of dramatic performance in the Ming and Qing varied according to performance space. Andrea Goldman discusses three important venues for performance in Qing Beijing: the salon (*tanghui yanchu* 堂會演出), the playhouse, and the temple fair. In the late Ming, literati often staged performances of *chuanqi* in their own homes or other private venues. Audiences for these private performances were restricted to the social elite—social custom and law discouraged audiences that mixed men and women, but many ignored this rule. These "salon performances" continued throughout the Qing, but the Qing government placed restrictions on these performances for Manchus and officials. In the eighteenth century, commercial opera houses became a more popular venue for watching dramatic performance, perhaps in response to restrictions placed on salon performances. Patrons of commercial playhouses included members of different socioeconomic backgrounds and were popular among the Manchu as well as the Han but were more accessible to educated men of modest wealth. Women were not allowed in commercial playhouses until the twentieth century. In contrast to the more restrictive settings of salon performances and commercial playhouses, performances at temple fairs were frequent and widely accessible, admitting mixed audiences of men, women, and children.[53]

[53] I discuss temple fair/festival performance in greater detail in Chapter Four. Andrea S. Goldman, *Opera and the City: The Politics of Culture in Beijing, 1770-1900*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2012, 63-114.

The earliest record of a Southern drama script of *Thunder Peak Pagoda*, the most common title for full-length plays of *White Snake*, appears in Qi Biaojia's 祁彪佳 (1602 – 1645) *Yuanshantang jupin* 遠山堂劇品 (Classification of plays from the far mountain hall), attributing the script to the writer Chen Liulong 陳六龍.[54] The passage criticizes the script and does not provide much information about the author or the content of the play, but Qi states that he prefers it as a "short play" (xiao ju 小劇), perhaps referring to excerpt plays, instead of as a full play. Since the text is roughly contemporary with the earliest extant written narrative version, Feng Menglong's 馮夢龍 (1574 – 1646) vernacular tale (*huaben* 話本) "Madam White," modern scholars have speculated that it follows a similar plot and structure.[55] The earliest scripts that remain come from the eighteenth century, but there is some dispute among scholars as to how these scripts developed in relation to each other.

As discussed in the introduction, modern scholarship of the development of *White Snake* in drama is heavily influenced by early scholars, such as Qian Xingcun 錢杏邨 (1900-77), Zhao Jingshen 趙景深 (1902 - 1985), Fu Xihua 傅惜华 (1907-1970). These scholars point to three

[54] "Yuanshantang jupin," in *Xuxiu siku quan shu* 續修四庫全書, vol. 1758 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2002), 280. Also quoted in A Ying, *Leifengta chuanqi shulu*, 2. Qian attributes the passage to a book with the title *Dan sheng tang qulu* 淡生堂曲录, but the quotation is the same.

[55] A Ying, *Leifengta chuanqi shulu*, 2.

*chuanqi* scripts, all titled *Thunder Peak Pagoda*, as the earliest extant playscripts.[56] Qian succinctly explains his understanding of the relationship between these three versions as:[57]

> The oldest extant edition is Huang Tubi's script, printed in the first year of the Qianlong reign [1735].[58] Because Huang's script was not entirely suitable for performance onstage, and did not satisfy the demands of the audience, there was a revised script from Chen Jiayan and his daughter, in which "Giving Birth to a Son," and "Sacrifice at the Pagoda" were both added.[59] In the thirty-seventh year of the Qianlong reign [1772], Fang Chengpei again added changes because of its "inelegance."[60]
>
> 現存之最早本子，為一乾隆初年刊印之黃圖珌本。因黃本不完全適宜于舞台演出，和滿足觀眾要求。於是有陳嘉言父女的改本，並增益『產子』、『祭塔』諸出。至乾隆三十七年，方成培又以其『不文』，再加改作。

This explanation of the progression of White Snake assumes a back-and-forth interaction between literati playwrights and actors. Huang Tubi was an accomplished scholar and official, serving as vice prefect and assistant vice prefect in different cities in Zhejiang and Henan provinces. His script is similar in plot to earlier written narrative versions, including "Madam White" and Mo Langzi's 墨浪子 narrative tale "Leifeng guai ji 雷鋒怪記" [Record of the monster of Thunder Peak]. Chen Jiayan was a famous actor of the *chou* 丑 (clown) role type. Fang Chengpei 方成培 (1731? – after 1780) was a scholar who published poetry and prose but

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[56] A Ying, *Leifengta chuanqi shulu*, 1-88; Zhao Jingshen, *Tanci kaozheng* 彈詞考證 [A textual criticism of lute ballads] (Changsha: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1938), 1-44; Fu Xihua 傅惜华 (1907-1970), ed., Bai she zhuan ji 白蛇傳集 [The Legend of White Snake collection] (Shanghai: Gudian wenxue chubanshe, 1957), 1-6. See also W.L. Idema, "Introduction," *The White Snake and Her Son* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2009); Guo Yingde 郭英德, *Ming Qing chuanqi zonglu*, 933-7 and 1010-20. For an English translation of Guo's entries, see Idema, *The White Snake and Her Son*, 135-49.

[57] A Ying, *Leifengta chuanqi shulu*, 2.

[58] According to the Huang's preface, the text was actually finished in 1738.

[59] Qian's punctuation makes it appear as though "Giving Birth to a Son" is the title of a scene in the Chens' script. This title does not appear in his scene outline, however, so this would seem to actually be a reference to the additional plotline of White Snake giving birth to a son, rather than a specific scene.

[60] Fang's preface is dated to the *xinmao* year of the Qianlong reign, 1771, and it was printed in the following year.

never took the imperial examinations or served as an official. Qian goes on to quote a passage from Xu Ke's 徐珂 (1869-1928) unofficial history, *Qing bai leichao* 清稗類鈔 (Anthology of petty matters in the Qing):[61]

> During the Southern Tour [of the Qianlong emperor] the performance of new plays had been ordered. The salt merchants of Lianghuai thereupon invited some twenty or thirty famous types and had them compose the *chuanqi* play *Thunder Peak Pagoda*. But they were afraid that the actors would be unable to memorize the lines, so they employed the old tunes and tempi for the ease of performance. If a singer by chance forgot his words, he could still go on singing the old tunes, and it would not conflict with the flute and the clapper. When the imperial boat took off, two boats went in front. A stage had been erected on these two boats, and they performed the play facing the imperial boat. The Qianlong emperor repeatedly watched with pleasure.
>
> 南巡時，須演新劇，兩淮鹽商，乃延名流數十輩，使撰《雷峰塔傳奇》。然又恐伶人之不習也，即用舊曲腔拍，以取唱演之便利，若歌者偶忘曲文，亦可因依舊曲，含混歌之，不至與笛板相迕。當禦舟開行時，二舟前導，戲台即架於二舟之上，向禦舟演唱，高宗輒顧而樂之。

This passage not only claims to the Qianlong emperor's interest in the play, but also provides a date for a major revision of the script, as this tour took place in 1765. Qian seems to suggest that the "new play" referred to in this passage is Fang's play, although he expresses uncertainty. Guo Yingde, however, suggests that the new play in this passage refers to Chen Jiayan and his daughter's script, and Fang revised their version seven years later in response to performances he saw in celebration of the Qianlong emperor's mother's eightieth birthday. As Qian explains,

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[61] A Ying, *Leifengta chuanqi shulu*, 2. Also quoted in Guo Yingde, *Ming Qing chuanqi zonglu*, vol. 2, 1020. English translation is from Idema's translation, see *The White Snake and Her Son*, 146. It seems possible that Qian (A Ying) and Guo have misquoted the original: "南巡时，须演新剧，而时已匆促，乃延名流数十辈，使撰《雷峰塔传奇》。 "During the Southern Tour [of the Qianlong emperor] the performance of new plays had been ordered, and the timing was already urgent, so they invited some twenty or thirty famous types and had them compose the *chuanqi* play *Thunder Peak Pagoda*." It is also possible that they were using a different edition of *Qing bai leichao*, but I have not found a version that corresponds to their text. Although this is only a minor detail, it does call into question the role of the salt merchants of Lianghuai in the creation of this script. Xu Ke 徐珂 (1869-1928), *Qing bai leichao* 清稗類鈔 (Anthology of petty matters in the Qing), vol. 1, 10 vols. (Taipei: Taiwan Shangwu yinshuguan, 1966), 11.7.

Fang's script differs significantly from Huang's script with the addition of White Snake's son and her eventual success in being released from imprisonment under Thunder Peak Pagoda at the plays' conclusions.[62]

A recent article by Wang Shih-pe 汪詩珮 has convincingly disputed many aspects of Qian's description of the three scripts. First, Wang cites historical records to argue that the manuscript may have been misattributed to Chen and his daughter but is no longer extant, so any information about this manuscript is highly suspect.[63] Wang also uncovered new materials related to performance of *White Snake* in the eighteenth century, including a manuscript version from 1780 that is kept in the National Library of China (中國國家圖書館 ). This version has not seen much attention in scholarship but appears to be the earliest complete manuscript copy. Based on these materials, Wang constructed a new timeline of the development of *White Snake*, with the main changes in plot occurring between 1738 and 1768, and the story reaching full maturation between 1770-1780. Furthermore, through comparing scenes in Fang's play with excerpt plays and manuscripts, Wang argues that Fang's play has little impact on later scripts, when compared to contemporary excerpts and manuscripts. In this sense, actors' versions seem to have been transmitted independently from Fang's play, and Fang's play was not as influential as previously thought. While Wang presents a convincing argument, the differences between Fang's play and versions that more closely resemble performance are mostly related to specific

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[62] Guo Yingde, *Ming Qing chuanqi zonglu,* vol. 2, 1010-1 and 1020; Idema, *The White Snake and Her Son*, 146-9.

[63] Based on quotations from Qian and Fu in newspapers and books, Wang provides a number of reasons to be suspicious of a script by Chen Jiayan and his daughter. First, records of the script appear not to be recorded by Chen or his daughter, but rather manuscripts written by others and attributed to the Chens. She also points out that neither Qian nor Fu provided convincing evidence that the manuscripts they worked with could be attributed to the Chens, and that neither of the manuscripts are now available. Wang Shih-pe, "Qianji yu minzong: Qing zhongye Leifengta chuanqi yanbian xinlun 潛跡與明蹤: 清中葉《雷峰塔》傳奇演變新論 (The underlain footprints and revealed route: a re-examination on the development of Thunder Peak Pagoda in mid-Qing)," *Minsu Quyi* 199 (2018): 263–327.

words and phrasing, and do not significantly affect the plot. As such, Fang's play is still the earliest script to include the later plot developments of White Snake giving birth and being freed from imprisonment under the pagoda.

In the introduction, I discuss how *White Snake* is often treated as a folktale that was primarily transmitted among common people. Considering the performance context of *chuanqi* discussed in this section and the available information relating to the development of *White Snake* scripts, however, the story's development appears to have been heavily influence by the male elite—literati writers and the Qianlong court. Even actors, who were generally poor and of low social status, probably made creative decisions to appeal to the educated elite that made up their audience. With the possible exception of Chen Jiayan's daughter, there is no evidence of women being involved in the production of *White Snake* performances. Women, children, and men of lower social classes may still have experienced performance of *White Snake* at the frequent festival performances, as shadow puppet dramas, storytelling, or other media, but extant materials from the eighteenth century suggest a bias of elite male audiences of acted performance.

**Leaving the Pagoda: the changing narrative of *White Snake* in the Southern dramas of the eighteenth century**

While the language of Huang's and Fang's scripts is not necessarily representative of actual performance, as Wang suggests, they are the most complete and accessible extant scripts from the eighteenth century, and a comparison of the plots of Huang's and Fang's plays reveals the story's transition from "earlier versions," which end with the imprisonment of White Snake, to "later versions," which include the addition of White Snake's son and end with her release

from imprisonment. In this section, I will compare Huang's and Fang's scripts to illustrate the major changes to the plot of *White Snake* in the eighteenth century, then I will relate these changes to *White Snake* excerpt plays to show which scenes became popular.[64] I will show that, in both full-length *chuanqi* scripts and excerpt scenes, audiences appear to have been consistently interested in the tension between White Snake's identities as monster, wife, and mother.

Huang's script contains thirty-two scenes on two *juan*.[65] The play opens with Buddha explaining White Snake and Xu Xian's origin, as well as their past and future relationship to each other. White Snake began cultivation after eating reeds dropped by the boat of the dharma, while Xu Xian is the incarnation of Buddha's former alms bowl attendant.[66] Buddha describes their connection as "destiny from a previous life (*suyuan* 宿緣)," and commands the Zen master Fahai to exorcise White Snake after their destiny is fulfilled and to guide Xu Xian back to him.[67]

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[64] The summaries I provide in this chapter are intended to highlight major plot changes. For a scene-by-scene comparison of the two plays, see Appendix II.

[65] As with other earlier versions of *White Snake*, the male protagonist in scripts of the eighteenth century is named Xu Xuan 許宣. I will refer to him by the name used in later versions, Xu Xian 許仙, for consistency.

[66] The "boat of the dharma" (damo hang 達摩航) may be a reference to "The Simile of the Raft" from *Alagaddupama Sutta* ("The Simile of the Snake") from the Pali Canon. In this parable, a man wishes to cross a river and, finding no boat or ferryman to take him across, arduously gathers grass, twigs, branches, and leaves and fashions them into a raft. Once he crosses, he must decide what to do with the raft. At the end of the parable, Buddha says that the raft, like the dharma, is for crossing the river, and should not be held onto after it has fulfilled its purpose. See Bhikkhu Ñàõamoli, trans., and Bhikkhu Bodhi, translator and editor, *The Middle Length Discourses: A New Translation of the Majjima Nikàya* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1995), 228-9.

[67] Feng Menglong's "Madam White" and some later versions describe their relationship as a "destiny of marriage (*yinyuan* 姻缘)," while the Southern dramas and many later versions describe their relationship as "destiny from a previous life (*suyuan* 宿缘 or 夙缘)." See Feng Menglong, "Jingshi tongyan 警世通眼 (Stories to caution the world)" in *Xuxiu siku quan shu* 續修四庫全書, vol. 1785, 1800 vols. (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1995), 139 (18.8a); Huang Tubi, "Leifengta," *Bai she zhuan ji*, 282; Fang Chengpei, *Leifengta*, 1-2. These terms are often interchangeable, though "matrimonial destiny" includes the added specificity of marriage. The first characters in both ways of writing *suyuan* have the same pronunciation and almost identical meanings, both referring to "long-standing, old, in the past," but *Hanyu da cidian* specifies 宿緣 only as a Buddhist term. See Luo Zhufeng 羅竹風, ed, *Hanyu da cidian* 漢語大詞典*,* di san juan, (Shanghai: Hanyu da cidian chubanshe, 1989) 1171 and 1518. Web. Regardless of which term a given version uses, the words themselves do not explain why White Snake and Xu Xian's relationship is destined, nor what precisely the destined relationship involves, but rather hint at an ineffable

In the human realm, Xu Xian is returning home from making offerings at a monastery and hires a boat to take him across West Lake. A storm springs up, and Xu allows the boatman to pick up White Snake and her maid, Little Green, who are stuck in the rain. They introduce themselves, and White Snake explains that she is a widow. They fall in love immediately and agree to be married shortly thereafter, with Little Green, serving as matchmaker. White Snake gives Xu Xian two ingots of silver, which are soon discovered to be stolen property. With no sign of White Snake and Little Green, Xu Xian is banished to Suzhou for possession of stolen silver. Feeling guilty for Xu Xian's predicament, White Snake returns to West Lake. The water creatures of West Lake complain to White Snake about a group of fishermen who had been capturing and killing them with a net. White Snake decides to teach them a lesson and sends Little Green to capture them. Little Green captures them and throws them in the shallow water and undergrowth of the cove as punishment for harming living creatures. Fahai saves the fishermen, urging them not to kill living creatures again.

White Snake and Little Green appear in Suzhou and convince Xu Xian they did not knowingly give him stolen silver, he forgives them, and White Snake and Xu Xian are married. A Daoist priest notices a monstrous aura around Xu Xian and gives him a charm to ward off monsters. The charm is ineffective on White Snake, and Little Green chases the priest away. Under the command of White Snake, water creatures from West Lake steal a coral fan pendant for White Snake to give to Xu Xian. Xu Xian is once again found with stolen goods and banished to Zhenjiang, where he works as assistant to a pharmacist. White Snake and Little

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connection between White Snake and Xu Xian. Some later versions, such as *Leifengta baojuan* 雷峰塔寶眷 [The precious scroll of Thunder Peak Pagoda], describe the reason for White Snake and Xu Xian's destiny from a previous life as "repaying gratitude 报恩," explaining that, in a previous life, Xu Xian had saved White Snake from being killed by a snake-catcher. See Fu Xihua, *Bai she zhuan ji*, 193; Idema, *The White Snake and Her Son*, 13.

Green once again follow Xu Xian and convince him to forgive them. Xu Xian's employer is attracted to White Snake and uses a birthday gathering as a scheme to rape her, but instead sees her in snake form and is nearly frightened to death. Later, Xu leaves his employer and opens his own pharmacy. He goes to Golden Mountain Monastery and meets Fahai, who keeps him there. White Snake and Little Green go to Golden Mountain Monastery to bring Xu Xian back, but Fahai scares them away. Identifying White Snake as a monster, Fahai tells Xu Xian to come to Jingci Monastery in Hangzhou if he needs help.

After an amnesty, Xu Xian returns to Hangzhou and immediately encounters White Snake and Little Green. Convinced his wife is a snake-monster, he hires a snake catcher to expel her, but White Snake is too powerful and humiliates the snake catcher. Finally, Xu Xian goes to Jingci Monastery to find Fahai. Fahai successfully subjugates White Snake and Little Green, traps them in an alms bowl, and has them imprisoned under Thunder Peak Pagoda. Xu Xian becomes a monk and eventually returns to Buddha with Fahai.

Fang's script has thirty-four scenes.[68] Like Huang's script, Fang's scripts begin with Buddha's explanation of White Snake and Xu Xian's destiny, but White Snake's origin is changed to a snake who ate a peach of immortality from the garden of Queen Mother of the West.[69] Additional scenes describe White Snake's identity as a "female transcendent" (*xian gu*

[68] For modern editions of Fang's script, see Fu Xihua, *Bai she zhuan ji*, 339-419; for an annotated modern version, see Fang Chengpei 方成培 (1713-1808), *Leifengta* 雷峰塔 (Thunder Peak Pagoda) (Beijing: Huaxia chubanshe, 2000). For a reprint of the 1772 woodblock print, see Fang Chengpei 方成培 (1713-1808), "Leifengta Chuanqi 雷峰塔傳奇 [The southern drama of Thunder Peak Pagoda]," in *Xuxiu siku quan shu* 續修四庫全書, vol. 1776, 1800 vols. (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1995), 202–323.

[69] According to legend, Queen Mother of the West, leader of the transcendents, is said to have a garden where she keeps magical peaches. The peaches only ripen once every three thousand years, so she invites gods and spirits to partake in the event. In fifth chapter of *Journey to the West*, the monkey king is famously excluded from this gathering. See Wu Cheng'en (c.1500 - c.1582), *The Journey to the West*, trans. Anthony Yu, vol. 1, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 134-49.

仙姑) practicing cultivation on Mount Emei, her leaving of the mountain and entering the human realm, and her subjugation and recruitment of Little Green, another snake monster and leader of the water creatures at West Lake in Hangzhou. As in Huang's script, White Snake and Xu Xian meet and fall in love at West Lake, White Snake gives Xu Xian stolen silver, he is arrested and banished to Suzhou, White Snake and Little Green follow him and persuade his forgiveness, a Daoist priest gives Xu Xian an ineffective charm to ward off monsters, and Little Green chases the priest away.

At Duanwu Festival, Xu Xian pressures White Snake to drink realgar wine, which causes her to revert into snake-form.[70] Xu Xian is literally scared to death at the sight of her. White Snake then goes to Mount Song 嵩山 to obtain a magical herb that will bring him back to life. A group of spirits try to force her to leave and although she defeats them each in combat, she is eventually captured. The leader of the mountain, Old Man of the South Pole 南極老翁, determines that she has an unfinished destiny with Xu Xian, gives her the herb, and releases her.[71] She returns home and revives Xu Xian. As in Huang's play, White Snake again gives stolen items to Xu Xian, Xu Xian is arrested and banished to Zhenjiang, White Snake follows Xu Xian and convinces him to forgive her, and his employer tries to rape White Snake. White Snake intentionally transforms into a monster to scare off the man.

Fahai hears of a stolen shipment of sandalwood and traces it to Xu Xian, who agrees to donate it to Golden Mountain Monastery. He also agrees to visit the monastery. Fearing Fahai

[70] Realgar wine is an alcoholic beverage infused with realgar, an arsenic compound, that is traditionally consumed at Duanwu Festival. I will discuss its historical and symbolic significance in Chapter Six.

[71] Also known as "The Star of Longevity" (Shou xing 壽星), "Old Man of the South Pole [Nanji Laoweng 南極老翁]" appears regularly in famous stories of Chinese literature, such as *Canonization of the Gods* and *Journey to the West*. One of his unique abilities is that he is able to determine the length of peoples' lives.

will turn Xu Xian against her, White Snake and Little Green lead an army of water creatures to the monastery to return Xu Xian, and they do battle with Fahai and his guardian spirits. White Snake defeats the spirits in combat but is almost subjugated by Fahai's alms bowl. She is saved, however, by the Star of Literature 文曲星 because she is pregnant.[72] Fahai allows White Snake to leave and sends Xu Xian after her until one month after she has given birth. Xu Xian meets with White Snake and Little Green at Broken Bridge at West Lake and convinces them to forgive him. One month after White Snake has given birth, Xu Xian goes to Fahai and has him subjugate White Snake and imprison her under Thunder Peak Pagoda. Sixteen years later, White Snake's son, Xu Shilin achieves the highest rank in the imperial examinations and writes a memorial to the emperor to have the pagoda taken down, but he is unsuccessful and ordered to establish a shrine at Thunder Peak Pagoda and offer sacrifices. White Snake is permitted to speak with Xu Shilin for the first time since he was a baby. Later, Shilin marries his cousin, and White Snake is finally pardoned by the emperor of Heaven and allowed to enter the ranks of the transcendents.

In summary, although many of the details of Huang's script differ from Fang's, four major additions to the plot of Fang's play and actors' scripts of the latter half of the eighteenth century significantly reframe the story's structure. First, later versions focus more on the perspective of White Snake and develop her character's background in the beginning scenes, such as "Leaving the Mountain" (Chushan 出山) and "Subduing Green" (Shou Qing 收青) in Fang's play. Second, Xu Xian dies in the middle of the story from seeing White Snake's original form, and White Snake obtains magical herbs to bring him back to life. This occurs in the scenes

[72] The Star of Literature 文曲星 is also a constellation god associated with writing and the imperial examinations. The relationship between the Star of Literature and White Snake's son is often not explicit and varies slightly across versions. In Fang's play, the reason that the Star of Literature defends White Snake may be because her son will achieve first place in the imperial examinations, but it may also because her child is the incarnate of the Star of Literature, as is the case in other versions. See Fang, *Leifengta*, 135 n62-3. See also Chapter Four, n260.

"Duanwu Festival" (Duanyang 端陽) and "Seeking the Herb" (Qiu cao 求草) in Fang's play. Third, later versions expand the event of Xu Xian's visit of Golden Mountain Monastery to a battle between water creatures and guardian spirits, followed by an emotional reunion of Xu Xian, White Snake, and Little Green at Broken Bridge. This occurs in the scenes "Water Battle" (Shui dou 水鬥) and "Broken Bridge" (Duanqiao 斷橋) in Fang's play. Finally, later versions significantly change the ending of the story, with White Snake giving birth to a son, who places first in the imperial examinations and successfully aids White Snake's release from imprisonment under Thunder Peak Pagoda. The most famous scene from Xu Shilin's arc is his visit to the pagoda, "Sacrifice at the Tower" (Ji ta 祭塔). Later versions also remove a couple of subplots from Huang's version, including Little Green's capture of the fisherman at West Lake (Scenes nine to eleven), and Xu Xian's attempt to have White Snake subdued by a hereditary snake-catcher (Scenes twenty-seven and twenty-eight).

While the comparison of Huang's and Fang's plays reveals the changes that appeared in full-length versions of *White Snake*, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, audiences in the eighteenth century more regularly watched excerpt plays that highlighted the most popular scenes. It is difficult to determine exactly how popular scenes were as except plays, but drama miscellanies, manuscripts, and performance guidebooks from the Qing suggest that certain scenes were especially popular. The first extant excerpt-play script of *White Snake* was published in 1771, just months before Fang's play, in the late eighteenth-century miscellany *Zhui bai qiu* 綴白裘 (A cloak of patch-worked white fur – hereafter, *Cloak*).[73] *Cloak* includes the scenes

[73] *Cloak* appeared in multiple editions since the late Ming, but it only includes *White Snake* in the 1771 edition. Since even the previous edition, released in 1768 does not include *White Snake*, this may suggest that *White Snake* grew in popularity shortly after 1768. For a reprint of the excerpt script in *Cloak*, see Qian Decang 錢德蒼 (fl. 1763-1774), complier, *Chongding zhui bai qiu xinji hebian* 重訂綴白裘新集合編 [Re-revised newly assembled cloak of

"Water Battle" and "Broken Bridge." Later miscellanies reflect a similar preference for these scenes.[74] Reprints of manuscript and woodblock-print scripts from the Qing that are held in libraries in China, Taiwan, and Japan also suggest greater interest in the scenes "Water Battle" and "Broken Bridge," but the scenes "Duanwu Festival," "Seeking the Herb," "Sacrifice at the Pagoda," "Opening for Business," and "Meeting on a Boat" are also somewhat common.[75] Qing "flower registers" (*huapu* 花譜)—publications in which opera enthusiasts recorded their theater experiences with descriptions of actors and short poems—reveal a similar enthusiasm for "Water Battle" and "Broken Bridge," but also show a proportionally greater interest in the scene "Sacrifice at the Pagoda."[76] Some excerpt scenes were more popular in other genres. As I discuss in Chapter Two, for example, anecdotal evidence suggests that the scene "Subduing Green" was popular in Beijing opera in the late Qing.[77] Also, in Chapter Four I discuss scripts of excerpt plays including the scenes "Duanwu Festival" and "Seeking the Herb" appearing more

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white fur], in *Xu xiu siku quan shu* 續修四庫全書, vol. 1780 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1995), 144-9. See also Wang, "Qianji yu minzong," 280.

[74] Yao Xie's 姚燮 (1805 - 1864) collection *Fu daoren duqu* 復道人度曲 and the Republican era miscellany *Ji cheng qupu* 集成曲譜 all contain the two scenes "Water Battle" and "Broken Bridge." The Republican era collection *Liu ye qupu* 六也曲譜 expands the same sequence, including the previous scene "Burning Incense (Shao xiang 燒香)" as well as "Water Battle" and "Broken Bridge," and adds the later scene, "United Bowls (He bo 合鉢)." In full-length versions, there are usually scenes between "Broken Bridge" and "United Bowls," but they may have been included in *Liu ye qupu* with the intention of performing or reading all four scenes in sequence. *Cloak* also contains much of the plot of "Burning Incense," but includes it at the beginning of "Water Battle." The late eighteenth-century miscellany *Nashuying qupu* 納書楹曲譜 contains only one solo song, "Fahai."

[75] Reprints of excerpt plays used in this dissertation are summarized in Appendix I. There are thirteen scripts of "Water Battle," eleven scripts of "Broken Bridge," five scripts of "Seeking the Herb," and four scripts of "Sacrifice at the Pagoda," "Meeting on a Boat," "Opening for Business," and "Duanwu Festival." These numbers should not be equally weighted, however, as some are printed publications, and some are performance notes for only a single character. Also, different texts may have had different distribution. Rather, the number of scripts per scene is just an estimation of which scenes may have been more popular. While this is not a comprehensive list of all extent scripts of *White Snake* excerpt plays, or even of *White Snake* excerpt plays in reprint editions, it does constitute a significant proportion of scripts available in Kunqu and *pihuang*.

[76] I discuss flower registers in greater depth in Chapter Three.

[77] See Chapter Two, n127.

frequently in Sichuan opera than in other genres. Combining all of these sources, “Water Battle” and “Broken Bridge” appear to have been particularly popular, while “Duanwu Festival,” “Seeking the Herb,” “Sacrifice at the Pagoda,” and “Meeting on a Boat” were also fairly common.

The scenes that were chosen for excerpt performance all appear in Fang’s play but not in Huang’s, with the exception of “Meeting on a Boat,” which appears in both plays. The four major additions to the plot of Fang’s play described above all appear as excerpt plays: “Subduing Green,” “Duanwu Festival” and “Seeking the Herb,” “Water Battle” and “Broken Bridge,” and “Sacrifice at the Pagoda.” This suggests that the scenes that were added to full-length plays of the eighteenth century quickly became the most popular scenes in *White Snake*. Scenes that were excerpted from *White Snake* also share an important quality with scenes that were added to the later *chuanqi* of the eighteenth century: these scenes heighten the conflict between White Snake’s ritual roles as wife and mother with her inborn nature as a monster. The conflict derived from White Snake’s identities is not reductive morals, such as “a virtuous wife conquers all” or “a monster must be destroyed,” but rather contradictions that challenge both female virtue and the nature of monstrousness. In “Duanwu Festival,” for example, White Snake succumbs to her husband’s pressure to drink realgar wine even though she knows that, as a snake-monster, it will cause her to lose control. She takes this risk because in order to fulfill her ritual role as wife, she must concede to her husband’s wishes and take part in the Duanwu Festival ritual of drinking realgar wine. Similarly, in “Water Battle,” White Snake uses her power as a snake monster to attempt to flood Golden Mountain Monastery, inadvertently killing innocent people in Zhenjiang. She commits this sinful act in order to set her husband free and preserve her family. Since almost all of the excerpt plays and additions to eighteenth century scripts focus on conflict

between White Snake's identities as wife, mother, and monster, it appears that audiences enjoyed *White Snake* not despite this conflict in White Snake's character, but because of this conflict. In following sections, I will discuss the categories of monster and woman within the context of Qing society.

In this chapter, I use Fang's play as an example of "later versions" of *White Snake* from the eighteenth century because it is the first extant full-length play to portray White Snake as a mother. As Wang Shih-pe argues, Fang's play does not necessarily represent how the play was performed, since it is a full-length play rather than an excerpt play, and its language is more elevated than performance texts. Its plot is consistent with excerpt plays and it is the earliest extant full-length version to include popular excerpt scenes, however, so I will continue to refer to it in later chapters as a reference point for later versions of *White Snake* in the eighteenth century.

**The Righteous Monster: Monsters and transcendents in late imperial culture**

Huang Tubi depicted White Snake fundamentally as a monster, but what did "monster" mean to Huang Tubi? What did it mean to Fang Chengpei? The term I translate as "monster," *yao* 妖, has changed over time, across geographic region, and even according to individual perspectives and interpretations.[78] Especially in earlier texts, *yao* could refer generally to ill omens or anomalies. The *yao*-monsters in this study are a more specific use of the word *yao*,

[78] Throughout this dissertation, I frequently refer to White Snake's "monstrous nature." This is intended to refer to qualities associated with *yao* that help identify her as a *yao*, but it is not a term that is translated from Chinese. While "monster," "monstrous," and "monstrousness," should be read as referring to the Chinese word *yao*, "monstrous nature" or "monstrous quality" are not intended to resonate with particular Chinese phrases other than *yao*.

referring to a category of chaotic spirit that, while present in ancient texts, had become a mainstay of Chinese culture by the Qing.[79] Monsters should not be thought of as a merely literary category; especially in imperial China, monsters were widely believed to exist and were an important part of people's spiritual lives. While the qualities of this specific class of monster has considerable variation, certain characteristics are fairly consistent. Monsters often begin as animals, plants, or even objects, and become corrupted, especially because they have been neglected by people, spirits, and/or gods. They often have the ability to take on human shape and excel at seducing or otherwise manipulating humans. They often form parasitic sexual relationships with humans, stealing their life essence to cultivate greater magical skills. As such, accounts and tales of animal-monsters often focused on exorcism; if people suspected a monster was possessing a person or occupying a human space, they would hire a monk, priest, or ritual master to perform an exorcism. Famous examples of monsters in Chinese literature include the fox spirits of *Liaozhai zhiyi* 聊齋誌異 (Strange tales from a Chinese studio) and the many adversaries of the monkey king from *Journey to the West*.[80]

Another category of spirits that closely relates to monsters is "transcendent" (*xian* 仙).[81] Transcendents are a specific form of spirit in Chinese culture, which by the late imperial period

[79] Another common translation of *yao* is "demon." I prefer "monster" because "demon" is often used to describe creatures from hell or other realms outside of the human realm, whereas *yao* often come from animals or objects that originated within a human realm.

[80] For studies on fox spirits in late imperial narratives, see Tak-hung Leo Chan, *The Discourse on Foxes and Ghosts: Ji Yun and Eighteenth-Century Literati Storytelling* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1998) and Rania Huntington, *Alien Kind: Foxes and Late Imperial Chinese Narrative* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003). For an anthropological study of fox cult worship, see Xiaofei Kang, *The Cult of the Fox: Power, Gender, and Popular Religion in Late Imperial and Modern China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006). For a discussion of Sun Wukong, the "monkey king," as an "orphan spirit," see Mark Meulenbeld, "Chinese Religion in the Ming and Qing Dynasties," in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Chinese Religions* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2012), 129-33.

[81] Other common translations of *xian* include "immortal" or "fairy."

was generally associated with Daoism.[82] Transcendents often began life as ordinary humans and attained god-like power through the practice of various forms of cultivation or a sudden realization, often brought on by a spectacular event. Animal spirits could also become transcendents. In the late imperial period, animal-monsters and animal-transcendents shared certain skills and magical powers, such as invisibility, flight, control of weather or natural phenomena, disguise, and transformation. Both could engage in cultivation or training that enable them to strengthen their existing powers and gain new ones. Monsters often cultivated powers parasitically, however, stealing life force from humans, so monstrous cultivation was generally considered evil or unnatural. Transcendents cultivated powers through adherence to special diets, various forms of meditation and martial arts, or more esoteric practices. While cultivation in the tradition of transcendents was not universally admired, it was often portrayed as wondrous and mysterious.[83] The difference between monsters and transcendents was not as simple as "wrong" and "right" or "evil" and "good," but often indicated subjective disapproval or approval. In his study of the Ming novel *Fengshen yanyi* 封神演義 (Canonization of the Gods), Mark Meulenbeld explains:[84]

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[82] The culture of transcendent training and worship precedes the communities we might identify as "Daoist." In his works on transcendents in the early medieval period, Campany argues against "Daoism" as a useful term in describing transcendents. See Robert Ford Campany, *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth: A Translation and Study of Ge Hong's Traditions of Divine Transcendents* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 6-9, *Making Transcendents: Ascetics and Social Memory in Early Medieval China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009) 35-6. By the late imperial period, however, the connection between transcendents and Daoist culture was more stable.

[83] For discussions of the cultivations practices of transcendents, see Isabelle (1932-2000) Robinet, *The World Upside Down: Essays on Taoist Internal Alchemy*, Kindle edition (Golden Elixir Press, 2014) and "The Taoist Immortal: Jesters of Light and Shadow, Heaven and Earth," *Journal of Chinese Religions* 13, no. 1 (1985): 87–105; Campany, *Making Transcendents*, and *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth*, 13-97; Anna Seidel, "Post-Mortem Immortality or: The Taoist Resurrection of the Body," in *Gilguil: Essays on Transformation, Revolution and Permanence in the History of Religions*, ed. Shaul Shaked, David Dean Shulman, and Guy G. Stroumsa (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1987), 223–37.

[84] *Demonic Warfare: Daoism, Territorial Networks, and the History of a Ming Novel* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2015), 9.

> In most cases these terms [*gui* 鬼 or *yaoguai* 妖怪] refer to phenomena that are unruly or undomesticated rather than inexplicable. The rationale behind them is one of authority and hierarchy. The powers of these apparitions may be terrifying, but only so long as they remain on their own, unsupervised and without allegiance. To call something a demon or a monster is mostly subjectively done from the perspective of those who are enmeshed in the discourse of social (or cosmic) order. All entities that do threaten to destabilize the safety of the discursive structure are deviant. Labels such as *xie* ("deviant," and by extension "evil") or *yin* ("excessive," and by extension "illicit") should rather be seen as terms for establishing the discourse of order, juxtaposing it with powers that are a threat to it. These terms are not qualifications of some inherently flawed moral nature; what matters is not the moral disposition of the *gui* but its unpredictable autonomy.

In this sense, the use of "transcendent" or "monster" often equates to the speaker's relationship to the subject; a friend or ally was called a transcendent (a spirit within the cosmic order), while an enemy was called a monster (an autonomous spirit which threatens the hierarchy). Like many other animal spirits in late imperial Chinese literature, White Snake is referred to as a transcendent as well as a monster in versions of *White Snake* from the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The classic plot structure of an encounter with a malevolent monster, especially common in vernacular stories (*huaben* 話本) and strange tales (*zhiguai xiaoshuo* 志怪小説 ), is a "demon story," in which a man is seduced by a beautiful woman who is actually a monster in disguise. Sometimes the man escapes or finds a means to exorcise the monster, and sometimes the man is killed by the monster.[85] This pattern was especially common in tales about fox spirits and other

[85] Patrick Hanan summarizes the general structure of "demon stories" as "The young man goes out on a spring day to a resort on the outskirts of the city, meets a beautiful girl, and they make love. At length he realizes she is a threat to his life and calls in the help of a Taoist master who makes the girl return to her real form as ghost or animal spirit and punishes her. In the more complex plots, actions may be repeated several times…." See *The Chinese Vernacular Story*, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1981), 44.

animal spirits. The earliest extant versions of *White Snake*, such as Feng Menglong's "Madam White" and Mo Langzi's "Leifeng guai ji," follow this pattern.[86]

Although demon stories continued to be popular throughout the late imperial period, tales depicting benevolent animal spirits and monsters that had been subjugated and controlled by exorcists for benevolent purposes were also widespread and accepted. This is especially true of tales about fox spirits in Qing collections of strange tales, such as *Liaozhai zhiyi*. In her study of fox narratives, Rania Huntington shows how a substantial subset of fox narratives depict vixens in positive roles, such as teachers, matchmakers, or wives, becoming "the cure for every one of man's ills, erotic desire is overshadowed by total satisfaction."[87] Foxes also walk the line between monsters and transcendents, sometimes cultivating power through the possession of humans and sometimes through study and practice.[88] Similar to *White Snake*, the male protagonists of fox romances tend to be weaker characters that do not seem particularly deserving of the affections of their extraordinary companions. White Snake shares some of the roles of the foxes of Qing romances, such as acting as a devoted wife and training as a transcendent, but her character is decidedly martial in ways that foxes are not; she bravely battles and exorcises spirits in order to protect her family. Another significant difference from fox romances is that foxes are almost always a means to help or punish humans for their unnoticed

[86] Hanan points out slight discrepancies between "Madam White" and other demon stories, especially White Snake's love and devotion toward Xu Xian. For example, the "threat" that White Snake causes to Xu Xian is represented not as violence or physical harm, but as the legal difficulty White Snake causes from stealing valuables and leaving Xu Xian to receive punishment. Additionally, regardless of White Snake's emotions toward Xu Xian, Xu Xian perceives her as a deadly threat. Despite the fact that even in "Madam White" and Huang's play White Snake is not a typically malevolent monster, however, the overall structure remains the same "demon story," concluding with the necessary subjugation of the monster. Ibid., 48-9.

[87] Huntington, *Alien Kind,* 288.

[88] For a discussion of fox spirits as transcendents, see ibid., 290-309.

virtue or shortcomings; they assist the male protagonists, whereas White Snake is often the hero of her own story.

Another common trajectory for monsters in late imperial narratives was to be canonized as gods or exorcist spirits. In recent years, Meulenbeld and other scholars have described this pattern in a variety of different works and contexts.[89] According to this narrative model, an autonomous and unruly spirit must be controlled and reintegrated into the spiritual hierarchy and given a new rank and function. These autonomous spirits, sometimes referred to as "orphan spirits (*guhun* 孤魂)," are separated from the spiritual hierarchy as a result of their inability to receive ancestral sacrifice. Upon obtaining merit, often gained through the accumulation of magical powers, worshippers, and success in battle, the spirit becomes worthy of entering the spiritual hierarchy—which usually involves being subjugated by a more powerful spirit. This structure appears in many late imperial Chinese novels, such as *Romance of the Three Kingdoms, Journey to the West*, *The Water Margin*, *Canonization of the Gods*, and hagiographies, such as the story of Miaoshan (Guanyin or Avalokiteśvara).[90] In late eighteenth and nineteenth-century versions of *White Snake*, White Snake shares some of the characteristics of these canonized orphan spirits. She practices cultivation as a transcendent, gains autonomy from the spiritual

[89] Meulenbeld relates this narrative structure, as it appears in the *Canonization of the Gods*, the broader uses of thunder rituals as a means of incorporating local cults into larger networks of organized religion. See *Demonic Warfare*. Meulenbeld also describes this narrative structure in hagiographies of the deity Guanyin, in "Death and Demonization of a Bodhisattva: Guanyin's Reformulation Within Chinese Religion," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 84.3 (September 2016): 690–726. See also Richard Von Glahn, *The Sinister Way: The Divine and the Demonic in Chinese Religious Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); Anne Gerritsen, "From Demon to Deity: Kang Wang in Thirteenth-Century Jizhou and Beyond," T'oung Pao 90, no. 1 (2004): 1–31; B. J. Ter Haar, "The Genesis and Spread of Temple Cults in Fukien," in *Development and Decline of Fukien Province in the 17th and 18th Centuries* (New York: E.J. Brill, 1990), 349–96; Kuang-hong Yu, "Making a Malefactor a Benefactor: Ghost Workshop in Taiwan," *Bulletin of the Institute of Ethnology, Academy Sinica* 70 (1990): 39–66.

[90] See Meulenbeld, "Chinese Religion in the Ming and Qing Dynasties," 129-31; "Death and Demonization of a Bodhisattva."

hierarchy and enters the human realm, is subjugated by more powerful spirits, and eventually earns enough merit through her combat prowess and her son's sacrifice to achieve "the correct result (*zhengguo* 正果)" and enter the ranks of the transcendents (*xianban* 仙班).[91]

Elements of fox romances, the canonization of orphan spirts, and other narratives of transcendents and extraordinary beings appear in many of the scenes added to *White Snake* in the latter half of eighteenth century, especially scenes chosen for excerpt performance. In "Subduing Green," "Seeking the Herb," and "Water Battle," for example, White Snake battles with other monsters and transcendents, exhibiting her martial ability and attesting to her strength and level of cultivation. In "Duanwu Festival" and "Broken Bridge," White Snake proves herself a devoted wife, like many of the vixens of fox romances. In the following chapters, I discuss monsters and transcendents in *White Snake* primarily as a contrast to human gender roles; White Snake's identity as a monster often opposes her identities of wife and mother and, consequently, emphasizes the difficulty of acting as a virtuous woman. This comparison also provides, however, new perspectives on how the category of monster was constructed and understood, especially in how it was represented in stage performance.

**From Alluring Courtesan to Virtuous Wife: the construction of gender in the late eighteenth century**

Huang Tubi's critical evaluation of later versions of *White Snake* bemoans the idea of White Snake, a monster, giving birth to a son who places first in the imperial examinations. If Huang Tubi considered monsters indications of human transgression, as demon stories would

[91] Although these specific terms are not consistent across versions, the implication is that White Snake ultimately realizes her cultivation practices and fully becomes a transcendent.

often have us believe, it is not surprising that he would disapprove of a monster as a mother. Who then, in the eyes of Huang Tubi, would make a good mother? What were the qualities of an ideal mother for Fang Chengpei? This section will expand these questions to discuss changes in the construction of the ideal woman in the High Qing.[92] As the character of White Snake changes from antagonist to protagonist and from monster to transcendent, she also begins to emulate the virtue of elite women. As the story was changing, however, so too were the gender roles of women in the Qing. These changes in gender identity from the late Ming to the High Qing have been discussed at length in scholarship on Chinese history and literature.[93] Whereas elites in the late Ming elevated courtesan culture, "the cult of *qing*," and companionate marriage, the Qing marks a more conservative shift, representing a greater emphasis on women's ritual duties as wives and mothers. In this section, I will briefly discuss this shift in relation to *White Snake*.

When *White Snake* was first being performed and read in the late Ming, the "cult of *qing*" informed the construction of female gender among social elites. The cultural movement referred to as the "cult of *qing*" (*qingjiao* 情教) emphasized the importance of one's internal nature and feelings, breaking with the earlier Cheng-Zhu school of Neo-Confucianism that emphasized the necessity of understanding the underlying principles of the universe (*li* 理) through the study of

[92] I will follow Susan Mann's periodization of 1683 – 1839 for the High Qing. Mann explains: "The rhetorical phrase *sheng shi* was reserved for the peak of each dynastic cycle. Thus, the High Qing was considered the high point of Manchu rule… The "peak" is actually a trajectory that begins in 1683, the year the Manchus eliminated the last remnants of the Ming loyalist resistance. It reaches its zenith during the decades after the 1720's and begins a downward turn sometime in the mid 1770's, declining rapidly after the 1790's, when White Lotus and Miao rebellions began to undermine the power of the central government…" See *Precious Records: Women in China's Long Eighteenth Century* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1997), 20.

[93] See Dorothy Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers: Women and Culture in Seventeenth-Century China* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1994); Susan Mann, *Precious Records*; Matthew Harvey Sommer, *Sex, Law, and Society in Late Imperial China* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2000), Janet M. Theiss, *Disgraceful Matters: The Politics of Chastity in Eighteenth-Century China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); and Goldman, *Opera and the City*, 145-246.

classical literature. The discourse on what *qing* represented and how *qing* could guide moral cultivation became a central theme of popular literary works, such as the Feng Menglong's vernacular tales and his classical language collection *Qing shi* 情史 [History of *qing*], and Tang Xianzu's 湯顯祖 (1550 – 1616) play *Mudan ting* 牡丹亭 (The peony pavilion).[94]

Within this culture of individuality and emotional expression, the female ideal was split between two images of women, the upper-class wives and mothers of the inner chambers, the "*guixiu* 閨秀," and the courtesans of the entertainment districts of the outer world.[95] Although wives and courtesans both held important positions in the literati culture of the late Ming, the femininity associated with *qing* often favored courtesan culture. Officials and other literati would pursue courtesans in the late Ming, forming companionate marriages based on love, respect, and shared interest.[96] During the Qing, changes in government policy and literati culture reduced the status of courtesans and restricted the sex trade.[97] While the implementation of anti-prostitution

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[94] The meaning of the word *qing* had broad usage and evolved over time, but frequently elevated qualities normally associated with femininity, such as emotion, feeling, and love. Wong Siu-kit identifies thirteen different uses of the term *qing*, which Mariam Epstein reduces to four categories of uses: physiological ("emotion"), spiritual ("true"), phenomenological ("conditions"), and aesthetic ("appeal"). See Wong Siu-kit, "Ch'ing in Chinese Literary Criticism," Ph.D. diss., Oxford University, 1967, 328-33; and Mariam Epstein, *Competing Discourses: Orthodoxy, Authenticity, and Engendered Meanings in Late Imperial Chinese Fiction*, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Asia Center, 2001), 65.

[95] For a discussion of the boundaries of inner and outer spheres related to Ming China, see Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers*, 12-14 and 115-42. For a discussion of the roles of courtesans in Ming China, see Ibid., 251-93.

[96] The cult of *qing* has been discussed extensively in secondary scholarship. For a general overview of the formation and development of the cult of *qing*, see Martin W. Huang, "Sentiments of Desire: Thoughts on the Cult of the Qing in Ming-Qing Literature," *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews (CLEAR)* 20 (1998): 153–84. Li Wai-yee contextualizes *qing* of *Dream of the Red Chamber* within a larger discourse of "enchantment and disenchantment" and "enlightenment through love." See Wai-yee Li, *Enchantment and Disenchantment: Love and Illusion in Chinese Literature* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993). On the cult of *qing* gender and stereotypes in the late Ming, See Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers*, 68-112. For analyses of the relationship between *qing* and desire in the Ming and Qing, see Martin W. Huang, *Desire and Fictional Narrative in Late Imperial China* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2001) and Katherine Carlitz, "Desire, Danger, and the Body: Stories of Women's Virtue in Late Ming China," in *Engendering China : Women, Culture, and the State*, ed. Christina K. Gilmartin et al. (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1994), 101–124.

[97] Mann describes one anecdote of a prohibition issued in 1673, forbidding officials from hiring female entertainers to perform in rites celebrating the new agricultural season. Although, local officials initially "widely ignored" the

laws had less of an impact outside of the capital and courtesan culture continued throughout the eighteenth century in the Jiangnan region, government restriction on the sex trade significantly detracted from the image of courtesans as idealized femininity.[98]

Although no version of *White Snake*, early or late, directly portrays White Snake as a courtesan or prostitute, she shares qualities with both because of her identity as a monster. Stereotypical connections between prostitutes and monsters in Chinese literature are frequent and well-established, especially in the case of female animal-monsters. Men often encounter monsters, for example, in liminal spaces outside of the inner quarters of the home, much like they encounter courtesans or prostitutes in entertainment districts or in the public realm. Monsters, like prostitutes, are beautiful, well-dressed and skilled with make-up, and engage in sex more readily than ordinary women. Both are seen as sexual parasites, with monsters feeding off of men's sexual energy and prostitutes taking away men's financial wealth. Finally, monsters and prostitutes lack the essential skills of an accomplished housewife, being unable to weave or embroider their own clothes. In both early and later versions of *White Snake*, the character of White Snake displays many of these qualities.[99]

Another set of Qing policies to affect in the construction of the female identity of the Qing was the official promotion of chaste widowhood. Under this system, community leaders could nominate chaste widows to be honored by the government. Women who qualified and were accepted were officially recognized for their virtue and had their names inscribed on shrines or received other awards. Although this system had been in place since the Yuan

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edict, a local gazetteer suggests that it was followed in Yangzhou in the late Qing. See Mann, *Precious Records*, 126-7.

[98] Mann discusses the diminished role of Qing courtesans in *Precious Records*, 121-42.

[99] For a discussion on the comparison of prostitutes and fox spirits, see Huntington, *Alien Kind,* 187-94.

Dynasty, Qing rules shaped the promotion of widow values in new ways and increased the scale of the canonization of chaste widows. In contrast to earlier practices, for example, the Qing government allowed non-Han women to be eligible for nomination, and they forbade the practice of committing suicide after the death of a husband (*xun si* 殉死). Dictating the standards for chaste widowhood allowed the Qing government to shape moral standards for women.[100] In some senses, this promotion of chaste widowhood detracted from White Snake's image as a virtuous woman because she first introduces herself as a widow and quickly agrees to marry Xu Xian. As White Snake's background is expanded in Fang's play and other versions, however, the audience learns that White Snake was not actually a widow. Furthermore, with the exception of "Meeting on a Boat," excerpt scenes do not discuss White Snake as a widow. In a more general sense, Qing elevation of chaste widowhood strengthen the importance of conjugal bonds and a wife's loyalty to her husband, even at the expense of loyalty to the lineage and senior generations.[101] Later versions of *White Snake*, especially in the scenes "Duanwu Festival," "Seeking the Herb," "Water Battle," and "Broken Bridge," White Snake is unfailingly loyal to her husband, risking her own life to protect his.

Among the literati, the classical revival movement of the Qing reopened discussions about the domain of femininity and the nature of male and female roles. Qing scholars of the classical revival, to some extent, overlooked the late Ming writings of the cult of *qing* and began

[100] Mann, *Precious Records*, 23-6; Mark Elvin, "Female Virtue and the State in China," *Past & Present*, no. 104 (1984): 111–52; Theiss, *Disgraceful Matters*, 25-38.

[101] Theiss explains, "Despite its avowed disapproval of conjugal passion as a basis for chastity, the Qing state was compelled by its own logic of individual moral responsibility and its distrust of lineage leaders to grant increasing recognition to the moral prerogatives of the marital unit. One of the most ironic consequences of the Qing state's construction of chastity around the chaste widow was that it promoted the interests of the conjugal unit represented by a man's widow over those of his patriline." See *Disgraceful Matters*, 99.

to research and reexamine ancient writings on Confucian values.[102] Scholars of the classical revival movement, both men and women, practiced extensive research in variations and inconsistencies in the Confucian classics and their Han interpretations, referred to as Han learning (*Hanxue* 漢學) and evidential scholarship (*kaozheng* 考證). Instruction of female virtue during the classical revival often took shape as biographical descriptions of exemplary women, such as works patterned after Liu Xiang's 劉向 (77-6 BCE) *Biographies of Exemplary Women* (*Lienü zhuan* 烈女傳). Classical works served as examples and models not only for the exemplary women described within the texts, but also as a model for writing.[103]

Although *Biographies of Exemplary Women*'s popularity in China ebbed and flowed over the centuries, by the Qing, it was a core text of women's education and provided an influential model for describing proper behavior through famous examples of women.[104] In her study of elite female identity and its impact on Qing society, Susan Mann discusses how literati used biographies of educated women to discuss the function of women's education, focusing on two examples: Ban Zhao 班昭 (45 CE – 116), as a moral instructor, and Xie Daoyun 謝道韞 (fl. 4th

[102] Modern scholars have varying opinions on the extent to which the classical revival of the High Qing broke with the late Ming. Susan Mann has argued for strong break from the late Ming; Paul Ropp and Sufeng Xu have argued that components of the late Ming cult of *qing*, such as romantic love, female talent, and companionate marriage, we reformed into the relationships between literati and *guixiu* in the High Qing. See Susan Mann, *Precious Records*; Paul Ropp, "Review of Precious Records: Women in China's Long Eighteenth Century by Susan Mann," Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies 58, no. 2 (1998): 587–97; Sufeng Xu, "Domesticating Romantic Love during the High Qing Classical Revival: The Poetic Exchanges between Wang Zhaoyuan (1763 - 1851) and Her Husband Hao Yixing (1757 - 1829)," Nan Nü 15, no. 2 (2013): 219–64.

[103] For example, Mann discusses how the fourth section of Yin Huiyi's 尹會一 (1691 – 1745) collection of moral instructions, *Sijian lu* 四鑑錄 (Record of Four Mirrors), for example, is patterned after *Biographies of Exemplary Women.* See Mann, *Precious Records*, 76-120.

[104] For a survey of illustrated Ming editions of and their place in society *Biographies of Exemplary Women*, see Katherine Carlitz, "The Social Uses of Female Virtue in Late Ming Editions of Lienu Zhuan," *Late Imperial China* 12, no. 2 (1991): 117–48. For a discussion of the text in the Qing, see Susan Mann, *Precious Records*, 205-8.

cent. CE), as a brilliant prodigy who surpassed her male peers.[105] Not all exemplary women were teachers, students, or poets, however. In her conclusion, Mann discusses a Qing edition of Yan Xiyuan's *Huapu baimeitu bing xinyong hebian* (Combined edition of the illustrated register of one hundred beauties with new verses), which featured portraits from famous contemporary women poets and calligraphers along with historical and legendary figures. One such exemplary woman was Hua Mulan 花木蘭, who was exemplary not for her education or writing, but for serving as a warrior who took her father's place out of filial devotion.[106]

How did wives and mothers become exemplary? How was female virtue articulated? Literati writing on gender roles in the High Qing often centered on the importance of using ritual (*li* 禮) to perform gender roles. In his study on gender in the eyes of the official Chen Hongmou 陳宏謀 (1696 – 1771), William T. Rowe shows that social roles, including gender roles, were generally regarded as universal truths, rather than social constructions. Boundaries between proper social roles, as well as the means to maintain one's social role was often through the correct performance of ritual. Rowe explains that the use of ritual in this context was broad and implicated formal rituals as well as daily rituals:[107]

> Certain especially momentous *li*—rites of passage such as capping ceremonies, betrothals, and funerals—were critical to the maintenance of the ordered system of social roles, inasmuch as they defined an individual's entry into or exit from a given *fen* [social roles]. The rite of marriage, in particular, was consistently

[105] *Precious Records*, 78-83.

[106] Ibid., 208. The popular tale of Hua Mulan appears in a variety of literary genres and modern media, originally taking the form of a *yuefu* ballad, "Mulan ci 木蘭辭" in the 6th century collection *Gujin yuelu* 古今樂錄 (Musical records old and new). The ballad tells of girl, Hua Mulan, who takes her father's place as a conscript in the military. After achieving success as a warrior and serving for twelve years, she resumed dressing and acting like a woman, much to the surprise of her companions, who had taken her as a man. For English translation, see Stephen Owen, "The Ballad of Mu-lan," in *An Anthology of Chinese Literature: Beginnings to 1911* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996), 241-3. Print.

[107] "Women and the Family in Mid-Qing Social Thought: The Case of Chen Hongmou," *Late Imperial China* 13, no. 2 (1992): 6-7. Rowe quotes from *Yangzheng yigui* (Sourcebook on childhood education), supplementary *juan*, p. 24; Chen Hongmou, *Jiaonü yigui* (Sourcebook on female education), 1:5.

> claimed to be the cornerstone of the entire system, since it marked the acceptance on the part of two individuals of the basic social roles of husband and wife. But the *li* also incorporated very mundane acts of household and interpersonal etiquette, and fine details of personal grooming and comportment, which were in effect mystified by assignment of an extra-human origin and a cosmological significance. Thus Chen Hongmou noted that young children must be repeatedly practiced in the ritually-correct forms of eating, drinking, sitting, reclining, and so on, and a wife taught to follow the proper ritual procedure (*dianli*) which governed the entire "routines of daily activity in the home" (*jushi riyong zhi chang*).

In this sense, the success of fulfilling social role was contingent not just on larger matters of ritual, such as marriage, but also the cultivation of daily practices. As the story of *White Snake* developed, White Snake took on more ritual roles, such as childrearing and receiving sacrifice. These rituals are discussed in greater detail in Chapter Three.

By the High Qing, adherence to gender roles defined by ritual was not limited to elites. Under the Yongzheng 雍正 reign (1722 – 1735), the Qing government issued laws dissolving former class lines, allowing for the advancement of debased people (*jianmin* 賤民) to the status of free commoners (*liangmin* 良民). Although not ostensibly targeting sex workers, Matthew Sommer's study of law and court cases from the Qing archive describes how this policy effectively criminalized prostitution and redefined how the law applied sex crimes.[108] Pre-High Qing law favored the protection of those with free status, administering more severe punishment for the violation of a person of free status, but also requiring those with free status to adhere to more rigid standards. Thus, while the rape of a free peasant woman or adolescent male by a man of the debased class was of high concern and involved strict punishment, the rape of a woman from a debased class was less likely to merit concern or punishment. As debased people were elevated to the status of free commoners, however, these double standards were no longer

[108] Matthew Harvey Sommer, *Sex, Law, and Society in Late Imperial China*.

relevant. In this sense, the Yongzheng laws effectively applied the same ritual standards to all people, regardless of class.[109] Sommer describes this shift as a change from "status performance" to "gender performance," emphasizing the diminishing role of social status and the rising importance of gender in the Qing construction of identity.

The cultural shifts from the cult of *qing* to the classical revival and from "status performance" to "gender performance" make White Snake's transition from monster to mother more understandable. As described earlier in this chapter, later versions of *White Snake* added four major plot developments: an origin for White Snake in a spiritual realm, the death and resurrection of Xu Xian during the Dragon Boat Festival, the battle at Golden Mountain Monastery and White Snake and Xu Xian's reunion at "Broken Bridge," and the birth and success of Xu Shilin, leading to White Snake's redemption as a transcendent. The importance of ritual in the construction of social roles in the High Qing is particularly salient for *White Snake* because White Snake's performance of female virtue through acts of ritual is an important theme in nearly all of these scenes. White Snake initially decides to leave her home in order to fulfill her destiny with Xu Xian, which involves fulfilling ritual roles as his wife. In "Dragon Boat Festival," White Snake involuntarily reverts to her snake form because of fulfilling her ritual role as wife, in accompanying her husband to drink realgar wine, even though it is poisonous to her. In "Sacrifice at the Pagoda," White Snake receives sacrifice from her first-rank son. The focus of later versions shifts from her seductive qualities as an alluring monster to her virtuous qualities as a loyal wife.

## Conclusion

[109] Sommer attributes much of the stigma attached to debased peoples to the assumption that they did not follow ritual. See *Sex, Law, and Society in Late Imperial China*, 6.

Huang Tubi attributes the changes in later versions of *White Snake* to the actors "slavishly adhering to the old conventions of the theater," or, in other words, changing the ending of the play so that it, like other plays of the time period, resulted in the happiest possible conclusion: the marriage of a young scholar and his placement of first rank in the imperial examinations. Although Huang's explanation is convincing, actors changed much more than just the ending, and these changes later appeared in storytelling versions and written narratives as well. As such, adhering to drama conventions explains only part of the situation. Other factors, which Huang may have been less aware of, also contributed to changes in the story of *White Snake* and the popularity of White Snake as a mother.

The tension between the two central aspects of White Snake's character—as a woman and as a monster—reflect much more broadly ways in which people of the Qing understood identity. By the High Qing, a romanticized image of courtesans from the late-Ming had fallen out of favor and was replaced by the image of an idealized wife who was unfailingly loyal to her husband, *qing* sentiments of love and emotion were replaced with exemplary women of the classical revival, and inherited status became less relevant in relation to gender for determining ritual roles. In this chapter, I have grounded the major plot changes of *White Snake* firmly in the latter half of the eighteenth century to show that *White Snake* is not only a reflection of these changes, but also a reflection of the audiences' interest in these changes. In the following chapters, I will discuss how *White Snake* continues to explore the conflict between femininity and monstrousness in specific scenes in a wider range of performance genres of the nineteenth century.

# CHAPTER TWO

## The Other Righteous Monster: Little Green as a foil in Qing excerpt plays

One of the most influential versions of *White Snake* in the twentieth century was a Beijing opera by Tian Han 田漢 (1898 – 1968), a playwriter, activist, and chief of the Opera Reform Bureau in the early 1950s. In the introduction to his 1953 Beijing opera version of *White Snake*, Tian describes the character Little Green:[110]

> Little Green's intense nature serves as part foil to and part influence on White Snake's beautiful nature. She is faithful and constant to her friends. She is angry, hateful, and aggressive to her enemies, to her oppressors, and to her betrayers. We have to require [that she have] this sort of nature that clearly separates love and hate. We have to require that directors and actors deeply understand and display this kind of character.
>
> 小青是與白娘子的美麗性格相襯托、相影響的強烈的性格。她對於朋友是忠實的、堅貞的。她對於敵人，對於壓迫者、背叛者，是嫉憤的、好鬥的。我們正要求這樣愛憎分明的性格。我們也要求導演和演員，深刻體會和表現這樣人物。

Little Green is a central figure in Tian Han's *White Snake* because it concludes with them[111] burning down Thunder Peak Pagoda and rescuing White Snake—a significant change from many

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[110] See Tian Han, Bai she zhuan *xu*《白蛇傳》序 (Introduction to *The Legend of White Snake*), in *Tian Han zhuan ji* 田漢專集 (Collected works of Tian Han) (Jiangsu: Jiangsu renmin chubanshe, 1984), 169. Quoted in Fan Jinlan 范金蘭, *Bai she zhuan gushi: xingbian yanjiu* 【白蛇傳故事】形變研究 (The story of White Snake: transformation research) (Taipei: Wanjuanlou tushu gufen youxian gongsi, 2003), 247.

[111] The character Little Green almost always presents as female. In some versions, especially in a scene discussed later in this chapter, however, Little Green is also portrayed by an actor of a male role type, then transforms into a female maidservant. As such, in this chapter I will refer to Little Green in the third person using the pronouns they/them/theirs, except when quoting from English sources or Chinese sources that refer to them using the third person female pronoun 她 (she/her/hers). While modern English conventions of gender pronouns are not ideal for describing transforming spirits in late imperial Chinese drama, I find consistent use of singular "they" pronouns clearer than alternating between gendered pronouns. Since most versions of *White Snake* depict Little Green only as female, I have elected to use non-gendered pronouns only for this chapter.

earlier versions.[112] At a time when the role of traditional drama in society was a heated debate, Tian Han saw value in traditional performance as a means to educate people on the core values of the newly established PRC. *White Snake* in particular was a suitable story to illustrate the dangers of feudalistic, religious societies. Little Green, a woman of low social class, was an obvious candidate to take on a heroic role. Despite the modern political context for Tian Han's quotation above, his description of Little Green rings true for many earlier versions. Little Green expresses anger more directly than White Snake and their emotions tend to be more dynamic; Little Green is fiercely loyal to their master and violent to their enemies. They sometimes serve as a mirror to White Snake, but sometimes they provide valuable perspective that White Snake cannot.[113]

This chapter will discuss developments and variations on Little Green in acted performance versions of *White Snake* from the Qing. In this chapter, I argue that the development of the character Little Green in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries helped define White Snake's identities of monster, transcendent, and virtuous wife, but also created a space for a sympathetic, and potentially subversive, alternative female perspective. I analyze the development of Little Green in three parts: in the first section, I provide a brief overview of the development of Little Green in dramatic and narrative versions of *White Snake* to show the

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[112] As I discuss later in this chapter, some versions do describe Little Green attempting to rescue White Snake from the pagoda, but they are generally unsuccessful. The only record of an example in which they are successful is the Sichuan opera sequel, titled *Lingyun du* 凌雲度 [Purple-cloud crossing] or *Qingshe da baochou* 青蛇大報仇 [The great revenge of Little Green]. Even in this example, Little Green is only successful in earning White Snake's freedom because, after they both are subjugated, Buddha is moved by Little Green's display of loyalty, and grants both of them status as transcendents. See Wang Ding'ou 王定歐, ed., *Chuanju jumu cidian* 川剧剧目辞典 [Dictionary of the Sichuan opera repertoire] (Chengdu: Sichuan cishu chubanshe, 1999), 813.

[113] Tian Han wrote and revised *White Snake* plays for over a decade. Performance of his most famous version began in 1953, and he finalized the play between 1953-5. For an analysis of the relationship between avant-garde and traditional performance in Tian Han's *White Snake*, see Luo Liang 羅靚, *The Avant-Garde and the Popular in Modern China: Tian Han and the Intersection of Performance and Politics* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan, 2014), 177-212.

general ways in which actors and writers elaborated on the character in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The second and third sections focus on particular scenes that contrast Little Green and White Snake. In the second section, I combine close readings of the scene "Subduing Green" (Shou Qing 收青) in Fang Chengpei's play with modern performance of the scene in Sichuan opera to show how the character of Little Green emphasizes White Snake's successful portrayal of human femininity and establishes their relationship as servant and master. In the third section, I compare close readings of the scene "Broken Bridge" (Duanqiao 斷橋) in *chuanqi*, Kun opera, *pihuang*, and Sichuan opera to show the development of Little Green's function as a subversive foil.

**A Monstrous Mirror: the development of Little Green's monstrousness**

In the earliest versions of *White Snake*, Little Green is portrayed as a flat character who helps describe White Snake as a woman of high social status and gives White Snake agency in the human world. Like White Snake, Little Green's character becomes more complex in Qing versions, but whereas White Snake is given a new identity as a female transcendent, Little Green is often described as comparatively monstrous and less developed as a transcendent. Some versions minimize Little Green's role.[114] Conversely, some excerpted scenes, chapters, and sequels focus entirely on Little Green. While plots that focus on Little Green differ widely, many share common themes, such as a propensity for violence and extreme loyalty to White Snake.

[114] Hsu Wen-hung cites one modern version that eliminates the character of Little Green entirely: Tu Kui-heng 杜貴恆, "Bai she jing 白蛇精 [The White Snake Spirit]," *Central Daily News* 中央日報 7, 14 June 1971. See Wen-hung Hsu, "The Evolution of the Legend of the White Serpent (Part II)," *Tamkang Review* 4, no. 2 (1973): 127 and 152n27.

Little Green's form as an animal-monster is comparatively unstable until the later *chuanqi* of the eighteenth century. In the Ming vernacular tale "Record of the Three Pagodas of West Lake (Xihu san ta ji 西湖三塔記)," the male protagonist encounters three monstrous women rather than two: a daughter, a mother, and a grandmother.[115] After being subjugated, the grandmother reverts to her original form as an otter, the mother reverts to a white snake, and the girl reverts to a black chicken. Although some scholars connect the character Little Green to the grandmother in "Record of the Three Pagodas of West Lake," these connections are tenuous at best;[116] Little Green's function as matchmaker, servant, protector, and monstrous foil do not apply to this tale. In Feng Menglong's vernacular narrative "Madam White," Little Green is a background character, inseparable from White Snake. Little Green takes on the form of a young maidservant attending to White Snake's needs and never indicates a difference of opinion or

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[115] See Hong Bian, "Qingping shantang," in *Xu xiu siku quan shu* 續修四庫全書, vol. 1784, (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1995), 9-14. For English translation of the tale, see W.L. Idema, *The White Snake and Her Son* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2009), 119-34. See also "Introduction," xv-xvi.

[116] Zhao Jingshen 趙景深 (1902 - 1985) provides perhaps the most convincing evidence, not because he evidence of Little Green's connection to the otter, but because he suggests that the black chicken becomes Dark Wind Transcendent, White Snake's sworn brother, which is at least consistent in color ("black" and "dark" are both translations of *hei* 黑). See *Tanci kaozheng* 彈詞考證 [A textual criticism of lute ballads] (Changsha: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1938), 17. Whalen Lai attaches particular importance to the change in Little Green's form from otter to snake. In the beginning of his study on the origins of *White Snake*, Lai includes the exorcism of a white snake and an otter as part of the core plot. He then notes "Nowadays we do not even remember the role of the otter. It has been replaced by a tiny green snake that, in her human form, plays handmaid to her mistress, Madame White. Nicknamed Xiao Qing 小青, or "Little Green," she now functions as the matchmaker to the central couple." At the end of the article, he argues that the otter form is more appropriate cosmologically: "Only one item remains to be explained: the otter. The Black Otter is the proper companion of the White Snake. The substitution for it of Little Green the snake—based on the later East-West icon of 'Green Dragon, White Tiger'—forgets that, as an agent of death, the White Snake is better served by the Black Otter, at one point the icon of the wintry north and of death. And Otter should go with Snake. This odd couple went as far back as Sage-King Yu-the Dragon (Snake) that stopped the flood-and his father Gun 鯀. Gun, who tried building up the river levee, has been identified as the otter. Once upon a time, as father and son, Gun-Yu represented the cycle of the year. When split into two, Gun would be remembered as the proud fool who aggravated the flood while Yu was the diligent hero who tamed it. Together they represent the two faces of the Yellow River, the bed of Chinese culture." See "From Folklore to Literature Theater: Unpacking 'Madame White Snake,'" *Asian Folklore Studies* 51, no. 1 (1992): 52-3, 64. See also Hsu Wen-hung, "The Evolution of the Legend of the White Serpent (Part I)," *Tamkang Review* 4, no. 1 (1973): 119, "From Folklore to Literature Theater: Unpacking 'Madame White Snake,'" *Asian Folklore Studies* 51, no. 1 (1992): 52-3, 64; Liang Luo, "Writing Green Snake, Dancing White Snake, and the Cultural Revolution as Memory and Imagination--Centered on Yan Geling's Baishe," *Frontiers of Literary Studies in China* 11, no. 1 (2017): 11.

individual motivation. At the conclusion, White Snake explains Little Green's origin to Fahai: "She's a carp from the pond under the third bridge in West Lake. She acquired immortality after a thousand years of spiritual cultivation. I met her quite by accident and made her my companion. She hasn't had any fun, not even for one day. Please have pity on her, Abbot!"[117] Unlike later versions, Little Green is imprisoned alongside White Snake in "Madam White." In this sense, their character mirrors White Snake in almost every way, but is comparatively undeveloped.

Beginning with *chuanqi* and Kun opera plays from the latter half of the eighteenth century, the character of Little Green is developed and is distinguished from White Snake in certain respects. While still serving White Snake as a maid and providing her agency to go out in public, Little Green also has scenes in which they perform duties independent of White Snake and expresses their own opinions. In Fang's play, Little Green begins the play as an independent snake-monster and master of the water creatures of West Lake, and is subdued by White Snake in the scene "Subduing Green." In the later scene "Broken Bridge," Little Green holds Xu Xian accountable for his betrayal of White Snake, while White Snake herself readily forgives him. Another notable scene from this time period is "Dao ku 盜庫 [Stealing from the Treasury]," in which Little Green steals silver to give to Xu Xian. This scene was not included in Fang's script, but manuscript copies from full-length plays and excerpt plays have survived, and the scene is still popular in performance.[118] In this scene, Little Green steals silver from a treasury near West

[117] Feng Menglong 馮夢龍 (1574–1646), "Madam White Is Kept Forever under Thunder Peak Tower," in *Stories to Caution the World*, trans. Shuhui Yang and Yang Yunqin (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005), 504.

[118] "Stealing from the Treasure" is one of the four excerpt plays from *White Snake* included in the 1925 miscellany *Kunqu daquan* 崑曲大全 [Complete collection of Kun opera]. Manuscript copies of excerpt versions of the scene are undated, from either the Qing or the Republican era. For a "foot copy"—actor's script—for the role of Little Green, see Huang Kuanchong 黃寬重 et al., eds., *Su wenxue congkan* 俗文學叢刊 Folk literature: materials in the

Lake, which is guarded by a treasury spirit (*ku shen* 庫神). The treasury spirit often has henchmen that help him protect the silver, and Little Green is sometimes accompanied by a small group of spirits that help them. The scene focuses on movement and action, exhibiting martial arts and acrobatics from Little Green.[119]

Nineteenth-century narrative and storytelling versions of *White Snake* also tend to develop events that focus on Little Green. For example, in the *tanci* (lute ballad) versions of *White Snake*, Little Green spends fourteen years after White Snake is imprisoned under Thunder Peak Pagoda cultivating a "flying dagger" (*feidao* 飛刀) technique to attack Fahai, and travels to the pagoda to set it on fire. Fahai arrives and defeats Little Green, trapping them in a bottle. The bodhisattva Guanyin comes to collect the bottle, and Little Green has no choice but to continue their cultivation practice inside the bottle.[120] A nineteenth-century *zidishu* 子弟書 (youth book),

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collection of the Institute of History and Philology, vol. 81 (Taipei: Xin wen feng chuban youxian gongsi, 2001), 31-7. Another version of the scene is collected in *Gugong zhenben congkan* 故宮珍本叢刊 [Rare editions of the Imperial Palace collection], vol. 663 (Haikou: Hainan chubanshe, 2001), 382-5. The scene also appears in a multi-scene excerpt version, *Yi yao zhuan* 義妖傳 (The legend of righteous monster). See Wang Wenzhang 王文章, ed. , in *Fu Xihua cang gudian xiqu zhenben congkan* 傅惜華藏古典戲曲珍本叢刊 [Collection of rare editions of classical dramas stored by Fu Xihua], vol. 130 (Beijing: Xuyuan chubanshe, 2010), 44-46.

[119] The Kunqu *sheng* actor Bai Yunsheng 白雲生 (1902 – 1972) notes that, in Kunqu, Little Green used to be performed by a *jing* role type in "Stealing from the Treasury." This is not commonly the case in modern performance. Qing manuscripts of the scene generally refer to Little Green's lines using their character name rather than role type, so it is unclear whether they were performed with a *jing* or *tiedan* role type. Two references to the scene in the flower register *Jubu qunying* 菊部羣英 [Heroes of the chrysanthemum quarter - originally published 1873] list the role of Little Green as being played by *dan* actors. It is possible that it was popular for *jing* actors in Kunqu to perform the scene for a time during the Republican era, but it is also possible that both *jing* and *dan* actors performed the role consistently. See Bai Yunsheng, *Sheng dan jing mo chou biaoyan yishu* 生旦淨末丑的表演藝術 [The performance arts of the male, female, painted face, old male, and clown role types] (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 1959), 106; Hanjiang xiao you xian ke 邗江小遊仙客, "Jubu qunying," in *Qingdai Yandu liyuan shiliao zhengxubian* 清代燕都梨園史料正續編 (Corrected and edited actors' materials from the captial during the Qing Dynasty - QYLSZ), ed. Zhang Cixi 張次溪 (1909-1968), vol. 2 (Taipei: Zhuanju wenxue chubanshe, 1974), 913-972.

[120] One of the most famous *tanci* versions to include this plot arc is Chen Yuqian's 陳遇乾 *Xiuxiang yi yao zhuan* 繡像義妖傳 [The embroidered portrait of the legend of the righteous monster]. The first chapter in this subplot is titled "Weeping at the Pagoda" and the second chapter in this subplot is titled "Subduing Green." "Weeping at the Pagoda" is the same title used in the youth book described above. "Subduing Green" is the same title as the

"Weeping at the Pagoda," describes a similar plot for Little Green's revenge. Little Green, who escaped exorcism, uses their magic to travel to West Lake and visit White Snake, who is imprisoned under the pagoda. They find White Snake, reduced in form, stripped of her magic power, and trapped inside an alms bowl. They commiserate with White Snake and the two regret Xu Xian's involvement with Fahai. In the end, Little Green resolves to travel to the Western Paradise to implore Buddha for White Snake's freedom.[121]

Some sequels to *White Snake* in drama focus entirely on the character of Little Green, such as the nineteenth-century *chuanqi* play, *Chengxin yuan* 稱心緣 [A destiny to fulfill the heart]. In this sequel, Little Green is killed after White Snake is imprisoned under Thunder Peak Pagoda, but then resurrected because they have a marriage-destiny with a man named Qin Jiyuan 秦繼元. Little Green and Qin live together as husband and wife for twenty years. Fahai tries unsuccessfully to convince Qin to break up with Little Green. Angry at Qin's lack of compliance, he traps Qin's soul at Golden Mountain Monastery. Little Green goes to save him and is also captured, but the two are later saved by a golden-winged bird (*jin chi niao* 金翅鳥) sent by Dīpaṃkara Buddha. Later, Dark Wind Transcendent 黑風仙, White Snake's sworn brother, tells Little Green of an opportunity to rescue White Snake. Five days later, West Lake dries up temporarily and Little Green and Xu Xian carry White Snake out of the pagoda. Their

performance scene that appears in multiple versions described above, but their location in the story and plot are entirely different. Chen Yuqian, *Xiuxiang yi yao zhuan*, 1809, *juan* 11 48.4a-49.5b. According to Qin Gong 秦弓, this plot arc also appears in an earlier *tanci*, *Xinbian dongdiao Leifengta bai she zhuan* 新編東調雷峰塔白蛇傳 [Newly compiled eastern tune of the legend of white snake of Thunder Peak Pagoda], which was originally published in 1770 and is kept at Fudan University. "Shuiman Jinshan wei na ban 水漫金山為哪般," in *Zhongguo ren de dexing* 中國人的德行 [Shameful behavior of the Chinese people] (Beijing: Wen jin chubanshe, 2013), 311–14.

[121] See Idema, *White Snake and her Son* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2009), 93-101; Fu Xihua 傅惜华 (1907-1970), ed., *Bai she zhuan ji* 白蛇傳集 [The Legend of White Snake collection] (Shanghai: Gudian wenxue chubanshe, 1957), 107-9.

destiny together fulfilled, White Snake and Xu part ways, separately resume their cultivation practices, and eventually meet with Buddha and return to Heaven. Little Green gives birth to a son and, having fulfilled their marriage-destiny, leaves for heaven, but first entrusts Xu Shilin to find a new wife for Qin.[122]

Another sequel that focuses on Little Green appears in Sichuan opera and shadow puppet opera, and is titled *Lingyun du* 凌雲渡 (Soaring-cloud crossing) or *Qingshe da baochou* 青蛇大報仇 [The great revenge of Green Snake]. [123] In this play, which also occurs after Fahai

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[122] *Chengxin yuan* is sometimes also written with the characters “稱心願” [A wish to fulfill the heart], and is also sometimes titled *Hou leifengta* 後雷峰塔 [Later Thunder Peak Pagoda]. For a brief summary in Chinese, see Zhang Chenglian 張成濂, ed., *Zhongguo xiqu quyi cidian* 中国戏曲曲艺词典 [A dictionary of Chinese drama and folk art] (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 1981), 538. The Library of Congress holds a physical and digitized manuscript copy of the last seven scenes, which were apparently mistakenly attached to the first twenty-five scenes of another play, *Yu jia le* 漁家樂 [The fishing family’s happiness]. The Library of Congress’ digital version is accessible from their website: https://lccn.loc.gov/2012402427. Deng Changfeng 鄧長風 dated this manuscript to the Kangxi reign (1661-1722), which would make it the oldest extant *White Snake* script and significantly change scholars’ understanding of the story’s development, as it involves characters and events in the story, such as White Snake’s son Xu Shilin and her sworn brother Dark Wind Transcendent, almost one hundred years before other versions. Wang Shipei 王詩珮 has convincingly disputed the accuracy of this date, arguing instead for a date during the Jiaqing reign (1796-1820) or Qianlong reign (1735-1796) at the earliest, based on internal evidence and comparison with other versions of the script. See Deng Changfeng, “Kangxi can chaoben "Chen xin yuan" chuanqi de faxian yu "Leifengta" banben, qingjie yanbian zhi tui kao 康熙残抄本《称心缘》传奇的发现与《雷峰塔》版本、情节衍变之推考 [The discovery of an incomplete manuscript of the drama "A wish to fulfill the heart" and editions of "Thunder Peak Pagoda," an investigation of plot development],” in *Ming Qing xiqujia kaolüe bian* 明清戏曲家考略三编 [Three investigations of Ming-Qing dramatists (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1999), 1–32; Wang Shih-pe, “Qing zhongye yi bu dianfuxing de bai she xiqu "xuji": Riben Tianli tushuguan cang Hou leifengta chaunqi chutan 清中葉一部顛覆性的白蛇戲曲「續集」:日本天理圖書館藏《後雷峰塔傳奇》初探 (A subversive white snake drama sequel in mid-Qing: the preliminary analysis of post-Thunder Peak Pagoda collected in Tenri Library,” *Guowen Xuebao* 國文學報, no. 62 (2017): 59–99 and “Qianji yu minzong: qing zhongye *Leifengta* chuanqi yanbian xinlun 潛跡與明蹤: 清中葉《雷峰塔》傳奇演變新論 (The underlain footprints and revealed route: a re-examination on the development of Thunder Peak Pagoda in mid-Qing),” *Minsu Quyi* 199 (2018): 299-303.

[123] Fan Pen Chen translates the second half of this version, based on a Republican era text. Lin Xiaomin lists a copy in her discussion of Sichuan opera woodblock print scripts, and summary of the play is included in *Chuanju jumu cidian*, but I have not seen evidence of pre-twentieth century versions. See “‘Cloud-Transcending Crossing’ (‘Lingyun Du’) or ‘The Great Revenge of Blue Snake’ (‘Qingshe Da Baochou’), the Second and Final Installment of a Chengdu Shadow Play Scripts, Thunder Peak Pagoda (Leifeng Ta),” *Chinoperl* 32.1, 30–71; Liu Xiaomin 劉效民 *Sichuan fangke quben kaolüe* 四川坊刻曲本考略 [An examination and overview of Sichuan shop-carved music books] (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 2005), 177; Wang Ding’ou 王定歐, ed., *Chuanju jumu cidian* 川剧剧目辞典 [Dictionary of the Sichuan opera repertoire] (Chengdu: Sichuan cishu chubanshe, 1999), 813. Li Diaoyuan 李調元 (1734 – 1803) is said to have written a script titled *Lingyun du*, although it would be surprising for such an

imprisons White Snake under Thunder Peak Pagoda, Little Green subdues another snake-monster, Little Red (Xiao Hong 小紅). The two snakes, along with Fish Girl (Yu Gu 魚姑) and Clam Girl (Bang Gu 蚌姑) battle various Buddhist and Daoist spirits to obtain magical weapons. They then use the weapons to assault Buddha's Western Paradise and avenge White Snake. Upon discovering that the weapons have no effect on Buddha and his guardians, the monster-women disrobe and use their nudity to disempower the gods and spirits. In the end, however, they are unable to overcome the Buddhist spirits and are defeated. Moved by Little Green's loyalty, Buddha decides to have White Snake released from Thunder Peak Pagoda and have Little Green and Red Snake taken to the Orchard of Immortal Peaches, where they will be forced to repent their sins, then taken to the Pool of Eight Virtues so that they can listen to the exposition of the sutras and achieve enlightenment.[124]

Although the character of Little Green is not consistent in all versions of *White Snake* and its sequels, there are patterns to how the character develops and changes. First, as the story develops in the eighteenth century, Little Green becomes more similar to White Snake. From their beginnings as an otter or fish in the early versions of *White Snake*, Little Green's original form is later changed to parallel their master's form as a snake. In addition to their form, Little Green often goes through similar challenges as White Snake. In *Chengxin yuan*, for example, Little Green also has to repay a karmic debt to a mortal lover, is also trapped by Fahai, also gives

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elaborate sequel of *White Snake* to appear in the eighteenth century, when the original story was still relatively new. See Chen, "Cloud-Transcending Crossing," 41, and Jiang Weiming 蔣維明, "Cong Qianlong chao houqi yige 'feng jiao xue' xiban kan Chuanju de Xingcheng 從乾隆朝後期一個風絞雪戲班看川劇的形成 (Looking at the development of Chuanju from the case of a mixed musical mode troupe of the later part of the Qianlong reign)," *Sichuan Xiju*, no. 3 (2007): 12–15.

[124] This summary is based on the shadow puppet versions translated by Fan Ben Chen. Chen notes that modern Sichuan opera versions of the play concludes differently, so that the *yao*-women do not disrobe but successfully defeat the Buddhist guardians. See also n112 and n123 above.

birth to a child, and also ascends to Heaven. Second, although Little Green becomes more similar to White Snake in some respects, they also tend to become more monstrous, even in the same versions. This quality is often expressed through their propensity for combat and violence. *Tanci* versions, "Weeping at the Pagoda," and *Soaring-Cloud Crossing*, for example, all elaborate on Little Green's attempts to free White Snake from Thunder Peak Pagoda through the use of violence. In other versions, however, Little Green's comparatively monstrous qualities enable them to perform duties that are less appropriate for White Snake, who is depicted as a more developed being. In "Stealing from the Treasury," for example, Little Green steals silver so that White Snake can give it to Xu—White Snake does not have to steal the silver personally but can rely on her monstrous servant to perform the task. Another aspect of Little Green's relative monstrousness is their portrayal as less developed than White Snake. Both practice cultivation, but White Snake is more experienced, more successful, and closer to becoming a transcendent.

These two developments in Little Green's character, becoming more similar to White Snake but also becoming more monstrous, affect their function as a foil to White Snake. As Little Green becomes more similar to White Snake, comparing the two becomes more natural. Since Little Green distinguishes themself as more monstrous, however, comparison between the two characters takes on a different shape. In this sense, when conflict arises between the two characters or they respond differently to any given situation, Little Green acts the way they act because they are more monstrous, and White Snake acts the way she acts because she is more advanced.

**The Loyal Monster: Monsterizing and masculinizing Little Green in "Subduing Green"**

Fang's play uses the scene "Subduing Green" to introduce Little Green. White Snake, having left her home on Mount Emei in Sichuan to find the beneficiary of her karmic destiny, stops to rest near West Lake in Hangzhou. Little Green, an independent monster and leader of the water creatures living at West Lake, confronts White Snake and threatens her. The two battle each other. White Snake defeats Little Green, and Little Green pledges loyalty to White Snake. White Snake requests Little Green transform into a maid to accompany her in the human world without raising suspicion. White Snake transforms into a human woman of high social status.[125] Based on extant scripts and performance traditions, "Subduing Green" does not appear to have been as popular as scenes like "Water Battle," "Broken Bridge," or "Sacrifice at the Pagoda," but it was performed as an excerpt play in Kunqu and Beijing opera in the late Qing, and is still included in the full-length versions of Sichuan opera.[126] The events described in this scene also appear in some written narrative versions and storytelling versions.[127] This section will compare

[125] For "Subduing Green" in Fang's script, see Fang Chengpei, *Leifengta* 雷峰塔 (Thunder Peak Pagoda) (Beijing: Huaxia chubanshe), 2000, 18-21.

[126] A Kunqu manuscript from the Qing or early Republican period is reprinted in *Folk Literature*. This excerpt scene combines "Subduing Green" with the events that appear in the previous scene in Fang's play, in which White Snake bids farewell to sworn brother, Dark Wind Transcendent 黑風仙, and leaves her home of Mount Emei for the realm of mortals. Arias in this version include musical notation. See Huang et al., "Xia shan shou qing 下山收青 [Descending the mountain and subduing Green]," *Su wenxue congkan*, vol. 81 (Taipei: Xin wen feng chuban youxian gongsi, 2001), 2–24. The Kunqu *sheng* actor Bai Yunsheng also briefly discusses the performance of "Subduing Green" in *Sheng dan jing mo chou biaoyan yishu*, 106; Beijing opera writer and scholar Pan Xiafeng 潘俠風 (1914-1993) explained that the scene was performed as an excerpt in the late Qing but then ceased to be performed. His collection includes a version of the scene, though it appears to be his own reinterpretation or recollection of how the scene was performed. See Pan Xiafeng, *Jingju jicheng* 京劇集成 [Beijing opera collection], vol. 1, (Beijing: Xin shijie chubanshe, 1989), 323-31. For Sichuan opera scripts of the scene, see He Xu 何序, "Bai she zhuan 白蛇傳 (The Legend of White Snake)," in *Chuanju jumu jianding yanchu juben xuan* 川劇劇目鑒定演出劇本選 (Selection of Sichuan opera repertoire authenticated performance scripts), vol. 9 (Chengdu: Sichuan renmin chubanshe, 1957), 42-4, and Wu Boqi 吳伯祺 (1925-1995), *Wu Boqi xiqu xuan* 吳伯祺戲曲選 (Selection of plays by Wu Boqi) (Chengdu: Chengdu chubanshe, 1993), 14-7. For a performance recording of the scene in Sichuan opera, see *Bai she zhuan* 白蛇传 (The Legend of White Snake), Li Zenglin 李增林 and Tian Huiwen's 田惠文, dir., performance by Chengdu City Opera House 川剧市剧院, Emei dianying zhipianguang yinxiang chubanshe 峨嵋电影制片厂音像出版社 (Emei Film Studio Audio and Video Publishing House) 7:13-19:39.

[127] For an example of the scene in written narrative, see Yushan Zhuren 玉山主人, *Leifengta Qi Zhuan* 雷峰塔奇傳 (The amazing history of Thunder Peak Pagoda) (Taipei: Tian yi chubanshe, 1985—originally published 1806), 1.6a-

close readings of Fang's script with a modern recording of Sichuan opera performance to show how Qing versions developed the character of Little Green as a monstrous foil to White Snake and established their relationship as master and apprentice.

Little Green's opening monologue immediately contrasts them with White Snake, establishing them as a more monstrous, less-cultivated snake-monster and transcendent-in-training:[128]

> I am Green Green, who has practiced cultivation for a thousand years. I used to live on an island in the ocean—I don't remember what year it was—but I only happened to come to this West Lake because heavy wind and rain broke out. In this place there are more than ten thousand water creatures, and they all take refuge in my leadership. During the day, I accompany the little ones, and at night I take shelter in the abandoned residence of Prince Qiu at Double Teahouse Lane. When I am still, I collect the essence of the sun and moon; when I am active, I cheat all the living creatures of their vital energy,[129] and use this scheme to, in the future, take off this skin and fur and cultivate the path of the transcendent.
>
> 我乃千年修煉青青是也。向居海島，不記歲年，隻因風雨大作，偶然來此西湖。此間有水族萬余，俱歸吾掌。日裡與孩子每為伴，夜間在雙茶坊巷裘王府空宅內安身。靜則採取日月之精華，動則魘惑群生之元氣，以圖將來脫此皮毛，修成仙道。

Here, Little Green expresses desire to leave behind their monstrous form ("take of this skin and fur") to become a transcendent and boasts having practiced cultivation for a thousand years. Ironically, their description of how they practice cultivation is not the kind of cultivation that leads to entering the ranks of the transcendents. Specifically, they boast that they "cheat all the

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7b. For a drummer melody (*guziqu* 鼓子曲) version and a precious scroll (*baojuan* 寶卷) version Fu Xihua 傅惜华 (1907-1970), ed., *Bai She Zhuan Ji* 白蛇傳集 [The legend of White Snake collection] (Shanghai: Gudian wenxue chubanshe, 1957), 49-51 and 196-7, and for English translation of the precious scroll version, see W.L. Idema, *The White Snake and Her Son* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2009), 15-6.

[128] Fang, *Leifengta*, 18.

[129] The verb that I have translated here as "cheat" is a compound of *yan*, "(to have a) nightmare; monstrous, grotesque; enchant(ment)," and *huo*, "to deceive, confuse." Li Mei 李玫 glosses *yanhuo* as "to use ritual magic to make people confused" (以法術使人迷惑). Ibid., 20 n13.

living creatures of their vital energy," which is the kind of parasitic cultivation the audience would expect from a monster. Additionally, Little Green's acts as the leader of all the water creatures in West Lake—whereas a transcendent would privately practice cultivation or take on a few apprentices, Little Green has established their own army of "ten thousand water creatures."[130] This helps to characterize Little Green as an independent monster who has gained autonomy from the celestial hierarchy, much like how Sun Wukong presides over the monkeys of Flower Fruit Mountain before he was subjugated by Buddha in *Journey to the West*.[131] In this sense, Little Green's opening monologue characterizes them as a monster with ambitions, or perhaps delusions, of becoming a transcendent.

White Snake and Little Green's exchange and subsequent duel, further illustrates Little Green's relative aggressiveness, in contrast to White Snake's relative civility:

> *Clown*[132] *enters:* Hey there![133] Where are you from, evil aberration? You dare snoop around my nest without permission? *Female*: I am none other than the White Cloud Female Transcendent. What monster are you, that you would dare ask me? *Clown*: I am none other than Green Green, who has practiced cultivation for a thousand years. *Female*: Oh, please![134] You are just a tiny little green snake,

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[130] In a Kun opera manuscript except play of this scene, Little Green is accompanied on stage by eight subordinates, referred to in the script variously as "monster children" (*yaotong* 妖童) and "four small monsters and four big monsters (四小妖四大妖). See Huang Kuanchong et al., eds., "Xia shan shou qing," 20-1. Although specific water creatures are not usually mention in "Subduing Green," they often appear in the later scene "Water Battle," when White Snake and Little Green lead them in an assault on Golden Mountain Monastery. In Fang's play, this group of water creatures includes a crab, a shrimp, a turtle, and a clam (*bang* 蚌). See Fang, *Leifengta*, 123-36.

[131] Monkey, later named Sun Wukong, becomes king of the monkeys of Flower Fruit Mountain 花果山 in the first chapter of *Journey to the West*, and he is subjugated by Buddha in chapter 7. See Wu Cheng'en 吳承恩 (c. 1500 -c. 1582), *Xi you ji jiaozhu* 西遊記校注 [Authenticated and annotated journey to the West], ed. Shaozhi 許少知 Xu, vol 1., (Taipei: Liren shuju, 1996) 1-27; 125-43.

[132] Although in my previous translations of scripts I have changed role types to character names for convenience, here I have translated the role types without including character names, in order to highlight the use of two role types for the character Little Green, which I discuss below. I have translated the *chou* role type (the male form of Little Green) as "clown," the *dan* role type (White Snake) as "female," and the *tie* role type (the female form of Little Green) as "second female."

[133] *Dai* is the phonetic spelling of a particle used to call someone's attention, like "Hey!"

[134] *Dou* is the phonetic spelling of a particle used as an angry noise to rebuff someone.

> and yet you dare to bully me like this. Leave this place quickly; only then can you protect your life. *Clown*: Rude aberration, you have no manners! I will come over and capture you. *Acts battling*. *Clown falls, female acts wanting to chop him*. *Clown*: This little beast has eyes but failed to see a Great Transcendent. Please forgive me! *Female*: Since that is the case, I will have mercy on your life for now. *Clown acts standing*: May I ask where the Great Transcendent comes from? *Female*: This lowly Daoist has come here from Mount Emei, and is hoping to search for my destined one, but I am short a companion.[135] You could change into a maidservant and follow me to and fro, but I don't know what you would think about that? *Clown*: I wish to wait upon you in all matters. *Female*: Since that is the case, you should change for now and let me see. *Clown*: Just wait while I change. *Exits*. *Second female enters*. If you wish to seek your destined one, I will make a secret change, and no one will know. Great Transcendent, have I changed well? *Female*: Very well. After today we will call each other mistress and servant, and then call your name Little Green. You have been here a thousand years, so you must know what place is most popular for travelers? *Second female*: Here, there are quite a lot of travelers at West Lake. *Female*: In that case, you can accompany me to go to West Lake. *Second female*: Understood. *Female acts changing clothes*.
>
> 〔丑上〕呔，何方孽怪，擅敢探吾巢穴麼？〔旦〕我乃白雲仙姑是也。汝是何妖魅，敢來問我？〔丑〕俺乃千年修煉青青是也。〔旦〕唗，你不過小小青蛇，輒敢霸住於此。速離此間，方保性命。〔丑〕潑怪休得無禮，俺來擒你也。〔戰介〕〔丑跌，旦欲斬介〕〔丑〕小畜有眼不識大仙，望乞饒恕。〔旦〕既如此，姑饒汝命。〔丑起介〕請問大仙何來？〔旦〕貧道從峨嵋山到此，欲度有緣之士，只是少一隨伴，你可變一侍兒，相隨前往，不知你意下如何？〔丑〕願隨侍左右。〔旦〕既如此，你且變來我看。〔丑〕待俺更變便了。〔下〕〔貼上〕欲覓有緣士，悄變有誰知。大仙，可變得好麼？〔旦〕好，今後主婢相稱，喚名青兒便了。你在此多年，必知何處遊人最盛？〔貼〕此處湖上游人頗多。〔旦〕如此，可隨我到西湖去來。〔貼〕曉得。〔旦〕〔更衣介〕

Here, Little Green instigates violence in the scene, making them the aggressor. In this sense, White Snake acts as an exorcist-spirit, pacifying a chaotic monster. This contributes to her identity as a transcendent, who often act as exorcists of chaotic monster-spirits. Little Green's response to defeat is also typical of a monster; they plead for mercy in exchange for their service.

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[135] Here, White Snake refers to herself in the first persons using the pronoun *pindao* 貧道, literally "poor Daoist," a humble term for Daoist priests.

In Fang's play, as with most versions, Little Green's loyalty to White Snake never wanes after her pledge in this scene.[136]

Comparing Fang's script and other Qing texts to modern performance helps show the visual effect of White Snake and Little Green's forms on stage. In modern Sichuan opera performance, "Subduing Green" is a spectacle of elaborate costumes and performance techniques that accentuates the monstrous and magical elements of White Snake and Little Green's origins. White Snake and Little Green wear transcendents' costumes, often including elaborate robes, ornate helmets with pheasant feathers, and horsetail whisks (see figure 3). Additionally, a team of several acrobats follow both White Snake and Little Green carrying "cloud plates (*yunpai* 雲牌)" (see figure 2). The acrobats hold the panels in shifting lines behind each of the characters, creating the effect of "flying the clouds."[137] The pheasant feather helmet in Sichuan opera

[136] A notable exception to this is the scene "Broken Bridge" in the Sichuan opera play *Xinke dao lingzhi* 新刻盜靈芝 [A new carving of stealing the transcendents' herb], discussed later in this chapter. In this version, Little Green erupts in a rage at Xu and attacks him, ignoring White Snake's pleads for them to stop.

[137] In narrative versions of *White Snake*, White Snake, Little Green, and other spirits often ride clouds for transportation and sometimes encounter each other in the clouds. *The Amazing History of Thunder Peak Pagoda* makes frequent reference to riding clouds, the word "cloud" appearing almost seventy times in the context of the flight of spirits. The exact phrasing differs substantially, such as "to drive up on the head of a cloud 駕起雲頭," "to cloud-float 雲遊," "to lower the head of the cloud 落雲頭," and many others. Occasionally the wording is specific to monsters, such as "to drive up on a monster cloud 駕起妖雲," but non-monster spirits also ride clouds, and generally the language is ambiguous.

*Figure 2. White Snake and Little Green as a wusheng (martial male) role type in the scene "Subduing Green." A team of acrobats carry 'cloud panels' to give the appearance of the characters flying on clouds. An acrobat lifts White Snake on his shoulder.* Bai she zhuan 白蛇传 *(The Legend of White Snake), Jinjiang juchang, Chengdu. 25 Dec. 2016.*

*Figure 3. White Snake and Little Green as a* tiedan *(second female) role type use their hands to manipulate pheasant tail helmets in "Subduing Green."* Bai she zhuan 白蛇传 *(The Legend of White Snake), Jinjiang juchang, Chengdu. 25 Dec. 2016.*

performances seems to be a development of the martial aspect of "Subduing Green." More than ornamental, pheasant feathers require the actor's intentional manipulation, either with movement of the neck and head, or by holding the tips of the feathers with the hands. Actor Yang Youhe 阳友鹤 (1913-1984) explains, "Plume: every [flower female role type] and martial female who performs a female transcendent or female general wears a graceful helmet with a pheasant tail inserted in it, and all have to 'play' the plume (pheasant tail)."[138] Although the costuming of modern Sichuan opera performance does not distinguish Little Green from White Snake in terms of their identities as monster and transcendent, it does help establish the scene as an encounter between two spirits in a place outside the mortal world. When compared to the content of the scene, the costuming and staging helps create the familiar context of an exorcist spirit subduing a chaotic monster.

It is difficult to know with certainty how much the performance techniques of modern Sichuan opera originated in Qing performance, but some elements appear to be consistent. The horsetail whisk and flying clouds, for example, are consistent with illustrations and texts from the Qing. A storyteller's robe from the Qing contains a series of patches that illustrate different scenes from *White Snake* and *Dream of the Red Chamber* (see figure 4).[139] The left side of the robe has a panel that corresponds to the scene "Subduing Green." In the panel, White Snake floats on clouds above Little Green, who bows to her. White Snake holds a horsetail whisk in one hand and a sword in the other, but both characters wear simple robes. In a woodblock print

[138] "翎子 凡花衫（花旦）、武旦表演仙女和女將戴帥盔插稚尾的，都要耍翎子（稚尾）." I added single quote marks around the word "play," which a common verb in Sichuan dialect, *sua*. Here probably means something closer to "use." See *Chuanju dan jue biaoyan yishu* 川剧旦角表演艺术 [The performance art of the Sichuan opera female role] (Chengdu: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 1960), 45.

[139] See Judith Zeitlin and Yuhang Li, *Performing Images: Opera in Chinese Visual Culture* (Chicago: Smart Museum of Art, The University of Chicago, 2014), 162-166.

*Figures 4 and 5: White Snake as a transcendent and a male Little Green in "Subduing Green" embroidered on a Qing Dynasty storyteller's robe (left) and White Snake as a transcendent before Lishan Laomu in* Righteous Monster.

in *The Legend of the Righteous Monster*, White Snake wears similar robes to the storyteller's panel, and holds a horsetail whisk while floating on clouds, showing reverence to her masters, (see figures 3 and 4).[140] The consistency of the clouds and the whisk emphasize White Snake's newly adopted role as a transcendent; flying clouds can indicate transcendents, monsters, or other spirits, but a horsetail whisk indicates a transcendent or Daoist priest.

In all versions of the scene, the most striking feature is the performance technique now referred to as *bianjue* 變角 or "changing roles," in which two actors of different role types portray Little Green's transformation from snake monster to maidservant. Little Green begins the scene as a male-gendered *chou* 丑 (clown) role type, but after White Snake defeats them, they exit the stage and an actor playing the female-gendered *tiedan* 貼旦 (secondary female) role type replaces them. More recent Kun opera versions may have used a *jing* role type to perform Little Green's male form. [141] Sichuan opera versions of *White Snake* substitute an actor of the *wusheng*

[140] Chen Yuqian, *Xiuxiang yi yao zhuan*, page 1A of illustrations.

武生 (martial male) or *jing* role type for Little Green's original form.[142] Sometimes in modern Sichuan opera performance, the acrobats holding the "cloud plates" surround Little Green as they exit in male form and re-enter in female form. Sometimes, steam is released from offstage or a blast of fire shoots out to mark the transformation.[143] In Fang's play, Little Green once again reverts back to their original form, as a *chou*, towards the end of the play, as White Snake is being subjected by Fahai.[144] In Sichuan opera, however, Little Green changes between male and

[141] The Kunqu excerpt play manuscript "Descending the Mountain and Subduing Green" does not record Little Green's role type, but does indicate a change in role type: before they transform, stage directions refer to Little Green as "Green Snake" (*Qing she* 青蛇) or "Green Cloud" (*Qing xia* 青霞), then at the transformation, stage directions read, "Green Cloud exits and changes to Little Green, dressed as a maid" (青霞下變青兒扮了環). While this seems to indicate the use of a *tie* role type for Little Green after the transformation, it does not indicate any particular role type for the male Little Green. See "Xia shan shou qing," 22. The Kunqu *sheng* actor Bai Yunsheng notes that a *hualian* (*jing*) role type was used for Little Green in the performance of the scene "Stealing from the Treasury." See Bai, *Sheng dan jing mo chou biaoyan yishu*, 106. See Pan Xiafeng notes two *jing* role type actors, Li Shunde 李順德 (1847 – 1919) and Fan Baoting 范寶亭 (1887 – 1944), who performed the male Little Green and two male *wudan* role type actors, Zhu Wenying 朱文英 (1860 – 1929) and Yan Shishan 閻世善 (1919 – 2007), who performed the female Little Green in Beijing opera performances. See *Jingju jicheng*, 323.

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[143] For a description of "changing roles" in Sichuan opera, see Du Jianhua 杜建華, ed., *Chuanju biaoxian shoufa tonglan* 川劇表現手法通覽 [An overview of the performance techniques of Sichuan opera] (Chengdu: Sichuan wenyi chubanshe, 2002), 86-7. For a discussion of related techniques, such as more than one actor playing one role or one actor playing more than one role, see Wang Anqi 王安祈, "Cong "jianban, shuangyan, daijiao, fanchuan" de yanchu xianxiang kan "dangdai xiqu" yu "guqu xiqu juchang yiyi de butong 從'兼扮、雙演、代角、反串' 的演出現像看'當代戲曲'與'古曲戲曲'與'古典戲曲'劇場意義的不同 (Looking at the differences in stagecraft between modern Chinese indigenous theater and classical Chinese theater from the performance phenomena of "acting more than one role, more than one actor acting one role, one actor to be noticed as playing more than one character, and acting roles outside your specialization)," in *Dangdai xiqu: fu juben xuan* 當代戲曲：付劇本選 (Modern Chinese Indigenous Theater, with Selected Play Scripts) (Taipei: Sanmi shuju, 2002), 499–548.

[144] Fang, *Leifengta*, 151-6.

female role types throughout the play, often taking on the male role type to engage in combat and taking on the female role type to serve White Snake in the human realm.[145]

The male role types chosen for Little Green's original form help to articulate their identity as a chaotic, transgressive spirit. The *chou* role type is often performed by actors of small stature and emphasizes speaking and acting over singing. While in modern Chinese opera the *chou* role is primarily associated with humor, historically it was also frequently associated with corruption, treachery, and weakness.[146] In this scene, the use of the *chou* role type immediately characterizes Little Green as both antagonistic, as *chou* are often villainous, and inferior, as *chou* are less physically powerful than other potentially villainous role types, such as the *jing*. Sichuan opera versions of *White Snake* substitute an actor of the *wusheng* or *jing* role type for Little Green's original form to heighten their aggressiveness. Even as a *wusheng* or *jing* however, Little Green was not necessarily portrayed as entirely masculine. In discussing the use of male role types in the portrayal of Little Green, the *sheng* Kunqu actor Bai Yunsheng 白雲生 (1902 – 1972) notes:[147]

> …First, an actor enters whose face is painted half in the likeness of a man and half in the likeness of a woman, and then only when White Snake tells them to change again do they take on the appearance of Little Green. …In the traditional acting of Little Green, it is not only that their appearance and movements are suddenly male then suddenly female, but even their voice singing out or reciting is all of a sudden a male voice, then all of a sudden a female voice.

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[145] Often, Little Green is performed by a male role type in the scenes "Subduing Green," "Stinging Up and Beating Wang Daoling (Diaoda Wang Daoling 吊打王道靈)," "Water Battle (Shui dou 水鬥)," and "Broken Bridge."

[146] In his study of the *chou* role type, Ashley Thorpe traces the development of the *chou* from its origins through the twentieth century. See *The Role of the Chou ("Clown") in Traditional Chinese Drama: Comedy, Criticism, and Cosmology on the Chinese Stage* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2007), 47-142.

[147] *Sheng dan jing mo chou biaoyan yishu*, 106.

> …先上一個演員臉上畫一半男像一半女像，白蛇叫他再變，才成為青兒模樣. …在傳統扮演青兒不只是在外形動作忽男忽女，連嗓音開唱念也是忽而男聲，忽而女聲.

The scene "Subduing Green" is no longer performed as an excerpt play in Kunqu and male role types are no longer used to perform Little Green, so the make-up and performance techniques for Little Green described above are no longer used.[148] Still, Bai conveys the sense that the *jing* performance of Little Green was sexually transgressive, intentionally contrasting the conventions of male and female role types. In this sense, regardless of whether a *chou*, *jing*, or *wusheng* was used to complement the *tiedan* in the portrayal of Little Green, the *bianjue* technique depicted them as chaotic and monstrous.

The emphasis on Little Green's comparatively monstrous characteristics and the otherworldly costumes and physicality of "Subduing Green" frames White Snake and Little Green's relationship as that of exorcist and subdued spirit, emphasizing Little Green's loyalty to White Snake. In Fang's play, after defeating Little Green in battle, White Snake agrees to accept Little Green as servant, and Little Green agrees to "wait upon her in all matters."[149] This ubiquitous theme is based on broad socio-cultural patterns in China in which subdued spirits serve the exorcist or deity that subdued them. For example, Sun Wukong serves Buddha and Guanyin after he is subjugated by Buddha, and Zhu Bajie and the Sand Monk also serve Buddha and Guanyin after they are subdued by Sun Wukong in *Jouney to the West*.[150] Similarly, in

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[148] Half male/half female make-up is, however, still used in Sichuan opera, such as in the performance of the character Red Snake in the *White Snake* sequel, *Ling yun du* 凌雲度 (Cloud-Transcending Crossing) or the *Liaozhai* play *Feiyun jian* 飛雲劍 [Flying-Cloud Sword]. See Du, *Chuanju biaoxian shoufa tonglan*, 239-40.

[149] *Leifengta* 雷峰塔 (Thunder Peak Pagoda) (Huaxia chubanshe, 2000), 18-9.

[150] For Buddha's subjugation of Sun Wukong, see Wu Cheng'en 吳承恩 (c. 1500 -c. 1582), *Xi you ji jiaozhu* 西遊記校注 [Authenticated and annotated journey to the west], ed. Shaozhi 許少知 Xu, vol 1., (Taipei: Liren shuju, 1996) 125-43 (chapter 7); for Sun Wukong's subjugation and recruitment of Zhu Bajie, see 371-89 (chapter 19); for Sun Wukong's subjugation and recruitment of the Sand Monk, see 425-40 (chapter 22).

*Canonization of the Gods*, the Burning Lamp Daoist of Numinous Vulture Mountain's Primal Sense Cave (Ling jiu shan yuan jue dong randeng daoren 靈鷲山元覺洞燃燈道人) subjugates the chaotic spirit Nezha 哪吒 so that he be given rank and be enlisted in the celestial army of King Wu of Zhou.[151] Although not all subjugated spirits serve their masters with unwavering loyalty, this pattern provides context for the audience to understand the change in Little Green's character from a chaotic monster to a loyal servant.[152] Furthermore, the audience can expect Little Green to faithfully serve their master, White Snake.

**You Go Too Far! Little Green as a subversive perspective in the scene "Broken Bridge"**

In most versions of *White Snake*, the greatest discrepancy between the perspectives of White Snake and Little Green arises in the scene "Broken Bridge." As noted in Chapter One, "Broken Bridge" is one of the two most popular excerpt scenes from *White Snake*. In this scene, White Snake forgives Xu Xian for his betrayal at Golden Mountain Monastery, but, in most versions, Little Green rebukes him. In this sense, most versions vilify Xu through Little Green's reaction to Xu's attempt to reconcile with White Snake. In early *chuanqi* and Kun opera versions of this scene, the difference between White Snake's and Little Green's reactions to Xu are subdued. As the scene developed and spread to other performance genres throughout the nineteenth century, however, the contrast between their perspectives became more exaggerated, culminating in Little Green's violent attacks on Xu. This section will examine the development

[151] See Xu Zhonglin 許仲琳, ed., *Fengshen yanyi* 封神演義 (Canonization of the gods), vol. 1 (Hong Kong: Zhonghua shujugufen youxian gonsi, 1960), 127-37.

[152] Zhu Bajie is a notorious example of reformed chaotic spirit that does not always follow his master's wishes. In chapter 23 of *Journey to the West*, for example, when the four pilgrims encounter a widow and her three beautiful daughters, Zhu expresses interest in marrying one of the daughters, thereby abandoning his vows as a monk. Later, however, the women turn out to have been bodhisattvas in disguise, sent to test the monks resolve and exposing Zhu's lack of resolve. See Wu Cheng'en, *Xi you ji jiaozhu*, 441-59.

of Little Green's aggression toward Xu in Kunqu, *pihuang*, and Sichuan opera, and show how Little Green's perspective provided space to criticize the male protagonist that could be expressed through White Snake's perspective.

The earliest extant script of "Broken Bridge" appears in the seventh collection of the drama miscellany *Zhui bai qiu* 缀白裘 (A Cloak of Patch-worked White Fur – hereafter, *Cloak*), along with the prior scene, "Water Battle." In "Broken Bridge" in *Cloak*, White Snake and Little Green arrive and regroup in Hangzhou after retreating from their battle with Fahai at Golden Mountain Monastery. They reflect on the events of "Water Battle," and come upon Broken Bridge, the place where they first met Xu, and decide to rest for a while. Fahai brings Xu to Broken Bridge and tells Xu that he will return one month after the child is born to give Xu a relic that he can use to subjugate White Snake. Xu is afraid of encountering White Snake and Little Green, but Fahai assures him that he need not worry. When White Snake and Little Green first spot Xu, he begins to run away, but then he remembers Fahai's words and decides to face them. At first, both of the women rebuke him, but he eventually convinces White Snake that he was manipulated by Fahai and did not betray her intentionally. Little Green is less willing to forgive Xu, but then White Snake begins to have labor pains, and all three characters leave together to go to Xu's sister's house so that White Snake can give birth there.

Contrast between Little Green's and White Snake's perspectives appear at three points in the scene in *Cloak*: the exchange between the two women at the beginning of the scene, Little Green's confrontation of Xu Xian in the middle of the scene, and Little Green's reluctance to forgive Xu at the end of the scene. The initial exchange between White Snake and Little Green at

the beginning of the scene, as recorded in *Cloak*, hints to differences in their perspectives and foreshadows conflict later in the scene:[153]

> [*White Snake*] Little Green, I had not thought that Xu would turn his back on our former pledge, listen to Fahai's words and believe them, and in the end not leave the mountain. I struggled and fought with [Fahai], but what could I do? His ritual power was extremely great, and we were in danger of being caught. Fortunately, I used the water to escape and made it to Lin'an. Oh, Little Green! Otherwise, you and I both would be dead at Fahai's hands! *Little Green*. My lady, this disaster is not about Fahai; it has all come to pass because of Xu Xian. This time, if we meet [again], we absolutely cannot forgive him lightly. *White Snake*: Right.
>
> 青兒吓，不想許郎頓背前盟，聽信法海之言，竟不下山。我和他爭鬬，奈他法力甚大，險被擒拿；幸虧我借水遁得到臨安。阿呀，小青吓！不然，是和你俱喪于法海之手了嘘！（貼）娘娘，此禍非關法海之事，皆是許仙之過。若此番見面，斷斷不可輕恕。（旦）是。

Although the last line in this quotation suggests that White Snake agrees with Little Green, that Xu is at fault for "this disaster" (Xu's betrayal and defeat at Golden Mountain Monastery), there is a discrepancy in the initial reactions of the two women: White Snake blames Fahai as well as Xu, whereas Little Green solely blames Xu. Once Xu appears in the scene and attempts to reconcile with White Snake, neither White Snake nor Little Green accepts his explanations:[154]

> [*White Snake, Little Green*:][155] Xu Xian, you are so heartless! *Xu*: Oh! Why is my lady so downtrodden? *White Snake*: Mostly because the harm that you caused [brought] me to this sad state of affairs![156] And yet you still want to pretend that you don't know? *Xu*: My lady, if you would please just calm your anger; just sit

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[153] Qian Decang 錢德蒼 (fl. 1763-1774), complier, *Chongding zhui bai qiu xinji hebian* 重訂綴白裘新集合編 [Re-revised newly assembled cloak of white fur], in *Xu xiu siku quan shu* 續修四庫全書, vol. 1780 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1995), 147-8.

[154] Ibid., 149.

[155] The previous line in the script is preceded by the note "White Snake and Little Green enter," suggesting the following line was for both characters. It is possible, however, that the previous line and/or this line was intended for only one of the characters.

[156] "The harm you caused [brought] me to this sad state of affairs" rendered more literally might be translated as "you hurt me [to the extent that I am now in] this sad state of affairs."

> and allow me, your humble servant, to explain it to you.[157] That day when I went up the mountain, I immediately wanted to return home, but Zen Master Fahai stirred me up with his words and compelled me to leave my family.[158] Several times I wanted to escape and return, but how could I, with no path to walk? Now I am happy to have fled and be able to see my lady. It was not something your servant did on purpose! *Laughs*.[159] *Little Green*: Xu Xian, you still want to feign clear-headedness? Come here. *Xu*: Okay. *Little Green*: After how my lady treated you, she was [still] harmed by this cruel-heartedness! *Sighs.*[160] How could you bear to do it? *Xu*: Oh! Sister Green! Wait![161] This business of mine was mostly because of that monstrous monk, it truly was not something your servant did on purpose. *Laughs*.
>
> 許仙，你好負心也！（小生）阿呀！娘子為何這等狼狽？（旦）多是你害得我這般光景，還要假做不知麼？（小生）娘子，你且請息怒，且坐了容卑人相告。那日上山卽欲歸家，被法海禪師將言煽惑，勒令出家，幾欲逃回，奈無路可行；今喜脫逃，得見娘子，實非干卑人之故嘘。（貼）許仙，你還要假惺惺？過來。（小生）是（貼）我娘娘何等待你，虧你下得這般狠心！咦！於心何忍？（小生）阿呀！青姐吓！卑人之事，多是妖僧之故，實非干卑人之故嘘。

Here, both of the women hold Xu accountable for his actions. Xu pretends not to know why White Snake is upset, and when she explains that she is upset because of his actions at Golden Mountain Monastery, Xu shifts the blame to Fahai. At first, both women are reluctant to believe Xu's explanation, and Little Green confronts him directly. Near the end of the scene, Xu is able

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[157] A more literal translation would be "please allow your humble servant to explain it to you." When referring to himself, Xu uses the humble pronoun "beiren 卑人" (your humble servant).

[158] 出家 "Leave [one's] family" is a phrase commonly used for someone who becomes a monk or nun (and thus no longer identifying with his or her family).

[159] Here, Xu's line ends with the character "xue 噱," which is a particle that indicates laughter. In this sense, the laughter is not a stage direction, as I have translated it, but incorporated into the dialogue to indicate laughter. It is similar to recording laughter as "ha-ha" in English. In this context, it would seem to represent awkward laughter, as Xu is nervous that White Snake will see him as disloyal and not forgive him.

[160] "Sighs" is a translation of the particle "yi 咦," which is an exclamation. Here, it expresses Little Green's anger and frustration toward Xu.

[161] "Wait!" is a translation of the particle "吓" ("xia" or "ha"). The character means "to frighten or threaten," but given the context of the scene, it may express Xu's fear toward Little Green.

to successfully shift blame to Fahai and persuade White Snake that his betrayal was not intentional. Little Green, on the other hand, remains reluctant to accept Xu's explanations:[162]

> *To the same tune as before*. *Xu*: How, how can I dare to let down my love? Who could have foreseen this monk would create a rift [between husband and wife], bind me up in the Zen chamber, and harm us by keeping apart husband and wife. Heaven can tell that I am sincere, and I hope that it takes pity on me. Ah! That monstrous monk! He spoke nonsense without exception, and even I was unable to endure listening. Now that I have been able to escape, I am extremely happy. For husband and wife to meet again, it is truly good fortune. I hope we can leave our worries and move on. Sister Green! *Little Green*: Cui![163] *Xu Xian*: The pearls that were divided once again join, everything depends on you to urge my lady to go; please be generous to we who have suffered from separation; I beg you to forgive this lonely shadow. *White Snake*: You wouldn't dare to do it again? *Xu Xian*: Wouldn't dare to again. *White Snake*: In that case, rise up. *Xu Xian*: Many thanks, my lady. Many thanks, Sister Green. *Little Green*: Cui!
>
> 【前腔】[小生] 怎，怎敢負卿？孰料僧為釁，勒住在禪堂，害我夫妻離影？天可鑒吾誠，望垂憫。那妖僧呵，他一剳胡言，我也不耐聽。今得逃回喜不勝。夫妻重會眞僥倖。望去愁行徑。青姐。（貼）啐！（小生）分珠再合，凡事賴卿卿勸娘行，請寬離恨，乞恕我孤單影。（旦）下次可敢了？（小生）再不敢了。（旦）如此，起來。（小生）多謝娘子。多謝青姐。（貼）啐！

White Snake eventually yields to Xu's persuasion and appears to accept his promise to stay loyal, but Little Green's response of "cui" indicates her continued skepticism. Although Little Green gives no further protest, neither is she appeased. She goes along with Xu to help White Snake find a place to give birth, but her skepticism remains unresolved at the end of the scene.

While the beginning of the scene and Little Green's initial reaction to Xu remain similar to *Cloak* in later versions of "Broken Bridge" in *chuanqi* and Kunqu, the scene's resolution

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[162] Ibid. I have used a larger font size, as in the original text, to differentiate arias from dialogues and stage directions.

[163] "Cui 啐" can function as a sound that indicates spitting. Li Gong glosses "cui" as "an exclamation, indicating disdain, to rebuke (嘆詞，表示唾棄，斥責)." See Fang, *Leifengta*, 27 n50.

develops in different ways. Fang's play, published only a few months after *Cloak*, presents a clearer picture of Little Green's anger toward Xu, and even explicitly describes them as "acting angry"[164] and extends Little Green's disapproval of Xu to a brief exchange of dialogue. After White Snake accepts Xu's explanation of his betrayal at Golden Mountain, Little Green shows resistance, so White Snake persuades them to follow suit:

> *Little Green acts not responding*. *Xu*: My lady, look at Sister Green, always blaming [me,] your humble servant. What should we do? *White Snake*: Little Green, Little Green! *Little Green*: My lady. *White Snake*: I think that this matter [of the events at Golden Mountain] is not Xu's fault. All of it is because of that Fahai being bad. Don't you be too stubborn. *Little Green*: My lady, look at your husband, he is always faking kindness and compassion, faking being careful. It's too bad he has been unworthy of even a little bit of my lady's sincerity. *White Snake*: Hai!
>
> 〔貼不應介〕〔生〕娘子，你看青姐，總是怨著卑人，怎麼處？〔旦〕青兒，青兒！〔貼〕娘娘。〔旦〕我想此事，非關許郎之過，都是法海那廝不好，你也不要太執性了。〔貼〕娘娘，你看官人，總是假慈悲，假小心，可惜辜負娘娘一點真心。〔旦〕咳。

White Snake's final line of "Hai!" marks White Snake entering the early stages of labor, and the scene concludes the same as *Cloak*, with all three characters leaving for Xu's sister's home. This exchange is similar to that of *Cloak*, but it expands on Little Green's refusal to accept Xu's explanation, arguing that Xu is feigning sincerity and does not deserve to be with White Snake. A manuscript version of the scene offers yet another resolution. After White Snake starts going into labor, and all three characters leave for Xu's sister's home, in this version, there is an additional exchange:[165]

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[164] "貼氣介," Fang, *Lefengta*, 140.

[165] See Huang Kuanchong 黃寬重 et al., eds., *Su wenxue congkan* 俗文學叢刊 (Folk literature: materials in the collection of the Institute of History and Philology), vol. 81 (Taipei: Xin wen feng chuban youxian gongsi, 2001), 249. This excerpt script runs 237-49, and Kunqu scripts of "Broken Bridge" run 195-265. None of the scripts in this collection give the names of authors or performers, and the script quoted above is undated, though it is consistent with many Qing scripts (no punctuation and smaller characters used for stage directions). The lines quoted here are, however, similar lines can be found in a "foot copy" (*jiaoben* 腳本; actor's script) for White Snake's lines dated to

> *Xu*: Maiden, look at how Little Green is repeating over and over that she is angry with me. How can we deal with this? *White Snake*: Little Green, this was not Xu's fault, all of it was Fahai's transgression and has nothing to do with him. *Xu*: As such, please, my maiden. *White Snake breathes [heavily]*: I am so resentful! *Xu*: Do you mean that you are resentful of me? *White Snake*: Oh, Xu. *Sings*: I resent myself!
>
> （生白）處子，你看青姐口口聲聲怒著（卑人。這便怎麼處？（旦白）青兒，此非官人之故，都是法海之過，與他無干。（生白）如此，處子請。（旦白）哧，我好恨。（生白）敢是恨著卑人。（旦白）哎呀，許郎。（旦唱）自恨我！

Rather than conclude the conflict between Little Green and Xu with Little Green venting their anger toward him, this version concludes with White Snake defending Xu's actions to Little Green and absolving him of blame. Furthermore, White Snake even puts the blame on herself. In this sense, the resolution of "Broken Bridge" in *chuanqi* and Kun opera scripts varies significantly, offering different depictions of how to interpret the scene. While some versions emphasize Little Green's anger toward Xu and allow their protests to remain at the scene's conclusion, other versions address their anger and absolve Xu from blame.

In addition to the variations on the conclusion of the scene in *chuanqi* and Kun opera, the resolution of "Broken Bridge" for any given performance was also greatly affected by whether the viewer watched the scene independently, as an excerpt play performed with the scene "Water Battle," or as part of the full play. In particular, Xu's sincerity in begging for White Snake's forgiveness appears quite differently in excerpt performances than it does in full-length versions. In full-length versions, White Snake is eventually subjugated, and the performance of her subjugation reveals whether or not Xu was sincere in his apology. In Fang's play, for example,

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1853 and a manuscript version from 1940, so it would appear that versions with lines similar to these were being performed from the mid-Qing through the Republican period. See Ibid., 202 and 265.

only two scenes after "Broken Bridge," Xu seeks out Fahai to have her subjugated.[166] In this sense, Xu convinces White Snake to forgive him while he is fully aware that he will betray her again. In other versions, however, such as the narrative version *The Amazing History of Thunder Peak Pagoda*, Xu actually changes his allegiance to White Snake and tries to persuade Fahai to leave her alone.[167] Although certain audience members may have been more familiar with one version or another, excerpt performance provided greater leeway for interpretation of Xu's sincerity; without the play's conclusion, the audience could have imagine that Xu sincerely intended to remain loyal to White Snake just as easily as they could have imagine that he intended to betray her again. As such, differences in how the above scripts conclude have a significant impact on the scene as a whole. In versions that leave Little Green's protests unresolved, the question of Xu's betrayal remains looming. In versions in which White Snake addresses Little Green's protest, however, Xu appears to be forgiven for his betrayal.

Whereas most of the variation in Kun opera versions appears at the scene's conclusion, other performance genres tend to elaborate on Little Green's initial reaction to Xu. In *pihuang* versions of "Broken Bridge," the conflict between Little Green and Xu escalates to violence.[168] Little Green sees Xu and immediately becomes angry:

> *Little Green*: Just as I see that hateful-hearted traitor, my anger rises up to the stars, as if it is hard for me to remain in this unjust human world of yours. Seeing me here now, how can you be willing to wash your hands [of White Snake] for no

[166] Fang Chengpei, *Leifengta*, 148-50.

[167] Fahai is ultimately able to subjugate White Snake by convincing Xu to take his golden alms bowl and fill it with tea. As soon as Xu brings the bowls near White Snake, it magically activates and begins subjugating her. See Yushan Zhuren, *Leifengta qizhuan*, 5.3a-4a.

[168] *Folk Literature* includes two *pihuang* scripts of "Broken Bridge" with similar language and plot, one a manuscript version and one a woodblock print. See Huang et al., eds., *Su wenxue congkan*, 527-39 and 541-50. *Qing che wang fu cang xiqu quanbian* 清車王府藏戲曲全編 [Complete volumes of dramatic works collected at the Qing Prince Che Palace] contains two punctuated and edited versions of "Broken Bridge" based on manuscripts kept at Beijing University Library and National Sun Yat-sen University Library, which are also largely consistent with the scripts in *Folk Literature*. Huang Shizhong 黃仕忠, ed., vol. 10 (Guangzhou: Guangdong renmin chubanshe, 2013).

> reason? Grasping on to my precious sword, I will surely chop the human head off from your neck! *White Snake acts blocking. Sings:* Using my hand, I hastily block Little Green.
>
> （青唱）一見了恨心賊氣沖牛斗，似你這無義人世間難留。今見了我豈肯平白丟手，持寶劍定斬你項上人頭。（旦攔介，唱）用手兒把青兒急忙攔住，

Here, both the stage directions and dialogue convey Little Green's violent threat to Xu, as they attempt to kill him but are obstructed by White Snake. Little Green's description of their anger, that they find it difficult to "remain in this unjust human world," expresses two important aspects of their violent outburst. First, by admitting difficulty in remaining in the human world, Little Green is acknowledging a regression into monstrousness. In this sense, this scene complements "Subduing Green" and other scenes that depict Little Green as comparatively monstrous and less developed than White Snake. At the same time, characterizing the human world as "unjust" creates sympathy for their loss of control. In this way, Little Green's monstrousness helps to reflect the "monstrousness" of Xu's betrayal; even a monster sees his actions as unjust, so who is the real monster? The scene concludes similar to the manuscript Kun opera versions discussed above, with White Snake urging Little Green to forgive Xu, and the three characters leaving for Xu's sister's house. Little Green's protest is resolved but the intensity of their anger and the legitimacy of their grievance is articulated more explicitly than the *chuanqi* and Kun opera versions.

Sichuan opera versions of "Broken Bridge" often escalate the conflict and violence between Little Green and Xu even further.[169] In *Xinke dao lingzhi* 新刻盜靈芝 (A New Carving

[169] There are, however, also Sichuan opera scripts of "Broken Bridge" that do not emphasize violence or tension between Little Green and Xu Xian. The China Art Academe Library holds two such examples, both excerpts scripts of "Broken Bridge." One script, *Gailiang xiqu: duan qiao* 改良戲曲：斷橋 [Reformed drama: broken bridge] , simply does include protest from Little Green, and the other script, *Gailiang xin duan qiao* 改良新斷橋 [Reformed new broken bridge] (Gu wolong jie qiming shuju 古臥龍街啟明書局), does not include the character of Little Green at all, but instead focuses on reconciliation between Xu Xian and White Snake. Although there are no precise dates on either of these scripts, the word "reform (*gailiang*)" in the title of each script suggests that it was produced

of Stealing the Transcendents' Herb—*A New Carving*), Little Green acts aggressively toward Xu almost as soon as he enters the stage and confronts him:[170]

> *Green says*:[171] Where are you going? *Xu Xian acts*. Scared me so that I fell down and broke my fingers. *Green says*: Cruel-hearted traitor, you've come! *White* [*says*][172]: Little Green, slow your sword a bit! *To the tune of "Zhu yun fei." Kneels, circles the stage, exits*. *Xu Xian and Green Snake enter and cross the stage*. *White Snake*: Little Green, you go too far! *Green acts*. My lady, you needn't obstruct me, [I will] swallow him down into my stomach. *White acts*. Is it possible you no longer have the great love of a servant for their master? *Crosses the stage*. With things as they are now, what master or servant is there? I will take a bite! *White Snake*: Oh! Little Green, you have gone way too far! *Kneels about the stage, Exits*. *Xu and Green enter and cross the stage*. *Lady White enters*: Little Green, could it be you are afraid? *Green acts*: My lady, cease obstructing me and [I will] exterminate Xu Xian completely! *White acts*: Little Green, I cannot let you! *Acts*. *Falls one knee*. *White acts*: Oh! *Crosses stage*.
>
> （青白）往哪裡走？（許仙介）吓的我這一陣跌破指頭。（青白）狼心賊，你來了！（白）青兒[慢]仗些！（主雲非）（跪走一[場]）（下）（上許仙青蛇過[場]）（白娘）青兒，你太過分了！（青介）娘娘，不必阻[擋]奴[婢]，將他吞在腹內。（白介）難道[無]有主僕大情？（過[場]）事至如今，還有什莫主僕，[咬]一口。（白蛇）[喂][173]呀，青兒，多過分了。（跪一場）（下）（上許、青）（過[場]）（上白娘）青兒，難道會有怕[懼]了？（青介）娘娘，休得[阻擋]我，將許仙[誅滅]。（白介）青兒，使不得（介）（跌一腳）（白介）[喂]呀！（過[場]）

during the opera reformations of the late-Qing or Republican periods. Dating the scripts to this period could also explain the discrepancy between the plots of these scripts and the plots of earlier and later Sichuan opera versions of "Broken Bridge": the violent actions of Little Green may have been more popular in the late-Qing, were removed during the opera reformations, then later reintroduce some time during the Republican period. Or, "Broken Bridge" scripts attempted to curb Little Green's aggression but did not have a lasting influence on the scene. Regardless, the late-Qing script discussed below, as well as scripts from the 1950s to today, tend to favor an aggressive, violent Little Green that seeks to kill Xu Xian.

[170] *Xinke dao lingzhi* 新刻盜靈芝 [A new carving of stealing the transcendents' herb] (Chongqing 崇慶: 1884), 39a-b. Three copies are kept at the China Art Academe Library (中國藝術研究院圖) in Beijing.

[171] Whereas in previous translations, I have used "Little Green," "White Snake," and "Xu Xian" consistently for clarity, even when the source text uses different names to refer to each character, in this passage I have persevered differences in the text for characters' lines, in order to highlight the differences (see below).

[172] Missing character. In this context, it is probably a verb indicating speech or song, such as 白 or 唱; "*White says*:" or "*White sings*:".

[173] The character in the original text combines the radicals "口" and "尾." Since the character's function is phonetic, I have used the more conventional character "喂".

Little Green's regression into monstrousness is even more apparent in this version than in *pihuang* versions. Not only does Little Green repeatedly attack Xu with their sword, chasing him off stage and back on stage, but they also attempt to eat him. Little Green even abandons their ritual role as servant to White Snake: "With things as they are now, what master or servant is there?" In this sense, Little Green's perspective is not as sympathetic as in Kun opera and *pihuang*; Little Green is not pointing out the injustice of Xu's betrayal, but rather giving in to their monstrous nature and forgetting their duty to White Snake. In modern Sichuan opera performances of "Broken Bridge," Little Green's regression into monstrousness includes many performative elements. When Little Green first sees Xu, and periodically throughout the scene when they become angrier, the actor performing Little Green "changes face," by applying grease-based face paint to their face.[174] Little Green grabs on to Xu's hat, but he removes that hat and escapes. Later, Little Green grabs on to his robe, but he slips it off and escapes.[175] While there is no indication that these elaborate techniques were incorporated into *A New Carving*, it

[174] The "face changing" technique used in "Broken Bridge" is not that same as the "face changing" commonly performed nowadays at Chinese tourist performances. *Chengdu shizhi: chuanju zhi* 成都市志：川剧志 (Chengdu city gazetteer: Sichuan opera gazetteer) lists three kinds of face changing techniques: *zhihui bianlian* 紙灰變臉 [paper-dust face changing] or *chuilian* 吹臉 [blowing face], *youcai bianlian* 油彩變臉 [grease paint face changing], and *lianpu bianlian* 臉譜變臉 [face-scheme face changing]. *Lianpu bianlian* is the technique most commonly used in tourist and commercial performances, in which the performance wears elaborate helmets that allow them to change masks at incredible speeds. "Broken Bridge" uses the *youcai bianlian* technique, in which the actor portraying Little Green faces away from the audience and smears a layer of grease-based paint on his face, changing the color of his face throughout the scene to reflect their growing rage. See Dai Deyuan 戴德源, *Chengdu shizhi: chuanju zhi* (Chengdu: Fangzhi chubansheq, 1997), 100.

[175] In modern Sichuan opera performance, "Broken Bridge" is often performed as an excerpt only, as full-versions of the play conclude with the previous scene, "Water Battle." In the scene, Little Green is portrayed by a male role type and attacks Xu repeatedly and violently, much as in the scene discussed here. He Xu's full-length script contains a version of the scene "Broken Bridge" that compares closely with modern excerpt versions. See He Xu, "Bai she zhuan)," *Chuanju jumu jianding yanchu juben xuan*, 77-9.

seems likely that visual elements were incorporated into Little Green's regression into monstrousness.[176]

Regardless of whether Little Green's anger toward Xu is resolved at the scene's conclusion, and regardless of whether Little Green maintains loyalty to their master or regresses into monstrous behavior, Little Green's perspective in "Broken Bridge" provides an important space to hold Xu accountable for his betrayal of his wife. As discussed in the introduction and Chapter One, changes in dramatic versions *White Snake* in the eighteenth century reflect changing attitudes toward gender, especially among elite literati households. The feminine ideal of the late-Ming courtesan lost favor, and wives and mothers from elite families looked to biographies of exemplary women for instruction. The character of White Snake follows this model of exemplary women, showing that even a monster can successful perform the roles of wife and mother. Within this context, it comes as no surprise that White Snake is reluctant to blame her husband for his betrayal and accepts his explanation that he did not willingly betray her. One of the central qualities of virtuous wives was loyalty to their husbands, so if White Snake did not forgive her husband and preserve her family, she could not be considered an exemplary wife. The fact that Xu is not necessarily sincere in his apology and may be plotting to have White Snake subjugated is irrelevant to White Snake's virtue. On the contrary, White Snake's virtue is enhanced by the fact that she forgives Xu, even though he will likely betray her again. At the same time, as a comparatively monstrous foil, Little Green does not have to follow the rules of a virtuous wife and still represents White Snake's interests. In this sense, Little

[176] *A New Carving* does not specify if Little Green is played by a male role type of a female role type. Curiously, the stage directions refer to Little Green as "Green Snake" when they enter in pursuit of Xu for the first time, whereas elsewhere they are referred to as "Green" or "Little Green." While this could represent transformation, the script also refers to White Snake as "Lady White" as well as "White Snake," so it would seem that this distinction does not specifically refer to the transformation of the character's body. It does suggest, however, that the writer of the script consciously or unconsciously to referred to Little Green as "Green Snake" at that point in the script because the character was acting more monster-like.

Green's opposition to Xu helps articulate disapproval of Xu's betrayal that White Snake cannot express herself. Even if Little Green regresses into a monstrous rage, the sentiment behind their anger is justified.

The violence presented in *pihuang* and Sichuan opera versions of "Broken Bridge" also reflects changes in genre and over time. Kun opera versions of the scene remain relatively consistent throughout the Qing and Republican periods. In contrast, the *pihuang* and Sichuan opera versions discussed above appeared in the latter half of the nineteenth century. In this sense, the increased emphasis on Little Green's violence and aggression may represent development of the scene over time. At the same time, Kun opera had a reputation as a refined art form that catered to the literati, whereas *pihuang* and regional styles were seen as comparatively low-brow, so the process of adapting the scene to the genres of *pihuang* and Sichuan opera may also have inspired actors to heighten the drama with the threat of violence. Andrea Goldman's study of the "I, Sister-in-Law" plays from the *Water Margin* show a comparative transition from late-Ming excerpt plays, which focused on seduction and romance, to *pihuang* plays of the nineteenth century, which focused on violence and retribution.[177]

**Conclusion**

The Introduction and Chapter One discuss how *chuanqi* versions of *White Snake* in the eighteenth century complicate White Snake's identity as a monster by giving her the additional identities of transcendent and virtuous woman. Within the context of changing attitudes toward the construction of the categories of gender and monstrousness, beings were less bound to their

[177] Andrea S. Goldman, *Opera and the City: The Politics of Culture in Beijing, 1770-1900* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2012), 175-235.

inherited identities and gained greater agency to define themselves through the performance of social and spiritual roles. The development of Little Green as a monstrous, aggressive foil to White Snake illustrates White Snake's success in the performance of her identities as a transcendent and virtuous woman. Little Green fancies themself a transcendent-in-training, but they practice improper cultivation, act as leader of West Lake, and behave aggressively. In order to travel with White Snake in the human world, they must transform their entire body and humbly assume the shape of a maidservant. In contrast, White Snake practices proper cultivation, acts humbly, and requires only a change in costume to enter the human realm. She is a more developed being and closer to humanity.

The comparison of Little Green does not merely accentuate White Snake's spiritual development and success in performing the rituals of a virtuous woman, however, but also expresses emotion on behalf of White Snake while preserving her virtue, especially through Little Green's opposition to Xu in "Broken Bridge." As a virtuous woman, White Snake has no choice but to forgive her husband for his betrayal. Little Green's reluctance to forgive Xu, however, offers an important alternative perspective: does Xu deserve forgiveness? In this sense, Little Green's perspective also reflects an important deficiency in the model of the virtuous wife. While audiences may not have wanted to see White Snake reject her husband, the development of Little Green's aggression and/or violence toward Xu in nineteenth-century excerpts of "Broken Bridge" suggests they did want to see Xu punished for his betrayal. The virtuous wife alone did not satisfy audiences; they wanted another righteous monster to demand justice.

# CHAPTER THREE:

## One Last Sip of Mother's Milk:

## Mothers, sons, and audiences in excerpt plays and storytelling

It is only through those such as the Maternal Models
That worthies and sages possess wisdom.
Their actions are emblems of correct behavior,
And their words are aligned with righteousness.
From the time of conception, they nurture sons and grandsons,
Gradually instructing and transforming them.
Having established them with virtue,
They bring about their achievements and accomplishments.
Female kin and mothers who examine these exemplars
Should make them their models.

惟若母儀，賢聖有智，
行爲儀表，言則中義。
胎養子孫，以漸教化。
旣成以德，致其功業。
姑母察此，不可不法。[178]

This poem is the short preface (*xiaoxu* 小序) of "Maternal Models" (*mu yi* 母儀), the first scroll of Liu Xiang's 劉向 (77-6 BCE) classic, *Biographies of Exemplary Women* (*Lienü zhuan* 烈女傳), a text which collected 125 hagiographies of women and was intended to serve as a guide to educate women through historical examples—mostly good examples, but also some bad examples.[179] *Biographies of Exemplary Women* is arranged by scrolls according to categories,

[178] Liu Xiang 劉向 (77 BCE-6 BCE), *Exemplary Women of Early China: The Lienü Zhuan of Liu Xiang*, trans. Anne Behnke Kinny (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 1; Liu Xiang, *Lie nü zhuan* 烈女傳 (Biographies of exemplary women), vol. 104, Sibu beiyao 四部備要 (Taipei: Taiwan Zhonghua shu ju, 1965), 1a.

[179] While the inherited text of *Biographies of Exemplary Women* contains 125 hagiographies on seven original scrolls and an additional supplementary scroll added by an unknown editor, earlier versions do not always correspond to this structure or length. See Anne Behnke Kinny, "Introduction," *Exemplary Women of Early China:*

such as “The Worthy and Enlightened” (Xian ming 賢明 ), “The Chaste and Compliant” (Jie yi 節義), and “The Depraved and Favored” (Nie bi 孽嬖). This short preface hints at why the work begins with “Maternal Models”: Mothers are “emblems of correct behavior,” establish virtue in their sons, and “bring about [their sons’] achievements and accomplishments.” In this sense, mothers are the foundations of society as a whole, instilling virtue and wisdom in the future officials, ministers, and rulers of the dynasty. Although *Biographies of Exemplary Women*’s popularity in China ebbed and flowed over the centuries, as mentioned in the Introduction, it was a core text of women’s education and provided an influential model for describing proper behavior through famous examples of women in the Qing.[180]

Maternal models were not limited to acting as models for women, however, but could act as models for men as well. This chapter will focus on White Snake’s identity as a mother. Whereas the foil of Little Green created space for an alternative female perspective, the introduction of White Snake’s son provided a context in which White Snake could express her own perspective and criticize her husband and the spiritual authority, embodied as Fahai, while still preserving sympathy from the audience. This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section borrows from the scholarship of Wilt L. Idema and Alan Cole to contextualize *White Snake* in the Chinese tradition of Buddhist mothers and sons. The second and third sections focus on White Snake’s personal expression in two scenes in different performance genres that emphasize her role as mother: the performance of the scene “Sacrifice at the Pagoda” (Ji ta 祭塔)

*The Lienü Zhuan of Liu Xiang*, xxxii-vi and xvlix-li. For *Biographies of Exemplary Women* as a tool for female education, see ibid., xxiv-xxvi.

[180] For a discussion of *Biographies of Exemplary Women* in the Qing, see Susan Mann, *Precious Records: Women in China’s Long Eighteenth Century* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1997), 205-8.

in commercial theaters, as represented by flower registers, and "Joining the Bowls" (He bo 合缽) in storytelling genres. Using these performance contexts as examples, I will show that although the development of White Snake's son provided a relatable hero for male audiences, the audience and performers attention largely focused on White Snake's sympathetic perspective.

**Filial Sons, Imprisoned Mothers**

The title of Wilt Idema's collection of translations of *White Snake* narratives, "The White Snake and Her Son," emphasizes the mother-son relationship that appears in eighteenth-century versions and develops in written and performance narratives. In his introduction, Idema draws connections between the mother-son relationship in *White Snake* and other stories from Chinese literature, including *Dong Yong and the Weaving Maiden* (*Dong Yong yu zhinü* 董永與織女), *Chenxiang* 沉箱, and *Mulian Saves His Mother* (*Mulian jiu mu* 目連救母). In his discussion of *White Snake* and *Mulian*, Idema draws from the scholarship of Alan Cole. Although all three tales share important parallels with *White Snake*, in this chapter I will focus on Idema's comparison of *White Snake* and *Mulian*.[181] In this section, I will briefly compare *White Snake* and *Mulian*, and summarize some of the relevant arguments in Cole's study to provide a framework for understanding the scenes discussed later in the chapter.[182]

[181] For English translations of multiple versions of *Dong Yong and Weaving Maiden* in performance and narrative, see Wilt L. Idema, *Filial Piety and Its Divine Rewards: The Legend of Dong Yong and Weaving Maiden, with Related Texts* (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2009). For an English translation of a precious scroll versions of *Chenxiang*, see Wilt L. Idema, trans., "The Precious Scroll of Chenxiang," in *The Columbia Anthology of Chinese Folk and Popular Literature*, Victor H. Mair and Mark Bender, eds., (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 359-83.

[182] "Introduction," *The White Snake and Her Son* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2009), xvii-xx; Alan Cole, *Mothers and Sons in Chinese Buddhism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

*Mulian Saves His Mother* (*Mulian jiu mu* 目連救母) has appeared in a wide variety of storytelling and acted performance genres and has been discussed at great length in English-language research on ritual opera.[183] The earliest extant version, *Yulanpen jing* 盂蘭盆經 (The Ghost Festival Sutra), is traditionally credited to the Indian monk Dharmaraksa (fl. 256 – 313) as a translation, but it is probably a Chinese creation from the fourth or fifth century. Although many details change from versions to version, certain elements are relatively consistent. After both his parents died, the monk Mulian (sk. Maudgalyāyana) discovers that, while his father has ascended to heaven, his mother is being kept in hell. With the help of relics bestowed to him by Buddha, Mulian travels through the different realms of hell to find his mother. As Mulian progresses through hell, he witnesses sinners enduring gruesome punishments. Eventually, Mulian finds his mother. He is able to earn her freedom by promoting Buddhism through the celebration of the Ghost Festival. His mother is first reincarnated as a dog, then later as a human.

Cole's study, which focuses on apocryphal sutras, commentaries, lectures, and transformation texts (*bianwen* 變文) from the fifth to thirteenth centuries, and discusses multiple versions of *Mulian*, argues that Chinese Buddhist texts depicted the suffering of parents, especially mothers, in hell to create greater dependence on the monastic community. These texts would emphasize the struggle of childbirth and child rearing in order to draw attention to the son's indebtedness to his parents (especially mothers, in later texts), along with the son's need to

[183] One of the earliest studies of *Mulian* stories is *Ritual Opera, Operatic Ritual: "Mu-Lien Rescues His Mother" in Chinese Popular Culture*, which includes essays on *Mulian* performance and related rituals by David Johnson, Kenneth Dean, Ch'ui K'un-liang, Kristofer Schipper, Gary Seaman, Stephen F. Teiser, and Beata Grant. See David Johnson, ed., *Ritual Opera, Operatic Ritual: "Mu-Lien Rescues His Mother" in Chinese Popular Culture*, ed. David Johnson (Berkeley: Publications of the Chinese Popular Culture Project, 1989). For an English translation of the transformation text version from Dunhuang, see Victor H. Mair, ed., "Transformation Text on Mahamaudgalyayana Rescuing His Mother from the Underworld, with Pictures, One Scroll, with Preface," in *The Shorter Columbia Anthology of Traditional Chinese Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 607–642. For an English translation of a precious scroll version, see Beata Grant and W. L. Idema, trans., *Escape from Blood Pond Hell: The Tales of Mulian and Woman Huang* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011).

repay this debt by supporting Buddhist clergy, who would perform prayers for the mother on behalf of the son. Rather than elevating the virtue of mothers, however, these texts would often emphasize the mother's sins and her subsequent torture in hell in order to heighten the urgency of paying their debts. Although some of the sins attributed to the mothers of these narratives could have been attributed to anyone, such as the consumption of meat or overindulgence in sexual urges, texts from the Song would often emphasize the sinful nature of women's biology, especially the polluting qualities of menstrual blood, suggesting that female sexuality was inherently tainted. In this way, sons could express gratitude to their mothers by donating to monks and literally paying for their sins, while simultaneous fantasizing about saving their mothers from torture and suffering.

Although there are many important differences between *Mulian* and *White Snake*, Idema has correctly identified a common theme between *Mulian* and versions of *White Snake* since from the late-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that focus on the reciprocating relationship of mother and son.[184] Both stories feature a mother who is imprisoned for committing sins, and both feature a morally admirable son who saves his mother from imprisonment. These broad similarities were not lost on the audience; as Idema points out, a bannerman tale version of *White Snake*, which is included in his translation, explicitly makes a comparison between White Snake's son and Mulian.[185] While I agree with Idema that many of Cole's conclusions on the

[184] Perhaps the most important differences between *Mulian* and *White Snake* are how the stories characterize the mother and son figures. Mulian is a monk and the protagonist of his story, whereas Xu Shilin is a scholar and a supporting character with comparatively little action in the story. Mulian's mother is often depicted as sinful because of her overindulgence, whereas White Snake, usually the protagonist, is often portrayed sympathetically, having sinned in order to maintain her relationship with Xu Xian.

[185] In the anonymous bannerman tale from Guangxu reign (1875-1908), "Sacrifice at the Pagoda," White Snake's son laments, "But alas, my allotted blessings are few, and my hidden karma is shallow, / So how can I bring my mother back to life again like erstwhile Mulian?" See Idema, *The White Snake and Her Son*, xviii and 95. For the Chinese text, see Fu Xihua, ed., *Bai she zhuan ji* 白蛇傳集 [The Legend of White Snake collection] (Shanghai: Gudian wenxue chubanshe, 1957), 110-1.

function of the mother-son relationship in Chinese Buddhist literature forms a foundation on which the later versions of eighteenth-century *White Snake* plays were built, in the following sections I will show that the relationship between the audience and the characters was often not so direct as mothers providing models for mothers and sons providing models for sons.

**Sorrowful Magnificence: "Sacrifice at the Pagoda" in Qing flower registers**

Although the number extant scripts of "Sacrifice at the Pagoda" does not suggest that it was an exceptionally popular scene, its frequency in Qing "flower registers (*huapu* 花譜)" suggests that it was quite popular among opera enthusiasts of the nineteenth century. As mentioned in Chapter One, flower registers were written publications in which opera enthusiasts recorded their theater experiences with lists and short poems. Flower registers served as guide books to the theater scene and described the actors in detail, often including romantic poetry that lauded the actors' beauty and performance skills.[186] A search for "White Snake," "Little Green," and "Xu Xian" in the database of "The Japan Association for Chinese Urban Performing Arts" for the Republican Era collection of flower registers and other materials, Zhang Cixi's 張次溪 (1909-1968) *Qingdai yandu liyuan shiliao zhengxubian* 清代燕都梨園史料正續編 (Corrected and edited actors' materials from the capital during the Qing dynasty – hereafter QYLSZ), yields almost fifty different entries that record the performance of scenes from *White Snake* in Kunqu and *pihuang*, as well as a few poems that mention specific actors in *White Snake* roles. These accounts confirm that the scenes "Water Battle" and "Broken Bridge," which have numerous

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[186] Wu Cuncun uses *huapu* and other textual sources to discussion of homosexual relationships between boy-actors and their literati patrons in chapter five of *Homoerotic Sensibilities in Late Imperial China.* See Wu Cuncun, *Homoerotic Sensibilities in Late Imperial China* (Routledge, 2004)*,* 111-51. For a discussion of the social and cultural world of literati opera in Qing Beijing depicted in *huapu*, see Andrea S. Goldman, *Opera and the City: The Politics of Culture in Beijing, 1770-1900* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2012), 17-60.

extant scripts, were popular scenes on stage. It also suggests, however that "Sacrifice at the Pagoda," which has relatively few extant scripts, was comparatively popular. The discrepancy between the number of extant scripts and the frequency of the scene's appearance in flower registers could reflect a number of biases—the biases of the opera connoisseurs who wrote flower registers, the biases of printing or manuscripts production, etc.—but it is difficult to explain the discrepancy with what little information survives.[187]

Fang's script is the earliest dated script of "Sacrifice at the Pagoda." Fang's scene begins with a divine guardian introducing the situation.[188] Many years after White Snake was imprisoned under Thunder Peak Pagoda, the divine guardian explains that her son, Xu Shilin, has received the first place in the imperial examinations. He petitioned the emperor to demolish Thunder Peak Pagoda, so that his mother would be set free. The emperor declined his petition but sent him back to his home of Hangzhou to perform sacrificial rites for his mother. The divine guardian goes on to explain that Buddha, moved by Shilin's filial devotion, ordered the divine guardian to temporarily release White Snake so that mother and son would have an opportunity to meet face-to-face. Shilin enters and describes much of the same information that the divine guardian conveyed but adds a few of his own opinions, such as how he detests Fahai for

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[187] The three most common scenes in QYLSZ are "Broken Bridge" (with fifteen appearances), "Sacrifice at the Pagoda" (with thirteen appearances), and "Water Battle" (with ten appearances). Other scenes that appear include "Borrowing an Umbrella," "Stealing from the Treasury," and *The Legend of White Snake* (*Bai she zhuan*), which may refer to an abridged version of the full-play *Thunder Peak Pagoda*, or an unspecified excerpt. See Zhang Cixi, ed., *Qingdai yandu liyuan shiliao,* "Chūgoku toshi geinō kenkyūkai 中国都市芸能研究会 (The Japan association for chinese urban performing arts)" Senda Daisuke 千田大介, ed., https://wagang.econ.hc.keio.ac.jp/~chengyan/index.php?清代燕都梨園史料. For print a print copy of QYLSZ, see Zhang Cixi 張次溪 (1909-1968), ed. *Qingdai Yandu liyuan shiliao zhengxubian* 清代燕都梨園史料正續編 (Corrected and edited actors' materials from the captial during the Qing Dynasty), 3 vols. (Taipei: Zhuanju wenxue chubanshe, 1974).

[188] Divine guardians (*jiedishen* 揭帝神) frequently appear in Chinese literature as defenders of the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. See Idema, *The White Snake and Her Son*, 14 n19.

scheming against his mother. Shilin changes clothes and bows, indicating the beginning of the rites. White Snake emerges from the pagoda, and mother and son are finally reunited. They sing arias reflecting their love for one another and their grief over the events of White Snake's imprisonment. White Snake warns Xu not to learn from his father, but to be loyal to his wife and serve the imperial family well, assuring him that he need not worry about her, and that she is at peace. The two part, knowing they will not meet again. The scene's appeal comes from the emotional arias Shilin and White Snake sing to each other. The plot of "Sacrifice at the Pagoda" in Fang's play is very similar to that of later *pihuang* plays, although the language and music is different.[189]

In this scene, the character of Xu Shilin provides an exemplary male character that would have appealed to the readers of flower registers, male audiences of commercial theaters. As a first-rank graduate of the imperial examination, Shilin has achieved the primary goal of scholars and elites in late imperial society. Whereas the male lead in the full version of *White Snake*, Xu Xian, often fails to support his wife and is easily manipulated, Shilin unfailingly supports his mother. His filial piety favors his mother, as he seems to blame his father for his mother's imprisonment: "I recall that my father mistakenly believed in slanderous words, abandoned his family, and left the [secular] world. This led my mother to personally meet with suppression and holds great regrets in the afterlife."[190] Although he does not go so far as to renounce or insult his

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[189] For a manuscript and a woodblock print of *pihuang* scripts of "Sacrifice at the Pagoda," see Kuanchong 黃寬重 Huang et al., eds., *Su wenxue congkan* 俗文學叢刊 (Folk Literature: materials in the collection of the Institute of History and Philology), vol. 323 (Taipei: Xin wen feng chuban youxian gongsi, 2001), 551-82. Two transcribed and annotated *pihuang* versions, based on scripts held at Bejing University Library, are printed in Huang Shizhong 黃仕忠, ed., *Qing che wangfu cang xiqu quanbian* 清車王府藏戲曲全編 [Complete volumes of dramatic works collected at the Qing Prince Che's palace], vol. 10 (Guangzhou: Guangdong renmin chubanshe, 2013), 645-54.

[190] 追思吾父誤信讒言，棄家方外，致令母親身遭鎮魘，抱恨重泉。下官已經具疏奏聞，請拆毀雷峰塔。 Fang, *Leifengta*,

father, he does attribute his mother's imprisonment to his father's failings. In this sense, the portrayal of Shilin's filial piety seems to focus on his mother over his father, much like the Buddhist tales described in Cole's research. While he uses discretion in describing his father's role in his mother's imprisonment, Shilin is one of the few characters who directly criticizes Fahai:[191]

> *To tune of "Yi zhi hua."* ***Xu***: Along the embankment, the peaches and plum bloom; from pleasure-boats, music and song spreads everywhere. Among the lakes and mountains, although I trust them to be beautiful, my regret is hard to dispel. Looking into the distance at that pagoda's shadow amidst an empty circle, my tears fall one after another, like sleet. I think that dastardly monk, Fahai, is such a hateful person! He made false charges against my own mother and without reason mixed up right and wrong. Even if the ritual power the Way is boundless,[192] who has ever seen a crafty villain who will sow discord between people of the same flesh and blood [but] will [also] explain the profoundness of the sutras?
>
> 【一枝花】〔小生〕長堤桃李綻，畫舫笙歌遍。湖山雖信美，恨難遣。遙望那塔影空圓，淚落紛如霰。我想法海那賊禿，好不可恨人也！陷害我親娘，無端施詭辨。便做道法力無邊，那曾見離間人骨肉的奸徒，會把三乘妙演。

In the rhetorical question at the end of this passage, Shilin addresses what he sees as contradictory in Fahai's character; a monk who preaches the sutras should not also put family members against one another. Much in the way that Little Green provides space for criticism of Xu Xian in "Broken Bridge" (see Chapter Three), in this scene Shilin provides a perspective with authority that provides space for criticism of Fahai. White Snake, Little Green, and other characters also deride Fahai in other scenes, but the effect here is quite different. Here, the critique of Fahai comes not from a monstrous enemy of Fahai, but from a human male who placed first in the imperial examinations. Shilin is not only a character of status, but also an

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[191] The bulk of this passage is lyrics meant to be sung during performance. I have reduced the font size of the line in the center, which is intended to be spoken as dialogue, to mimic a technique often used in Qing playscripts—although this technique is not used in Fang's script. Fang Chengpei 方成培 (1713-1808) *Leifengta* 雷峰塔 (Thunder Peak Pagoda) (Beijing: Huaxia chubanshe, 2000), 165-6.

[192] In this context, the "ritual power of the way" probably refers to Buddhism.

idealized representative of the audience, so his critique of Fahai was probably relatable or admirable to the audience.

While the character Shilin provides an exemplary perspective in "Sacrifice at the Pagoda" that the audience would have found enviable or relatable, the information recorded in the flower registers suggests that the audience's attention was still more focused on White Snake herself. In many of the flower registers collected in QYLSZ, "Sacrifice at the Pagoda" is listed as an exemplary play for about a quarter of the actors of the *qingshan* role type, the role of White Snake in this scene, whereas it is not listed for any actors of the *xiaosheng* role type, the role type of Xu Shilin.[193] Although this discrepancy may reflect a biased interest for actors of female role types, it is still surprising that not a single actor of a male role type is mentioned.[194] While many of the entries on "Sacrifice at the Pagoda" merely list the scene as a representative work for a *qingshan* actor, a few poems provide some insight into what the audience appreciated in the

[193] The *qingshan* (青衫 "blue robe") role type is often the female lead, especially in *pihuang* plays, named for the blue robes they often wore. Xu Shilin is often played by a *xiaosheng* 小生, or "young male" role type. One *xiaosheng* actor is noted for his performance of "Sacrifice at the Pagoda" in QYLSZ, but this actor also performed *qingshan* roles, and since this entry records him as "White Snake," it must be referring to his performance as a *qingshan* and not as a *xiaosheng*.

[194] Although the flower registers in QYLSZ do not record as many actors of male role types as they do female role types, they do include some actors of male role types. Based on searches in "The Japan Association for Chinese Urban Performing Arts," the scene "Sacrifice at the Pagoda" appears in seven texts in QYLSZ. Because of the variable nature of the texts in QYLSZ, some of these texts mention the scene only once, but others repeatedly use it as an example for *qingshan* actors. One text, *Jubu qunying* 菊部羣英 [Heroes of the chrysanthemum quarter - originally published 1873], contains entries for thirty-four *qingshan* actors and seven *xiaosheng* actors (the male role type normally used to perform Xu Shilin). Nine of the *qingshan* actors are noted for their performance of "Sacrifice at the Pagoda." Other texts reveal similar proportions: *Jutai jixiu lu* 鞠台集秀録 [A Record of a collection of excellence from the chrysanthemum stage - originally printed 1886] has fifteen entries of *qingshan* actors, four of whom were noted for "Sacrifice at the Pagoda," and three entries for *xiaosheng* actors. *Xinkan jutai ji xiu lu* 新刊鞠台集秀録 [A new carving of a record of a collection of excellence from the chrysanthemum stage] has twenty-eight entries for *qingshan* actors, eight of whom were noted for "Sacrifice at the Pagoda," and nine *xiaosheng* actors. By combining these three texts, twenty-one of seventy-seven (27%) *qingshan* actors were noted for their performance of "Sacrifice at the Pagoda." See Zhang Cixi, ed., *Qingdai yandu liyuan shiliao,* "Chūgoku toshi geinō kenkyūkai 中国都市芸能研究会 (The Japan association for Chinese urban performing arts)" Senda Daisuke 千田大介, ed., https://wagang.econ.hc.keio.ac.jp/~chengyan/index.php?清代燕都梨園史料. For print a print copy of *Jubu qunying,* see Hanjiang xiao you xian ke 邗江小遊仙客, QYLSZ, vol. 2, 913-972; for a print copy of *Jutai jixiu lu*, see QYLSZ, vol. 3, 1185-1212; for a print copy of *Xinkan jutai ji xiu lu*, see QYLSZ, vol. 3, 1213-1234.

performance of the scene. In the 1837 flower register *Dingnian yusun zhi* 丁年玉筍志 [Record of sixteen-year-old jade figurines], the author, pen-named Ruizhu Jiushi 蘂珠舊史, describes an actor's performance of "Sacrifice at the Pagoda": "The play 'Sacrifice at the Pagoda,' is especially good at winning the audience. Whenever I listen to [him perform it] while the beer is green and the lanterns are red,[195] it feels like the song of Han E at Yongmen[196] is then still in my ear."[197] The 1894 flower register *Qingtian waishi* 情天外史 [Unofficial history of the realm of emotion] describes the actor Jing Hetang 景穌堂 performing the scene, as: "When performing the two plays 'Sacrifice at the Pagoda' and 'Sacrifice at the River,' it is truly such that his expression is seductive and his sorrowful magnificence moves the audience."[198] Finally, in an undated flower register from the late-Qing/early Republican Period, *Ku an shang ju shi* 哭庵賞菊詩 [Poems of crying at the hut and admiring the chrysanthemums], the writer describes an actor named Yu Ziyun 余紫雲: "Whenever he performs all of 'Sacrifice at the River,' 'Sacrifice at the Pagoda,' 'Grand Trial,' or 'Teaching the Son,' the subtle emotion is like water, so

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[195] "…while the beer is green and the lanterns are red" refers to a nightlife filled with extravagance and indulgence.

[196] *Liezi* 列子 tells a story of Han E, a beautiful female singer from the Spring and Autumn Period (771 – 476 BCE) who intoxicated listeners with her song. While traveling to the kingdom of Qi 齊國, Han E ran out of food, and began to sing for money at Yongmen. Her song enthralled all those around her and seemed to linger on for three days. One day, an innkeeper insulter her, and she sang a sorrowful song that caused all those her heard to anguish for three days without eating, so they found her and invited her back. This time, she sang a song of rejoicing, which caused everyone to dance with joy and forget their anguish. Here, this reference would seem to suggest a beautiful and emotive quality to the music that also lingers on after performance. See Liezi 列子 (fl. fourth cent. BCE) and Xiao Dengfu 蕭登福, *Liezi guzhu jinyi* 列子古注今譯 [Ancient annotations and modern interpretations of Liezi] (Taipei: Wenjin chubanshe, 1990), 489-491.

[197] "《祭塔》一齣，尤擅勝場。每當酒緑燈紅時聽之，覺韓娥雍門之歌，今猶在耳。" See QYLSZ, vol. 2, 692-3.

[198] "演《祭塔》《祭江》二劇，真乃神情妖冶，哀艷動人。" See QYLSZ, vol. 3, 1275.

sonorous it could stop the clouds from passing,[199] with clear transitions, just like Gongsun was dancing with her swords."[200] These descriptions are poetic and do not provide much specific information about the performance, but there is important consistency in the language; they emphasize the importance of the actors' singing, especially as it connects with the expression of their performance.

While the experience of Qing performances cannot be recreated, Fang's script can reveal some of the emotion that the actors of White Snake portrayed in the scene. Surprisingly, White Snake has few lines in "Sacrifice at the Pagoda," and what little she says focuses on consoling Shilin. Near the closing of the scene, however, after she has appeared to Shilin and he has expressed his devastation at her situation, White Snake offers her son important advice:[201]

> *White Snake*: My child, with things as they are, you needn't be sorrowful, but I wish that, in the days to come, you will live in harmony with your wife. You must not learn from your fickle father! *Xu*: Oh, mother of mine! *White Snake*: I have something else to say. *Xu*: Your child is listening carefully. *White Snake*: Now you are experiencing the favor of the empire. You ought to exert yourself for the imperial family. Do not dwell so tirelessly on me. As a mother, although I am beneath the pagoda, I have become content to close my eyes![202] *Xu*: This child dares not disobey his mother's wishes. *White Snake acts crying*: After parting now today, we will never have a time to meet face-to-face! Child, just go! *Xu*: Oh, my mother!

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[199] This four-character saying also appears in the *Liezi* passage that describes Han E at Yongmen. See n197 above.

[200] "每演《祭江》《祭塔》《大審》《教子》諸齣，幽情似水，響遏行雲，瀏亮頓挫，彷彿公孫舞劍器也。" See Yi Shunding 易順鼎 (1858 – 1920), in QYLSZ, vol. 3, 1421. Great Lady Gongsun performed a sword dance for the Xuanzong Emperor (r. 713-56 CE), according to a poem by Du Fu that praises her skill, along with that of her student, who he sees perform as an old man. See "Guan Gongsun daniang dizi wu jianqi" 觀公孫大娘弟子舞劍器 [Watching the great Lady Gongsun's apprentice dance with swords]. See Du Fu 杜甫 (712–770), *Du fu quanji jiaozhu* 杜甫全集校注 [Du Fu's complete collection and annotation], ed. Xiao Difei 萧涤非, vol. 9 (Beijing: Renming wenxue chubanshe, 2014), 5308-25.

[201] Fang Chengpei, *Leifengta*, 166-7.

[202] "become content to close [my] eyes," indicates that White Snake can die without regret, knowing her son has made such high achievements.

〔旦〕兒呵，事已如此，不必悲痛，但願你日後夫妻和好，千萬不可學你父薄幸！〔小生〕阿呀，我那親娘呵！〔旦〕我還有一言。〔小生〕孩兒謹聽。〔旦〕你今身受國恩，當為皇家宣力，不要苦苦思念我，做娘的雖在浮圖之下，變得瞑目矣！〔小生〕孩兒敢不遵依慈訓。〔旦哭介〕今日一別，永無見面之期了！兒呵，你去罷！〔小生〕哎呀，我那母親呵！

In this final exchange between mother and son, we see a few important points that solidify White Snake as the sympathetic heroine of the story and provide a satisfying conclusion for her and her son. First, when White Snake tells Shilin not to "dwell so tirelessly on [her]," she is absolving him of guilt in continuing with his life and his career. Second, by advising Shilin to "exert [himself] for the imperial family," she is not only emphasizing the importance of her son's successful career, but also showing herself to be a loyal subject with the emperor's (and the empire's) interests at heart. Third, the first piece of advice White Snake gives to her son, not to follow the way of his "fickle father," gives a final pronouncement on her view of Xu Xian. Whereas, as discussed in Chapter Three, in the scene "Broken Bridge" White Snake acts appropriately for a virtuous wife and ultimately supports her husband, in this scene she is openly critical of him. While this expression was incongruous with her role as virtuous wife when she was with Xu Xian, it is now important for her to assume the role of mother and instruct her son on correct behavior and loyalty.

In summary, despite a relatively low proportion of surviving scripts, flower registers from the Qing suggest the scene "Sacrifice at the Pagoda" was a popular excerpt scene at commercial theaters and was the only popular excerpt scene to feature Xu Shilin. In contrast to Xu Xian, Xu Shilin was an idealized male character who embodied the aspirations of the male elite. Despite his admirable qualities, however, the flower registers suggest that the audience was most interested in the musical ability and emotional expressiveness of the actor performing White Snake. The scene is critical of Fahai and Xu Xian, and it provides resolution for White Snake

and Shilin, with White Snake expressing her contentment with Shilin and absolving him of any guilt for her hardships.

**One Last Sip of Mother's Heartbroken Milk: "Joining the Bowls" in storytelling**

"Joining the Bowls (He bo; 合缽 or 合鉢)," also called "Refining in the Pagoda (Lian ta 煉塔)" in Fang's play, is the scene of White Snake's subjugation. While not common as an excerpt play in acted performance,[203] this scene appears in nearly all full-length versions of *White Snake*, including earlier versions, such as Huang Tubi's play. Based on the materials collected by opera scholar and collector Fu Xihua 傅惜华 (1907-1970) in *Bai she zhuan ji* 白蛇傳集 [The Legend of White Snake Collection – hereafter *Collection*], "Joining the Bowls" also appears to have been popular as excerpt scene for the storytelling genres. In this 1955 compilation of *White Snake* tales and plays from various performance genres from the Qing and Republican Period, "Joining the Bowls" is the most common title for a tale based on single scene.[204] This section will contrast six of these storytelling versions of "Joining the Bowls," with

[203] "Joining the Bowls" does appear as an excerpt play in the Republican period Kun opera miscellany *Liu ye qupu* 六也曲譜, combining with the earlier scenes "Burning Incense (Shao xiang 燒香)," "Water Battle," and "Broken Bridge" to create a four-scene sequence. Considering this arrangement, it is possible that some Qing references to the performance of excerpt versions of "Water Battle" may include all four scenes, but I have not seen any scripts that have done so.

[204] There are nine storytelling versions titled "Joining the Bowls" in *Collection*, including three *matoudiao* 馬頭調 [wharf tunes], one *bajiaogu* 八角鼓 [octagonal-drum tales], one *guziqu* 鼓子曲 [drum melodies], two *zidishu* 子弟書 (bannerman tales), one *xiaoqu* 小曲 [little melody], and one *nanci* 南詞 [Southern ballads]. *Collection* also includes an excerpt play from the genre acted-performance genre *tanhuang* 灘黃. While the *xiaoqu* version and southern ballad summarize the entire plot of *White Snake*, the other eight versions are all excerpt scenes with similar plots. The next most common excerpt scene in the collection is "Jie san 借傘 [Borrowing the Umbrella]," which appears five times under similar titles. For the storytelling versions of "Joining the Bowls" discussed in this chapter, see Fu, *Bai she zhuan ji*, 10-17, 43-6, and 101-9. An English translation of the Jiaqing Era bannerman tale is included in Idema, *The White Snake and Her Son*, 87-92.

Fang's version to show how storytelling versions create sympathy for White Snake and emphasize her identities as wife and mother.[205]

The storytelling versions described in this section include a wharf tune form the Xianfeng reign (1851-1861), a wharf tune dated 1856, a wharf tune from the Guangxu reign (1875-1908), a bannerman tale from the Jiaqing reign (1796-1820), a bannerman tale from the Guangxu reign, and an octagonal drum tale from the Xianfeng reign.[206] The wharf tunes range in length from several hundred characters to over two thousand, the bannerman tales are between one-thousand five hundred and three thousand characters, and the octagonal drum tale is less than eight hundred characters. Although these works were written to reflect the language of performance, storytellers would often elaborate or change texts during performance, and the texts themselves were privately read as well.[207] Despite these potential discrepancies between extant texts and performance, I will treat the texts as mostly accurate representations of the words used by storytellers during performance in the Qing.

Although there was likely considerable overlap in the audiences of wharf tunes, bannerman tales, and octagonal drum tales, there are also distinctions between the audiences that

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[205] I have chosen to exclude "little melody" and the southern ballad because these tales, although titled "Joining the Bowls," narrate the entire story of *White Snake* without sufficient emphasis on the scene of White Snake's subjugation. I have chosen to exclude the drum melody because it was published in 1947, making it an outlier in terms of time period. The other storytelling versions were published between the Jiaqing reign and the Guangxu reign, 1796-1908.

[206] Here, "storytelling version" is used to describe narrative performance literature that includes lyrics of songs and sometimes spoken word but not extended physical action to represent character movement. In performance, the tales were often sung by a storyteller with musical accompaniment, either performed by the storyteller himself or an additional musician. Common instruments for storytelling performance include the *sanxuan* 三絃 (a three-stringed lute), the pipa, clappers, and a variety of drums.

[207] For an in-depth comparison of storytelling versions of "Wu Song Fights the Tiger" from *The Water Margin*, including comparison between texts and modern performance recordings, see Vibeke Børdahl, *Wu Song Fights the Tiger: The Interaction of Oral and Written Traditions in the Chinese Novel, Drama, and Storytelling* (Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2013).

are worth noting. The name for wharf tunes is commonly written as "matou diao 馬頭調," literally "horse-head tunes," but this is likely a homophone for "matou diao 碼頭調" (wharf tune), which is also sometimes used to refer to the genre. The genre of wharf tunes was likely named for where it was performed, wharfs and other areas of commerce, and so was likely often performed for merchants and traders. In his *Zhongguo su wenxue shi* 中國俗文學史 (History of Chinese folk literature), Zheng Zhenduo 鄭振鐸 (1898-1958) suggests that wharf tunes were primarily sung by prostitutes, although he does not provide evidence or explanation for this statement.[208] In her recent study, Elena Chiu has shown that although bannerman tales have often been considered popular literature for the lower classes, they were in some senses a genre for the elite. Bannerman tales and octagonal drum tales originated among Manchu literati men in the early Qing. The Qing government forbade Manchu men from attending acted performance, but they were allowed to perform bannerman tales as amateurs.[209] Later in the Qing, bannerman tales became popular among Han populations as well, and Han performers sold their skills in commercial performance spaces in the capitals. Octagonal drum tales were also popular among Manchus, performed by clubs often involving men of high social status.[210] In this sense, wharf tales were comparatively popular among merchants and may have been sung by prostitutes, while bannerman tales and octagonal drum tales were comparatively popular among Manchu men, although in the late Qing all three likely had a broad audience from different levels of

[208] "歌唱這個調子的，當以妓女們為中心," *Zhongguo su wenxue shi*, vol. 2 (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 1984), 438.

[209] Goldman discusses the attempts made by the Qing government to restrict Manchu patronage of acted performance, as well as the great lengths some Manchu opera fans would go to see acted performance. See *Opera and the City*, 68-76.

[210] See Elena Suet-Ying Chiu, *Bannermen Tales (Zidishu): Manchu Storytelling and Cultural Hybridity in the Qing Dynasty* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Asia Center, 2018), 62-128.

society. It seems likely that women made up at least some of audiences for private performances, but there is little evidence specifying female audiences or performers.[211]

In Fang's play, "Refining in the Pagoda" begins with White Snake holding her baby and recounting the events of the previous scenes. Little Green enters, and the two women agree that they are suspicious that Xu has not returned home as expected. Xu returns and explains to the audience that Fahai will come to subjugate White Snake. Little Green takes the baby to have a nap, while White Snake sits at a mirror to comb her hair and put on makeup. Fahai arrives with two divine guardians, and they fight with White Snake. They capture White Snake with an alms-bowl relic and cause her to revert to her snake form. Little Green tries to rescue White Snake and attacks Xu Xian, but she is blocked by the divine guardians. She reverts to her male form but is defeated and captured. Xu feels his connection to the mortal world break and agrees to join Fahai as a monk at his monastery. Fahai takes White Snake to Thunder Peak Pagoda and traps her underneath, with the help of thunder and fire spirits.[212]

The stage notes for this scene suggest a strong focus on the visual spectacle of White Snake's subjugation. The clearest example of spectacle occurs shortly after the divine guardians enter and White Snake begs Fahai for mercy:[213]

> *Fahai uses alms bowl to trap White Snake, White Snake acts escaping. The divine guardians block White Snake and act taking out beads to strike her. Fahai catches the beads to trap White Snake and [they] exit. [Fahai] enters carrying the bowl. Xu sees the snake, and acts being sad.*
>
> 外將缽合旦，旦逃介，諦攔旦，出珠打介，外接珠合旦下。持缽上，生見蛇，悲介。

[211] For Chiu's discussion of female audiences of bannerman tales, see ibid., 103-6.

[212] Fang, *Leifengta*, 151-6.

[213] Ibid., 152.

The verb "he 合" that I have translated as "trap" above is the same verb that appears in the title of the scene as "join," and although it is difficult to find a direct, consistent translation in English, the action within the story is quite clear and consistent with other versions of *White Snake*: the two bowls, when brought together around a monster will cause the monster to shrink and revert to their original form, allowing the bowls to "join" together and "trap" the monster. According to these stage directions, this action in performance could be quite complicated. First, White Snake escapes Fahai's attempts to trap her with the bowls, presumably involving some sort of martial arts or acrobatic movement to avoid him. The divine guardians then use a second prop, "beads," which were probably a string of prayer beads, to strike at White Snake. Fahai catches the beads and traps White Snake, which probably means that he wraps the beads around White Snake and leads her offstage. When Xu sees the "snake," it would seem that he is looking at a prop that Fahai has brought back on the stage inside the bowl, representing White Snake's subjugated form. The stage directions mention this prop a second time shortly thereafter, as Little Green attempts to grab the snake. In her attempts to free White Snake and fight off the divine guardians, Little Green again uses the technique *bianjue* (see Chapter Two), this time transforming from a *tiedan* role into a *chou* role. Although Little Green has a couple of emotional arias expressing her sorrow for White Snake and her anger at Xu, similar to her expression in "Broken Bridge," the emphasis of the scene is clearly oriented towards action and spectacle.

The wharf tune from the Xianfeng reign in *Collection* provides a good overview of how the plots of many of the storytelling versions are structured. I have translated most of the text below, omitting a section in the middle in which White Snake recounts the plot of previous events in the story:

*To the introductory "wharf tune"*: At West Lake, the beautiful scenery is quite out of the ordinary; the green mountains and clear water are exceptionally marvelous. In spring, stroll the Embankment of Su and observe the peach trees and willows.[214] In summer, admire the wayside pavilions and lotus blossom ponds. In fall, gaze at the moon, and the chrysanthemums bursting with stamens. In winter, chant a poem about riding a donkey among the winter plum trees.[215] The happy festivals of the four seasons have wonderful sights, the landscape natural, inherited from ancient paintings.

【馬頭調引】西湖美景甚出奇，山清水秀蓋世希。春遊蘇堤觀桃柳，夏賞涼亭荷花池，秋望明月菊綻蘂，冬吟驢雪寒梅詩。四季佳節好風光，景物天然古畫遺。

*To the tune of "wharf tune"*: It was all because the monstrous evil created chaos in the world, disturbing The One Who has Thus Come, [216] our Buddha, who sent the great soldier who exorcises evil spirits. He himself bestowed the ritual relic at Golden Mountain,[217] to get rid of monsters and deliver [to enlightenment] the groups of those who are lost. Since she flooded Gusu, Xu Hanwen and his wife met again and turned home, and Madam White gave birth to a baby boy.[218] It was also that his unlucky star had arrived; the monk Fahai had found the front of his door.[219] This man, Xu, held the alms bowl in hand and, wearing a smile, he brought up the subject: "My Lady, Zen Master Fahai came here today and gave me an extraordinary ritual relic. He said that if a monstrous or wicked figure sees this relic, they will find it hard to evade. How about we give it a try?" [The bowls] took the obedient Madam White and scared her until her powdered face turned sallow, her apricot eyes blurred, and her soul started to fly out and scatter. She became timid and her heart went weak. She became drowsy and laid on the ivory bed, without any energy, and cooed and sobbed. Heartbroken, she called out: "Cruel-hearted husband! I did not actually do harm to your heart, but you wounded my will. The instant that you heard slanderous words and believed in them you did

[214] The "Embankment of Su" (*Sudi* 蘇堤) is a dike that runs between the northern and southern shores of West Lake, named after the famous poet Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037 – 1101), who is credited with its construction in 1089.

[215] "Chanting a poem about riding a donkey among the winter plum trees" is an allusion to a poem by Zheng Qi 鄭棨 (861 – 874), an image that also appeared in later poems.

[216] "The One Who has Thus Come" (Ch. *Rulai* 如來 Sk. Tathāgata) is a common title for Buddha, going back to the Pali Canon.

[217] The "ritual relic" here refers to the golden alms bowls, which Fahai (the "great soldier") bestows to Xu Xian.

[218] Gusu is an area within the city of Suzhou. The flooding of Gusu seems to be a reference to White Snake's flooding of Golden Mountain Monastery, although in most versions the flood is repelled by Fahai and drowns the city of Zhenjiang, about 150 km from Suzhou.

[219] "Unlucky star" is a reference to a solar deity that controls calamities.

not think at all of our years as husband and wife. What good is there in harming me? ...

【馬頭調】皆因是妖邪亂世，驚動了如來我佛，差遣那降魔大士，親賜法寶在金山，除妖度群迷。自從他水淹了姑蘇，許漢文夫妻重逢回家裏，白娘子產生嬰兒。也是他難星來至，法海僧找到門前。這許郎手托鉢盂，帶笑把話提，說：娘子呀，法海禪師今到此，送給我法寶出奇。他說道妖邪形象，若見此寶難躲避，試試看怎的？把一個聽話的白娘子，唬的他粉面焦黃，杏眼迷離，魂飛魄散，膽怯心虛，昏沉沉躺在牙床無氣力，鶯聲兒悲啼。慘切切叫聲狠心夫郎！奴並沒有害你心，你到有傷奴的意。一旦間聽信讒言，全不念數載夫妻，害奴有何益？ ...

[White Snake recounts the main events of the full story]

…The common people who were harmed were innocent; the cycle of retribution has arrived.[220] I gave birth to a son and encountered difficulty and urgency; I gave birth to a son and encountered difficulty and urgency. Now that it has come to this, it is hard for me to blame you. I have only this son that I have born, how can I bear to abandon him and go? In a moment, we separate; in a moment, we separate. Even an iron-hearted person who heard about this would think it was tragic and sorrowful." The baby awoke and could not stop crying. Lady White felt like she has been stabbed with a knife. "My son, do not cry! My son, do not cry! This apron was made by your mother;[221] I leave it for you to wear on your body. From now on, you will go with your father. My husband, you listen well; my husband, you listen well: the young child needs you to support him. When he gets older and grows up, he will read the books and the histories, do not mistake his ambition. If he receives official position; if he receives official position, and brings honor to his ancestors and decorated halberds to the door,[222] when the festival time comes, burn papers [for me],[223] and I will die in the netherworld and my mouth and eyes will close.

...無辜的害黎民，報應循還[環]至，生兒遇難急，生兒遇難急，事到其間也，難怨你。惟有這親生子，怎忍拋了他去？頃刻就分離，頃刻就分離。鐵石人聞，也是慘悽。嬰兒醒，不住的哭，白娘如刀刺：我兒莫悲啼，我兒莫悲啼！這件兜肚是娘做的，留與你穿在身，從今跟父去。兒夫你聽知，兒夫

[220] The "common people who were harmed" is probably a reference to people of Zhenjiang who were killed when White Snake attempted to flood the monastery. In many versions of *White Snake*, this is depicted as her most egregious transgression.

[221] The "apron" referred to here is a *dudou*, which is an undergarment that covers the chest and abdomen, and was often worn by children.

[222] "Decorated halberds at the door," is a sign of a successful person; a person with a uniformed guard.

[223] "Burning papers" refers to the burning of paper money, used as an offering to the spirits of relatives and ancestors who have passed away.

> 你聽知，幼小的孩兒要你扶持，成人長大讀書史，莫誤凌雲志，倘然得官職，倘然得官職，光宗耀祖，門排畫戟。逢時節，燒張紙，就死黃泉口眼閉。
>
> *To the tune of "wharf tune coda*": Oh, my son! Drink one last sip your mother's heartbroken milk. We will never know when we will meet again! While she spoke, the Buddhist relic was ruthless, all of the transcendents, gods, and spirits appeared. Then Xu received the baby, White Snake was unable to support [herself], and could only reveal her original form, [a snake of] more than seven inches. The monk Fahai collected her in the lotus bowl and went with her to Thunder Peak Pagoda. It makes people so sorrowful! Later, Xu Xian achieved the Way and delivered his wife [to enlightenment], and the two of them joined the ranks of the transcendents. The little baby had his name inscribed on the scholars' list, and he searched for his mother and father and went to perform sacrifices at their graves. The mysteries left of these ancient traces are a topic for later writers.
>
> 【馬頭調尾】哎呀兒吓！喫娘這口斷腸乳，再不知相逢何日！說話間，法寶無情，現出了諸仙神祇祕。這許郎接過嬰兒，白娘子無法支持，也只得現出原形，七寸有餘。法海僧收入蓮鉢，同往雷峯塔去。令人好慘悽！到後來，許宣得道度妻子，他二人位列仙極。小嬰兒金榜名題，尋父母去把墳塋祭，古蹟留奧後人題。

The structure of this version is largely consistent with the other storytelling versions. This narrative begins with an unrelated short lyric describing the beauty of West Lake in each of the four seasons, then changes tune to describe the chaos brought from White Snake's entrance into the mortal realm. Fahai arrives and gives the alms bowls to Xu Xian. Xu Xian takes the alms bowls to White Snake and explains to her that Fahai gave him the alms bowls, seemingly unaware that the bowls were a danger to his wife. White Snake immediately becomes weak. She berates Xu and begins to recount the events of their time together. She expresses her sorrow, gives her baby to Xu, and is forced to change into her original form. Fahai arrives, collects her body in the alms bowl, and imprisons her under Thunder Peak Pagoda. The tale concludes with a summary of the events that follow: the baby grows up to place in the imperial examinations, becomes an official, and offers sacrifice at their graves; Xu achieves the Way, helps lead White Snake to enlightenment, and they both become transcendents.

Before comparing acted performance and storytelling, it is worth noting a few details in this version that are largely consistent with the other storytelling versions. First, the tone of the narratives changes abruptly in places, almost seeming to contradict itself. For example, the opening lyric of the wharf tune explicitly vilifies White Snake: "It was all was because the monstrous evil created chaos in the world, disturbing The One Who Has Come, my Buddha, ..." while the bulk of White Snake's monologue casts her as a sympathetic character. In a similar sense, White Snake's attitude toward Xu changes throughout the passage. At first, she is furious with Xu, calling him cruel-hearted and blaming him for initiating the subjugation. After recounting the events of their time together, however, she appears to forgive him ("it is hard for me to blame you"). By the end of the passage, her focus changes to ensure that Xu take care of Shilin after she has gone. These inconsistencies suggest that the author and audience alike were less concerned with a specific moral message to the tale than they were with White Snake's expression and the range of emotions she goes through as she is subjugated.

While the Xianfeng wharf tune provides a good example of the plot of the storytelling versions, there are a couple of important differences between the storytelling versions as well. First, the Guangxu-era wharf tune and the Guangxu-era bannerman tale version describe an extended combat leading up to White Snake's subjugation, in which an army of warrior gods, such as Nezha and Erlang, descend from heaven to assist Fahai in subjugating White Snake.[224] The fact that both of these stories are dated to the Guangxu reign may suggest that this plot development was popular at that time. Second, only the wharf tunes and the octagonal-drum tale describe Xu Xian "leading" White Snake to enlightenment at the tale's conclusion; the

[224] The bannerman tale is divided into two "chapters" (*hui* 回), separately titled "Jie er" 嗟兒 [Lamenting (her) son] and "Ru ta" 入塔 [Entering the pagoda]. The description of the descending gods appears in the latter section.

bannerman tales do not mention White Snake's release, although they do summarize events that occur after White Snake's subjugation, such as her son achieving first-place in the examinations and offering sacrifice to her.[225] This difference between storytelling versions could reflect differences between the genres. Perhaps the audiences of wharf tunes and octagonal drum tales preferred happy endings with lovers reunited, whereas the audiences of bannerman tales were satisfied with a more ambiguous ending.[226]

Despite these differences between the storytelling versions, they all share a couple of important differences in plot when compared to Fang's play. First, Xu Xian's role in White Snake's subjugation in Fang's play contrasts with the storytelling versions in *Collection*.[227] In Fang's play, Xu Xian seeks out Fahai to perform the subjugation, but refuses to perform it himself, so Fahai performs the subjugation on his behalf.[228] In the storytelling versions, however,

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[225] It is also worth noting that Xu leading White Snake to become a transcendent is also different in acted performance, which normally concludes with Fahai helping White Snake cross over, and Xu Xian returning to Buddha in the Western Paradise, such as in Fang's play.

[226] Another possibility is that some audiences of bannerman tales preferred White Snake to remain trapped in the pagoda at the tale's conclusion. However, other *White Snake* bannerman tales do describe White Snake's release, such as "Ku ta 哭塔 (Weeping at the pagoda)," conclude which concludes with Little Green traveling to the Western Paradise to help White Snake escape. It would seem that concluding with White Snake's imprisonment was not a feature of bannerman tales as a genre. See; Fu*, Bai she zhuan ji*, 107-9; Idema, *White Snake and her Son*, 93-101.

[227] This action is inconsistent in written narratives as well. In Feng Menglong's "Madam White," for example, Xu Xian receives a magical alms bowl from Fahai and performs the subjugation personally. In *The Amazing History of Thunder Peak Pagoda*, Xu Xian is not complicit with the subjugation and tries to convince Fahai that it is unnecessary. Fahai does not debate with Xu Xian, but instead gives him the magical alms bowl under a false pretense to cause him to inadvertently initiate the subjugation, much like in many of the storytelling versions discussed here. See Feng Menglong 馮夢龍 (1574–1646), "Madam White Is Kept Forever under Thunder Peak Tower," in *Stories to Caution the World*, trans. Shuhui Yang and Yang Yunqin (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005), 503; Yushan Zhuren 玉山主人, *Leifengta qi zhuan* (Taipei: Tian yi chubanshe, 1985—originally published 1806), 5.3a-4a.

[228] Curiously, in Huang Tubi's earlier play, which in most respects follows the same narrative as "Madam White," Xu also asks Fahai to perform the subjugation because he is unwilling to personally subjugate his wife. See *Bai she zhuan ji*, 331-2. It is tempting to argue this as evidence that audiences did not want to see a husband harm his wife onstage, but there are plenty of examples of plays in which husbands violently punish their wives in plays based on *The Water Margin*. Goldman shows how these plays grew in popularity in the late Qing in *Opera and the City*, 175-235.

Fahai tricks Xu Xian to bring the alms bowl to White Snake, causing him to unwittingly initiate the subjugation. Only in the Guangxu-era bannerman tale does Xu appear to be aware of his actions; in the other five versions, Xu appears either to have been tricked by Fahai to bring the bowls to White Snake, or there is not enough information to determine that Xu was aware of the consequences of his actions.[229] Much like differences in the conclusions of different *chuanqi* and Kun opera scripts of the scene "Broken Bridge" discussed in the last chapter, the different depictions of Xu's role in White Snake's subjugation affect the framing Xu's character and his relationship to White Snake. In the versions in which Fahai tricks Xu into initiating the subjugation of White Snake, Xu is loyal to his wife and they remain a loving couple until she is taken away. His only fault is his inability to recognize Fahai's scheme. In Fang's play and the Guangxu-era bannerman tale, however, Xu is complicit in betraying White Snake, suggesting that he either does not support his wife or is too weak to resist Fahai's manipulation.[230] In this sense, the storytelling versions depict a comparatively sympathetic Xu Xian.

The second important difference between Fang's play and the storytelling versions is the depiction of White Snake as she is being subjugated. While Fang's play focuses on the action of White Snake's subjugation, describing her transformation and Little Green's attempt to fight off Fahai and his minions, storytelling versions focus more on White Snake's personal expression of her resentment and sorrow. In the Xianfeng-era wharf tune described above, White Snake expresses her perspective through a monologue that occupies more than half of the narrative, with 76 out of a total of 123 phrases written in the first person from White Snake's

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[229] See Fu, *Bai she zhuan ji*, 104-5 and 157-8.

[230] He could also be interpreted as a reluctant hero, who betrays White Snake because she is a monster and must be subjugated, despite his love for her. When we consider the sympathetic focus on White Snake, however, this explanation seems less likely.

perspective.[231] While Little Green's resistance is central to Fang's play, she only appears in three of the eight storytelling versions.[232] All of the storytelling versions in *Collection* devote more space to the expression of White Snake's perspective than Fang's play, especially in terms of her disappointment at Xu's betrayal and her sorrow over parting with her child. Certain phrases and images appear across different genres that describe White Snake's pain. For example, five different versions compare the pain of White Snake giving up her son to that of being stabbed by a knife. Another image that is shared by almost all storytelling versions of "Joining the Bowls" in *Collection* is White Snake providing her son one last feeding of breastmilk before they part—this is often the last action White Snake experiences before the alms bowls force her to transform.[233]

The contrast between the visual spectacle of Fang's play and the first-person expression of storytelling versions clearly relates to the natures of the media. As a visual medium, acted performance has the advantage of representing the spectacles of transformation and battle visually, using elaborate costumes, props, and athletic movements. In this sense, it is not surprising that Fang's play focuses on visual spectacle at the scene of White Snake's subjugation. In contrast to acted performance, storytelling focuses much more narrowly on language. The storytelling genres described in this section were performed by a single person

[231] The "phrases" here are counted based on commas, full stops, and colons in Fu Xihua' edition. They are not consistent in length but give an approximate measure of the proportion of text used to describe White Snake's perspective.

[232] In the bannerman tale versions, she attempts to fight off Fahai, but is driven away. In one of the wharf tunes, she threatens Xu in a manner similar to Fang's play.

[233] Of the eight versions discussed here, only the Guangxu era (1875-1908) bannerman tale does not include a description of White Snake offering her baby breastmilk.

and much of the content was sung. This emphasis on language and music alone is in many ways more suited to the expression of a specific perspective through monologue.

An implication of the importance of personal expression of emotion in storytelling versions of "Joining the Bowls" is the connection formed between character and performer. Amateur performers were particularly common in private performances of bannerman tales and octagonal drum tales. For an amateur performer to sing "Joining the Bowls" and to give sufficient expression to White Snake's monologue, he or she would almost certainly have had to make an emotional connection with her character. Although he may not relate to her identity as a woman or a monster, through performance he would want to find emotional connection to effectively sing the story.

**Conclusion**

The trope of Buddhist mothers and sons described by Cole and Idema focuses on the relatability between mothers in the narrative and mothers in the audience, and sons in the narrative and sons in the audience. In his conclusion, Cole discusses some of the benefits tales of Buddhist mothers and sons provided for mothers who heard the tales, such as their depiction of the mother's contributions in childrearing, the indebtedness and loyalty that sons displayed to their mothers, and the positive resolution of the mother's spiritual freedom, despite her initial depiction as sinful.[234] Also, Cole discusses some of the benefits the tales provided to sons, including the expression and celebration of the love between mother and son, the depiction of the son in the role of the hero, and the ultimate forgiveness of the son's debt to his mother as he

[234] Cole, *Mothers and Sons in Chinese Buddhism,* 232-3.

earns her freedom. [235] Unquestionably, female audiences of *White Snake* identified with the character of White Snake, and male audiences likely also identified with Xu Shilin to some extent.[236] In this sense, many of the observations from Cole's study are transferrable to *White Snake.*

When we consider the ways in which the story of *White Snake* was transmitted, however, we can see that audiences were not limited to relating to the characters that they were most similar to; in the scenes discussed in this chapter, audiences of all types seem to have identified most with White Snake. While women certainly watched the scene "Sacrifice at the Pagoda" at festival or salon performance in the Qing, and wharf tunes and bannerman tales were probably somewhat accessible to women (at least Manchu women and prostitutes), the flower registers and storytelling versions in this chapter show that male audiences and performers were also drawn to the female perspective. In viewing the scene "Sacrifice at the Pagoda," the male audience experienced the joy and pain of mother and son meeting for the first and last time, physically represented as a *dan* actor and a *xiaosheng* actor. In hearing the story of "Joining the Bowls" sung, however, the audience experienced the pain of her husband's betrayal and her separation from her son through music and language alone. Especially for the performers, but for the audience as well, the scene provided a personal connection to a sympathetic mother. Even audience members that did not become amateur performers may have learned the songs, repeating White Snake's words as their own.

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[235] Ibid., 334.

[236] One anecdotal account can be found in the Qing *zhiguai* tale, "Hitting Xu Xian" (Da Xu Xian 打許仙). In this tale, a woman moved by the performance of the scene "Broken Bridge" insists that the actor performing Xu Xian be punished for his treatment of White Snake. See Yu Mengjiao 俞夢蕉, "Da Xu Xian 打許仙 [Hitting Xu Xian]," in *Jiaoxuan zhilu* 蕉軒摭錄 [Records picked by Mr. Banana Carriage] (Zhengzhou: Zhongzhou guxiang chubanshe, 2012 – Originally published 1839).

# CHAPTER FOUR

## Recognizing the Dark Aura:

## An excerpt of White Snake as a festival ritual in late-Qing Sichuan opera

> In my youth I saw in [Sichuan] province performances of what amounts to a serial play based on the story of *The Rescue of* [*Mulian's*] *Mother* starting with the birth of the heroine, which was followed by her life as a young girl, then her coming of age, then discussion of marriage, etc., complete with small details of family affairs. It took more than ten days for the play to reach her wedding and on this day an actor was dressed as a bride in exactly the same way as the local custom prescribed and, sitting in the bridal carriage, he was paraded around the town with music and attendants, the bridegroom and relatives, all in proper costume, following on horseback or in carriages, and the people in the streets watched them as they would a real wedding procession, also observing the customs and manners appropriate for such occasions. The bride was then taken to the theatre where a mock marriage ceremony was performed on the stage. The play continued with the birth of her child and her life at home, cooking, sewing and reading Buddhist scriptures and becoming in her later years a vegetarian just as a woman in that district would do. Later when the son died she abandoned religious practices and her soul was taken to parade through the town by the same route covered by her wedding procession and daemons struck her with three-pronged spears, the actor who played her being protected by a thick straw padding underneath the costume. The whole drama took about a month to complete and was supposed to have the effect of exorcizing evil spirits. Although there was singing and acting in the drama, the audience took part in much of the action, such as the feasts for the birth of babies, wedding parties and the service at her death: in these scenes the audience mixed with the actors and could not be distinguished from them.[237]

The performance of *Mulian* described above is a testament to the level of community involvement in festival plays in Qing Chengdu. A far cry from the accounts from the flower registers in the previous chapter, which described performances in commercial theaters to all-male audiences, the play described above involved a large portion of the city and blurred the

[237] Wang Mengsheng 王夢生, *Liyuan jiahua* 梨園佳話 (Taipei: Xuehai chubanshe, 1972), 4, "Xin Xi 新戲," as translated in Tao-Ching Hsu, *The Chinese Conception of the Theatre* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1985), 415-6.

lines between actor and audience, encouraging people to participate in the feasts, festivals, and parades in the city streets. In his study of regional versions of the *Mulian* ritual operas, David Johnson names this account as "the most remarkable example… of the penetration of the opera into the community."[238] *Mulian* was not, however, the only example of ritual performance in late Qing Chengdu, but only one example of many. In his study of street culture in Chengdu in the late-Qing and early Republican periods, Wang Di notes that various local organizations would raise money to hold "spring stage operas (*chuntaixi* 春台戲)," "spring operas (*chunxi* 春戲)," or "flower lanterns (*huadeng* 花燈)," which were names for street performances held in the second lunar month.[239]

Religious ritual plays in important role in the story of *White Snake*, as evident from Xu Shilin's offerings to his mother in "Sacrifice at the Pagoda" and White Snake's subjugation in "Joining the Bowls," discussed in the previous chapter. Like the *Mulian* play described above and many other plays in late imperial China, however, the performance *White Snake* itself could also serve ritual functions. Within the context of Qing Chengdu festival performance, this chapter examines the role of ritual in one *White Snake* script from the Guangxu period (1875 – 1908), the Sichuan opera (*Chuanju* 川劇) excerpt play *Xinke yi yao chuan Leifengta quanben* 新刻義妖傳雷峰塔全本 [A new of carving of the complete legend of the righteous monster of

[238] The story of Mulian tells of a Buddhist monk who travels to the Avīci hell to free his mother from the cycle of rebirth. It has appeared in numerous genres of storytelling and acted performance since the ninth century. See "Actions Speak Louder than Words: The Cultural Significance of Chinese Ritual Opera," in *Ritual Opera, Operatic Ritual: "Mu-Lien Rescues His Mother" in Chinese Popular Culture*, edited by David Johnson (Publications of the Chinese Popular Culture Project, 1989), 1-45.

[239] Wang notes that "some thought that the men in the audience paid more attention to the women in the audience than to the unfolding drama," giving further testament to festival performance as a unique space that allowed for large-scale interaction between men and women. *Street Culture in Chengdu: Public Space, Urban Commoners, and Local Politics, 1870-1930* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), 42.

Thunder Peak Pagoda – hereafter, *Righteous Monster*].[240] I compare *Righteous Monster* with *chuanqi* and modern Sichuan opera versions to show how *Righteous Monster* adapted Duanwu rituals and symbols to the *White Snake* story to function as a Duanwu Festival ritual itself.[241] This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section introduces the text of *Righteous Monster* and compares it to the script of Fang Chengpei's *chuanqi* version. The second section shows how the beginning and the conclusion of *Righteous Monster* frames the performance as a ritual for the audience, establishing a parallel between the rituals within in the play and the play's function as a ritual. Finally, the third section compares *Righteous Monster* with a modern performance recording to show how the play uses Duanwu Festival themes and symbols to enhance the play's efficacy as an exorcistic ritual.

Discussion regarding the efficacy of ritual, especially the term "ritual efficacy" has come under scrutiny in recent years because it often lacks substance and can be defined in different ways.[242] Evaluating the effects of ritual in this context is especially complicated because *Righteous Monster* involves both rituals within the story of *Righteous Monster* and the rituals

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[240] In this paper I will refer to the Sichuan opera playscript *Xinke yi yao chuan Leifengta quanben* as "*Righteous Monster*." It should not be confused with other versions of *White Snake* that use the title "Yi yao zhuan," such as *Xiuxiang yi yao zhuan* 繡像義妖傳 [The embroidered portrait of the legend of the righteous monster], a *tanci* (lute ballad) attributed to Chen Yuqian 陳遇乾 and published in 1809. For the Sichuan opera script discussed in this paper, see Huang Kuanchong 黃寬重 et al., eds., "Xinke yi yao chuan Leifengta quanben 新刻義妖傳雷峰塔全本 [A new carving of the complete legend of the righteous monster of Thunder Peak Pagoda]," in *Su wenxue congkan* 俗文學叢刊 (Folk literature: materials in the collection of the Institute of History and Philology), vol. 104 (Taipei: Xin wen feng chuban youxian gongsi, 2001), 513–79.

[241] Known variously as *duanwujie* 端午節, *duanyangjie* 端陽節 [both meaning "Festival of Solar Maximus"], *longzhoujie* 龍舟節 (Dragon Boat Festival), *shuangwujie* 雙五節 (Double Fifth Festival) and other names in Chinese, Duanwu Festival is often translated as "Dragon Boat Festival" or "Double Fifth" in English. I will consistently use "Duanwu Festival" to highlight connection to the summer solstice and minimize association with the tradition of dragon boat racing, which has little relevance to *White Snake*.

[242] See William S. Sax, Johannes Quack, and Jan Weinhold, eds., *The Problem of Ritual Efficacy* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010); Johannes Quack and Paul Töbelmann, "Questioning 'Ritual Efficacy,'" *Journal of Ritual Studies* 24, no. 1 (2010): 13–28.

created through the performance of the play. The effects of rituals within the story of the play appear within the script itself. Since I have found no accounts of the performance of *Righteous Monster*, I do not have evidence of the actual (ritual) effects of the performance of the play. However, I will argue in this chapter that, since rituals within the play parallel the Duanwu festival rituals that the play is a part of, the effects of ritual within the play are intended to apply the performance of the play as a ritual. In this way, "efficacy" of ritual refers to effects of rituals depicted by actors within the play, which the performers and audience hoped the performance of the play would bring about.

## Incompetent Exorcist, Involuntary Transformation: A comparison of *Righteous Monster* and a *chuanqi* predecessor

*Righteous Monster* is divided into two parts: "Xinke diaoda Wang Daoling 新刻吊打王道靈 [A new carving of stringing up and beating Wang Daoling]" and "Xinke dao lingzhi 新刻盜靈芝 [A new carving of stealing the transcendents' herb]." The two parts of *Righteous Monster* are further divided into a of total fourteen *juan*.[243] Each part corresponds to a separate

[243] The term "*juan* 卷" has a variety of uses, but in this contexts refers to groups of pages that were bound together, roughly equivalent to "volumes." The *juan* of scripts from this period do not always correspond to performance scenes, even though their titles are similar to scene titles. This script, as with other Sichuan opera scripts from this period, sometimes break *juan* in the middle of a line of dialogue, so in performance it is unlikely the actors ended scenes exactly as presented in the script. It is also possible that the titles of *juan* do indicate scene titles, but actual scene breaks in performance did not directly correspond to how they were presented in print. Part one, "Xinke diaoda Wang Daoling 新刻吊打王道靈 [A new carving of stringing up and beating Wang Daoling]" begins with a introduction, followed by seven *juan*, titled "Qiu yu ze 求雨澤 [Pool of asking for rain]," "Ci lingfu 賜靈符 [Bestowing the magical charm]," "Baoxin huijia 報信回家 [Responding to a letter and returning home]," "Fuqi xianghui 夫妻相會 [Husband and wife meet]," "Xu Xian jiang qing 許仙講情 [Xu Xian explains his feelings]," and "Shifang Daoling 釋放道靈 [Releasing Daoling]." The second part begins with "Xinke dao lingzhi 新刻盜靈芝 [A new carving of stealing the transcendents' herb], and is followed by "Qing'er baoxin 青兒報信 [Little Green reports with a letter]," "Xu Xian quan jiu 許仙勸酒 [Xu Xian urges [White Snake] to drink]," "Xiasi Xu Xian 嚇死許仙 [Scaring Xu Xian to death]," "Baishi bie jia 白氏別家 [Miss White bids family farewell]," "Da zhan Bai she 大戰白蛇 [The great battle with White Snake], and "Kuixing jiu nan 奎星救難 [The Star of Literature saves [White Snake] from danger].

story arc in full-length versions of *White Snake*, but in *Righteous Monster* the two story arcs are connected to make a single, coherent play. The first part tells of how a Daoist exorcist recognizes that Xu Xian has been possessed by monsters and tries to ward them off, but is captured, threatened, and beaten by White Snake and Little Green. The second part tells of White Snake unintentionally reverting to her original form and scaring Xu to death, then obtaining a magical herb from Mount Song 嵩山 to revive him. Each part could have been performed separately, but differences in the plots relative to *chuanqi* versions show that the two story arcs create a single, coherent story.[244] Arias in *Righteous Monster* follow tunes from the *gaoqiang* tradition.[245]

To understand the unique festival ritual elements of *Righteous Monster*, it is helpful to compare the play with full-length versions that were not necessarily intended to serve a festival ritual function. As such, I will compare the plot of *Righteous Monster* to the corresponding

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[244] The story arc in the second part of *Righteous Monster*, in which White Snake drinks realgar wine, transforms, scares Xu Xian to death, then retrieves the transcendents' herb to revive him, appears as an excerpt play in many other performance genres. Wang Shih-pe compares a Kunqu excerpt with Fang's play in "Qianji Yu Minzong," 285-8 and 315-6. Based on extent scripts, however, this excerpt appears particularly popular in Sichuan opera in the late-Qing and was often combined with the previous story arc of the Daoist exorcist, as in *Righeous Monster.* Liu Jiaomin's 刘效民, for example, catalogue of Sichuan opera woodblock prints contains ten *White Snake* plays: six following the story arc of "Stealing the Herb," three are "Broken Bridge," and two are "Sacrificing at the Pagoda." While most of the scripts described in this collection are single-scene excerpt plays, *Righteous Monster* and one other script from the Guangxu period (1875 – 1908) are multiple scenes edited to portray an abbreviated version of the *White Snake* story. See *Sichuan fangke quben kaolüe* 四川坊刻曲本考略 [An examination and overview of Sichuan shop-carved music books] (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 2005).

[245] Sichuan operas are often categorized according to musical tradition. Sichuan opera developed from the localization of five separate musical traditions, including *Kunqiang* 昆腔 (the music of Kun opera)*, gaoqiang* 高腔*, huqinqiang* 胡琴腔*,* and *tanqiang* 彈腔, as well as the local tradition of *dengxi* 燈戲 (lantern plays). *Gaoqiang* plays, based on an earlier style of *Yiyang qiang* 弋陽腔, make up the bulk of the Sichuan opera repertoire, and probably took hold in Sichuan during major migrations into Sichuan in the seventeenth century. The population of some areas of Sichuan, especially the urban center of Chengdu, was decimated in the Ming-Qing transition due to a combination of war, famine, and disease. As a result, the Qing government created incentives for people in other provinces to migrate to Sichuan. Most migrants came from Huguang (modern Hubei and Hunan) and Shaanxi. See Du Jianhua 杜建華 and Wang Ding'ou 王定歐, *Chuanju* 川劇 (Sichuan Opera) (Beijing: Wenhua yishu chubanshe, 2012) 37-53. For a discussion in English of musical styles in traditional Chinese operas of the twentieth century, including Sichuan opera, see William Dolby, *A History of Chinese Drama* (London: Paul Elek, 1976), 216-30. Modern performances of *White Snake* combine music from the *gaoqiang* and *Kunqiang* traditions, suggesting multiple origins for Sichuan opera versions of *White Snake*.

scenes in Fang Chengpei's *chuanqi* version, including "Giving the Talisman (Zeng fu 贈符)," "Expelling the Daoist (Zhu dao 逐道) ," "Duanwu Festival (Duanyang 端陽)," and "Seeking the Herb (Qiu cao 求草)." At the beginning of "Giving the Talisman" a Daoist character introduces himself as Wei Feixia 魏飛霞, the manager of a temple.[246] He explains that it is the fourteenth day of the fourth month, which is the birthday of Lü Dongbin, so many people are coming to the temple to offer incense, one of whom is Xu Xian.[247] Wei notices that Xu's appearance is odd, and tells Xu that he has a "dark aura" (*heiqi* 黑氣) coming from his forehead because he is involved with a monster.[248] They discuss more details about Xu's situation, and Wei gives him two *fu* 符 talismans to get rid of the monster, one to put in his hair, and one to burn, which will enable him to exorcise the monster.[249]

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[246] The Daoist exorcist character goes by different names and is portrayed by different role types in different versions. In Fang's play, Wei Feixia is portrayed by a *mo* 末 actor. In the earlier play by Huang Tubi, the Daoist character is nameless and is portrayed by a *jing* 淨 actor. In Huang's play, the action of Xu receiving the talisman is not portrayed on stage but recounted in dialogue. Rather, the Daoist has a comical exchange with a Buddhist acolyte who insists on collecting a fee because the Daoist is selling talismans in front of his monastery. In *Righteous Monster*, as with modern Sichuan opera and many other regional opera versions, the Daoist character is named Wang Daoling 王道靈 and is portrayed by a *chou* 丑 role. The name "Wang Daoling" is probably a parody of Zhang Daoling 張道陵 (34-136), the founder of the Way of Celestial Masters 天師道 Daoist movement. For the corresponding scene in Huang's play, see "Leifengta 雷峰塔 (Thunder Peak Pagoda), *Bai she zhuan ji* 白蛇傳集 [The Legend of White Snake collection], Fu Xihua 傅惜华 (1907-1970), ed., (Shanghai: Gudian wenxue chubanshe, 1957) 308-9. The complete play runs 281-338.

[247] One of the "eight immortals," Lü Dongbin is a popular figure in Chinese literature and religion. Setting this scene at Lü's birthday may reflect the god's status as an exorcist, which is also an important function of Duanwu Festival ritual. In his study of cults of Lü Dongbin based in the Palace of Eternal Joy (*Yong le gong* 永樂宮) in modern Shanxi Province, Paul R. Katz notes evidence of celebration of Lü's birthday dating to the thirteenth century. See *Images of the Immortal: The Cult of Lü Dongbin at the Palace of Eternal Joy* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999), 35-6.

[248] A "dark aura" or "monstrous aura 妖氣" is a common feature of tales about monsters. These auras radiate from monsters and people they possess, though only exorcists or spirits can see them.

[249] The Chinese word *fu* 符 in this context is often translated as "talisman," "charm," or "amulet." Grégoire Espesset discusses the different uses of the word and provides a case study of examples from Daoist liturgy. The word *fu* can apply to objects other than talismans, such as particular kind of official document or a marker of sovereignty. As such, a more literal translation of *fu* as "symbol" is more accurate, as it can be applied more broadly to different uses of and objects referred to as *fu*. Since the context of *fu* in this paper is specific, however, I have chosen to use the more specific and commonly used translation of "talisman." Here, *fu* refers to small sheets of yellow paper with an

The following scene in Fang's play, "Expelling the Daoist," begins with White Snake explaining that she knows a Daoist has incited Xu against her. Xu returns home, and White Snake and Little Green eventually convince him to confess about his encounter with Wei. He apologizes and suggests they destroy the talismans, but White Snake refuses, telling him to burn them as instructed so that she can drink the ashes with water to prove her innocence. The talisman has no effect. White Snake and Xu exit, and Little Green leads four "ghosts (*gui* 鬼)" on stage and captures the Daoist. The ghosts string him up and exit, and White Snake and Xu enter. White Snake has Little Green beat the Daoist, and eventually he agrees not to "use monstrous words to mislead the people."[250] After Little Green lets him down, White Snake uses magic to make it appear as though the Daoist changes into light as he leaves, which convinces Xu that Wei was the monster, not White Snake.[251]

In the scene "Duanwu Festival" in Fang's play, Xu Xian returns home and describes his excitement at the arrival of the Duanwu Festival and his hope to celebrate the holiday with his wife. Meanwhile, White Snake and Little Green are nervous that Xu will want to drink realgar wine and decide to rest for a while.[252] White Snake tells Little Green to rest until midnight, then find her immediately. Little Green exits, then Xu enters and awakens White Snake. He invites

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elaborately written name or phrase written in red ink, used as a ward against disease and evil spirits. See Grégoire Espesset, "A Case Study on the Evolution of Chinese Religious Symbols from Talismanic Paraphernalia to Taoist Liturgy," *Bulletin of SOAS* 78, no. 3 (2015): 493–514. For this scene in Fang's script, see Fang Chengpei, *Leifengta* 雷峰塔 (Thunder Peak Pagoda) (Huaxia chubanshe, 2000), 70-4.

[250] "妖言惑眾," Fang, *Leifengta*, 77.

[251] Although it is difficult to know how this action would have been staged, the script describes the magic trick with stage directions and dialogue: "[White Snake] *releases Wei; White Snake acts letting go and blowing air*. *Xu Xian*: How strange! That Daoist transformed into white light and left. This [He] must have been a monster! （放末，旦撒手吹氣介，末奔下。）（生）好奇怪！那道人化道白光而去，這定是妖魔了！" Ibid., 77.

[252] Realgar wine is an alcoholic beverage infused with realgar, an arsenic compound, that is traditionally consumed at Duanwu Festival. I will discuss its historical and symbolic significance later in this chapter.

her to get up and drink realgar wine with him. She discretely refuses to drink, but eventually agrees, when Xu Xian says he will not drink alone if she refuses. She then retires to her bed, pretending to be drunk and insisting Xu Xian leave her alone. While in bed, she involuntarily reverts to snake form. Xu Xian comes to check on her and the sight of her snake form literally scares him to death. Little Green hears his scream and comes to investigate. She figures out what has occurred, revives White Snake, and explains to her that she revealed her form and scared Xu to death. White Snake explains that she has no choice but to go to Mount Song and obtain the "transcendents' herb (*xian cao* 仙草)" which will revive Xu.[253]

"Seeking the Herb"[254] begins with White Crane Acolyte 白鶴童兒, who introduces himself as an apprentice of The Star of Longevity 南極老翁, who is away attending the Great Meeting for the Peaches of Immortality.[255] Old Man of the South Pole returns, along with his other students, including Little Deer Transcendent 小鹿仙 and the transcendents Ye Fashan 葉法善 and Dongfang Shuo 東方朔.[256] Old Man of the South Pole asks White Crane to stand guard,

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[253] Fang, *Leifengta*, 79-84.

[254] In later versions of *White Snake*, this scene is often called "Dao cao 盜草 [Stealing the Herb]," "Dao xian cao 盜仙草 [Stealing the Transcendents' Herb]," or "Dao lingzhi 盜靈芝 [Stealing the Numinous Fungus]." This change in title seems to reflect a change in the tone of the scene; in Fang's play and other older versions, White Snake travels to Mount Song to request permission to take the herb, whereas in later versions she goes there to steal the herb.

[255] "Star of Longevity" is called "Old Man of the South Pole [Nanji Laoweng 南極老翁]" in Fang's play. He is known under an alternate title, The Star of Longevity (Shou Xing 壽星), in *Righteous Monster*. I will refer to him as Star of Longevity in both contexts for consistency. The Star of Longevity is a deity who appears in famous stories of Chinese literature, such as *Canonization of the Gods* and *Journey to the West*. One of his unique abilities is that he is able to determine the length of peoples' lives. He is played by an actor of the *wai* 外 role type in Fang's play. "The Great Meeting for the Peaches of Immortality" is a mythical event commonly referenced in Chinese literature, in which Queen Mother of the West, leader of the transcendent, invites her most honored guests to partake in her magical peaches, which only ripen once every three thousand years. In fifth chapter of *Journey to the West*, the monkey king is famously excluded from this event. See Wu Cheng'en (c.1500 - c.1582), *The Journey to the West*, trans. Anthony Yu, vol. 1, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 134-49.

[256] The Old Man of the South Pole is often depicted with a white deer as a mount. In chapters 78-9 of *Journey to the West*, the White Deer Monster 白鹿精 went to a land called "Biqiuguo 比丘國" disguised as a Daoist, then

and all of the spirits except for White Crane exit. White Snake arrives and goes to greet White Crane. White Snake politely requests the transcendents' herb, but White Crane refuses and the conflict escalates. White Crane attacks White Snake but fails to defeat her. White Crane reports to The Star of Longevity, and the other spirits go to capture her, but none of them are able to defeat her. Finally, Ye Fashan is able to capture White Snake by turning a boulder into a mountain of realgar and using it to suppress her, with the support of a spirit general [*shenjiang* 神將] and his troops. Old Man of the South Pole questions White Snake, and she explains that she came to Mount Song to acquire the transcendents' herb in order to revive Xu Xian. He grants White Snake the herb and allows her to leave. The apprentices ask their master why he let her go, and he explains that since Xu Xian was originally Buddha's alms bowl attendant, White Snake and Xu Xian have a predestined relationship, and one day the Zen Master Fahai 法海 will subjugate her, so he released her out of consideration for Buddha.[257]

Although the basic plot of these four scenes is consistent with *Righteous Monster*, there are many important changes. Rather than begin with the festival atmosphere of Lü Dongbin's birthday, *Righteous Monster* begins with a prayer for rain. At the beginning of the play, Xu Xian introduces himself and explains that he decided to visit the rain altar because there is a drought and he is bored. He exits. A group of commoners ask Wang Daoling, a Daoist priest, to pray for

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presented the king with a beautiful wife. He then agreed to make a potion for the king using of the hearts of 1,111 boys, which would increase the king's lifespan 1,000 years. The monkey king helped subdue White Deer Monster and returned him to Old Man of the South Pole. See Wu Cheng'en, *The Journey to the West*, trans. Anthony Yu, vol. 4, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 38-69. Ye Fashan (631 CE – 720 CE) and Dongfang Shuo (c. 160 BCE – c. 93 BCE) are both historical figures that are said to have become transcendents. Like White Snake, legends about Dongfang Shuo describe him stealing peaches of immortality from the garden of Queen Mother of the West. Little Deer is played by an actor of the *jing* role type; Ye Fashan is played by a *mo*, and Dongfang Shuo is played by a *fujing* 副净.

[257] Fang, *Leifengta*, 85-92.

rain. He lights a candle and begins to sing a prayer, during which he summons the four dragon kings.[258] Xu Xian re-enters. The commoners complain that the sun has come out, indicating the ritual is unsuccessful. Eventually, Wang identifies Xu as the cause of the ritual's failure, noticing his "dark aura." Wang gives him a talisman and tells him to wear it on his head and use it to subdue his wife. He also tells Xu not to tell his wife who gave him the talisman, no matter what she does. Xu thanks Wang and leaves. Little Green secretly observes Xu and Wang's interactions and reports to White Snake.

Xu Xian returns home, his talisman represented physically onstage as a guardian spirit, referred to as "numinous official 靈官" (see below). Unbeknownst to Xu, White Snake defeats the numinous official and drives him away. White Snake sends Little Green to apprehend Wang. She accuses Wang of turning her husband against her, and has Little Green string him up to the storefront with leather cord and beat him. Xu enters and sees Wang hanging. Wang blames Xu for telling White Snake about meeting at the rain altar, and Xu pleads for White Snake to let him go. Eventually White Snake and Little Green allow him to set Wang free. Wang tells Xu that his wife is a white snake from the West, and that over time she will steal his life essence and kill him. He then tells Xu to buy realgar wine for the upcoming Duanwu Festival holiday and make White Snake drink it, which will force her to become weak and transform, so that Xu can beat her to death with a club. Xu finds Wang's instructions to be cruel, but he also fears that he will die if he stays with White Snake, so decides to get realgar wine for Duanwu Festival.

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[258] The four dragon kings include the green dragon of the east, Ao Guang 敖廣, the red dragon of the south, Ao Qin 敖欽, the white dragon of the West, Ao Run 敖閏, and the black dragon of the north, Ao Shun 敖順. They appear frequently in stories of gods and spirits, such as *Journey to the West* and *Canonization of the Gods*, and often exert control over weather and natural forces, especially those relating to water.

Little Green reports to White Snake about Xu's plan and expresses her outrage at his disloyalty. She suggests they transform into snakes and eat him when he returns home, before he has an opportunity to poison them. Appalled at this suggestion, White Snake chastises Little Green. Little Green protests, warning that if White Snake does not heed her words, it will be too late. White Snake does not agree and explains her own plan. She tells Little Green to go and hide until later, while she feigns sickness and lies in bed to avoid drinking the wine. Little Green exits and Xu Xian enters. Xu sings an aria asking the audience not to blame him for trying to harm White Snake because he is only trying to protect himself.

Xu returns home and asks White Snake to drink wine with him. White Snake explains that she is pregnant and that if she drinks, the child will be crazy, but Xu dismisses her. In an extended exchange, White Snake attempts to avoid drinking the wine, explaining that she should not drink because she has caught a cold and is with child. Xu refutes her excuses, and she eventually concedes. She describes becoming inebriated and excuses herself to the bedroom. He is suspicious that she is faking her inebriation and uses the excuse of bringing her tea to go and check on her. After opening the curtain to the bed and seeing her form, he is scared to death. Little Green returns and brings White Snake back to consciousness, explaining to her that Xu Xian witnessed White Snake's snake form and was frightened to death. Little Green tries to placate White Snake and again suggests they change to snake form and eat Xu, which White Snake completely rejects. White Snake tells Little Green that she will go to Mount Song to steal the transcendents' herb, and Little Green offers to guard Xu's body.

White Crane Acolyte introduces himself as the apprentice of the Star of Longevity and explains that he has been charged with guarding the transcendents' herb.[259] White Snake enters

[259] Star of Longevity is another name for Old Man of the South Pole (see note 27 above).

and greets him, explaining that she has come to Mount Song in order to retrieve the transcendents' herb to revive her husband. White Crane Acolyte refuses, and they battle and exit. saying that the herb is their treasure. Kuixing 奎星 enters, explaining to White Snake that she will encounter difficulty with The Great Realgar Formation 雄黃大陣 so he has come to offer her support.[260] White Crane reports to The Star of Longevity and explains that White Snake injured his shoulder. Star of Longevity heals him and asks why he did not subdue her with The Great Realgar Formation. White Snake derides White Crane and The Great Realgar Formation as weak. The Star of Longevity sees Kuixing protecting White Snake and performs a divination. He then explains to White Crane all that has happened to White Snake, and then further explains that he himself will subjugate her after she has given birth. He orders White Crane to give her the herb and release her, and the play ends.

Many of the differences between the four scenes of Fang's play and the full play of *Righteous Monster* could be summarized as three kinds of practical creative choices to make the performance more entertaining as an excerpt. First, many of the differences help combine the first and second half of *Righteous Monster* into a single, cohesive story. For example, in "Duanwu Festival" in Fang's play, Xu Xian brings home realgar wine on his own accord, simply because he wants to celebrate the festival, whereas in *Righteous Monster* Wang gives Xu the realgar wine with the expectation that it will force White Snake's transformation. This helps

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[260] Kuixing 奎星 (also written 魁星) is a constellation god, often associated with writing and the imperial examination in late imperial China. The Star of Literature 文曲星 is also a constellation god associated with writing and the imperial examinations. The relationship between Kuixing, the Star of Literature, and White Snake's son differs between versions of *White Snake* and is often not explicit. Kuixing and the Star of Literature often appear to be portrayed as the same god, such as in *Righteous Monster*; in these versions, the god Kuixing defends the woman he has chosen to give birth to his own incarnation. In other versions, such as Fang's play, the reason that Kuixing defends White Snake is not clear and may simply be because her son will achieve first place in the imperial examinations, not because he is the incarnate of a Kuixing or the Star of Literature. See Fang, *Leifengta*, 135 n62-3.

connect the first part of the play, which focuses on Wang Daoling, to the second half of the play, which focuses on White Snake's transformation. Second, some elements of *Righteous Monster* enhance visual spectacle. For example, the physical representation of Wang Daoling's talisman as a numinous official and the addition of Kuixing to White Snake's battle at Mount Song create additional opportunities for spectacle in costuming and martial arts. Finally, *Righteous Monster* increases conflicts between the characters to heighten dramatic tension. In the scene "Duanwu Festival" in Fang's play, for example, Xu does not believe his wife is a monster, and merely tries to persuade her to drink realgar wine in order to celebrate the holiday, whereas in *Righteous Monster* he believes that she is a monster and tries to persuade her to drink so that she will transform and he can kill her.

While the practical considerations of combining two story arcs, enhancing visual spectacle, and heightening conflict partially explain differences between the plots of Fang's play and *Righteous Monster*, in the following sections I will argue that these differences also reflect changes that the actors used, consciously or subconsciously, to enhance the ritual function of the play. Specifically, many of these differences reflect creative choices in *Righteous Monster* that establish the play as a Duanwu ritual and work to increase the play's efficacy as an exorcistic ritual.

**Recognizing the Dark Aura: The play-ritual within the ritual-play of *Righteous Monster***

The four scenes from Fang's play described above are split across two festivals, Lü Dongbin's birthday and Duanwu Festival. Full versions of the play often highlight other festivals as well, such as Xu Xian and White Snake's first meeting at Qingming Festival. In this sense, full-length versions of *White Snake* do not exclusively focus on Duanwu or any individual

festival or ritual. *Righteous Monster*, however, begins just before Duanwu Festival begins and ends the day after, so the play is entirely set in the temporal context of the Duanwu. Furthermore, Duanwu is not merely a background for the plot of the play, but establishes the play's conflict, themes, and function as a festival ritual. This section will show how the plot of *Righteous Monster* is framed as a Duanwu Festival ritual and establishes parallels between rituals within the play and the festival ritual function of the play itself.

Duanwu Festival is an ancient festival that combines traditions from multiple sources. One traditionally cited origin of Duanwu is the biography of the famous official and poet Qu Yuan 屈原 (c.340 – 278 BCE) in chapter eighty-four of the *Shi ji* 史記 (The Grand Scribe's Records). According to this account, Qu Yuan drowned himself in the Miluo River to protest a corrupt government that exiled him. Boats were sent to find his body, but the body was not found.[261] This is thought to have been the origin for the later tradition of dragon boat competitions at Duanwu Festival, although early sources do not record practice of the tradition.[262] Some traditions associated with Duanwu have origins that predate Qu Yuan, however, so it is likely that the origin story of Qu Yuan's death was created at a later time or supplemented earlier practices. Since Duanwu is celebrated on the fifth day of the fifth lunar month, it falls close to the summer solstice and has gradually enveloped traditions that were originally associated with the summer solstice.[263]

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[261] See Ssu-ma Ch'ien (c. 145 BCE - 86 BCE), *The Grand Scribe's Records*, ed. William H. Nienhauser, Jr., vol. VII (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), 295-302.

[262] Although today dragon boat competitions usually take the form of races, historical competitions often included some element of combat. See Göran Aijmer, *The Dragon Boat Festival on the Hupeh-Hunan Plain, Central China: A Study in the Ceremonialism of the Transplantation of Rice* (Stockholm: The Ethnographical Museum of Sweden, 1964), 69-96.

[263] Derk Bodde explains: "There can be no doubt that the solstice was the earlier festival of the two. However, with the post-Han decline of the solstice observances (both winter and summer), the cosmologically based practices that

Many of the premodern traditions associated with Duanwu Festival focused on counteracting anxieties over malevolent spirits, disease, infestation, and drought. According to a general cosmological understanding of the season, the summer solstice was a time of concern because it marked an extreme imbalance in *yin* and *yang*—Duanwu marks the height of *yang* energy, while simultaneously marking the initial rise of *yin* energy, both indications of potential danger that required mitigation through ritual practice.[264] In addition to general changes in the balance of cosmological forces, however, the effects of disease epidemics were also attributed to specific spiritual forces. In his study of a plague-exorcising cult to the deity Marshal Wen in Zhejiang in the late imperial period, Paul R. Katz identifies two spiritual causes that people of late imperial Zhejiang attributed to disease epidemics: plague deities (*wenshen* 瘟神) and plague demons (*yigui* 疫鬼). Disease attributed to plague deities was interpreted as punishment distributed by the heavenly bureaucracy and required merit and ritual offering to reverse. Disease attributed to plague demons was interpreted as a consequence of the conflict between external demonic forces and the spiritual forces that protect the community, which required the performance of exorcism rituals to treat. Along with the Great Exorcism and the Double Ninth Festival, Duanwu Festival was an important festival ritual for communities to address spiritual

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had been peculiar to the Summer Solstice disappeared entirely. At the same time the other non-cosmological practices which, in Han times and perhaps earlier, had been shared by the solstice with the Double Fifth, became gradually, but eventually completely, assimilated by the later." See *Festivals in Classical China: New Year and Other Annual Observances During the Han Dynasty 206 B.C. - A.D. 220* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975), 289. Even the dragon boat competitions, normally associated with Duanwu Festival, were not universally held on the fifth day of the fifth month but were also held on different days in the fifth month. See Aijmer, *The Dragon Boat Festival on the Hupeh-Hunan Plain, Central China*, 21-7.

[264] For example, in his discussion of midsummer festivals in *Later Han History* 後漢書, Bodde notes that the practice of hanging strong smelling vegetables (such as onion and garlic) and talismans was meant to counteract the birth of *yin*, whereas the practice of refraining from building fires or working with metal was a response to the excess of *yang*. See *Festivals in Classical China*, 289-316.

concerns that caused disease and other epidemics.[265] In this sense, the efficacy of rituals related to Duanwu Festival would often be judged on their ability to expel or appease malevolent spirits, thereby relieving threats of disease and drought.

Wang Daoling's prayer for rain at the beginning of *Righteous Monster* uses Duanwu ritual to connect the audience of the ritual in the play with the real-life audiences of the play. As traditions associated with Duanwu address anxieties about drought common to the summer solstice, the prayer for rain that Wang performs on stage would have been seasonally appropriate for performance at Duanwu Festival.[266] In this sense, the opening ritual creates an obvious parallel between the audience on stage (actors portraying the audience of the prayer for rain) with the actual audience of the play. As exemplified in the *Mulian* performance discussed at the beginning of this chapter, blurring the boundaries between ritual and dramatic performance, or not even distinguishing between the two, was a common feature of Chinese drama in the late imperial period. To have a *chou* actor perform the ritual also helps establish dual layers to the prayer for rain, as the *chou* role type is particularly notorious for interacting with audience members in a ritual performance context.[267]

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[265] Paul R. Katz, *Demon Hordes and Burning Boats: The Cult of Marshal Wen in Late Imperial Chekiang* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 39-75.

[266] In an interview with the Sichaun opera *xiaosheng* actor, Lan Guanglin 藍光林 (1935 – 2018), Lan noted that a major difference between the performance of *White Snake* in the Republican period and after 1949 was that the scene of White Snake's transformation at Duanwu Festival was performed much more frequently ("everywhere") around Duanwu Festival in the Republican period. Personal interview, Chengdu, February 15, 2018.

[267] In his study of the *chou* role type, Ashley Thorpe notes the important ritual functions of a *chou* as a chaotic force that helps establish a return to order at the play's conclusion. In regard to the role type's interaction with the audience, he explains: "...the *chou* is a paradoxical figure since it is both an initiator of, and a commentator on, dramatic action and, it might be argued, is neither wholly in nor out of the performance." See *The Role of the Chou ("Clown") in Traditional Chinese Drama: Comedy, Criticism, and Cosmology on the Chinese Stage* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2007), 212-3.

Since the stage ritual functions as a ritual in real life, the audience has a vested interest in successful performance of the ritual on stage. Consequently, the conflict that arises in the rain ritual also establishes a conflict for the ritual efficacy of the play itself. Wang is a comical and often incompetent ritual practitioner throughout the play, so it would seem likely that his incompetence causes the prayer for rain to fail. I argue, however, that the play presents Xu as equally culpable, if not the sole cause of ritual failure. The first indication that the ritual is unsuccessful, when the stage audience complains that the sun has come out, appears as soon as Xu Xian enters. After, Wang blames the audience for the ritual's failure, accusing them of having "ingenuine hearts,"[268] but eventually notices Xu's "dark aura" and determines that he is the cause of the ritual's failure. Although the stage audience is initially skeptical of Wang's excuse, they believe that Xu is possessed by a monster when Wang points out distinguishing markings on Xu's body.[269] Wang could be using Xu as a scapegoat to cover up his own incompetence, but the audience notes that Wang's prayer has been effective in the past, and the evidence Wang provides that Xu caused the ritual to fail successfully persuades the commoners. There is no information in the script that refutes his evidence. Connecting Xu's possession to the failure of the prayer for rain affects the play's ritual efficacy for the audience; successful performance of the prayer for rain, and by extension Duanwu Festival rituals in the real world, depend on the resolution of Xu's possession. In this sense, the drought caused by White Snake's possession of Xu is similar to Katz' description of disease epidemics believed to be caused by plague demons; from the perspective of the audience, inside and outside of the play, the cause of the drought is a symptom of an external demonic force and must be resolved through exorcism.

[268] "心不真," "Xinke yi yao zhuan Leifengta quanben," 523.

[269] The marks are called "七皮寸甲 [seven-inch skin-scales]," and are located on his waist.

While the beginning of the play creates a parallel between content and ritual function, the play's conclusion resolves conflict more fully than the corresponding scene in full-length versions. In *Righteous Monster*, White Snake is excused from Mount Song with the transcendents' herb, so she will later revive Xu Xian, and the Star of Longevity will subjugate her after she has given birth to the incarnation of Kuixing. This conclusion borrows from later scenes in full-length versions, but omits major events, including White Snake's assault on Golden Mountain Monastery, her reunion with Xu Xian at Broken Bridge, Xu Shilin's sacrifice at the pagoda, and White Snake's eventual release.[270] This conclusion also erases the character Fahai, who is responsible for subjugating White Snake in full-length versions.[271] How can the story commonly known as *Thunder Peak Pagoda* end without Thunder Peak Pagoda? How can White Snake be subjugated without her nemesis Fahai? The conclusion of *Righteous Monster* is not concerned with resolving the plot of *White Snake*, but rather resolving conflict in the rituals

[270] For example, these events mimic the scene "Water Battle (Shui dou 水鬥)" in Fang's play. In "Water Battle," White Snake and Little Green go to Golden Mountain Monastery to bring Xu Xian home—Fahai has convinced Xu that his wife is a snake-monster and that he should become a monk. They confront Fahai, who summons guardian spirits to attack them. They lead an army of water creatures in a battle against the guardian spirits. Before the guardian spirits are able to subdue White Snake, Kuixing appears and protects her. Fahai realizes that White Snake is pregnant with the incarnate of the Star of Literature (see note 33) and lets her go. He sends Xu to her and reveals that he will subdue her after she has given birth. In this sense, many of The Star of Longevity's actions at the end of *Righteous Monster* mimic those of Fahai in full-length versions like Fang's play. In Fang's play, White Snake's assault on Golden Mountain Monastery in "Water Battle" is followed by the scene "Duan qiao 斷橋 (Broken Bridge)." Xu Xian's sacrifice occurs in the scene "Ji ta 祭塔 (Sacrifice at the Pagoda)," and White Snake is released in the final scene, "Fo yuan 佛圓 (Reuniting Around the Buddha)." Fang, *Leifengta*, 126-42, 165-70, 175-82.

[271] In most full-length versions, White Snake is subjugated with an alms bowl, a powerful relic that floats above her head and forces her to transform into a tiny snake. In some versions, such as Feng Menglong's vernacular narrative, Fahai gives the alms bowl to Xu Xian so that he can initiate the subjugation. In Huang's and Fang's *chuanqi* plays, Xu Xian cannot bear to subjugate his wife, so Fahai and his retinue use the bowl to subjugate her. In other versions, such as the written narrative *Leifengta qizhuan*, Fahai tricks Xu Xian into carrying the alms bowl to White Snake, and the bowl automatically flies above her head and begins to subjugate her. For an English translation of this scene in Feng's narrative, see Feng Menglong 馮夢龍 (1574–1646), "Madam White Is Kept Forever under Thunder Peak Tower," in *Stories to Caution the World*, trans. Shuhui Yang and Yunqin Yang (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005), 503–505; for Huang's version, see *Bai she zhuan ji*, 333-5; for Fang's version, see *Lefengta*, 151-6; for *Leifengta qizhuan*, see Yushan Zhuren 玉山主人, *Leifengta qi zhuan* 雷峰塔奇傳 (The amazing legend of Thunder Peak Pagoda) (originally printed 1806) (Taipei: Tian yi chubanshe, 1985), 5.1a-16a.

of the Duanwu Festival. In this sense, the play must provide the most complete ending possible within the temporal setting of the festival. The conflict arose with Xu's aura interrupting Wang's prayer for rain. In the end, while Xu has not severed his connection with White Snake, their relationship has been temporarily sanctioned by both Kuixing and the Star of Longevity, and her eventual subjugation has been determined by the Star of Longevity—a sign that Xu's involvement with White Snake will no longer act as a barrier to ritual success. Although the play does not return to Wang Daoling's ritual and provide evidence of ritual success, resolution of its conflict allows us to presume that Duanwu Festival rituals will continue without obstruction.

**Escalating Conflict: Exorcistic symbols and themes in *Righteous Monster***

Considering the framing of the conflict of *Righteous Monster* as White Snake's possession of Xu disrupting Duanwu ritual, it may seem contradictory that White Snake overcomes each attempt to exorcise her. How can a ritual be successful if all attempts to subdue or exorcise the monster fail? Do not White Snake's victories prove the exorcists and spirits ineffective? In this section, I argue that White Snake's success in overcoming exorcists and exorcistic symbols does not prove the exorcists ineffectual, but rather escalates conflict to enhance ritual efficacy. The conflicts between White Snake and exorcistic symbols in *Righteous Monster* often involve stage combat and other visual spectacles. Since, however, the stage directions of *Righteous Monster* are often brief and vague, I use a modern performance recording of Sichuan opera to complement close reading of the script.[272] Combining performance recording

[272] For the performance recording discussed in this paper, see *Bai she zhuan* 白蛇传 (The Legend of White Snake), Li Zenglin 李增林 and Tian Huiwen's 田惠文, dir., performance by Chengdu City Opera House 川剧市剧院, Emei

with the script of *Righteous Monster*, I show how the use of the exorcistic Duanwu symbols of talismans and realgar develops conflict to enhance the play's ritual efficacy.

Various forms of talismans have long-standing connections to Duanwu. One of the earliest records of talismans used at Duanwu appears in *Book of the Later Han*, which records that "Peachwood 'seals' (*yin*), six inches long and three inches square, multicolored, with words written on them according to custom, are used to display on gates and doors."[273] In the inner chapters of *Baopuzi* 抱樸子, Ge Hong 葛洪 (283 CE – 343) describes using "red numinous talismans 赤靈符" at Duanwu to ward against attacks from weapons.[274] In addition to these early examples, Huang Shih 黃石 describes three talismans that were associated with Duanwu Festival in the late imperial period, including the Celestial Master Talisman (*tianshi fu* 天師符), the Five Thunders Talisman (*wulei fu* 五雷符), and the Five Poisons Talisman (*wudu fu* 五毒). Each of these talismans were written on yellow paper with red ink and used as wards against disease, infestation, and other dangers. Although each of these talismans were associated with different symbols, they all served the similar function of warding off disease and evil spirits. Celestial Master Talismans invoked the name or the image of powerful spiritual figures, such as founder

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dianying zhipianguang yinxiang chubanshe 峨嵋电影制片厂音像出版社 (Emei Film Studio Audio and Video Publishing House).

[273] *Hou Han shu* 後漢書, vol. 95. This phrasing is from Derk Bodde's translation, in *Festivals in Classical China*, 290.

[274] The fifteenth chapter of *Baopuzi* states: "或問辟五兵之道。抱朴子答曰: '……或以五月五日作赤靈符，著心前。'" "Someone asked the way of warding against the five weapons. Baopuzi answered, saying 'On the fifth day of the fifth month, some use cinnabar numinous talismans, wearing [them] in front of their heart.'" See Ge Hong 葛洪 (283 CE – 343), *Baopuzi neipian jiaoshi* 抱朴子內篇校釋 [Corrections and explanations of the inner chapters of the master explaining simplicity], ed. Wang Ming 王明, revised edition (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju chuban, 1988), 269-70.

of the Daoist movement Way of the Celestial Master (*Tianshidao* 天師道), Zhang Daoling 張道陵 (34-136), or the famous exorcist spirit, Zhong Kui 鍾馗. Five Thunders Talismans invoked the thunder ritual, a ritual used by Celestial Masters and other ritual masters for exorcism.[275] Five Poisons Talismans invoked the image or the names of a variable list of five poisonous creatures, often including a snake, toad, lizard, scorpion, and centipede.[276] While common practice was to attach talismans to doors, they could also be worn or burned and consumed with water, as in *Righteous Monster* and Fang's play respectively.[277] The talisman depicted in *Righteous Monster*, however, carries a resemblance to Heavenly Master Talismans, as it invokes a powerful spiritual guardian to ward against evil spirits.[278]

One unique quality of the performance of Wang Daoling's story arc in Sichuan opera that appears in *Righteous Monster* is the physical embodiment of Wang Daoling's talisman as a

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[275] For a study of thunder ritual, as described in the Ming novel *Fengshen yanyi*, as a means of creating communal networks, see Mark R. E. Meulenbeld, *Demonic Warfare Daoism, Territorial Networks, and the History of a Ming Novel* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2015). For examples of thunder ritual in the Ming liturgical text, *Daofa huiyuan* 道法會元, see Florian C. Reiter, *Basic Conditions of Taoist Thunder Magic = Daojiao Lei Fa* (Weisbaden: Harrosowitz, 2007).

[276] Five Poisons Talismans form the basis of another popular Duanwu play, *Wuhuadong* 五花洞 (Five flower cave). This play stars Wu Dalang, the dwarf brother of the hero Wu Song from *The Water Margin*. Wu Dalang and his wife, Pan Jinlian, go in search of Wu Song. On the road, Wu sends Pan to go and find food. Animal-monsters in the form of the Five Poisons take the shape of Wu and Pan, so that they are unable to differentiate person from monster. They all go to the magistrate, who is also unable to tell person from monster. Finally, the famous Judge Bao Zheng arrives and uses his magic mirror to determine who are the real Pan and Wu, and spirits come to subdue the Five Poisons. Ashley Thorpe discusses this play in his study of the role of the *chou* in ritual drama. See *The Role of the Chou ("Clown") in Traditional Chinese Drama: Comedy, Criticism, and Cosmology on the Chinese Stage* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2007), 216-221.

[277] Talismans that were worn were sometimes referred to as "*zantoufu* 簪頭符 [pinned to the head talismans]." Talismans that were burned and consumed with water were sometimes referred to as "*shaohuitunfu* 燒灰吞符 [swallow-burnt-ash talisman]." See C.A.S Williams (1884 - ?), *Chinese Symbolism and Art Motifs*, Revised Fouth (Rutland, Vermont: Tuttle Publishing, 2006), 83-87.

[278] Huang Shih 黃石, *Duanwu Lisu Shi* 端午禮俗史 (History of the Tuan-Wu Festival customs), ed. Tsu-k'uang 婁子匡 Lou, vol. 102, Folklore and Folk Literature Series of National Peking University and Chinese Association for Folklore (Taipei: The Orient Cultural Service, 1970), 164,177.

"numinous official." References to the numinous official in the script are scant, with only two stage directions that address the character and no dialogue. The numinous official first appears at the end of the third *juan*, as Xu Xian prepares to return home after meeting Wang Daoling at the rain alter and receiving the talisman:[279]

> [Xu:] "I came to the rain altar to have a look, and Teacher Daoling said I have become entangled with a monster. He gave me a talisman. I will take it out and put it on my head." *Numinous official enters*. "Oh, how come after putting the talisman on my head to wear, my eyes have become dazzled? I will turn around and go home." *Exits.*
>
> 去至雨台观看，道灵先生言我被妖所 [纏] 。賜我灵符一張，拿来 [戴] 在頭上。（上灵官）哦，將符 [戴] 在頭上怎磨 [麼] 眼花 [繚] 乱，轉 [回] 家中 [兒] 去。（下）[280]

The numinous official appears on stage again after Xu Xian returns home:[281]

> *Xu enters and sings*: "In a deep daze I turned for my home, but for a time it has been hard to know North from South, East from West. I'll go into the house and rest my body on the armchair. I still worry that our love as husband and wife will separate for a while." *White Snake acts*.[282] "My husband has returned. *Gags*. What has happened to my husband?" *She cannot approach him, crosses the stage*. "Could this be a numinous official talisman? Wait while I bite the tip of my finger open." *Crosses the stage, numinous official exits*. "My husband has regained consciousness."
>
> （ 上許唱）昏沉沉轉 [回] 我自家屋舍，这一陣难分曉 [東] [北] 西南。進 [莊] 去将身 [兒] 倒在 [交] 椅，犹恐怕夫妻情两下分离。（白介） [官] 人 [回] 来了。哽。 [官] 人怎养 [樣] 了？ (不能近身 過場) 这个莫非灵 [官] 符？ [待] 奴将指頭咬破。（過場 灵 [官] 下） 官人蘇醒 （吹打）

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[279] "Xinke yi yao zhuan Leifengta quanben," 527-8.

[280] The Chinese text has no punctuation, although stage directions are often written in smaller script than lyrics and dialogue. As mentioned earlier, the script contains numerous irregular characters. Here, I have added punctuation, included stage directions in parenthesis, and provided my interpretations of irregular characters or missing characters in brackets.

[281] Ibid., 531.

[282] The verb *jie* 介 (to act) is commonly used in stage directions. Unfortunately, this verb often does not imply any particular action for the actor to perform, so we must interpret the action based on context. Here, it would seem to indicate a reaction to Xu returning home.

With only the information in the script, the action is unclear both on the stage and in the story. What does the numinous official look like and what does he do on stage? Why is White Snake unable to approach Xu Xian as he sits in the armchair? How does White Snake drive the numinous official away? Comparing the script with modern performance helps to clarify some of this action. In modern performance, the numinous official first appears after Xu Xian returns home and reads his talisman. The costume of the numinous official closely follows the iconography of Numinous Official Wang (Wang Lingguan 王靈官), an exorcistic spirit in late imperial literature and an official in the Daoist hierarchy of gods (see Figure 6). He is dressed in robes with a black and white checkered pattern and orange sleeves similar to that of Wang Daoling but embroidered with dragons. He wears a golden mask with a third eye and red scarves that form a long beard. He wields a "metal whip [*jin bian* 金鞭]" in his right hand, which more closely resembled a rod or club, while a small orange orb floats above a hand seal (*shouyin* 手印) in his left hand.[283] Xu goes dizzy and falls asleep in a chair, while the numinous official climbs

[283] For a comparison of the iconography of Wang Lingguang and Ma Lingguan, see Yoshihiro Nikaidō, *Asian Folk Religion and Cultural Interaction* (Göttingen: V & R Unipress, 2015., 2015), 100-2.

up the back of the chair and makes a defensive pose. White Snake goes to check on Xu, but rather than simply "gag" at the sight of the numinous official, the numinous official shouts at her, and she spins away and leaps onto a table at the back of the stage. This communicates a similar idea to the stage direction "*She cannot approach him, crosses the stage*," but here we have a sense that the action is a confrontation between White Snake and the numinous official. White Snake then moves a chair opposite the numinous official and leaps from it, miming her entrance to the room from somewhere other than the door the numinous official was guarding. White Snake and the numinous official fight, and she catches his club in her hand. Finally, White Snake bites her finger and waves her hands and water sleeves at the numinous official, diving him away. The meaning of this action is perhaps most explicit in modern scripts, which explain that White Snake bites her hand in order

*Figure 6. White Snake approaches Xu Xian while he rests in an armchair and the numinous official protects him.* Bai she zhuan 白蛇传 *(The Legend of White Snake), Jinjiang juchang, Chengdu. 25 Dec. 2016.*

to spray blood at the numinous official.[284] White Snake considers destroying the talisman, but decides to wake Xu instead, so that she can prove that it has no effect on her.[285]

Through the physical representation of the numinous official, especially with elaborate costuming and weaponry, the audience sees a talisman function in a way that they normally cannot: they see the spiritual guardian that the talisman represents. In this sense, representation of the talisman in the play provides evidence of its efficacy as a ward, even though White Snake is able to defeat the numinous official. Physical representation helps emphasize White Snake's difficulty in overcoming the talisman. In Fang's play, the talisman is simply ineffective against White Snake, so she insists on consuming it to prove her innocence. In *Righteous Monster*, however, the talisman is only proven ineffective after White Snake is able to defeat the numinous official in combat. This stage combat serves the dual functions of entertaining the audience with elaborate costumes and action, and emphasizing White Snake's strength, as she is ultimately more powerful than the numinous official.

Another important exorcistic symbol that *Righteous Monster* focuses on is realgar, a toxic arsenic compound. Realgar was used to make alcoholic beverages for consumption at Duanwu

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[284] Blood is often used as a repellent in exorcistic rituals, but White Snake's use of blood in this scene may also relate to her gender and monstrous nature. Women's blood as a pollutant and repellant for spirits probably connects to taboos against menstrual blood; although White Snake does not spray menstrual blood on the numinous official, she is pregnant during the scene, so her blood may be polluted. For an analysis of menstrual blood as a pollutant in Buddhist literature, see Alan Cole, *Mothers and Sons in Chinese Buddhism* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998., 1998), 192-236.

[285] See *Bai she zhuan*, Li and Tian, approx. 60:00 – 67:00. For the corresponding scene in a modern scripts, see Wu Boqi 吳伯祺 (1925-1995) *Wu Boqi xiqu xuan* 吳伯祺戲曲選 (Selection of plays by Wu Boqi) (Chengdu: Chengdu chubanshe, 1993), 30-2; He Xu 何序, "Bai she zhuan 白蛇傳 (The Legend of White Snake)," in *Chuanju jumu jianding yanchu juben xuan* 川劇劇目鑒定演出劇本選 (Selection of Sichuan opera repertoire authenticated performance scripts), vol. 9 (Chengdu: Sichuan renmin chubanshe, 1957), 54-8.

Festival, a practice that rose to popularity in the Song.[286] Realgar's poisonous quality led to its use as a ward against pests, disease, and other evils. This follows a traditional medicinal principal known as "using poison to combat poison (*yi du gong du* 以毒攻毒)."[287] Realgar "wine" is not actually a wine made from fruit, but an alcoholic beverage made from grains that is infused with realgar. In addition to direct consumption, people would also spurt realgar wine onto walls and bedcurtains or apply it to the ears or foreheads of children to use as a repellent against disease and poisonous vermin.[288]

The sequence of Xu Xian urging White Snake to drink realgar wine in *Righteous Monster* is different from Fang's play and many other versions of *White Snake* because Xu Xian intentionally uses the realgar as a weapon against White Snake.[289] In the scene "Duanwu Festival" in Fang's play, Xu Xian does not suspect White Snake is a snake-monster, and he urges her to drink realgar wine in order to celebrate the festival, not to prove that she is a snake. White Snake concedes and drinks the wine only because Xu Xian says that he will not drink if she does

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[286] Huang Shih explains, "Realgar wine is mostly seen in historical works of the Song and after the Song. It is not commonly seen in [works from] the Tang 雄黃酒多見於宋及宋以後的筆乘，唐以前較少見." Huang also notes that, although not the most ancient practice associated with Duanwu, its use was widespread across China. See *Duanwu lisu shi*, 41.

[287] This phrase appears in a Yuan Dynasty collection of essays by the famous scholar Tao Zongyi 陶宗儀 (1329-1412), *Nancun chuogeng lu* 南村輟耕錄 [A record or giving up the plough in a southern village]. Although it seems to have originated as a medicinal term, it is now used as an expression, referring to something harmful or negative resist something else that is harmful or negative. See Tao Zongyi, *Nancun chuogeng lu*, vol. 102–3, *Sibu congkan xubian* 四部叢刊續編 (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1966), 29.6b.

[288] Huang Shih provides numerous textual examples of the practice of consuming realgar wine at Duanwu Festival for protection against disease and vermin. See *Duanwu lisu shi*, 40-6. Ashley Thorpe uses realgar wine as an example of "using poison to combat poison" in his discussion of the role of the *chou* in Duanwu Festival performances of *Five Flower Cave* 五花洞. See note 49 above and *The Role of the Chou ("Clown") in Traditional Chinese Drama*, 216-225.

[289] Modern Sichuan opera performance of this scene is more similar to Fang's play than *Righteous Monster*, so I have not included it for comparison. In most performances, like Fang's play, Xu is unaware that White Snake is a snake-monster and does intentionally force her transformation.

not drink as well. In this sense, White Snake's transformation is an unfortunate consequence of the proper performance of social roles; Xu Xian wants to drink realgar wine with his wife because that is the custom of Duanwu Festival, and White Snake concedes because she wants to fulfill the ritual role of wife. Ironically, if White Snake chose not to perform the ritual role of wife, she would not transform and scare her husband to death, but because she acts in accordance with her social role, tragedy is inevitable. In *Righteous Monster*, however, Xu and White Snake are adversarial. Xu Xian suspects White Snake is a snake-monster and urges her to drink realgar wine in order to cause her to transform so that he can beat her to death. In this sense, *Righteous Monster* emphasizes the use of realgar wine as a ward against monsters and evil spirits. The fact that White Snake's transformation scares Xu Xian to death does not dispute the realgar's efficacy as ward, but rather emphasizes its effectiveness; in this case, the realgar performs its function too well, overcoming an exceptionally powerful monster.

Realgar is also an important symbol in the final scenes of *Righteous Monster*, with the appearance of "The Great Realgar Formation." After The Star of Longevity has healed the wounds White Crane sustained in his first battle with White Snake, he tells White Crane to lead the Great Realgar Formation against her: [290]

> *Arranged formation enters. Kuixing walks the stage. Star speaks:* "My apprentice, lead the formation up here." *White Snake acts*. "White Crane Acolyte, could it be that you are battle-shy?" *Acolyte acts*. "It is not that I am battle-shy. I have arranged this little battle array. Dare you, woman, charge my formation?" *White Snake acts*. "I would charge a net that covers Heaven and Earth, to say nothing of your little formation." *Longevity speaks:* "I was just about to subdue her, but I saw Kuixing protecting her. Allow me to perform a divination."
>
> [擺]陣上奎星走場。 [壽] 白："我弟子，引陣上來。"旦介。"白合[鶴]童兒莫非 [怯] 陣？"童介。"非我 [怯] 陣。擺下小小陣 [勢] ，女敢闖陣？"旦白：

[290] "Xinke yi yao zhuan Leifengta quanben," 578-9.

> “莫[說]小小陣，方 [放] 天[羅]地網也要闖你一闖。 [壽] 白：“正要將他收伏，只見奎將他護定。 [待] 我袖占一課哦。”

These lines are followed by The Star of Longevity’s divination, his decision to release White Snake, and the conclusion of the play. In this passage, we have the sense of the dynamics between with characters—White Snake and White Crane antagonize each other, White Crane leads the formation, and Kuixing protects White Snake—but we do not get a sense of the action, nor of the visual representation of The Great Realgar Formation. Once again, modern performance helps clarify some of the action.

In modern performance of this scene, after White Snake defeats White Crane, she collects the herb, which rests on a platform. As she descends from the platform, White Crane attacks once again but is quickly driven away. Then, a team of eight acrobats in orange and yellow costumes enter, representing The Great Realgar Formation, a unit of martial spirits. Each member carries an orange flag that waves as they encircle White Snake. White Snake spins with the formation, as if trapped by it, holding the herb in her mouth. The acrobats then perform a variety of tumbles, waving their flags around White Snake, as she appears disoriented and weakened. She curls into a ball on the stage floor as the acrobats walk in a circle around her, holding their flags over her. With White Snake trapped, Kuixing appears and uses his brush to break the circle of acrobats around White Snake.[291] Finally, The Star of Longevity appears and allows White Snake to leave with the herb.[292] While there are noticeable discrepancies between *Righteous Monster* and modern performance, such as how she obtains the herb, comparison suggests a strong emphasis on martial spectacle in both versions. One of the most surprising

[291] As a god of writing and the imperial examination, Kuixing is often depicted as holding a brush.

[292] *Bai she zhuan*, Li and Tian, approx. 84:00 - 93:00.

aspects of the conclusion of both *Righteous Monster* and modern Sichuan opera is that The Great Realgar Formation fails to capture White Snake. Since realgar is traditionally and symbolically used to ward against snakes at Duanwu Festival, The Great Realgar Formation represents White Snake's greatest foe, and the audience might expect them to subdue White Snake. In Fang's play, the spirits of Mount Song successfully capture White Snake by using realgar. In *Righteous Monster*, however, even realgar is not enough.

Neither the talisman, the realgar wine, nor The Great Realgar Formation fulfills its intended purpose of subduing or defeating White Snake. In each of these cases, however, the symbols do not fail because they are ineffective—the talisman successfully summons a numinous official as guardian, the realgar wine successfully forces White Snake's transformation, and White Snake only escapes The Great Realgar Formation because of Kuixing—rather, these exorcistic implements fail because of White Snake's exceptional strength as a monster. Despite her exceptional strength, however, the conflict of White Snake's involvement with Xu Xian, which is outlined at the beginning of the play, is finally resolved when The Star of Longevity announces that he will subdue her once she has given birth. In this sense, the failure of exorcistic symbols helps escalate the stakes of the ritual and enhance the play's ritual efficacy. In other words, since normal means of exorcism fail to subdue White Snake, White Snake is an exceptionally powerful monster, but since the conflict of her relationship with Xu Xian is ultimately resolved, the conclusion of the play represents an exceptionally successful ritual.

**Conclusion**

*Righteous Monster* differs from its *chuanqi* and Kunqu predecessors in a number important ways. First, there are major revisions to the plot, such as eliminating the character of Fahai, the battle at Golden Mountain Monastery, White Snake's imprisonment under Thunder Peak Pagoda, and her subsequent release. Also, the dynamics of White Snake's character and her relationship with Xu Xian take on a different tone. Whereas *chuanqi* versions emphasize love and reconciliation, *Righteous Monster* highlights conflict and escalation. These differences do not represent changes to the story of *White Snake* in the genre of Sichuan opera, as versions more similar to *chuanqi* versions were in circulation in Sichuan at the same time as *Righteous Monster*.[293] Rather, these differences represent how the work was adapted to meet the needs of a specific performance context. The performance context of Duanwu Festival ritual was intended to appeal to a broader audience than commercial performances. While the visual spectacle of *Righteous Monster* likely entertained a wide range of audience members, its function as a festival ritual addressed the needs of the community in appeasing evil spirits, disease, and drought. To this aim, the conflicts developed from White Snake's identities as monster and woman were adapted to escalate the stakes of exorcistic ritual and thereby increase the efficacy of the play as a ritual deterrent against malevolent spirits and the droughts and epidemics they wrought.

[293] One example is another Guangxu era excerpt script that includes most of the plot of *Righeous Monster*, as well as White Snake's assault on Golden Mountain Monastery and her reunion with Xu Xian at Broken Bridge. *Xinke dao lingzhi* 新刻盜靈芝 (A new carving of stealing the transcendents' herb) (Chongqing 崇慶: 1884). Three copies are kept at the China Art Academe Library (中國藝術研究院圖) in Beijing.

# CONCLUSION

The earliest evidence of a performance version of *White Snake* appears in Qi Biaojia's 祁彪佳 (1602 – 1645) *Yuanshantang jupin* 遠山堂劇品 (Classification of plays from the far mountain hall), in reference to a *chuanqi* play written by an author named Chen Liulong 陳六龍:[294]

> According to legend, the construction of Thunder Peak Pagoda was to imprison the monster Madam White. To serve as a short play it is acceptable, but if [performed as] the entire play, then it is entirely without resonance [between different parts of the play]. Why would you make the audiences take notice of it? Furthermore, its words also crudely imitate magnificent diction, and its coarse parts are many still.
>
> 相傳雷峰塔之建，鎮白娘子妖也。以為小劇則可，若全本則呼應全無，何以使觀者著意？且其詞亦效顰華贍，而疏處尚多。

Although full-length *chuanqi* plays of *White Snake* continued to be written and printed for another two centuries, this criticism of Chen Liulong's play suggests that even in the late Ming, *White Snake* may have been more popular as excerpt plays.[295] As the plot developed during the Qing, the popularity of excerpt plays is even more apparent. One major contribution of this dissertation to the study of *White Snake* is that it recognizes the importance of excerpt plays to the story's performance, transmission, and development. Whereas previous scholarship has often focused on full-length versions of *White Snake*, this study explores and analyzes discrepancies between full-length written versions and the performance of excerpt scenes.

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[294] "Yuanshantang jupin," in *Xuxiu siku quan shu* 續修四庫全書, vol. 1758 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2002), 280. Also quoted in A Ying 阿英 [Qian Xingcun 錢杏邨 [1900-77]], *Leifengta chuanqi shulu* 雷峰塔傳奇敘錄 [Commentaries on the southern dramas of Thunder Peak Pagoda] (Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju, 1960), 2. Qian attributes the passage to a book with the title *Dan sheng tang qulu* 淡生堂曲彔, but the quotation is the same.

[295] Although "short play" (*xiaoju* 小劇) does not commonly refer to excerpt plays, I argue that here, by juxtaposing "short play" with "entire play," Qi is likely referring to excerpt plays.

My analysis of excerpt scenes suggests that audiences of *White Snake* were particularly interested in the conflict between White Snake's identities as monster and virtuous woman. The depiction of the conflict between White Snake's identities is not consistent in different excerpt scenes, nor is it even consistent in different versions of the same scene. In this sense, the conflict does not reflect a cohesive ideology or argument, but rather conflicting perspectives over points of contention. As such, these conflicts are better represented as question than as statements. Here, I will briefly summarize some of the conflicts discussed in previous chapters and the questions these conflicts give rise to.

As a foil to White Snake, Little Green provides an alternative perspective that is more monstrous and less restricted by social rules. The conflict between White Snake and Little Green contrasts anger with restraint and loyalty with justice. In "Broken Bridge," Little Green blames Xu Xian for betraying White Snake and refuses to forgive him. White Snake, however, is loyal to her husband and forgives him, even though he may betray her again. Is White Snake virtuous for staying loyal to her husband, despite his disloyalty to her? Is she foolish? Is Little Green's aggressiveness to Xu justified, and is she right to attack Xu Xian for betraying his wife? Or is White Snake correct to stay loyal to her husband, even though it will lead to her imprisonment?

The conflict of "Sacrifice at the Pagoda" and "Joining the Bowls" is a conflict between White Snake accepting her fate and having her injustice recognized. In both of these scenes, White Snake concedes to being imprisoned under the pagoda. At the same time, she grieves her predicament and regrets that she will be separated from her son. Both the commercial playhouse performances of "Sacrifice at the Pagoda," as described in the flower registers, and the long monologues of storytelling versions of "Joining the Bowls" show that the audience was most interested in White Snake's expression of grief. In "Sacrifice," White Snake blames Xu for his

betrayal, but in "Joining" she ultimately seems to forgive him. If White Snake was willing to accept her fate, was her imprisonment justified? Was it an inevitable consequence of her monstrous nature? Was it her own fault, or was it because Xu betrayed her? Is White Snake an unfortunate victim of circumstance, or is she doomed to punishment because of her monstrous nature?

The conflict in the Sichuan opera play *Righteous Monster* is particularly antagonistic and violent when compared to the corresponding scenes in *chaunqi*. In this version, Xu believes that White Snake is a monster and a threat, and actively employs exorcistic tools to harm her. Whereas in *chuanqi* and Kunqu versions, Xu urges White Snake to drink realgar wine in order to celebrate Duanwu Festival, in *Righteous Monster* he urges her to drink realgar wine to incapacitate her so that he can kill her. White Snake remains loyal to Xu in this version, but she invokes her monstrous nature to violently repel threats to herself and to Xu. She repels the numinous official with her blood. She fights off the spirits of Mount Song to recover the magical herb for her husband. The conflict is directly tied to Duanwu Festival ritual, and greater conflict leads to a more powerful ritual. In this sense, the more monstrous she acts, the better the symbolic outcome for the audience. Is Xu weak-willed for considering his wife a threat? Does his death at the sight of her snake form justify his fears? For the audience, is White Snake a hero of Duanwu celebration, or an example of terrible forces beyond their control?

What do these conflicts tell us about Qing society? The questions above directly relate to broader questions of gender and identity in the Qing. As shown in Chapter One, changes to *White Snake* correspond temporally to changes in the Qing construction of gender. Matthew Sommer articulated this change as a shift from "status performance" to "gender performance." White Snake is the ultimate example of this shift because her inherited "status" as a monster is

reproachable, and yet her successful "performance" of "gender" ritual roles earns her the sympathy of nearly every audience. The struggles she encounters in the story reflect either her own flaws, usually associated with her monstrous nature, or they reflect flaws in the construction of female virtue itself; struggles that any women, or perhaps any person in general, could encounter. To summarize, here I will discuss three common themes that appear in many of the excerpt scenes and full-length versions discussed throughout this dissertation. Some of these themes are contradictory, illustrating that they were not universally held beliefs, but boundaries for discussion among the people of the Qing.

*One can(not) overcome the limitations of their nature*. In nearly every version of *White Snake* since the late eighteenth century, White Snake is a sympathetic character. There seems to be a discrepancy, however, as to whether she can overcome her monstrous nature through the performance of ritual roles or whether she is doomed to fail in her ritual roles because of her monstrous nature. In "Duanwu Festival," White Snake chooses to drink realgar wine, in accordance with her ritual role as wife, even though it will force her to transform. In "Broken Bridge," although Little Green's exposes Xu Xian's disloyalty, White Snake forgives him, potentially against her own interest. In "Joining the Bowls" and "Sacrifice at the Pagoda," White Snake accepts her fate, with little or no sign of regret. Ultimately, White Snake is depicted both as a tragic figure, who is punished for who she is, and a hero, who overcomes the limitations of her nature to fulfill her goals of motherhood and admittance to the ranks of the transcendents.

*Monstrousness (or violence) can be righteous*: In "Subduing Green," White Snake's relative martial strength and ritual power, earned through cultivation practice, allow her to subdue and tame Little Green. Little Green's aggression toward Xu in "Broken Bridge" allowed the audience to see him punished for his betrayal. In *Righteous Monster*, the powers White Snake

and Little Green have as monsters enable them to repel the numinous official, to capture Wang Daoling, and to fight off the spirit guardians of Mount Song. By using her monstrous powers to overcome exorcists, spirits, and relics, White Snake enhances the symbolic ritual value of the play. In this sense, although White Snake is often punished for her monstrous nature, monstrousness is also often an asset to the characters and the audience as well.

*Loyalty is neither reciprocated nor rewarded*. In Chapter Two, I argue that the function of Little Green in the excerpt scene "Broken Bridge" is to provide a critical perspective on Xu Xian that allows White Snake to maintain her wifely virtue. Also in the scene "Broken Bridge," Little Green attacks Xu out of loyalty to White Snake, but White Snake does not yield to Little Green. In "Sacrifice at the Pagoda," White Snake urges her son to be loyal to his wife. She continues to harbor resentment toward Xu for not reciprocating her loyalty to him. In *Righteous Monster*, White Snake concedes to Xu's pressure to drink realgar wine, even though she knows it is dangerous, and she revives Xu from death even though he attempted to kill her. In all of these examples, loyalty without reward further emphasizes the character's virtue; to remain loyal despite the consequences is proof of exceptional loyalty, and to remain loyal in the face of betrayal is the greatest display of loyalty.

Another major contribution of this dissertation is the use of different media and performance genres to reflect specific performance contexts and audiences. In the introduction, I discuss how previous scholarship on *White Snake* has often considered the story a folktale and, consequently, an expression of popular literature. While I do not intend to dispute that non-elite artists and audiences played an important part in the development of *White Snake*, I question the value of categorizing *White Snake* as a folktale or work of popular literature. Following the lead of Idema, Lee, and other scholars, I argue that labeling *White Snake* as popular literature is

problematic because it generalizes the audiences and creators, when in reality many people moved between different social strata. Also, other ways of contrasting different types of literature are often more informative. Here, I will revisit discussion of the audiences and performance contexts of some of the plays and storytelling narratives in this dissertation and consider what other ways of classifying performance works could be more helpful.

Over the course of this dissertation, I have mentioned audiences and artists representing a broad spectrum of diverse backgrounds. In a passage quoted in the introduction, Lu Xun explains that, as a child, he listened to his grandmother tell the story. According to Lu, "the old husbands working the fields and the common women of the villages working the silkworms" shared his sympathetic view of White Snake. In Chapter One, I discuss the role of elite men in the development of *chuanqi* versions from the eighteenth century, including the literati authors Huang Tubi, Fang Chengpei, and even the Qianlong emperor. Chapter two focuses on excerpt plays that were likely performed in commercial theaters for male audiences, but offers regional diversity, comparing scenes from Kunqu, *pihuang*, and Sichuan opera. In Chapter Three, I compare the perspectives of literati writers of the flower registers with those of and Manchu bannerman performers of bannerman tales and the prostitute performers and merchant audiences of wharf tunes. In Chapter Four, I examine a Sichuan opera adapted to performance as a festival ritual, which likely included audience members from a wide variety of backgrounds.

Although some of these audiences and artists may be meaningfully categorized as "elite" or "popular," many were somewhere in between. As I mention in the introduction, for example, Kunqu actors were often poor and not traditionally educated, but they would have likely made creative choices to draw the attention and the patronage of officials and other elites. Furthermore, many of these genres may have been common to a specific performance context but could be

easily adapted to another context. Even Kunqu, the most elite genre of acted performance, would be performed at festivals. All of the different genres of acted performance and storytelling could have been adapted for commercial performance, salon performance, or festival performance.

Certain themes seem to carry across performances to different audiences. In Chapter Three, I compare three contrasting groups of performers and audiences—the Kunqu and *pihuang* actors of commercial theaters in Beijing, the Manchu bannerman performers and patrons of bannerman tales and octagonal drum tunes, and the prostitute singers and merchant audiences of wharf tunes. Despite major differences between these audiences, there seems to be a shared interest in sympathizing with White Snake's injustice. This conclusion is similar to Goldman's study of excerpt plays of *The Garden of Turquoise and Jade*, in that it shows educated male audience sympathizing with protagonists that are female and/or of a lower social class, but suggests that not only were Kunqu audiences sympathetic with female protagonists facing injustice, but bannerman and merchants as well.[296]

Whereas some themes remain consistent across performances for different audiences, performance context appears to be a better means of contrasting perspectives. The audiences of the Kunqu, pihuang, and storytelling genres discussed above differed, but they were all common to the performance contexts of commercial playhouses and private salon performances. The festival ritual play discussed in Chapter Four, however, differs from these plays significantly. *Righteous Monster* does not focus on sympathizing with White Snake's injustice, but rather heightens the conflict between her, her husband, and the various exorcists and spirits that oppose her. As a festival ritual play, the audience of this play would have included a diverse range of

[296] See Andrea S. Goldman, *Opera and the City: The Politics of Culture in Beijing, 1770-1900* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2012), 145-74.

people because festival rituals were one of the few occasions that allowed men, women, and children from different levels of society to participate in together. The background of the audience is less important, however, than the temporal context and function of the play, as the changes made to adapt the *White Snake* story to a Duanwu Festival ritual focus on symbols associated with combating drought, infestation, and malevolent spirits—the concerns of the Duanwu season.

Despite the comparatively wide range of sources used in this dissertation, it is still only a fragment of extant material related to *White Snake* in Qing performance. The Sichuan opera materials discussed in previous chapters differ from other genres in noticeable ways, so it seems plausible that other regional genres may offer substantive material for comparison. Similarly, while the storytelling versions discussed in Chapter Three provide a useful contrast to acted performance versions, they are a small sample of the materials available. In particular, I believe a substantive study of *tanci* versions of *White Snake* would offer new perspectives on the story's evolution. *Tanci* versions are considerable in length, and perhaps for this reason are less popular in scholarship than some other genres, but *tanci* is the only genre apart from *chuanqi* that I have found that reflects the story's development in the eighteenth century.[297]

Another major limitation to this study is the lack of sources that can be attributed to a female author. With the possible exception of records of a script from the eighteenth century attributed to the actor Chen Jiayan and his daughter, I have not seen any evidence of female authorship. Even in the genre of *tanci*, which was often written and performed by women, the only extant version of *White Snake* with a named author was attributed to a man. I have discussed occasional instances when women may have performed *White Snake*, such as Lu

[297] I discuss this in Chapter Two, n120.

Xun's grandmother and prostitutes who may have performed wharf tune versions of "Joining the Bowls," but it is difficult to say if women were involved in writing the lyrics. In the case of wharf tunes, my research has suggested that these versions were largely consistent with bannerman tales, which were generally performed by men. With so much of this study relating to the construction of femininity, it would be helpful to know if female writers' depictions of *White Snake* differed from that of male writers.

For one last example of the importance of performance context for the development and transmission of *White Snake*, I will close by returning to Lu Xun's reflection on the fall of Thunder Peak Pagoda. In the introduction, I discuss how Lu's memory of the story is incomplete; he remembers some scenes, but not others. He was sympathetic to White Snake, but he did not seem to remember that, in almost every full-length version from the Qing, White Snake was released from the pagoda at the end of the story. He did, however, have a clear memory of the stories he heard as a child about what happened to Fahai:[298]

> I heard that later the Jade Emperor also blamed Fahai for meddling, up to [and including] polluting living creatures, and wanted to capture and punish him. Fahai fled here and there but finally fled into a crab shell to escape misfortune, and did not dare to come out again. Up until now, it is still like that. I have very many unspoken criticisms for the things that the Jade Emperor has done, but only in this matter am I actually satisfied [with what he did], because in the incident of "Flooding Golden Mountain," it certainly should be Fahai who takes responsibility; he [the Jade Emperor] truly handled it quite well. It is just unfortunate that I did not inquire about the source of this story at that time. Perhaps it is not in *The Legend of the Righteous Monster* but is instead a popular folktale.
>
> 聽說，後來玉皇大帝也就怪法海多事，以至荼毒生靈，想要拿辦他了。他逃來逃去，終於逃在蟹殼裡避禍，不敢再出來，到現在還如此。我對於玉皇大帝所做的事，腹誹的非常多，獨於這一件卻很滿意，因為"水滿金山"一案，

[298] "Lun Leifengta de daodiao 论雷峰塔的倒掉 [Discussing the fall of Thunder Peak Pagoda]," *Beijing Literature* no. 5 (2002): 19. Originally published: "Lun Leifengta de daodiao," *Yusi* 語絲 [Language thread], Nov. 17, 1924. An English translation of the full article appears in Lu Hsun (Lu Xun), *Selected Works of Lu Hsun*, trans. Xianyi (1915-2009) Yang and Gladys (1919-1999) Yang (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1956), 82-4.

的確應該由法海負責；他實在辦得很不錯的。只可惜我那時沒有打聽這話的出處，或者不在《義妖傳》中，卻是民間的傳說罷。

In the height of the fall season when the rice in the paddies have ripened, that which is in abundance in Wu and Yue is crabs. After they are boiled until they are red through and through, regardless of which one you pick, when you open up the back shell, inside there are organs and fat.[299] If it is female, it has eggs as red as a pomegranate. First you finish eating these, which will then certainly reveal a cone of membrane, and then you use a small knife to carefully cut the base of the cone off, take it out, turn it over, and make the inside face out. As long as it doesn't break, then it will change into something like an Arhat, which has a head, face, and body and is sitting. Us kids who were there would all call it a "crab monk," which was Fahai lying inside to avoid trouble.

秋高稻熟時節，吳越間所多的是螃蟹，煮到通紅之後，無論取那一隻，揭開背殼來，裡面就有黃，有膏；倘是雌的，就有石榴子一般鮮紅的子。先將這些吃完，即一定露出一個圓錐形的薄膜，再用小刀小心地沿著錐底切下，取出，翻轉，使裡面向外，只要不破，便變成一個羅漢模樣的東西，有頭臉，身子，是坐著的，我們那裡的小孩子都稱他"蟹和尚"，就是躺在裡面避難的法海。

At that time, White Snake was trapped underneath the pagoda, and Zen Master Fahai was lying inside a crab shell. Now, there is but only this old Zen Master meditating by himself, and not until that day when the crabs become extinct will he come out. Could it be that when he built the pagoda, he didn't think that it would come down in the end?

當初，白蛇娘娘壓在塔底下，法海禪師躺在蟹殼裡。現在卻只有這位老禪師獨自靜坐了，非到螃蟹斷種的那一天為止不出來。莫非他造塔的時候，竟沒有想到塔是終究要倒的麼？

Serves him right.

活該。

Lu's account of Fahai's imprisonment in the shell of crab is a relatively unique ending to the story, and I have not seen references to "crab monks" that do not attribute Lu's article as a source. In addition to the uniqueness of this version, however, this passage illustrates how Lu's

[299] "Organs," *huang* or *xiehuang* 蟹黃, refer specifically to the ovaries and digestive glands of crabs. They are usually orange in color.

experience with *White Snake* was personal and at times a part of his day-to-day life. When he heard that Thunder Peak Pagoda had collapsed, he thought of the stories his grandmother told. He thought he knew which version she told but had never seen the book. When he visited the pagoda, there was a "discomfort" in his heart, and he wished it would fall down. He also thought of eating crabs as a child and shaping bits of crab meat into Fahai. For Lu Xun, as with many audiences of *White Snake*, the complete story was overshadowed by specific scenes that he associated with specific contexts of growing up. Some of these contexts were shared with many people, while others were regional, or even personal. As new audiences experience the story in modern media—as 1 TV and online streaming series, video games, and animation, in Mandarin, Chinese dialects, and other languages as well—the story's transmission continues to take on new shapes and meaning, but the conflict between snake-monster and woman continues to provoke many of the questions left unanswered in the Qing.

**APPENDIX I: List of Excerpt Plays**

The following table lists *White Snake* plays that appear in reprint in modern editions. It is arranged according the sequence of the plot of full-length plays—for excerpts that are sequences of multiple scenes, I have listed them according the first scene of the sequence but placed them after other excerpt plays of individual scenes that are not sequences. The table includes the volume and page numbers of each collection they are reprinted in, the genre of performance (Kunqu, *pihuang*, and Sichuan opera), the title of corresponding scene in Fang's play,[300] format (manuscript, woodblock print, etc.) and year of publication if available, and notes that appear on the cover page if available.

**Abbreviations**:

*Yushuangyi - Beijing daxue tushuguan cang Cheng Yanqiu Yushuangyi ziqu zhenben congkan* 北京大學圖書館藏程硯 秋玉霜簃戲曲珍本叢刊 [Collection of rare editions stored at Cheng Yanqiu's Yushuangyi at Beijing University Library], Beijing daxue tushuguan, ed. 44 vols. (Beijing: Guojia tushuguan chubanshe, 2014).

*Fu Xihua – Fu Xihua cang gudian xiqu zhenben congkan* 傅惜華藏古典戲曲珍本叢刊 [Collection of rare editions of classical dramas stored by Fu Xihua], Wang Wen Zhang 王文章, ed., 146 vols. (Beijing: Xuyuan chubanshe, 2010).

*Imperial Palace – Gugong zhenben congkan* 故宮珍本叢刊 [Rare editions of the Imperial Palace Collection], Gugong bowuguan, ed., 731 vols. (Haikou: Hainan chubanshe, 2001).

*Folk Literature – Su wenxue congkan* 俗文學叢刊 (Folk literature: materials in the collection of the Institute of History and Philology), Huang Kuanchong 黃寬重 et al., eds., 500 vols. (Taipei: Xin wen feng chuban youxian gongsi, 2001).

*Che Palace – Qing chewangfu cang xiqu quanbian* 清車王府藏戲曲全編 [Complete volumes of dramatic works collected at the Qing Prince Che Palace], Huang Shizhong 黃仕忠, ed., 20 vols. (Guangzhou: Guangdong renmin chubanshe, 2013).

*Double Red Hall – Riben Dongjing daxue dongyang wenhua yanjiusuo shuang hong yang wenkucang xijian Zhongguo chaoben quben conkan* 日本東京大學東洋文化 研究所雙紅堂文庫藏稀見 中國鈔本曲本叢刊 [Scarcely seen Chinese manuscript and music book collection from the Double Red Hall Library at the Institute of Advanced Studies on Asia at Tokyo University in Japan], Huang Shizhong 黃仕忠 and Ōki Yasushi 大木康, eds., 32 vols. (Guilin: Guangxi shifan daxue chubanshe, 2013).

[300] In order to see consistency in scenes across different versions, I have changed the titles of corresponding scenes to the title name in Fang's play. The scene "Meeting on a Boat" (Zhou yu 舟遇) in Fang's play, for example, is usually titled "Jie san 借傘" [Borrowing an Umbrella] as an excerpt play, but in this list I have used Fang's title. This also makes for easier reference with scene summaries for Fang's play in Appendix II.

*Shengpingshu - Zhongguo guojia tushuguan cang Qinggong shengpingshu dangan jicheng* 中國國家圖書館藏清宮 昇平署檔案集成 [The Chinese National Library collection: Shengpingshu archive compendium from the Qing Palace], Zhongguo guojia tushuguan, ed., 108 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2011).

| Collection (vol.: pages) | Genre | Scenes | Format (Year) | Cover Notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Double Red Hall* (18; 297-315) | Kunqu | *Thunder Peak Pagoda*: "Combined Song 總曲," "Recalling Family 憶親," "Leaving the Mountain," "Subduing Green," "Traveling to the Lake 遊湖," "Meeting on a Boat," "Stealing from the Treasury" | Manuscript | "明煥記曲譜，共六齣" |
| *Fu Xihua* (130; 1-85) | Kunqu | *The Righteous Monster*: "Family Gate 家門," "Meeting on a Boat," "Stealing from the Treasury 盜庫," "Giving the Silver 贈銀," "Opening the Store 吊場開店" | Manuscript (1886) | "道光十一年": "樂安湘記"; "前段中段另有一本" |
| *Folk Literature* (81; 1-24) | Kunqu | "Leaving the Mountain," "Subduing Green" | Manuscript | "總書" |
| *Yushuangyi* (10; 31-57) | Kunqu | "Meeting on a Boat" | Manuscript | "汝南郡"; "白蛇記" |
| *Yushuangyi* (10; 75-91) | Kunqu | "Meeting on a Boat" | Manuscript | "觀心室珍藏" |
| *Folk Literature* (81; 25-30) | Kunqu | "Meeting on a Boat" | Manuscript; actor's script for Xu Xian | |
| *Yushuangyi* (10; 129-80) | Kunqu | "Meeting on a Boat," "Opening the Store," "Uniting Around the Buddha" | Manuscript | |
| *Folk Literature* (81; 31-6) | Kunqu | "Stealing from the Treasury" | Manuscript; actor's script for Little Green | |
| *Yushuangyi* (10; 93-105) | Kunqu | "Opening the Store 開店" | Manuscript | "文瀾" |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Folk Literature* (81; 37-42) | Kunqu | "Opening the Store" | Manuscript; actor's script for Little Green | |
| *Folk Literature* (104; 513-79) | Sichuan opera | *A New of Carving of the Complete Legend of the Righteous Monster of Thunder Peak Pagoda*: "Bestowing the Charm," "Chasing the Daoist," "Duanwu Festival," "Seeking the Herb" | Woodblock print by 洪興曹 (1888_ | "公堂戲本"; "洪興曹記批發" |
| *Imperial Palace* (663; 386-9) | Kunqu | "Duanwu Festival" | Manuscript | |
| *Yushuangyi* (10; 107-127) | Kunqu | "Duanwu Festival," "Seeking the Herb" | Manuscript | "曹文瀾" |
| *Yushuangyi* (10; 181-260 | Kunqu | "Duanwu Festival," "Seeking the Herb," "Treating the Terror," "Stealing the Clothes 盜巾," "Dressing up in the Clothes 飾巾," "Tiger Mound," "Investigated and Sentenced," "Seeking Again," "Tower Seduction" | Manuscript | "右欄乃參考方本標示" |
| *Double Red Hall* (3; 353-68) | Kunqu | "Seeking the Herb" | Manuscript | "內鈔崑曲總本十二種" |
| *Imperial Palace* (663; 382-5) | Kunqu | "Seeking the Herb" | Manuscript | |
| *Double Red Hall* (5; 62-90) | Kunqu | "Making the Incense," "Water Battle," "Broken Bridge" | Manuscript | "蓋臣氏雅集" |
| *Imperial Palace* (666; 172-87) | Kunqu | "Water Battle" | Manuscript | |
| *Shengpingshu* (102; 59913-40) | Kunqu | "Water Battle" | Manuscript | "昇"; "弟子寧死江心"; corrected to "弟子就死江心" |
| *Shengpingshu* (102; 59941-60) | Kunqu | "Water Battle" | Manuscript | "要過准底" |
| *Che Palace* (10; 616-35) | Kunqu | "Water Battle" | Manuscript (typed)[301] | |

[301] Scripts from *Che Palace* are manuscripts that have been typed and formatted.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Folk Literature* (81; 43-8) | Kunqu | "Water Battle" | Manuscript; actor's script for Xu Xian | |
| *Folk Literature* (81; 49-58) | Kunqu | "Water Battle" | Manuscript; actor's script for White Snake | |
| *Folk Literature* (81; 59-70) | Kunqu | "Water Battle" | Manuscript; actor's script for White Snake | |
| *Folk Literature* (81; 71-8) | Kunqu | "Water Battle" | Manuscript; actor's script for Little Green | |
| *Folk Literature* (81; 79-96) | Kunqu | "Water Battle" | Manuscript | |
| *Folk Literature* (81; 97-126) | Kunqu | "Water Battle" | Print (1939) | |
| *Folk Literature* (81; 127-162) | Kunqu | "Water Battle" | Manuscript by "Bai Ben Zhang 百本張" | |
| *Folk Literature* (81; 163-94) | Kunqu | "Water Battle" | Manuscript | |
| *Che Palace* (10; 636-40) | Pihuang | "Broken Bridge" | Manuscript (typed)[301] | |
| *Che Palace* (10; 641-4) | Pihuang | "Broken Bridge" | Manuscript (typed)[301] | |
| *Folk Literature* (81; 195-204) | Kunqu | "Broken Bridge" | Manuscript; actor's script for White Snake (1852) | |
| *Folk Literature* (81; 205-12) | Kunqu | "Broken Bridge" | Manuscript; actor's script for Xu Xian | |
| *Folk Literature* (81; 213-18) | Kunqu | "Broken Bridge" | Manuscript; actor's script for Little Green (1852) | |
| *Folk Literature* (81; 219-26) | Kunqu | "Broken Bridge" | Manuscript; actor's script for White Snake | |
| *Folk Literature* (81; 227-34) | Kunqu | "Broken Bridge" | Manuscript | |
| *Folk Literature* (81; 235-50) | Kunqu | "Broken Bridge" | Manuscript | |
| *Folk Literature* (81; 251-66) | Kunqu | "Broken Bridge" | Print (1941) | |

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| *Folk Literature* (323; 531-54) | Pihuang | "Broken Bridge" | Manuscript | |
| *Folk Literature* (323; 555-70) | Pihuang | "Broken Bridge" | Woodblock print by 文裕堂 | "新刻"; "文裕堂梓" |
| *Che Palace* (10; 645-9) | Pihuang | "Sacrifice at the Pagdoda" | Manuscript (typed)[301] | |
| *Che Palace* (10; 650-4) | Pihuang | "Sacrifice at the Pagoda" | Manuscript (typed)[301] | |
| *Folk Literature* (323; 571-82) | Pihuang | "Sacrifice at the Pagoda" | Woodblock print by 錦春堂 | "旨奉祭塔"; "京調" |
| *Folk Literature* (81; 267-76) | Kunqu | "Stringing Up Xuan [Xu Xian] 吊宣" | Manuscript; actor's script for Little Green | |
| *Yushuangyi* (10; 59-73) | Kunqu | "Uniting Around the Buddha" | Manuscript (1820) | "曹文瀾識記"; "張仲芳傳本" |

**Appendix II: Scene Comparison of *Chuanqi* Plays by Huang Tubi and Fang Chengpei[302]**

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">Huang Tubi's script</td><td colspan="2">Fang Chengpei's script</td></tr>
<tr><td>Scene</td><td>Plot</td><td>Scene</td><td>Plot</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">1. 慈音<br>The Sound of Compassion</td><td rowspan="2">Buddha explains White Snake's predestined relationship with Xu Xian. White Snake and Green Fish had mistakenly eaten reeds dropped by the boat of the Dharma as it was crossing a river, which is why they now practice cultivation. Xu Xuan had been the alms bowl bearing attendant to Buddha, but since he had a long-standing destiny with White Snake, Buddha ordered him to go down, be born, and finish this destiny. Buddha gives Zen Master Fahai a mission to help Xu return once his destiny is complete. Fahai accepts and bids him farewell.</td><td>1. 開宗<br>Opening the Lineage</td><td>Sketches a broad outline of the story, beginning to end.</td></tr>
<tr><td>2. 付缽<br>Bestowing the Alms Bowl</td><td>Describes Buddha giving the alms bowl to Fahai and explaining White Snake and Xu Xian's origins and their predestined relationship. White Snake is from Mount Emei and began practicing cultivation because she stole a peach from Queen Mother of the West's peach garden and ate it. Xu Xuan had been the alms bowl bearing attendant to Buddha, but since he had a long-standing destiny with White Snake, Buddha ordered him to go down, be born, and complete this destiny. Buddha gives Zen Master Fahai a mission to help Xu return once his destiny is complete. Fahai accepts and bids him farewell.</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td>3. 出山<br>Leaving the Mountain</td><td>White Cloud Female Transcendent (White Snake) wants to go to the mortal realm. Her sworn brother, Dark Wind Transcendent, repeatedly tries to dissuade her, without success. He warns her not to harm living things and to return to the mountain soon. The two then say farewell.</td></tr>
</table>

[302] This table is based on Qian Xingcun's chart and Fan Jinlan's 范金蘭 summaries. See A Ying 阿英 [Qian Xingcun 錢杏邨 [1900-77]], *Leifengta chuanqi shulu* 雷峰塔傳奇敘錄 [Commentaries on the Southern Dramas of Thunder Peak Pagoda] (Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju, 1960), 54-8; Fan Jinlan, *Bai she zhuan gushi: xingbian yanjiu* 【白蛇傳故事】形變研究 (The Story of White Snake: Transformation Research) (Taipei: Wanjuanlou tushu gufen youxian gongsi, 2003), 96-101 and 117-123.

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| 2. 薦靈<br>Offering Sacrifice to the Spirits | Xu Xian describes himself—his father and mother have both passed away, and he relies on his older sister and her husband, making a living by working at a medicine shop. At the time of Qingming Festival, he had gone to pray for his father and mother. He encountered rain and boarded a boat to return home. | 4. 上塚<br>Going to the Burial Mound | Xu Xian works at a medicine shop. His older sister's husband is named Li Ren, and he serves as an investigator for Qiantang County. At the Qingming Festival, Xu Xian was going to sweep his parents' tombs. |
| | | 5. 收青<br>Subduing Green | Little Green rules the water creatures of West Lake from an abandoned residence. White Snake arrives and Little Green provokes her to fight. White Snake subdues Little Green and makes him her maidservant. The two become master and servant, and friends as well. |
| 3. 舟遇<br>Meeting on a Boat | White Snake explains that she found Little Green ("Green Fish") after a storm broke out. They turn into human forms and encounter Xu Xian. They convince Xu Xian to let them ride in a boat with him to get out of the rain. Xu also lends them an umbrella when they leave. | 6. 舟遇<br>Meeting on a Boat | White Snake and Little Green see Xu Xian on a boat at West Lake. They cause it to rain, then convince him to let them ride in a boat with him to get out of the rain. Xu also lends them an umbrella when they leave. |
| 4. 榜緝<br>Notice of Arrest | Fifty large ingots of silver had been stolen from the treasury of Shao, minister of military. Constable He Li has received orders to catch the culprit. | | |
| 5.許嫁<br>Marrying Xu | White Snake entertains Xu Xian as a guest, and the two of them get along well. White Snake orders Little Green to bring silver for Xu | 7. 訂盟<br>Making the Pledge | Xu and White Snake meet again and realize they have great affinity for one another, with Little Green acting as matchmaker. White Snake orders Little Green to bring |

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| | Xian to use to find a matchmaker. | | silver for Xu Xian to use for their wedding. |
| 6. 贓現<br>Stolen cash | Xu Xian informs his older sister that he wants to get married to White Snake and gives his sister silver to ask her to preside over the wedding. After his sister's husband sees the silver and decides to report to the court. His sister tries to stop him but is unsuccessful. | | |
| 7. 府訊<br>Court Interrogation | The prefecture governor interrogates Xu Xian, and Xu Xian explains himself. The prefecture governor sees his sincerity and decides to bring White Snake and Little Green to court for interrogation. | | |
| 8. 邪祟<br>Evil Spirits | When the constables go to arrest White Snake, they hear a loud sound. They do not catch sight of White Snake but find a stack of stolen silver on the bed. The imprints confirm it is the stolen silver, and they thereupon return to the court. | | |
| 9. 回湖<br>Returning to the Lake | After returning the silver, White Snake flees to West Lake. The water creatures beg for her help, as fishermen who are using their nets to catch, kill, and butcher them. White Snake decides to repay this injustice and take revenge. | | |
| 10. 彰報<br>Displaying Revenge | Little Green captures the fishermen. White Snake throws them all in the shallow water and undergrowth of the cove to show them that they should not harm living beings. | | |

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| 11. 懺悔<br>Confess Regrets | Zen Master Fahai saves the fishermen and urges them to not kill living creatures again. | | |
| 12. 話別<br>Parting Words | Xu Xian is banished to Suzhou for the case of the stolen silver. He cries bitterly with his older sister and bids her farewell. His sister's husband writes a letter ask his friend to take care Xu Xian. | 8. 避吳<br>Fleeing Wu | Xu Xian visits his sister. Her husband, Li Ren, discovers the stolen silver and Xu Xian asks him for help. Li Ren arranges for him to flee to Suzhou and also asks his friend, Wang Jingxi, to take care of Xu on his behalf. |
| | | 9. 設邸<br>Arranging the Lodging | Wang Jingxi urges his attendant to open the store and performs a comedic scene. Xu Xian has already arrived at the store to work. |
| 13. 插標<br>Inserting the Labels | At the Wang family's shop in Suzhou, Xu Xian receives proper care. Master Wang himself describes the reason Xu Xian was sent to Suzhou and performs a comedic scene of inserting labels and opening the store. | | |
| 14. 勸合<br>Urge to Reunite | After arriving in Suzhou, Xu Xian misses White Snake but also suspects that she is a monster. After half a year, White Snake and Little Green arrive searching for him. He resents the surprised and is suspicious of White Snake. After White Snake uses gentle words to explain herself, they are back on good terms as before. | | |
| | | 10. 獲贓<br>Capturing the Stolen Goods | Li Ren reports to the county court that White Snake stole the silver. They try to arrest White Snake but are unsuccessful and are able only to return the stolen silver. |

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| | | 11. 遠訪<br>Visiting from Afar | White Snake and Little Green go to Suzhou to find Xu Xian but he turns them away. The Wangs act as go-betweens and persuade Xu to forgive White Snake. |
| | | 12. 開行<br>Opening a Business | Xu Xian leaves the Wang household and opens a business with White Snake. She uses her magic to help Xu open his shop and earn a living. Beggars and others come to congratulate them and celebrate the opening of the store, and Xu and White Snake offer sacrifices in celebration. |
| | | 13. 夜話<br>Words at Night | White Snake discusses the past events with Little Green and expresses her feelings. Xu Xian arrives and goes for a walk in the front of the courtyard, divulging his aspirations. |
| 15. 求利<br>Seeking Advantage | A Daoist priest selling charms and medicine sees Xu Xian and tells him that he is involved with a monster. He gives Xu Xian magical talismans to help him eliminate his monster. | 14. 贈符<br>Bestowing the Charm | Xu Xian encounters the leader of a Daoist temple, who informs him that he has become involved with a monster. Xu Xian explains how he met White Snake. The leader bestows on him a talisman for dispelling monsters. |
| 16. 吞符<br>Swallowing the Charms | White Snake sees through the charm and they both look for the Daoist who gave it to Xu. White Snake swallows the talisman in public and suffers not harm, and thereupon punishes the Daoist, taking him a thousand *li* away.[303] White Snake claims that the Daoist ran away. | | |
| | | 15. 逐道 | Xu Xian returns at night. White Snake knows he is |

[303] One *li* is approximately one third of a mile. Here, "one thousand *li*" is probably intended to describe the distance as far away, rather than a specific distance.

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| | | Chasing the Daoist | hiding a talisman. She consumes the talisman to no effect, then goes to find the person who gave it to Xu. She and Little Green string the Daoist up and beat him. Xu Xian sees them, is convinced that the Daoist is a monster, and apologizes to White Snake. The Daoist returns to his mountain to practice cultivation in hopes of subduing White Snake in the future. |
| | | 16. 端陽 Dragon Boat Festival | During Duanwu Festival, Xu Xian encourages White Snake to drink realgar wine. The wine causes White Snake to reveal her form. Xu Xian sees her and is frightened to death. Little Green rouses White Snake, and White Snake decides to go to the place of Old Man of the South Pole to ask for the transcendents' herb to save her husband. |
| | | 17. 求草 Seeking the Herb | White Snake goes to Mount Song to ask for the transcendents' herb. The transcendents who protect the herb, White Crane Acolyte, Little Deer Transcendent, Ye Fashan, and Dongfang Shuo try to stop her but cannot defeat her, until Ye Fashan captures her with the Realgar Formation. White Snake begs for forgiveness and asks for the herb, and The Star of Longevity takes pity on her and gives her the herb. |
| | | 18. 遼驚 Treating the Terror | White Snake returns and prepares the medicine to revive Xu. |
| 17. 驚失 Surprise Loss | Crab Spirit and Turtle Spirit steal valuable clothing and | | |

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| | adornments from within the treasury of Zhou Jiangshi and offer them to White Snake. Zhou Jiangshi petitions for an investigation on the stolen goods. | | |
| 18. 浴佛 Washing Buddha | At the festival for washing the Buddha,[304] a temple invites donors to light incense. Xu Xian goes to worship Buddha. | 19. 虎阜 Tiger Mound | Xu Xian goes on a tour of Huqiu.[305] White Snake gives him stolen clothing and adornments to wear. Also at just this time, a bailiff is investigating the theft of the items. |
| 19. 被獲 Being Captured | White Snake gives clothing and adornments to Xu Xian to wear when he goes to visit the temple. People recognized the stolen goods, and Xu Xian gets arrested. | | |
| 20. 妖遁 The Monster Escapes | White Snake discovers that Xu Xian has been captured and blames herself for his capture, so she calls on two spirits to return the stolen goods. White Snake and Little Green abandon the shop. The local authorities go to arrest White Snake but are unsuccessful. | 20. 審配 Investigated and Sentenced | Xu Xian is caught wearing the stolen goods and explains the situation. The authorities are unsuccessful in catching White Snake. Xu Xian is banished to Zhenjiang. His sister's husband sends money to support him and introduces him to his friend He Zhongwu, who will take care of him. |
| 21. 改配 Changed Exile | Zhou Jiangshi obtains the goods that had been stolen from him and thereupon asks for Xu Xian to be treated lightly. Xu Xian is exiled to Zhenjiang. His sister's husband sends a letter asking his friend Li Keyong to take care of him. | | |
| 22. 藥賦 Bestowing the Medicine | Li Keyong and his employee perform a comedic skit. Xu Xian is so diligent in his work for Li that the other employee is | 21. 再訪 Seeking Again | White Snake arrives in Zhenjiang to look for Xu. He is initially reluctant to forgive her, but He Zhongwu convinces him otherwise. |

[304] A ceremony to celebrate the Buddha's birthday on the eight day of the fourth month.

[305] A district of Suzhou. "Huqiu" literally translates to "Tiger Mound."

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| | jealous, but they make peace over a banquet. | | |
| 23. 色迷<br>Lost in Lust | White Snake and Little Green discover that Xu Xian is at the banquet and wait for him outside. Xu is at first angered at the sight of them, but eventually accepts White Snake's explanations, and they are once again united. | 22. 樓誘<br>Tower Seduction | At He Zhongwu's birthday, White Snake goes to congratulate him. He Zhongwu takes the opportunity to guide her to River Gazing Tower, intending to rape her, but White Snake turns into a monster and scares him away. |
| 24. 現形<br>Revealing the Form | Li Keyong covets White Snake and reveals that he has a plan to rape her. During his birthday feast, he follows White Snake to the toilet and secretly spies on her. He accidently sees her original form and runs away in terror. | | |
| 25. 掩惡<br>Shutting Out the Evil | White Snake returns from attending the banquet, gloomy and unhappy. She tells Xu that Li Keyong tried to rape her, though she was fortunately able to escape. Xu plans to resign from his position at Li's shop and open his own. | | |
| | | 23. 化香<br>Changing the Incense | Fahai comes down from the mountain to enlighten Xu Xian and meets with a sailor on the way, who is wailing about the theft of his sandalwood. Fahai asks Xu Xian to give alms of sandalwood for Buddha sculptures, and Xu he agrees, without telling White Snake. Fahai arranges for Xu Xian to arrive at the monastery, saying that there are some things he wants to tell Xu. |

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| 26. 棒喝<br>Bang and Bawl | Xu Xian opens a shop and business is prospering. At the Dragon King's Birthday,[306] Xu Xian goes to Golden Mountain Monastery for a visit. White Snake goes to the monastery in search of Xu. When White Snake sees Fahai, her boat capsizes, and she flees. Fahai tells Xu to again go back to his hometown, and to seek him again if the monster (White Snake) comes after him again. | 24. 謁禪<br>Visiting the Buddha | Xu Xian arrives at the monastery, and Fahai sends an acolyte to bring him in. White Snake follows after with a squad of water creatures, guessing she will have to save her husband and fight with her ritual magic. |
| | | 25. 水鬥<br>Water Battle | Fahai does not let Xu Xian go. White Snake dispatches her troops to save her husband, and she and Fahai fight. White Snake implores Fahai to release Xu Xian, but she fails floods Golden Mountain Monastery in anger. White Snake is almost subdued, but because she is pregnant, Kuixing blocks her subjugation and she escapes. Fahai urges Xu Xian to return to Hangzhou and wait until one month after she has given birth. After that, he should find Fahai to subdue the monster. |
| | | 26. 斷橋<br>Broken Bridge | White Snake and Little Green flee to Broken Bridge and express sorrow over Xu's betrayal. Fahai sends Xu to Broken Bridge as well. Little Green and White Snake blame Xu for his betrayal, but eventually he convinces White Snake to forgive him. White Snake starts going into labor, and they all go to Xu's sister's house to deliver the baby. |
| 27. 赦回<br>Returning on a Pardon | Xu receives a pardon and returns home. White Snake and Little Green had already arrived and are looking for him. Xu accuses | 27. 腹婚<br>Betrothal in the Womb | Xu, White Snake, and Little Green arrive at Xu's sister's house. Xu's sister has given birth to a daughter. They decide to betroth her daughter |

[306] Seventh day of the seventh month.

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| | her of being a monster, and they have a big argument. Xu's sister's husband suggests he hire a snake catcher. | | to Xu's and White Snake's son. White Snake is about to give birth. |
| 28. 捉蛇 Catching a Snake | The snake catcher fails at catching White Snake. White Snake tells Xu Xian that if they live together as husband and wife, she can fix any problem for him. If he continues to act as he is and opposes her, she will turn the people of the city into blood. Xu Xian, anxious and desperate, goes to the Monastery of Clean Benevolence to ask for Fahai's aid. | | |
| 29. 法勦 Ritual of Extermination | Fahai wants to test if Xu is truly awakened and intentionally avoids him. Xu searches for Fahai but cannot find him and prepares to hurl himself into the lake to commit suicide. Fahai stops him just in time and calls on a divine guardian to seize the monster. Fahai commands the guardian to use an alms bowl to subjugate White Snake and Little Green. He then goes to Thunder Peak Pagoda with Xu Xian to bury them. | 28. 重謁 Visiting [Buddha] Again | After White Snake has given birth, Xu Xian goes to Fahai. Fahai orders him to bring the alms bowl to subdue the monster. Xu Xian cannot bear it, and Fahai decides to go do it himself. |
| 30. 埋蛇 Burying the Snake | The two monsters are interred under the pagoda. Xu Xian willingly leaves his family to becomes monk. Fahai hands the alms bowl to Xu Xian and orders him to collect donations. | 29. 煉塔 Refining the Tower | When White Snake is combing her hair and putting on makeup, Fahai brings the alms bowl to subdue her. Little Green sees the situation and fights him but is repelled. Xu imprisons her at the base of the pagoda with Fahai. |
| 31. 募緣 | Describes Xu Xian collecting donations. | | |

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| Collecting Contributions | | | |
| 32. 塔圓 Uniting Around the Pagoda. | Skanda comes to receive Xu Xian. Fahai also comes to the pagoda to take back the alms bowls and to send Xu Xian to return to Buddha. Xu Xian rejoices and returns to the Pure Land (Sukhavati) with his master. | 30. 歸真 Returning to the Origin | Describes Skanda and all the spirits accepting Buddha's orders and welcoming Fahai and Xu Xian to return to the Pure Land. |
| | | 31. 塔敘 Pagoda Conversation | Having completed his cultivation, Dark Wind Transcendent goes to find White Snake, only to learn that she is imprisoned under Thunder Peak Pagoda, and he obtains permission to see her. White Snake has no regrets over what she has done in the mortal realm. She has been trapped under the pagoda for sixteen years already and does not know if she will see her son again. |
| | | 32. 祭塔 Sacrifice at the Tower | White Snake's son Xu Shilin wins first place in the exams and petitions the emperor to release his mother. His request is denied, but he is sent to Thunder Peak Pagoda to offer sacrifice to his mother. He criticizes Fahai for separating their family. Shilin and White Snake are allowed to meet face-to-face, and White Snake expresses her hopes for he and his wife to live happily, unlike she and his father, and above all to remember to repay his gratitude to the empire. |
| | | 33. 捷婚 Promptly Wedded | Shilin is married and given rank. The county magistrate says that his accomplishments |

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| | | | are even more extraordinary than his mother's. |
| | | 34. 佛圓 Uniting Around the Buddha | The emperor of Heaven is moved by the sincerity and filial devotion of Shilin and grants a pardon to White Snake, ordering Fahai to release her. Little Green is pardoned with her. Heavenly female spirits receive and lead them two to the Heavenly Palace. |

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