EXTREME MAKEOVER: DAIYU AND BAOCHAI IN TWO EARLY SEQUELS TO HONGLOU MENG

BY

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Abstract

The paper attempts to make sense of two radically changed characters in two early sequels to Honglou meng. One is the managerial Daiyu of Hou Honglou meng, the other is the military Baochai of Honglou fumeng. The analysis begins with a comparison to oral literature, especially the genre known as zidishu. It concludes that the likeliest influences lie elsewhere, perhaps in such vernacular novels as Shihu zhuans and the rhymed prosimetric text Zaisheng yuan. Readerly dissatisfaction with the parent novel certainly also played a role. There are some grounds on which to argue that women readers had input into Baochai's transformation, although the case cannot be made for sure.

Introduction

Honglou meng's nineteenth century sequels present familiar characters in unfamiliar roles. Xue Pan 薛蟠 as solid citizen (Xu Honglou meng 續紅樓夢, 1805), Shi Xiangyun 史湘雲 as immortal (Hou Honglou meng 後紅樓夢, before 1796), and Jia Lian 賈璉 as the White Cloud Monk (Xu Honglou meng, 1799) are examples of what I have in mind.²

There are many reasons to write a sequel, but among the more common is the wish to improve upon Honglou meng's ending and

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restore the good fortune of the Jias. For sequels so motivated, Baoyu needs to show more interest in examination success, or some other male in the family must develop such ambitions. This must be one reason for the several instances of competent, career-minded sons (e.g. *Bu Honglou meng* 補紅樓夢—preface 1814, and published in 1820) or reincarnations of Baoyu (*Honglou fumeng* 紅樓復夢—preface 1799, and published in 1805).

The first sequel, *Hou Honglou meng*, which came out before 1796, works in a similar direction when it turns Daiyu into a healthy, ultra-competent, no-nonsense household manager. Under her firm hand, Baoyu shapes up, takes and passes the examinations, and assumes mature responsibilities. As part of Daiyu’s extreme makeover, this sequel first resurrects her from the dead then supplies her with a long-lost brother and an ample fortune. Thus equipped, she acquires the confidence, status, and poise she so woefully lacks in *Honglou meng*. When she sets down twenty-four rules for household management in chapter nineteen, one is reminded of Wang Xifeng’s performance in *Honglou meng*’s chapter thirteen and fourteen, but without any hint of cruelty or pent up aggression. The emphasis is on how appropriate, indeed how long overdue, such regulations are. Meanwhile, Baoyu has to strive mightily to get Daiyu to pay any attention to him and never really succeeds. Throughout, Daiyu operates with the full support and cooperation of Jia Zheng, who, in this as in many other sequels, is the final arbiter of right and wrong. Implausible though Daiyu’s change of status and personality might seem to students of psychology, it is understandable, given the author’s agenda; and the book was not unpopular in its own day. Indeed it was the subject of at least one drama, which treated it and *Honglou meng* as two parts of a single whole.

Another instance of personality transplant is found in the early sequel, *Honglou fumeng* (preface 1799, and published in 1805). This one was by a man surnamed Chen (first name unknown) from Guangzhou, with editorial assistance from his sister, Chen Shiwen. It, too, features radically transformed characters, many in

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reincarnated form. Most noteworthy is the transformation in the character of Baochai 寶釵. Unlike the transformed Daiyu of Hou Honglou meng, Baochai does not need to be reborn when the story begins, since she is still alive at the end of Honglou meng. For the first eighty-five chapters, she is a recognizable version of her former self, mostly tending to her son and Madam Wang. Only in chapter eighty-six does her personality take a new turn. In response to a request from an immortal that she lead an army against marauders in Lingnan she protests that as a guixiu 閨秀 she cannot play such a role. Her otherworldly interlocutors respond by giving her a pill that will improve her courage and knowledge so that she can perform as they desire. They do the same for the nine women in Baochai’s entourage. They also provide Baochai with a book of military secrets, some of which are said to derive from Zhuge Liang 諸葛亮 (page 959). Thus equipped, she metamorphoses into a general, who masterminds a successful foray against marauding bandits, quite a few of whom turn out to be women. Her troops number in the thousands. She is filled with something akin to patriotic emotion as she goes about this business, seeing herself as “repaying the great favor of the dynasty on behalf of her ancestors” (dai zuzong baoguo shenen 代祖宗報國深恩, see page 1007).

This transformation can almost be called a rebirth, in that it takes place after an interlude of seventy days, which she spends at the bottom of a well. There she encounters several supernatural beings and a rock with magical powers. Once her tour of military duty is complete, she returns to her normal self for the final few chapters, except that she is summoned to the palace to receive an imperial reward. This transformation is differently motivated from the one affecting Daiyu in Hou Honglou meng, in that it has nothing to do with propping up a sagging Baoyu. Perhaps the author needed to add spice to his hundred-chapter novel, which after eighty-eight chapters was running out of new things to say. Yet Honglou fumeng is a carefully plotted novel. The troubles in Lingnan are adumbrated as early as chapter 3. For whatever reason, the Daiyu of Hou Honglou meng and the Baochai of the last twelve chapters of Honglou fumeng have both been altered beyond recognition. Were it not for the fact that their names remain the same we would have little basis on which to link them to the creations of Cao Xueqin 曹雪芹.5

5 Most sequels favor Daiyu over Baochai, so Hou Honglou meng is more typical than...
It is with such considerations in mind that I pause, now, to ask the following question. Might *Honglou fumeng*’s Baochai or *Hou Honglou meng*’s Daiyu or any of the other transformed beings found in sequels have been based on something other than the imaginations of sequel writers? More specifically, might they perhaps be linked to evolutions of those characters in oral storytelling? A full answer to this question would require input from a vast number of storytelling genres. To keep this project at a manageable length, I shall begin with an extended look at one genre, *zidishu*. I am not so much claiming that the northern, Manchu-based genre of *zidishu* should have influenced either the Suzhou-based *Hou Honglou meng* or the Guangzhou-based *Honglou fumeng*. Rather, my question takes shape as a more general one about the extent to which characters stay the same or change when they reappear in oral versions of *Honglou meng*. Compared to other genres of storytelling, *zidishu* offers the largest number of extant stories about this novel, so this would seem a good place to begin. I refer to two other genres of storytelling in the course of this discussion, *kaipian* 開篇, an eclectic group of short *tanci* 彈詞 popular in Suzhou, Shaoxing, Siming and other Jiangnan locales, and *muyu shu* 木魚書 from Guangdong. This material is introduced only by way of comparison to *zidishu*. Neither *kaipian* nor *muyu shu* are themselves of primary concern. After my look at *zidishu* is complete, I will explore a few other possible sources of influence on these novels, including novels, dramas, and *tanci xiaoshuo* 彈詞小説. As is well known, *tanci xiaoshuo* are long prosimetric narratives by women in written form.

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*Honglou meng* in this regard. Daiyu’s ascendancy over her rival in the former novel is measured by the way she replaces Baochai as Baoyu’s first wife, a development that takes place over several chapters. This turnaround is one of the chief ways the sequel rights the “imbalance” of the parent novel. In contrast, *Honglou fumeng* favors Baochai, but Daiyu is very much on the minds of the other characters, and her gravesite in Yangzhou sets the scene for several chapters. Moreover, she is represented in a reincarnated character, one of the hero’s twelve wives.

a) Some Facts about *zidishu*

Let me set the stage for this inquiry by laying out some basic information about *zidishu*. I would like to stress from the outset that my research on this topic depends primarily on the work of others. When it comes to background information, I have drawn heavily on secondary sources, especially work by Hu Wenbin, Guan Dedong, Mark Elliott, and J.D. Schmidt. And I have benefited from the research of UCLA graduate student Elena Chiu, now completing her Ph.D. thesis “Cultural Hybridity in Manchu Bannermen Tales (*zidishu*).” The questions raised about gender and other matters in the pages that follow point to blanks that I hope others will fill in.

As Manchu culture lost its prominence at the beginning of this century, *zidishu* ceased to be performed, but from what scholars have been able to ascertain, they may have arisen as early as the Yongzheng era and were certainly flourishing under the Qianlong 乾隆 (1736-1796) and Jiaqing 嘉慶 (1796-1821) reigns. This means that the genre was well underway before the first batch of *Honglou meng* sequels, which came out between 1796 and 1805. There are signs that *zidishu* drew on *Honglou meng* almost immediately after the appearance of the first two published editions of 1791 and 1792; there are even a few signs that *zidishu* on *Honglou meng* predated these published versions.

The expression *zidi* can be taken to mean “youth” generally, or more broadly “sons and brothers.” In either case the term *zidishu* refers to books or writings by and for Manchus. Originally composed in Manchu language (in all likelihood), *zidishu* were eventually

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8 Hou *Honglou meng* (before 1796), Xu *Honglou meng* (30 chapters; 1799), Qilou *chong-meng* 綺樓重夢 (1805), Xu *Honglou meng* (40 chapters; 1805), and *Honglou fumeng* (preface 1799, and published in 1805).


performed by Chinese storytellers. This evolution accompanied a gradual loss of fluency among Manchus in their own tongue. However, one can locate vestigial signs of Manchu vocabulary and rhyme patterns even in works entirely in Chinese; and there are a few important extant examples of bilingual zidishu. As far as I know, none of the latter are based on Honglou meng.

Unlike some other forms of oral storytelling, zidishu are never spoken, only sung. The basic line is seven syllables, although much variation is allowed. The basic organizational unit is the chapter. Some works contain only a single chapter; in others, chapters number as many as fifteen. Often an introductory poem fills in context or introduces the author. Many zidishu in multiple chapters have introductory poems to each chapter in addition to a general poetic introduction to the whole. In general, rhymes are supposed to be the same throughout chapters, but there is much deviation from this rule.

Zidishu were performed by one or two performers. If two, then one sang and the other played the sanxian. If one, then he accompanied himself, again on the sanxian. As zidishu are regarded as a kind of drum song, some kind of drumming may also have been involved. A handful of the names of authors have been preserved, often because they refer to themselves by name, usually either in the introductory poem or the conclusion. There is debate about the class status of these authors, but it is likely that at least some were middle or lower ranking bannermen. Performers and audiences probably also varied in status. The setting for performance could be tea houses, temple festivals, or private parties. It is said that no money was charged for performances.

I have so far been unable to ascertain how many zidishu might have been performed at a single sitting or what, other than food, might

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12 Hu Wenbin, Honglou meng zidishu, 8.
14 Guan Dedong, Zidishu congchao. 3. Elliott, “Eating Crabs,” 266 notes a transition from an earlier stage controlled by Manchus and a later one when Chinese storytellers took over.
have accompanied performances. There must have been differences between the performances at tea houses, temple festivals, and private parties, but I do not know what those differences were.

Questions involving gender also come to mind. Male authors and performers were clearly the rule. I have not been able to discover whether *zidishu* were ever performed by women, but Jin Qicong 金啓孮 has discovered one *zidishu* by a female author.\(^5\) If courtesans performed drum songs in public toward the end of the Qing and into the Republic, as is demonstrable,\(^6\) might the same have been true for *zidishu*? Or is it the case, as seems more likely, that publicly performed *zidishu* were the exclusive purview of male storytellers? And if *zidishu* were performed at private parties, might non-courtesan women performers, such as blind female storytellers, have been involved? Accounts of oral storytelling sessions in *Honglou meng* and its written sequels occasionally feature storytellers, but the form is normally *tanci*, never *zidishu*.\(^7\) Perhaps loud drumming (whether of *zidishu* or drum singing) was incompatible with the acoustics or the mores of the women’s quarters.\(^8\) We know, as well, that drum singing required a long period of tutelage, which would have disqualified the casual woman performer.\(^9\) It is furthermore unclear how easily women might have attended performances and what kind of performances they might have attended—whether they were allowed to attend temple-based gatherings, for instance, or whether it was only at private parties that female audiences were included.

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\(^5\) Jin Qicong, *Beijing chengqu de Manzu 北京城區的滿族* (Shenyang: Liaoning minzu chubanshe, 1998), 103. I am indebted to Elena Chiu for this citation.


\(^7\) See for example chapter 40 of the forty–chapter Xu *Honglou meng* and numerous sessions in *Honglou fumeng*, for example chapters 26, 47, and 80. Even Gu Chun’s *Honglou meng ying 紅樓琴影*, which was written by a Manchu, has a *tanci* session in chapter 5. See Gu Chun, *Honglou meng ying* (1877; reprint, Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1988). *Honglou meng*’s chapters 54 and 62 also feature storytelling sessions.

\(^8\) Sources describing drum singing, such as Liu E, *The Travels of Lao Ts’an*, translated by Harold Shaddick (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1952), Lao She’s *The Drum Singer*, translated by Helena Kuo (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing, 1987), and Zhang Cuifeng’s autobiography give the impression of much larger audiences.

\(^9\) Zhang Cuifeng autobiography.
and whether female audiences were only Manchu, never Han. What
does seem clear is that women were among those who enjoyed this
genre. The large number of stories involving female characters,
including many from Honglou meng, might itself be taken as evidence
along these lines.

Zidishu are considered to be more literary in their use of language
than drum songs. Conversely, drum songs (of various kinds) often
take their material from zidishu. This is especially the case
with jingyun dagu 京韻大鼓, where some surviving texts are said to
be based directly on zidishu and are attributed to the most famous
author of in this genre, an early nineteenth century Manchu from
Shenyang named Han Xiaochuang 韓小窗.

Contemporary accounts divide zidishu into two categories, eastern
and western, with the eastern centering on adventure and the
western centering on love. This division is further signaled by a dif-
ference in musical style. It is likely that the differing sub-cultures
of Beijing’s eastern and western segments bear some connection to
this division of labor among zidishu, but it is also quite possible that
the gender composition of audiences varied with the change in sub-
ject matter.

Zidishu are quite capable of creating stories with no reference to
preexisting literature. A prime example is the famous “Eating Crabs
Youth Book.” For the most part, however, the zidishu that I know
of, which is to say, the ones reprinted by Hu Wenbin and Guan De-
dong, derive from novels, dramas, and zhiguai xiaoshuo 志怪小說.
Among the stories derived from novels, Honglou meng-based stories
appear to be the most important subset among zidishu of the West-

21 Guan Dedong, Zidishu congchao, 1.
22 Hu Wenbin, Honglou meng zidishu, 5.
23 Yisu, Honglou meng shulu, 346–53. According to Elena Chiu, Han’s works were
included in Yigeng’s 雲鶴 “Jijin shumu” 集錦書目, in Beijingshi minzu guji zhengli
chuban guihua xiaozu 北京市民族古籍整理出版規劃小組, ed., Qing Menggu Che wangfu
cang zidishu 清蒙古車王府藏子弟書 (Beijing: Guoji wenhua chubangongsi, 1994) vol.1,
176-8.
25 See Naquin, Peking, 398.
26 See note 7 above.
27 I have also consulted a reprint of the Che Wangfu collection. See note 9
above.
ern style. I am told that stories about *Sanguo* are the largest in number overall.\(^{28}\) Stories about *Jin Ping mei* and *Shuihu zhuán* are also found.\(^{29}\) If the survival rate of texts is any measure of past practice, it would be true both that the largest number of western *zidishu* derive from *Honglou meng* and that the largest number of oral retellings of this novel are found in *zidishu*, as opposed to other storytelling forms. These two patterns of convergence add to the reasons for placing *zidishu* and *Honglou meng* side by side.

The four hundred or so extant *zidishu* are said to represent but a fraction of the total that once was.\(^{30}\) In focusing on *zidishu* derived from *Honglou meng*, I am dealing with twenty-seven stories,\(^{31}\) which translate into 294 pages in modern type. Another ten or so stories on the novel were not reprinted by Hu Wenbin. For the most part, this was either because they are incomplete or duplicates of other *zidishu*. One other *zidishu* I will take up, “Baochai chanyu” 寶釵產玉, derives from the *Honglou meng* sequel *Xu Honglou meng* (thirty chapters). It is available in the Che wangfu 車王府 collection in Beijing, the reprint edition of which misidentifies its origin, claiming that it is based on *Honglou meng*.\(^{32}\) Hu Wenbin knew about this work, whose origins he too misidentifies (see below). Hu did not reprint it because it did not come from *Honglou meng*.\(^{33}\)

b) *Honglou meng* as Recreated in *Zidishu*

By no means is every character or episode from *Honglou meng* featured in *zidishu*. Most of the best known characters make an appearance

\(^{28}\) Correspondence with Elena Chiu. Evidently, many of the *Sanguo* manuscripts have not been published, but if totaled up, they would establish *Sanguo* as the most popular subject. Her source for this point is Professor Chen Jinzhao 陳錦釗, emeritus professor of National Chengchi University, Taiwan.

\(^{29}\) By my count, seventeen stories drawn from *Honglou meng* are listed in Guan Dedong’s *Zidishu congchao*, six from *Sanguo*, four from *Jin Ping Mei*, and two from *Shuahu*. The largest number from any other source is four from *Changsheng dian* 長生殿. There are three from *Liaozhai zhiyi* 聊齋志異 and one from *Hou Xiyou ji* 後西遊記.

\(^{30}\) Guan Dedong, *Honglou meng congchao*, 1.

\(^{31}\) I have only recently had occasion to read Elena Chiu’s “Some Inertextual Relations between The Dream of the Red Chamber and Manchu Zidishu,” *Tunguso Sibirica (Proceedings of the First North American Conference on Manchu Studies)*, 15 (2006): 27-61. Her work is based on twenty-eight, not twenty-seven stories.

\(^{32}\) See pages 407–9. The collection states that it is based on *Honglou meng*.

\(^{33}\) Hu Wenbin, *Honglou meng zidishu*, 296.
in this genre, if only because they are talked about by other characters. Yet those that star in their own zidishu are rather few. Among extant zidishu collected by Hu Wenbin, the characters most often featured are Daiyu, Liu Laolao (Granny Liu), and Qingwen (Skybright). Baoyu is rarely the sole star, but when characters like Daiyu and Qingwen are featured, Baoyu is also involved. This list is as interesting for the names that do not appear as for those that do. Thus, no extant zidishu revolves around Jia Zheng, Wang Furen 王夫人, Jia Mu 賈母, or Xue Pan. Even Baochai appears far less than one might expect, given her prominence in the novel. Except for Baoyu, male characters are not much featured in zidishu on Honglou meng.

Not every zidishu is organized around a person. Some are more episode-based, for example the one entitled “Haitang jieshe” 海棠結社, which is about the founding of the poetry club in Honglou meng chapter 37. Episodes usually focus on interactions between characters. Thus a scene such as that in Honglou meng’s chapter 40 when Grandmother Jia discourses on old pieces of cloth or the one in chapter 54 where she discusses caizi jiaren 才子佳人 fiction are not reworked in zidishu. However, a piece about evaluating tea from chapter 41 does translate, thanks to sprightly dialogue between Baoyu and Miaoyu 妙玉. In some works it is atmosphere rather than characterization that attracts attention. Even when a zidishu is primarily about a person, it normally features that person in a context involving other people. Soliloquies do occur, especially in longer zidishu, where they are preceded or followed by more interactive scenes. Generally speaking it is a combination of memorable episodes and memorable people from which zidishu were composed.

Every extant zidishu can be linked to a specific segment of Honglou meng. While a work may deviate from that segment in some respects, whether in leaving out subplots or modifying the action or emphasis, it is still possible to identify the segment or segments of the novel from which it is drawn. So closely are most zidishu on Honglou meng based on the novel that the author must have been literate enough to consult the written version, or, if blind, capable of appropriating someone else’s reading. Sometimes the text is quot-

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34 Zhao Jingshen 趙景深 Dagu yanjiu 大鼓研究 (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1937), 33-42.
ed directly, as when individual poems are cited in the piece on the poetry club (pages 78–9). At other times, although there is no direct quotation, the sequence of episodes follows that in the novel very closely. This is so even when the emphasis diverges from that of the novel and even when a *zidishu* consists of a chain of episodes, rather than a single scene.

I propose to illustrate this assertion with two examples. Apart from demonstrating the point, these examples also help to bring out the emotional range of *zidishu*. Thus, examples involving Qingwen show her as loyal, talented, high-strung, and ultimately wronged, whereas those involving Liu Laolao can be amusing. *Zidishu* on these two characters also raise issues of class, a matter I take up below. In addition to the *zidishu* I talk about in detail, I will mention one involving Shi Xiangyun. It highlights her social disadvantages. In this sense, too, class is a factor.\(^{35}\) In addition, *zidishu* about Daiyu dramatize such memorable moments as her arrival in the Jia household, her burial of flowers, and her suffering when Baoyu marries Baochai. There is no question that Daiyu’s travails and ultimate demise are among the favorite themes of *zidishu* on *Honglou meng*.\(^ {36}\) In contrast female characters who suffer fates similar to those of Qingwen and Daiyu but who commit suicide rather than waste away are less favored in extant *zidishu*.

i) Liu Laolao
Several extant *zidishu* take up the subject of “Granny Liu”, in the Hawkes translation.\(^ {37}\) Among the themes covered are her initial visit to the Jia family compound in chapter 6, the visits to the garden in chapters 39 and 40, her overindulgence in drink in chapter 41, and her relationships with Qiaojie 巧姐 and Xifeng, as described in chapter 42.

To give some examples of *zidishu* on Liu, the episode from chapter 40 in which she is introduced to the garden comes up in two *zidishu*, one entitled “Yiyan chenyuan” 議宴陳園 (pages 116–22), another entitled “Liangyan daguan yuan” 兩宴大觀園 (pages 123–6). Each takes up a different part of the first part of chapter

\(^{35}\) Guan Dedong, *Zidishu congchao*, 9


40. The first sets up the party by describing Jia Mu’s invitation. It then continues through the following episodes: Baoyu suggests that the food be supplied in boxes; Jiamu needs a rest; Baoyu goes back to his room; Liu Laolao is asleep at Xifeng’s place. The next day, Li Wan 李纨 appears; it is a nice day and the maids sweep the moss; Liu Laolao arrives, and they let her explore a tower; finally Jia Mu arrives. In the second chapter, Xifeng puts flowers in Liu Laolao’s hair; Liu Laolao says she doesn’t know how her head can deserve such an honor (the words she uses are almost the same as those in the novel). She then remarks that the scene around her looks just like an illustration; the Matriarch points to Xichun and notes that she knows how to paint; everyone goes on a tour of the garden; Liu Laolao walks too fast and is warned to go slower. She says she’s all right then immediately slips; everyone laughs; she turns out to be fine.

The name of the second zidishu, “Liangyan daguanyuan,” follows the title of the chapter heading to *Honglou meng* chapter 40: “Shitaijun liyang yan daguanyuan” 史太君兩宴大觀園. The characters, on a picnic, take a boat to the picnic site. Liu Laolao makes a humorous comment about eating a pig, again worded almost exactly the same way as the one in *Honglou meng*. Everyone laughs to the point of being sick. Xifeng tricks Laolao by forcing her to eat quail eggs with large chopsticks, again to general merriment. The characters go on to perform drinking songs.

There are many small differences between these zidishu and *Honglou meng*. As narrative poems, not novels, zidishu are already different in that they operate through verse rather than prose. Moreover, a lot of the novel’s dialogue and minor subjects are omitted, and there are other changes, such as that the boat trip is more heavily emphasized than in the novel in the second of these zidishu. My point is not that there are not many differences. It is rather that the number of similarities suggests that the authors of these zidishu (Fuzhai 符齋 in the first case, an anonymous writer in the second) would have needed to know the actual text of *Honglou meng*.
meng, not some approximation thereof, to have followed the plot as closely as they do.

The same cannot be said of the kairpian entitled “Liu laolao you Daguan yuan” 劉姥姥游大觀園. It, too, is drawn from chapter 40, but much more loosely, with far less detail. It encompasses the whole of chapter 40 and combines the plots of the two zidishu I have just described, although it is shorter in length than either of the two. What happens is as follows: it’s a nice day; the characters travel around the garden; Liu Laolao falls; Xifeng fools Liu Laolao with the eggs and chopsticks; at a second banquet Liu Laolao speaks about her great appetite, eats a lot and needs to relieve herself; she then falls asleep in Baoyu’s room. Unlike the zidishu, where the order of events is the same as that in the novel, here Laolao’s speech about her appetite follows rather than precedes the episode with the chopsticks, and the language is not as close to that of the novel as in the zidishu.\footnote{David Rolston, How to Read the Chinese Novel (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 331.}

ii) Qingwen
Among Honglou meng’s many servant characters, Qingwen is the most frequently encountered in zidishu.\footnote{Hu Wenbin, Honglou meng shuochang ji, 115-6.} I presume her popularity is related to that of Daiyu, inasmuch as the two women’s fates shadow one another in Honglou meng.\footnote{Hu Wenbin, Honglou meng shuochang ji, 116.} To put this another way, at their respective class levels, each projects the image of a woman wronged. Of the several extant zidishu about this character, I will begin with one entitled “Qingwen sishan” 晴雯撕扇 (pages 67–70). The opening poem notes Qingwen’s intelligence and asks the reader to forgive her for her sharp tongue. The main body goes on to tell the story of the first part of Honglou meng chapter 31. The story starts after Qingwen mistakenly steps on a fan and arouses Baoyu’s anger, events it refers to in retrospect, but only very briefly.\footnote{Hu Wenbin, Honglou meng zidishu, 7.} The events on which this zidishu focuses are as follows: Qingwen is

\begin{quote}
我的食量比耕牛大，老母豬一隻才能把飢充。\footnote{Hu Wenbin, Honglou meng shuochang ji, 115-6.} \end{quote}

The events on which this zidishu focuses are as follows: Qingwen is...
sleeping in Baoyu’s bed; Baoyu returns from a party having had too much to drink; he notes how elegant Qingwen is and sits next to her; she parries this move; he asks her why she was sleeping in his bed; she doesn’t answer the question but suggests that she prepare tea; he proposes that they take a bath together; she refuses and proposes that he eat some fresh fruit; he maintains that it’s all right to wreck property as long as one does not do so in anger; she then playfully rips his fan in two; Sheyue 麝月 appears, and, at Baoyu’s suggestion, Qingwen rips Sheyue’s fan, as well; Sheyue is upset by this; Baoyu tells Sheyue to get another fan; Qingwen says she’s tired of tearing anyway; the story ends by noting how considerate Baoyu is.

Although most lines differ from the equivalent line in Honglou meng, many are very similar; and the sequence of episodes is again identical, suggesting that the author must have known the text of the novel, not just some vague approximation thereof. Again, there are pronounced differences between the two tearing scenes. For example the zidishu is vague about the earlier episode when Qingwen stepped on a fan. Unless one has prior knowledge of the earlier episode one would be somewhat mystified as to what is going on. This vagueness seems odd in context. It makes me wonder whether the primary function of the individual zidishu was to teach readers about a novel they did not know, or rehearse episodes they already knew well. This and other lacunae in individual zidishu raise a further question about intertextuality: whether zidishu might have been presented in a series of, say, three or four works, so that no one story needed to be complete unto itself, or whether each one was expected to stand on its own. It is also possible that a serial performance might have included works in contrasting moods. For lack of information, I cannot pursue such questions farther at this time.

The zidishu on Qingwen tearing a fan makes an interesting comparison with a Guangdong muyu shu on the same subject, also entitled “Qingwen sishan.”45 Here there is no introductory poem to set the stage. The piece begins in the first person with Qingwen thinking about her feelings for Baoyu and the events, including the first fan episode, that led to the tearing of the fans. The time is set

45 Hu Wenbin, Honglou meng shuochang ji, 152–7.
at **duanwu jie** 端午節 (fifth day of the fifth month), as it is in the novel. Qingwen’s soliloquy tells of a party at Daguan yuan 大觀園, which she has chosen not to attend. We are then informed that she lies down and falls asleep. Baoyu comes back from the party and sits down. She complains to him about feelings of inferiority. He comforts her by saying not to worry and not to fret about the fan she accidentally stepped on. This prompts her to reflect on how sensitive Baoyu is. Baoyu gives her his fan to tear, which she then does. Sheyue appears and asks what is going on. Baoyu gives Sheyue’s fan to Qingwen. Sheyue is worried by this, but Qingwen goes on tearing. The *zidishu* concludes by comparing the way rain clears the air with how much better Qingwen feels better after destroying the fans.

While not as vague as the *kaipian* in its recounting of events from *Honglou meng*, the *muyu shu* is still considerably less closely based on the text of the novel than the *zidishu*. Another noticeable contrast lies in the way time is restructured. The *muyu shu*’s opening pages recapitulate the earlier fan episode, but this time in a flashback carried out in Qingwen’s own voice. After she falls asleep and Baoyu returns, the action moves forward in the narrator’s voice, more or less as it does in *Honglou meng*. In omitting direct narration of the earlier fan-breaking scene, the *zidishu* is closer to the text of the novel because it clearly shows how the first and second scenes involving fans are related. Is it feasible to claim that *zidishu*’s tendency to follow the text literally can sometimes hinder it from telling a story as coherently as it might? One sometimes has this impression, although on the whole *zidishu* tell their stories very well. Once again, one wonders whether the individual *zidishu* might have been performed as part of a larger set, all of which would have been familiar to audiences, so that no one story need have stood entirely on its own.

Two longer *zidishu*, one each about Liu Laolao and Qingwen, lend further insight into the relationship between *zidishu* and *Honglou meng*. The one about Liu Laolao is entitled “Er ru Rongguo fu 二入榮國府” (pages 81–115). Its author is unknown.

After an opening poem which emphasizes the humor in Liu Laolao’s situation, it takes her through twelve discrete moments, from the time that she first approaches Zhou Rui’s 周瑞 wife (chapter 6) to a conclusion in which Liu agrees to pray for Baoyu’s success.
on the examination and Jia mu asks Liu to bring them fruits and vegetables from her garden (chapter 39). In varying degrees, these discrete episodes are quite faithful to the text of the novel. However, the effect of telling Liu Laolao’s story over a series of connected episodes creates a very different impression from the novel, which spreads the same story over many chapters and interrupts it with other plot lines. Moreover, the *zidishu* sets up a connection between the bounty supplied by the Jias and Liu Laolao’s provision of tangible and intangible recompense for everything she has received. Such a logic is present in the novel but is not highlighted to the same degree. In these two senses, the *zidishu* differs from *Honglou meng*.

Much the same type of conclusion can be drawn from a six-chapter *zidishu* about Qingwen (pages 151–97). Entitled “Furong lei” 芙蓉誄, it is the work of Han Xiaochuang, the most famous composer of *zidishu*. It begins with an episode from *Honglou meng* chapter 52, in which Qingwen, ill with flu, skillfully mends Baoyu’s cape. The next chapter tells of her expulsion by Madame Wang from the Rong house (*Honglou meng* chapter 77) and a dream Baoyu has of her after she has moved out (*Honglou meng* chapter 77). The penultimate scene concerns Baoyu’s furtive visit to Qingwen’s house, where he makes her tea and receives her long fingernail parings as a parting gift and where the two principals exchange clothes. This visit is interrupted by an unpleasant run-in between Baoyu and Qingwen’s promiscuous sister-in-law (chapter 77). It is followed by Baoyu’s eulogy after Qingwen has died (chapter 78). The work ends with Daiyu’s expression of admiration for Baoyu’s deep feeling for Qingwen, followed by a reference to another text, a *zidishu* (?) involving Xifeng entitled “Fengjie’r niansuan” 鳳姐兒拈酸.46

Here again the *zidishu* follows the text of the novel quite faithfully. Chapter by chapter it leaps from one patch of text to another with no deviation from the order in which events in the novel occur. Again, however, the effect is different because the events are strung together as a connected whole rather than interspersed among other plot lines. In addition, there are minor additions and subtractions of words and emphases. Most important, this *zidishu* concentrates on some but not all of Qingwen’s story. Had “Furong lei” begun

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46 下回書“鳳姐兒拈酸”再找零。I read this as a possible sign of intertextuality, but I would welcome help in pinning down what it means.
with the scene about the ripping of fans, which is rather light hearted, it would have lost its intensity of focus on the injustice done to Qingwen. By beginning with Qingwen’s noble deed in patching Baoyu’s cape when she was very ill and ending with her unjust death and Baoyu’s secret eulogy, the story pits Qingwen’s vulnerability against Lady Wang’s predatory protectiveness toward her son. It is clearly the product of a fine artistic sensibility, more so than any of the other zidishu discussed so far.

In sum, fidelity to the text of *Honglou meng* seems to me to be an integral feature of the zidishu I have examined, but the rather literal appropriation by zidishu of material from the novel is by no means a sign that no artistic shaping is going on. On the contrary, these two longer sequences carry nuances not found in the original account, and they are different from the novel in that they are not crisscrossed by unrelated plot lines. Yet this fidelity to the words and sequences of the novel creates a slightly odd effect, one of hopscotching from one patch of detail to the next, rather than of presenting a story smoothly from beginning to end.

One can certainly find zidishu with looser ties to the text of the novel than the examples cited above. “Shi Xiangyun zui jiu” *史湘雲醉酒* (author unknown)\(^{47}\) combines features of three discreet chapters in a rather short narrative. These chapters do not appear in precisely the order found in the novel, and the extent of textual borrowing is rather limited. Moreover, considerable attention is paid to Xiangyun’s social disadvantages in the rarefied atmosphere of the Jia household.\(^{48}\) When this zidishu is compared with *Honglou meng*, the difference is more like that between the *kaipian* and novel which we reviewed above in connection with Liu Laolao. Even so, it is still possible to find lines of text and details that underscore the textual basis behind this zidishu.\(^{49}\)

\(^{47}\) Guan Dedong, *Zidishu congchao*, 491–4.

\(^{48}\) The theme comes out especially forcefully in the final couplet.

\(^{49}\) With no opening poem, this should probably be taken as an incomplete example of the genre.
With these observations in mind, we can now return to the question asked at the beginning: whether the extremely “uncharacteristic” characters in certain sequels to *Honglou meng* might reflect the influence of an oral genre such as *zidishu*. Admitting that our evidentiary base is slim, we have found reason to doubt that this is so. The *zidishu* we have examined draw closely upon the text of the novel. They may sometimes infuse new nuances involving character into their material, but they tend to stick quite closely to the contours set down by *Honglou meng*. The piece on Shi Xiangyun is an example of how they might revise the text in certain respects; and the longer *zidishu* on Liu Laolao and Qingwen show how much the tone may differ, even when the order of events in *Honglou meng* is strictly followed. An additional contrast with the novel is that *zidishu* are much more straightforward. They do not present major events obliquely, ironically, or off-stage, nor do they emphasize abstract patterns of similarity or difference between characters; and they do not pretend to address philosophical issues. Yet there is nothing in these contrasts to suggest that *zidishu* revise character in major ways. Never do they turn Daiyu into a proper household manager, nor do they showcase Baochai’s military skills. Whatever minor changes can be found are still “characteristic” of the characters set down by Cao Xueqin.

Here we come upon a fundamental difference in the way *zidishu* and sequels behave. Like the other oral stories considered so far, *zidishu* work within known contours. Also, like the other oral stories we have examined, *zidishu* are short. I hypothesize that they can afford to be short because for the most part they merely reproduce characters of whom the audience has prior knowledge. It is difficult to imagine any advantage for them in altering characters beyond all recognition, for then they would lose the basic core of familiarity on which performance seems to depend.

When it comes to sequels, on the other hand, their mission is necessarily to go beyond what is said in *Honglou meng*. Whether it be to resurrect characters from the dead or to send them off on totally new adventures, sequels aim to surprise readers or to comfort them for their disappointment with how the novel ends. Moreover, they have sufficient length to be able to explain how a Daiyu or Baochai could turn out so differently than they did in *Honglou meng*. 
Whereas the oral storytelling we have seen so far operates within familiar parameters and is, in that sense, conservative, sequels are much more radical, sometimes to the point of incoherence or absurdity. The availability of one *zidishu* based on a sequel, “Baochai chanyu”, provides another window onto the relationship between sequels and *zidishu*. The main event of this piece is the birth of Baochai’s and the absent Baoyu’s male child. It is taken from chapter nine of the sequel *Xu Honglou meng* in thirty chapters, which came out in 1799. Once again, the order of events follows the text of the novel, and at many moments the wording is so close as to leave no doubt that the writer wrote with a copy of *Xu Honglou meng* close at hand. As always there are embellishments. For example, “Baochai chanyu” has fun noting the flustered way in which various ladies in attendance (Lady Xue 薛姨媽, Lady Wang, Shi Xiangyun, and Liu Laolao) respond to the surprise of the birth, something the sequel does not do. Several other sequels show Baochai giving birth, but in only some cases is the baby named Jia Gui 賈桂, as this baby is. When Hu Wenbin reports that the source of the *zidishu* “Baochai chanyu” is *Bu Honglou meng* of 1814, he is not convincing. This is because the texts and events of “Baochai chanyu” are far closer to *Xu Honglou meng* than they are to *Bu Honglou meng*. Because *Bu Honglou meng* draws on earlier sequels, including *Xu Honglou meng*, Hu’s mistake is based on a similarity between *Bu Honglou meng* and *Xu Honglou meng*. But a comparison of the three texts leaves no doubt that *Xu Honglou meng*’s chapter nine, not *Bu Honglou meng*’s chapter seven, was the source for this *zidishu*. Apart from the fact that few if any lines of text follow those in *Bu Honglou meng*, the emphasis in the latter work is on a remarkable concatenation of happy events, including family members who achieve the rank of *jinshi*, which coincides with the birth of a male heir for the Jias.

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50 It is not only sequels to *Honglou meng* that alter characters. In *Shuihu houzhuan*, Wu Song 武松 has become a frail old man.  
51 *Qing Che wangfu*, 1407–09. See also Qin Zichen, *Xu Honglou meng*, 111.  
52 One is the thirty-chapter *Xu Honglou meng*, others are *Bu Honglou meng* and *Hou Honglou meng*—this name is foreshadowed in the parent novel.  
53 *Bu Honglou meng*’s account of the phrase from which the name comes follows that in *Xu Honglou meng*. See p. 139.  
54 Note the discussion of all previous sequels in chapter 48.
This embellishment is missing both from Xu Honglou meng and “Baochai chanyu.”

More important than the question of which of two sequels this zidishu might be based on is the fact that “Baochai chanyu” allows a litmus text like the one just performed. Because of the way zidishu use preexisting texts as guides, we can cite chapter and verse of Xu Honglou meng as the source for this zidishu. Conversely, we can say for certain that Bu Honglou meng was not the text from which “Baochai chanyu” was drawn.

As the above demonstration indicates, Honglou meng-related zidishu need not be based on the masterwork per se. Yet even when the model is a sequel, Baochai is still very much her old self, as is midwife Liu Laolao and the supporting cast of characters around whom this scene revolves. I do not rule out the possibility that outlandish Baochais and Daiyus like the ones discussed in my introduction might appear or even star in zidishu. But I have seen no such examples, and it is much more likely, in my view, that when zidishu were derived from sequels, the characters retained most of the traits with which they were endowed by Honglou meng. To answer a question raised at the outset, this would mean that sequels did not follow zidishu in creating outlandish characters. Zidishu could follow sequels, but the reverse seems not to be true.

I turn now to a second question about zidishu, the degree to which characters may have been “Manchu-ized” in the new genre. In every zidishu I have read, the southern origins of at least the women characters are emphasized. This is especially true of Daiyu. However, Elena Chiu notes a long conversation between Skybright’s flirtatious sister-in-law and Baoyu in “Furong lei,” that mentions several popular forms of entertainment in nineteenth century Beijing. This might imply some Manchu coloration to the character of Baoyu. Chiu’s observation may eventually require us to modify the assertion that zidishu are completely conservative when it comes to depicting character. Creative variations may be possible on the ethnic front, even when the basic core of personality is retained.

55 “Baochai chanyu” is not the only zidishu to be based on a sequel. Guan Dedong, Zidishu congchao, 528-39 reports on one based on Hou Xijiu ji. It is entitled “Mengsha guiguo” 梦剎鬼国.
56 Chiu, “Some Intertextual Relations between The Dream of the Red Chamber and Manchu Zidishu,” 27-61.

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A third point of interest is the class status of characters. Here we see subtle signs of alteration, beginning with the fact that the high currency of such figures as Liu Laolao and Qingwen is disproportionate to the roles they played in Honglou meng. Likewise zidishu on Shi Xiangyun dwell on the social disadvantages she faced as a member of the Jia household, which they add to the talkativeness, the kindness, and nap amidst peonies that stand out in Honglou meng. As well, zidishu involving Daiyu emphasize social matters in explaining why she could not marry Baoyu. These various signals can be hypothesized as deriving from zidishu’s outreach to non-elite audiences. They may also pertain to the status of authors, who were certainly literate but who would not necessarily have been members of the highest classes. Baochai’s relative absence in extant zidishu might then be understood as a negative response to the high social status she enjoyed. Alongside whatever degree of “Manchuization” we can detect in characters, this social commentary shows us that zidishu were willing to expand in class terms upon what the novel says. As recreated in zidishu, Honglou meng is less a story about the Jias and their elegant lifestyle than about the Jias in juxtaposition with other people, especially women, whose social advantages were far more limited, a juxtaposition that highlights the contingent nature of the privileges the Jias enjoyed. This emphasis is present in Honglou meng, as well, but it is comes out more clearly in zidishu.

Such an observation cannot be made about the sequels, which tend to celebrate the glamour of upper class life, not critique it. This is so despite evidence that most sequel authors were not themselves members of the upper classes and so could only fantasize about what it must be like to be a Jia.\footnote{One great exception is Gu Taiqing’s Honglou meng ying of 1877. Gu was the wife of a Manchu prince, Yihui 奕繪, and had many female friends whose husbands held high office.} This point of contrast may or may not mean that the sequels operated at a higher social level than zidishu. Certainly sequels demanded a higher level of literacy in consumers, but class and literacy do not necessarily run hand in hand. The lower-ranking Manchu bannermen who appear to have composed most zidishu need not have been lower in status than the writers of
sequels; but they are thought to have reached out more deliberately to a lower-class clientele. It was in their interests to highlight less privileged characters and to find other ways to emphasize social privilege or the lack thereof, even if they never went so far as to take an oppositional line.

_zidishu_ can thus be seen to derive from imperatives that at first seem contradictory, ones in which high literacy and high social consciousness both play roles. Its characters must be understood against this background. Their fidelity to models in _Honglou meng_ has to do with _zidishu_’s tendency toward literal appropriation of words and scenes, hence of the personalities to whom words and scenes give rise. At the same time, _zidishu_’s appeal to disempowered readers nuances familiar figures in new ways. Whether it be through the characters and plots that this genre most favored or the ways they tell their stories, _zidishu_ point to that vast surround of underprivilege to which the Jias life is set in contrast but on which it ultimately depends.

**Alternative Explanations**

If not through _zidishu_, how else might we account for the transformations in Daiyu and Baochai described above? The two cases are rather different, so we will analyze each one separately. _Hou Honglou meng_’s Daiyu can be understood as a logical response to the author’s frustration with the way the parent novel ends. Female critic Shen Shanbao’s (1808-62) 1861 preface to a much later sequel, _Honglou meng ying_ (published 1877) sums up this kind of frustration as follows:

> Because Crimson Pearl [Daiyu] has such an unequaled talent and beauty and dies early bearing a grudge, people emerge to write sequels. Each in its own way wants to dispel [Daiyu’s] grudges and overturn her poor fate, conferring earthly riches and glory on the immortal maiden beyond the heavens.\(^{58}\)

By granting Daiyu a fortune, providing her with a brother, and showcasing her competence at household management, it would seem, _Honglou fumeng_ addresses this kind of concern. Shen Shanbao lived long after _Honglou fumeng_ was published, but she sums up a reaction common to many sequels, and we need look no farther to

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\(^{58}\) Shen Shanbao, “Preface,” in Gu Taiqing, _Honglou meng ying_, 1.
explain the transformed Daiyu of *Hou Honglou meng*. Here no precedent in oral literature need be assumed. An important conceit of *Hou Honglou meng* is Cao Xueqin’s inclusion as a character. It is on Baoyu’s suggestion that Cao decides to add a new ending, one that brings Daiyu back from the dead and carries out the other adjustments described above. *Honglou fumeng* thus creates the illusion that Cao, Baoyu, Jia Zheng and others agree with the need for a revision and applaud the one supplied. This conceit does not rule out the possibility of latent influences from oral or other literature, but it makes sense as a highly rationalized effort to repair the “mistakes” of the parent novel along the lines Shen Shanbao describes.

What about the military Baochai? Judging from a preface by Chen Shiwen, the editor, and the author’s sister, this novel was also designed to relieve anxiety produced by the parent novel’s ending, but anxiety of a rather different kind. In Chen Shiwen’s words:

> The talented men of the world read [*Honglou meng*] philosophically, while [in reaction to the fates of the women characters], the gifted woman calls out in anguish “what can be done?” Love comes from the heart. Why must [the characters of the novel] be so ill fated?

This plot centers on a reincarnated Baoyu, who manages to marry twelve wives, keep them all happy, pass the examinations, and lead his family toward a rosy future. But these successes do not quite answer the question about female misfortune raised by Chen Shiwen. Might Baochai’s military triumph have been designed to alleviate the female editor’s concerns about women’s poor fate in love? It is interesting, too, that the setting of the chapters in question is Lingnan, the home town of the author and his sister. Just as *zidishu* sometimes “Manchuize” *Honglou meng*, this and other sequels move some or all of the action closer to locales the author(s) knew well. In this case, it is only in the Lingnan chapters that the transformed Baochai performs. Her other, more “characteristic” appearances in the book take place in Beijing or Jiangnan.

The first place to look for possible influences on this Baochai is *Xiyou ji* 西遊記 and *Liaozhai zhiyi* 聊齋志異, the two most frequently referenced works of fiction in *Honglou fumeng*. *Xiyou ji*’s influence may be implied in the fact that the pill Baochai takes to overcome her

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guixiu reserve, when the issue of going to battle first comes up, was supplied by Xiwang mu 西王母. However, Xiyou ji is not mentioned specifically in this connection, so it may not be an influence here. Liaozhai comes up much more clearly, and with more distinct relevance to Baochai’s military exploits. Between chapters 92 and 95, Liaozhai characters actually appear within the novel (they are clearly referenced as such), where they abet Baochai’s successful campaign. Liaozhai is not referred to elsewhere in Honglou fumeng. But the Liaozhai characters operate on a more magical plane than Baochai herself, and there is no precedent in Liaozhai for a guixiu-like character leading troops against an enemy. Other possible fictional influences include the novels Shuihu zhuan and Yangjia jiang 楊家將, incidentally, both works with ties to oral literature. Shuihu zhuan does include a few women within the ranks of its outlaw heroes, an example being Third Daughter Hu. The same can be said for Yangjia jiang, where Ninth Sister Yang dons military garb and fights against enemies of the Song Dynasty. In Yangjia jiang, some of her enemies turn out to be women, as is the case with the military Baochai’s enemies. However, in neither Shuihu nor Yangjia jiang is the heroine’s guixiu status emphasized.

One last possibility is the tanci xiaoshuo Zaisheng yuan 再生緣. By the woman writer Chen Duansheng 陳端生, this is by all accounts the greatest work in this genre. As far as we know, it was first published in 1821. Since Honglou fumeng was prefaced in 1799, the author of the preface, Chen Shiwen, could not have known Zaisheng yuan through the published version. However, this work had a long history of circulation in manuscript form.⁶⁰ Zaisheng yuan’s most notable character is surely Meng Lijun 孟麗君, whose cross-dressing leads her to civil, not military accomplishment. Zaisheng yuan also features a cross-dresser with success in the military field. This is the “Great King” 大王 Wei Yonge 衛勇娥, who is driven by political events to set up a community of female outlaws in the mountains after her father is captured by enemy forces. Her community is reminiscent of the one in Shuihu, in that it is highly organized. It is also a surprisingly civilized place to live. And members of this com-

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⁶⁰ According to the introduction to Zaisheng yuan, edited by Zhao Jingshen and Liu Chongyi 劉崇義 (Zhengzhou: Henan sheng xinhua shudian, 1982), 11, Chen Duansheng died in 1751.
munity talk about “carrying out the way of Heaven (titian xingdao 替天行道),” another sign of influence from Shuihu zhuan.⁶¹

Wei Yonge is said once to have been a guixiu, but she is so completely cross-dressed that she is always mistaken for a man until, long after we first meet her, she takes off her military garb. A somewhat related case from Zaisheng yuan is that of Huangfu Changhua 皇甫長華, who turns up (with her mother) in Wei’s outlaw camp during a flight from persecution. This character’s guixiu status is emphasized far more heavily than Wei’s. She never actually cross-dresses and thus is always patently female, but she is recognized as a brave leader during the interlude she and her mother spend in the outlaw camp with Wei. Evil fighting women can also be found in Zaisheng yuan. A manuscript version of this tanci xiaoshuo could conceivably have been among the disparate sources from which Honglou fumeng’s Baochai was formed. Alternatively, Honglou fumeng and Zaisheng yuan might each, through independent processes, have constructed their fantasies of military guixiu.

It is perhaps of only incidental interest that Honglou fumeng uses the phrase zaisheng yuan—twice in its opening pages (both on page 11) and once near the conclusion (page 1051). This is in reference to the fact that, except for Baochai and Madam Wang, virtually all of its characters are reincarnations from Honglou meng. Here again Honglou fumeng recollects Zaisheng yuan, whose characters are reborn from earlier tanci xiaoshuo.

Conclusion

The sequels we have looked at show a willingness to develop characters and plot lines in directions not found in the parent novel. This is a contrast to the much more literal appropriations from Honglou meng of zidishu. Sequels that right the “wrongs” suffered by Daiyu, among them Hou Honglou meng, are cases in point along these lines. In zidishu the tendency is opposite—to dwell on Daiyu’s sorrows as a favorite topic, but not to alleviate the bad fate she endures. Hou Honglou meng’s Daiyu is typical of the Daiyus of other sequels in her greatly improved managerial talent, if not in her lack of romantic interest in Baoyu. Whether these traits would justify ascribing to

⁶¹ Zhao Jingshen and Liu Chongyi, eds., Zaisheng yuan, 104.
her greater “agency” in the contemporary sense, or merely greater conformism, is a point not easily resolved.

Turning now to the military Baochai, it would be easy to dismiss her as an aberration, an outlandish departure from the Baochai of *Honglou meng*. Where she gains interest is in conjunction with Chen Shiwen’s preface and its lament about female misfortune. Conceivably, the extreme makeover that turns her into a military heroine was bred of the type of worry expressed by Chen Shiwen. After all, Chen Shiwen’s brother was the author, and her preface precedes that of her brother in the published version of the text. It is not at all impossible that she contributed in some way to this character’s design.

Few would take this character seriously as art, but one has to admit that she is by no means helpless. In this sense she addresses Chen Shiwen’s concerns. Here, more than with *Hou Honglou meng*’s Dai Yu, the term personal agency would seem to apply. We cannot pin down exactly where this remade Baochai came from, except to hypothesize that she is a composite of many influences, as well as of authorial refashioning and invention. Of all of the possible models we have considered the most interesting is *Zaisheng yuan*. Herein lies a link to an important tradition involving women, whether or not we posit a direct link between it and *Honglou fumeng*. Yet works like *Shuihu* and *Yangjia jiang* may also have played a role. Does this mean that storytellers generally, not just those catering to the women’s quarters, found pleasure and profit in the figure of the cross-dressed military woman?

Where *Honglou fumeng* and *Zaisheng yuan* go beyond earlier works is in their insistence on the heroine’s *guixiu* status. To one extent or another, women of *guixiu* background were involved in both of these works’ composition. This suggests that the figure of the *guixiu* warrior may be based on the dreams and covert aspirations of *guixiu* authors and audiences, not merely on what worked as popular entertainment during the Ming and Qing.