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Voices of Anxiety: an Examination of the Treatment of Sexuality in the Fox Tales of Liao-chai chih-i

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is an examination of the function of the fox fairy in Chinese literary culture. In traditional Chinese stories, fox fairies carry a strong sexual image. In P'u Sung-ling's Liao-chai chi-i, the fox tales are also closely related to human concerns about sexuality, but past studies of P'u's works have concentrated mainly on their biographical and political aspects. This thesis, however, uses Freud's psychological treatises to interpret four fox stories.

P'u's fox stories are not only stories of desire based on the perennial theme of the expression of sexual instinct, but are also stories of suppression, repression, and anxiety which directly reflect the various problems of the age in which they were written. Using a psychological approach, it will be argued that "Subjugation of the Foxes" is about male sexual desire, "Scholar Tung" warns against sexual desire, "Scholar Leng" utilizes the life-giving strength of sexual instincts to fulfill a non-sexual craving, and "Huang Chiu-lang" expresses a subtle wish for the continuation of banned homosexual tradition.

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Chapter I. Introduction

P'u Sung-ling's 蒲松齡(1640-1715 AD) Liao-chai chih-i聊齋誌異 consists of 494 anomalous or supernatural tales, which offer the best showcase for modern readers to take a look into the psychological activities and concerns of individuals as well as the masses of that age. The title of this book has also been romanized as Liaozhai zhiyi, and translated into English as Tales of the Unusual from the Leisure Studio, Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio, or Strange Tales from Make-Do Studio. Hereafter, I will simply refer to it as Liao-chai, except in quotations.

A widely accepted assumption is that Liao-chai must have already been largely completed by the time that P'u wrote his own preface "Liao-chai tzu-chih" 聊齋自誌, (Liao-chai's own record) to it in 1679 (Barr, 515). Yang Liu also indicates that according to the literary conventions of the time, a preface was usually added to a book after the initial manuscript was finished; thus, it can be inferred that Liao-chai took P'u more than twenty years to complete (14). Hsieh Yauling, in the introduction to Hsieh's Ph.D. dissertation, "Tales of the Supernatural: 'Liao-chai chi-i' and the American Short Story of the Nineteenth Century," points out, however, that "not until 1766 was it first printed and published. Since then Liao-chai has become very popular first among readers who may be said to be truly literate, [and] later among the public in general" (5). In fact, Hsieh states: "It is considered the most important collection of short stories ever written

by a single author in classical Chinese in terms of quality, influence, and sheer volume" (5).

Though Liao-chai gained popularity among P'u's contemporaries and readers of later generations, its genesis seems to have been an unpleasant one, tinged with P'u's personal frustration and suffering. In the memorial epitaph inscribed upon P'u's tombstone, P'u's contemporary Chang Yuan張元 wrote:

> Though his name was famous among scholars, he failed his examinations repeatedly. He sighed: "It must be my fate!" Thus, he decided to turn his attention away from those examinations in order to put more efforts in the art of writing in the classical language. . . . However, his interior complexes could not be fully salved by this, either. So, he started to search for tales of the strange, then wrote down his book Chih-i. (Yang Liu, 14) [1]

Evidently, Chang Yuan believed that P'u's motivation for writing Liao-chai was mainly prompted by his repeated failures in the civil-service examinations, and this observation does appear valid. In Lin Lien-hsiang's article "The Examination Syndrome in Liao-chai chih-i," Lin gives a detailed account of P'u's experiences in the examinations. According to Lin, P'u grew up in a family in which three generations of male members--P'u's grandfather, father, and P'u himself--devoted much time to preparing for the civil service examination. However, none of them was ever successful. In fact, P'u's examination career started well. At the age of nineteen, much younger than the average candidates, P'u had already successfully passed all the three elementary tests of *t'ung-shih*童試 with the highest honors and won high praise from the chief

examiner, the well-known scholar Shih Jun-chang施閏章. Nevertheless, P'u unfortunately spent the next thirty years trying to climb the next step in vain. Only at the age of seventy-two, three years before his death, was he eventually granted the status of *kung-sheng*貢生 for his spotless record as a *sheng-yuan*生員 for more than half a century (Lin, 368-69).

Indeed, repeated failures in examinations might be an ostensible factor which motivated P'u to write Liao-chai; however, after scrutinizing P'u's other works and the contents of Liao-chai, some scholars indicate that other reasons must be involved. For example, Jaroslav Prusek, based upon his analysis of a poem written by P'u in 1679, which contains the line "Hopeless is my lot--and the book still unwritten," speculates that P'u wrote his book with a view to winning a great name for himself (121). Also, according to Chang Chun-shu and Chang Hsueh-lun's observation, the tales of Liao-chai not only stress romantic love but provide social criticism as well. They categorize P'u's tales into four major themes: love stories, exposure of the corruption of the bureaucracy, satire on the civil service examination system and the scholarship of the age as a whole, and a reflection of the anti-Manchu feelings of the Chinese people (65).

It is widely accepted among scholars that social criticism and the venting of pent-up anger is one of P'u's purposes in writing Liao-chai. Lin even regards this purpose as the very reason that Liao-chai needed to be camouflaged in the guise of supernatural and curious stories. Lin explains that "In a tyrannical society where realistic social criticism might endanger his own life, the form of fiction, especially strange stories about

supernatural beings, fox spirits, and ghosts, would make an ideal vehicle for his criticism" (371).

In fact, seen from another point of view, P'u's fictive narrative of fox fairies and ghosts is a continuation of the tradition of Chinese fantastic writing, which can be traced back to the Six Dynasties (220-589 AD). In the *chih-kuai* 志怪 (records of the strange) stories written during the Six Dynasties, many examples of the transformation of animals and inanimate objects, as well as their interactions with humans can be found (Kao, 1985, 5). Short stories related to anomalous and supernatural events are frequently depicted in various works, such as So-shen chi 搜神記 (In search of the supernatural) by Kan Pao 干寶 , Shi-i chi 拾遺記 (Gathering remaining account) by Wang Chia 王嘉 , and Hsuan chung chi 玄中記 (Records from within the recondite) by Kuo P'u 郭璞 .

Inherited along with the generic features of *chih-kuai* stories, the fantastic writing tradition was maintained during the T'ang Dynasty (618-907 AD), and was further elaborated into the form of *ch'uan-ch'i* 傳奇 (accounts of the extraordinary) tales. Most *ch'uan-ch'i* writers adopted the *chih-kuai* tradition in terms of themes and techniques, showing great interest in stories of crossed lovers, heroic individuals, supernatural encounters, unavenged ghosts, dreams and their interpretations, as well as journeys to Utopia (Hsieh, 4).

The *chih-kuai* and *ch'uan-ch'i* tales had a significant influence on the literature of the succeeding dynasties, such as *hua-pen* stories 話本 (vernacular stories), drama, as well as professional story-telling (Prusek, 122). And up to the Ming and Ch'ing

Dynasties, the self-conscious characteristic of narrative derived from the linguistic and literary properties of the genre of fantastic writing became an increasingly prevalent phenomenon in the revival of fiction writing in the classical language; thus, following Chien-teng hsin-hua 剪燈新話(New tales told under the lamp) of Ch'u Yu 瞿佑 (1341-1427 AD), as well as other Ming works, P'u wrote his Liao-chai (Kao, 1985, 48). According to Dr. Karl S. Y. Kao, Liao-chai "achieved a new height of narrative art that emulated and at times surpassed the standard of T'ang authors," mainly "by transforming motifs new and old and by the application of rhetorically informed literary processing" (1985, 48).

But observing the writing of Liao-chai from a different angle, we may note that P'u not only adopted the motifs and themes from the tradition of fantastic writing but also drew much inspiration from contemporary folklore. In his own preface, he explicitly describes how his collection of anomalous and supernatural tales was derived. He writes:

> Though I lack the talent of Gan Bao, I too am fond of "seeking the spirits"; in disposition I resemble Su Shi, who enjoyed people telling ghost stories. What I have heard, I committed to paper, and so this collection came about. After some time, like-minded men from the four directions dispatched stories to me by post, and because "things accrue to those who love them," what I had amassed grew even more plentiful. (1) [2]

Thus, judging from this self-acknowledged statement, the sources of his more than 490 tales were mainly reports of anomalous events occurring during the early Ch'ing Dynasty, unusual anecdotes that happened to or heard by P'u's friends, as well as those

folktales which were concerned with the supernatural and which were already available during P'u's time. After a close reading of P'u's tales, however, Marlon Kau Hom provides us with a clearer and more accurate picture of the sources of P'u's tales in her dissertation "The Continuation of Tradition: a Study of Liaozhai zhiyi by Pu Songling (1640-1715)". Hom states:

> Generally speaking, the sources for his entries can be divided into three categories: entries where the sources were from earlier tales, popular folk legends, and natural events; entries where the materials were provided by Pu's friends and associates; and entries that were Pu's own creative compositions. (36)

Though P'u produced a large collection of tales by rewriting and drawing inspiration from ancient and contemporary folktales, natural events, as well as from P'u's imagination, in this thesis I will focus only on those tales related to the fox fairies and, in particular, on the treatment of sexuality within these stories.

Fox stories play a very important role among the tales of Liao-chai. Allegedly, Liao-chai was initially entitled as "Kuei hu chuan" 鬼狐傳 (Accounts of ghosts and foxes), and was later renamed as Liao-chai chih-i due to the fact that the book had broadened to include a much larger range of topics (Luo, 386; Chang Ching-chiao, 181). As a matter of fact, among those stories related to supernatural beings depicted in Liao-chai, fox tales constitute the second largest group, after the ghost stories. In Liao-chai, based on Luo Ching-chih's calculation, there are ninety-three tales related to ghosts, seventy-one to foxes, and six to both ghosts and foxes (386). Thus, Fatima Wu, in her article "Foxes in Chinese Supernatural Tales I." declares that it can be said that P'u wrote

the greatest number of such tales that had been written up to that time in his one collection of Liao-chai chih-yi (134).

In the Chinese fictive narrative written in the classical language, the fox fairies are one of the most frequently depicted supernatural beings. In the beginning of the genre of fantastic writing during the Six Dynasties, various records of foxes, their sorcery, and magic can be found in works such as Pao-p'u tzu 抱朴子 (The master who embraces simplicity), So-shen chi, Hsuan chung chi, and So-shen hou-chi 搜神後記 (The sequence of So-shen chi) (Wu, 1986, 122-23). However, during the Six Dynasties, fantastic story writers had not paid much attention to creating stories of fox fairies; only in the T'ang Dynasty did fox stories become popular and were written in large numbers with many elaborations on a variety of themes (Yeh, 31). In the Sung Dynasty, fox tales maintained their popularity. The book T'ai-ping kuang-chi 太平廣記 (The broad records of T'ai-ping), for example, is "a monumental compilation done in early Sung on miscellaneous narratives of the pre-Sung period," and within it the section on foxes is among the biggest categories of the entire collection (Hom, 244). Until the Ch'ing Dynasty, as is claimed by Chang Huo-ch'ing, the fox fairies were still the most often depicted subject matter by fantastic story writers (294).

Traditionally, fox fairies carry a negative image: the universal characteristics attached to foxes are that they are cunning, tricky, and wise, and therefore dangerous. The ancient sage Chung Tzu 莊子 shared such a belief in the malicious nature of foxes referring to them as "evil foxes" (Wu, 1986, 126). In Sho shen chi, Kan Pao maintains that foxes can cause insanity, disease, or even death (Wu, 1986, 126). Moreover,

according to the later folk belief, as suggested by R. D. Jameson, people tended to believe that all foxes were unfriendly and vicious, so that if there were some stories about good foxes, they were mainly used to pacify and flatter the fox demons who probably were invisibly lurking around all the time (92). As a consequence, even in the contemporary language, the negative image of foxes is adopted to characterize sly, debauched men or lascivious, unchaste women (Yeh, 31).

But with respect to the genre of fantastic narrative, in the T'ang Dynasty, two *ch'uan-ch'i* tales, "Chi Chen"計真 and "Jen-shih chuan"任氏傳 (The biography of Lady Jen), developed revolutionary ideas to overturn the traditional negative image attached to fox fairies. These two stories helped to change the image of foxes from being dangerous, lewd, selfish, greedy, and cunning animals to being kind, self-sacrificing, faithful, sincere and caring individuals (Wu, 1986, 134 and 140). Immediately thereafter, the image of foxes underwent a drastic change. Wu provides us proof by indicating that in the T'ai-ping kuang-chi, one quarter of foxes had already been depicted as possessing good characters and that in P'u's Liao-chai, as much as eighty percent of the fox spirits are portrayed with positive qualities (1986, 134). In Liao-chai, P'u not only assigns desirable qualities to his fox fairies but also creates a much wider spectrum of characters compared with those in the traditional tales. P'u's foxes appear as scholars, educated and refined individuals who help men in their studies or writing; as foxes who are excessively fond of drinking and develop a relationship of trust and love with their human drinking companions; as vicious foxes who either plunder the human domain or steal energy from men or women through sexual intercourse; as beautiful females who become involved

with men, helping them in their careers and starting families with them; and as magical helpers who assist humans in various matters such as making money, driving away a shrewish wife, or winning a family power struggle.

Among all the fox stories dealing with the various relations between foxes and humans, sexuality is possibly the most prominent theme. Even in the ancient book Hsuan chung chi, we can find such description:

> When a fox is fifty years old, it can transform itself into a woman; [when] a hundred years old, it becomes a beautiful female, or a *wu* [shaman] possessed by a spirit, or a grown-up man who has sexual intercourse with women. Such beings are able to know things at more than a thousand miles distance; they can poison men by sorcery, or possess and bewilder them, so that they lose their memory and knowledge; and when a fox is a thousand years old, it penetrates to heaven, and becomes a celestial fox. (Wu, 1986, 122) [3]

As is clearly revealed in this passage, once fox fairies acquire the ability to metamorphose, they tend to transform themselves into attractive humans in order to have sexual intercourse with humans. Yeh Ch'ing-ping also points out that in most classical fantastic narrative, fox fairies often become beautiful women in order to seduce, live with, or marry men. And they usually succeed since they possess the "magical pearl," a pearl hidden inside their bodies which endows them with special charm irresistible to mortals (32).

Why are foxes fond of having sexual intercourse with human beings? A folk belief may provide us with one possible answer. Chang Huo-ch'ing states that in ancient times,

people thought that animals or plants, after they died or became very old, could turn into spirits. But, allegedly, because their status as beings was inferior to that of humans, they could only ascend to the so-called level of "*yu-tien*"欲天(heaven of desire) after their death instead of the higher ones of "*so-tien*"色天 (heaven of phenomena/forms) and "*wu-so-tien*"無色天(heaven of formlessness), which were accessible to virtuous humans. Thus, if foxes could steal the superior essence of life from the humans, they could accelerate their cultivation and eventually reach higher levels of heaven (293-94). Young men and women are abundantly filled with such vital energy; thus, foxes always try to get close to them in order to absorb their spiritual energy by inhaling their breath while they are sleeping or by having sexual intercourse with them. As a consequence, most ancient fox tales, as well as a large number of P'u's stories, are tales of possession, rape, and extra-marital relationships between a fox and a man, and, in the end, the man or woman who is deprived of spiritual energy by the fox usually dies or becomes debilitated (Wu, 1986, 123).

Inspired by this interesting phenomenon, I have chosen P'u's fox tales--particularly an exploration of the treatment of sexuality between foxes and humans--as the subject matter of this thesis. In Yang Rui's dissertation "Liaozhai zhiyi reinterpreted from a Psychoanalytic Point of View," Yang Rui adopts Freudian, Jungian, feminist, and Winnicottian psychoanalytical theories to interpret some of P'u's stories. But, as far as Freud's theories are concerned, Yang Rui mainly uses the theory of the masculine Oedipus complex (Ch. 8). Here, I will use other dimensions of Freud's psychoanalytical

theories to read P'u's fox tales, as well as borrow perspectives, whenever they are related and applicable, from Freud's various treatises to help analyze and explain some plots.

Freud's theories were mainly built upon his observations and considerations of Western culture and civilization. They will, inevitably, have certain limitations, when applied to explain or interpret Chinese stories, because the contents of the Chinese stories are based on a different set of cultural assumptions and underlying principles, whereas Freud's theories are more focused upon the observation and consideration of the mental activities of individuals in Western society. However, Freud's innovative and extensive studies of sexuality and the psychological activities of human societies should be a valuable reference when exploring various problems related to sexuality as revealed in the targeted stories.

In this thesis, due to the large number of P'u's fox tales and the unavoidable complexity and difficulty of carrying out an overall examination, I will only choose four fox stories for analysis, then explore particular dimensions related to the treatment of sexuality within them. In the first story "Fu hu"伏狐(Subjugation of the foxes) (308), I will mainly apply Freud's theories about the libidinal instinct, the pleasure principle and the reality principle to examine the contents of the story. Also, when it is appropriate, I will make use of some perspectives from Freud's discussion of sadism, fear of castration, jokes, and fantasy to explain parts of this story. In the second story "Tung shen"董生 (Scholar Tung) (133-36), I will apply Freud's statements on the ego, the id, the superego, the dynamic formation of dreams, and the death instincts. In the third story "Leng sheng"冷生 (Scholar Leng) (847), Freud's ideas of anxiety will be drawn upon to explain certain

plots. Finally, in the fourth story "Huang Chiu-lang"黃九郎 (Mr. Huang Chiu-lang) (316-23), Freud's discussion on homosexuality will be my reference. The structure of this thesis is divided into two parts. The main body will be divided into four parts, as follows: "Subjugation of the Foxes": a Manifest Display of Males' Libidinal Desire; "Scholar Tung": the Ambiguity of Death; "Scholar Leng": Sex as a Catalyst for Wishfulfillment and Social Criticism; and "Huang Chiu-lang": the Return of Males' Repressed Homosexual Wish.

Chapter II. An Examination of the Treatment of Sexuality in the Fox Tales of Liao-chai

A. "Subjugation of the Foxes": a Manifest Display of Male Libidinal Desire

Before we start to examine the treatment of sexuality in the following fox stories, we need to know some of Freud's basic concepts related to human sexuality, upon which our discussion in "Subjugation of the Foxes" is mainly based. In an encyclopedia article entitled "The Theory of Libido," Freud gives a concise description of his libido theory. According to him, there are two classes of basic instincts in our mind. One set is "the death instincts," which "follow the aim of leading the creature to death," which are "directed outward as the results of the combination of numbers of unicellular elementary organisms," and which "manifest themselves as destructive or aggressive impulses" (Standard Edition XVIII, 258). The other set is "the sexual or life instincts," called "Eros" by Freud, which are concerned with self-preservation and the need to relate to others, and which "form living substance into ever greater unities, so that life may be prolonged and brought to higher development" (Standard Edition XVIII, 258). Freud believes that these two sets of instincts are in constant conflict. He writes:

> the erotic instincts and the death instincts would be present in living beings in regular mixtures or fusion . . . . Life would consist in the manifestations of the conflict or interaction between the two classes of instincts; death would mean for the individual the victory of the destructive instincts, but reproduction would mean for him the victory of Eros. (Standard Edition XVIII, 258-59)

Freud terms the dynamic manifestation of sexual instincts in mental life as "libido." He thinks that the libido is made up of instincts which are gradually united into organizations. The sources of these instincts are in the organs of the body, especially in the so-called "erotogeneous zones." In the beginning, individual component instincts seek for satisfaction independently, but in the course of development they become more and more convergent and concentrated. Freud divides the later development into three stages: oral, anal, and genital (Standard Edition XVIII, 244-45). However, according to him, the development of libido is not always smooth. He writes:

> As a rule this development is passed through swiftly and unobtrusively; but some individual portions of the instincts remain behind at the prodromal stages of the process and thus give rise to fixations of libido, which are important as constituting predisposition for subsequent irruption of repressed impulses and which stand in a definite relation to the latter development of neuroses and perversions. (Standard Edition XVIII, 245)

The relentless libidinal search for satisfaction is guided by a "pleasure principle." In "Beyond the Pleasure Principle," Freud states:

> In the theory of psycho-analysis we have no hesitation in assuming that the course taken by mental events is automatically regulated by the pleasure principle. We believe, that is to say, that the course of those events is invariably set in motion by an unpleasurable tension, and that it takes a direction such that its final outcome coincides with a lowering of that tension--that is, with an avoidance of unpleasure or a reproduction of pleasure. (Standard Edition XVIII, 7).

Nevertheless, he continues,

> We know that the pleasure principle is proper to a *primary* method of working on the part of the mental apparatus, but that, from the point of view of the self-preservation of the organism among the difficulties of the external world, it is from the very outset inefficient and even highly dangerous. (Standard Edition XVIII, 10)

Therefore, goaded by the instincts of self-preservation, the human psyche needs to take conditions of the outside world into consideration and replaces the pleasure principle with the "reality principle." Though the pleasure principle may well be replaced by the reality principle, Freud adds:

> This latter principle does not abandon the intention of ultimately obtaining pleasure, but it nevertheless demands and carries into effect the postponement of satisfaction, the abandonment of a number of possibilities of gaining satisfaction and the temporary toleration of unpleasure as a step on the long indirect road to pleasure. (Standard Edition XVIII, 10)

Thus, once the reality principle replaces the pleasure principle, in Herbert Marcuse's words, "the reality principle supersedes the pleasure principle: man learns to give up momentary, uncertain, and destructive pleasure for delayed, restrained, but 'assured' pleasure," and, "because of this lasting gain through renunciation and restraint, . . . the reality principle 'safeguards' rather than 'dethrones,' 'modifies' rather than denies, the pleasure principle" (12-13).

With an understanding of these basic theories of human sexuality, we can now start our examination of the treatment of sexuality in "Subjugation of the Foxes," which consists of two short stories. Although these theories may be considered basic in Western culture, their usefulness in the analysis of these stories will be indicated in my argument. For example, one of the aspects of their validity lies in the fact that all the figures who have relations with fox fairies deviate from what would be considered normal sexual behavior in traditional Chinese culture, because sexual pleasure was thought to be found within the family and not elsewhere.

Because of their brevity, I will translate them in their entirety.

(I)

There was a historian who was possessed by a fox, which caused his health to deteriorate severely. After trying all manners of spells and exorcisms in vain, he took leave from his post to return to his hometown with the hope of getting rid of the fox. However, as soon as the historian set out, the fox followed him. The historian was in a panic but could do nothing at all. One day, he met a doctor who claimed that he could help him subjugate the fox, so the historian invited the doctor to his house. The doctor gave him a special medicine--the art of the bedchamber. After taking this "medicine," the historian entered the room and had sexual intercourse with the fox. He became so energetic and violent that the fox wanted to run away, and pleaded with him to stop. But, ignoring its plea, he only became more vehement. The fox tried all means of escape, but its efforts were in vain. After some time, the fox returned to its original fox shape and died.

(II)

In my hometown, there was a scholar. This scholar had an exceptionally big sexual organ, and kept complaining that his organ has never got complete satisfaction during all his lifetime. One day, while in a room alone, without the door being opened, there walked in a girl who had run away from her family. He knew that she must be a fox fairy in disguise, and thus felt glad to have sexual intercourse with her. Taking his clothes off, he thrust his penis into her private part right away. Feeling great agony, she squealed painfully. Like a falcon flying off the hunter's forearm, she hurriedly ran out through the window. Looking out of the window, he addressed her with words of endearment, hoping to call her back; however, there was no reply. It is really the fiercest general who can suppress the fox spirits! He should hang out a shingle, which says that he is an expert at chasing the foxes away, and make a living out of it.

Observed in light of Freud's ideas, these two stories are an ostensible display of the male pursuit of satisfaction for unquenchable libidinal instincts. However, before wholeheartedly pursuing their pleasure, the males still have some hesitation and need to take the limitations of reality into account. Consequently, these two tales are cloaked in the disguise of comic stories and sheer fantasy. Here, in this exclusively male world of fantasy, the male genital organ is the pivotal point; whereas the females have been reduced to shadowy figures, functioning only as the males' sexual objects. However, under the surface of this blatant display of sexual potency, a fear still lingers in the male psyche--their fear of impotence, which means a symbolic castration by the females and

which might be the very source of male hostility towards females, as presented in these two stories.

Compared with the other fox stories or even any other Liao-chai story which depicts sexual scenes, the undisguised language used in these two stories is much more vivid and may even have been sensationally provocative to contemporary audiences. As far as Freud's libido theory is concerned, these two stories are almost self-explanatory examples of the pursuit of pleasure and satisfaction which is perpetually prompted by the sexual instincts. Here, what is under the spotlight is the expression of sexual desire, or, more specifically, the search for erotic satisfaction and the concern of sexual potency. In the first story, thanks to that miraculous medicine--the art of the bedchamber--the historian obtains superb sexual ability and gallantly turns the tables on the fox. From being a desperate victim ravished by a supernatural being, he becomes a sexually strong man, finally ruining his predator and tormentor. In the second story, confident with his extraordinary genital organ and its presumable potency, the scholar publicly complains that he has long awaited the complete sexual satisfaction. So, he feels very glad to encounter the fox fairy and has no hesitation in having intercourse with it in order to fulfill his long-cherished wish. Although, at the end of the story, it is not clear if his wish has been realized or not, at least he proves that his sexual organ really endows him with indomitable sexual power, which even a lascivious fox fairy cannot resist.

While witnessing the triumphant exhibition of sexual feats committed by these two human characters, however, we should consider "who" these two fox fairies really are. Obviously, fox fairies exist exclusively in stories of fantasy. As is usually shown in P'u's

other fox stories, fox fairies are in fact human beings who have been transformed and projected into the realm of fantasy through imagination. So, these two fox fairies are human figures in disguise, too. In the second story, the fox fairy appears as a human female. In the first story, the fox fairy's gender has never been given. However, judging from the depiction of sexual scenes and their similarity to the second story, we can tell that that fox fairy has implicitly been assigned a female role, too. Moreover, if it is a male and the subject matter in this story is homosexual act, the author P'u would have pointed it out to us directly, as he does in stories such as "Huang Chiu-lang" and "Hsia-nu"俠女 (A chivalrous woman) (210-16). Thus, we can infer that the display of sexual pleasure and potency in these two stories belongs to a male version; wherein these two fox fairies are the representation of imaginary females, who are sexually active and whom males wish to encounter in any possible extramarital or illicit affair.

This discovery makes us wonder what might be the motivation for the genesis of these two stories, and leads our attention to the manner in which P'u collected his tales. As has been pointed out in the Introduction, a substantial part of P'u's anthology is derived from early tales, contemporary folktales, and stories or anecdotes provided by P'u's associates, who were also male scholars, owing to the fact that during that age, generally speaking, only males had the privilege of receiving education. Naturally, while telling, retelling, or making up their stories, P'u's associates would infuse their own ideas into them in various ways. As for the ancient tales, Anthony Yu has pointed out clearly that traditional Chinese stories, including the vernacular ones, were virtually all written by men (427). P'u could elaborate upon these early tales, but his new tales would retain

the personality of the preceding writers to a considerable degree. As a result, these two characteristics extant in the sources of his tales have inevitably left a good number of P'u's stories tinged with a strong male bias. So, where the expression of male sexual desire is concerned, that desire is most ostensibly and intensively displayed in these two fox stories.

As has been indicated by Freud, however, such a male pursuit of libidinal pleasure and satisfaction is hardly compatible with social mores and must eventually be tamed by the reality principle. Reckless pursuit of male desire for erotic gratification would be unacceptable and severely condemned by the existing social norms, which usually demanded individuals' sexual restraint and . Also, the blatant and blunt expression of sexual violence, as is presented in these two stories, would definitely violate the rules of social decorum and the established relations between males and females in society. Moreover, the consideration of social status and education level would halt any scholar from plunging into such an instinctive sexual pursuit without hesitation; rather, it could prompt him to gratify his desire by telling or writing stories of this genre. Due to these various restrictions, the release of male erotic desire needs to be confined by the reality principle, and, as a consequence, these two stories in "Subjugation of the Foxes" are cloaked in fantastic and comic color.

Although presented as fantasy, these two stories still hang on tightly the perennial theme of pleasure-seeking and become a clever version of stories which follow both the pleasure principle and the reality principle. They embody somewhat the story provider's interior process of negotiation between following either the pleasure principle or the

reality principle, and because a compromise has been reached--that is, the stories become fox stories, the stories of fantasy--in depicting the foxes's incessant sexual quests, he can avoid direct criticism and obtain vicarious gratification at the same time.

In fact, on the origins of fantasy-making, Freud has already pointed out this inherent characteristic of searching for pleasure in fantastic stories. He states:

> With the introduction of the reality principle one mode of thought-activity was split off: it was kept free from reality-testing and remained subordinated to the pleasure principle alone. This is the act of phantasy-making (das Phantasieren), which begins already with the game of children, and later, continued as day-dreaming, abandons its dependence on real object. (Standard Edition IV, 16-7)

Though practical considerations get the upper hand temporarily, the search for pleasure still prevails and dominates in these two stories of fantasy. More importantly, they speak a psychological truth in the process of searching for pleasure. According to Marcuse, in fantasy,

> Reason prevails: it becomes unpleasant but useful and correct; phantasy remains pleasant but becomes useless, untrue--a mere play, day-dreaming. As such, it continues to speak the language of the pleasure principle, of freedom from repression, of uninhibited desire and gratification . . . . (142)

Perhaps these two stories of fantasy might appear to be useless and untrue on the surface, but they actually achieve a much more important practicality and truth instead, since they offer the space for the males--inside and outside of stories--to speak out a reality of their mentality without repression or inhibition. As is also pointed out by Marcuse, "as a

fundamental, independent mental process, phantasy has a truth value of its own, which corresponds to an experience of its own--namely, the surmounting of the antagonistic human reality;" and through the convenience of fantasy, "imagination envisions the reconciliation of the individual with the whole, of desire with realization, of happiness with reason" (143). So, through these two stories of fantasy, the male is able to surmount the opposition of society, reconcile any conflict between the individual and the whole, realize his desire, and gain happiness in the name of reason. And, fortunately, due to the particular features of fantasy--a form resistant to being defined, the free-floating quality, the ability to escape the human condition as well as to construct an alternate world, and being imaginatively formed and written--readers of these two stories can enjoy them, then forget them easily (Jackson, 2).

These two stories are also presented as comic stories. Obviously, P'u regards these two stories, particularly the second one upon which he jokingly attaches his brief comment, as stories with comic value to entertain his readers (mainly male readers perhaps), so that he collects them, writes them down, then arranges them under the title of "Subjugation of the Foxes." But, what could be the comic elements within these two stories at all? Seemingly, the first comic sense lies in the existence of irony--even these supernatural, sex-thirsty fox fairies can be defeated by their human opponents. The second comic sense lies in hyperbole, in the miraculous function of the males' genitals, for strong and powerful penises are much better than any talisman to fend off the approaches of vicious fox fairies.

These special comic elements remind us of a particular style of joke named "smut," which Freud mentions in his "Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious." He states that "we know what is meant by 'smut': the intentional bringing into prominence of sexual facts and relations by speech" (Standard Edition VIII, 97). According to him, in using smut, the teller's intention is not merely limited to depicting the sexual facts and relations as the major substance of the joke; but, rather, the focus in the act of telling is on the anticipation and response from the audience. He writes:

> Smut is directed to a particular person, by whom one is sexually excited and who, on hearing it, is expected to become aware of the speaker's excitement and as a result to become sexually excited in turn. Instead of this excitement the other person maybe led to feel shame or embarrassment, which is only a reaction against the excitement and, in a roundabout way, is an admission of it. (Standard Edition VIII, 97)

He continues:

> If a man in a company of men enjoys telling or listening to smut, the original situation, which owing to social inhibitions cannot be realized is at the same time imagined. A person who laughs at smut that he hears is laughing as though he were the spectator of an act of sexual aggression. (Standard Edition VIII, 97)

With the vivid description of sexual acts and the intention of bringing sexual organs into prominence, the writer or the teller of the two stories in "Subjugation of the Foxes" also has the intention of making his audience laugh, imagine the sexual scenes, and share the copulative pleasure. The audience, with desire aroused, is willing to wait to see the

depicted sexual acts to obtain vicarious pleasure. They become voyeurs, and their voyeuristic desire is called "fore-pleasure" by Freud. "The increment of pleasure," he writes, "which is offered to us in order to release the yet greater pleasure arising from deeper sources in the mind is called an 'increment premium' or technically, 'fore-pleasure'" (Standard Edition VII, 210). Thus, through reading or being told these two stories, the reader becomes a voyeur, who anticipates the "fore-pleasure," and who keeps looking on with a fixed stare, with a hope that he will get "waylaid," "laid by the wayside, as if accidentally," but in the meantime remain "enthralled by a mirage, a simulacrum for the thing itself" (Kochhar-Lindgren, 468-69).

Indeed, a very important part in the motivation of telling smut is letting others visualize the sexual things; but, Freud reminds us that these others are not limited to male audiences only but also include those whom smut is originally aimed at--females. He writes:

> Smut is thus originally directed toward women and may be equated with attempts at seduction . . . . Smut is like an exposure of the sexually different person to whom it is directed. By the utterance of the obscene word it compels the person who is assailed to imagine the part of the body or the procedure in question and shows her that the assailant is himself imagining it. (Standard Edition VIII, 98)

So, smut as well as our two stories at hand also carries a seducer's intention of visualizing his target's sexual organ and of attracting her by exposing his own sexual organ. Here, then, he is also an exhibitionist. However, in this aspect, nothing seems unusual from the Freudian point of view. Freud regards the desire to see and to let sexual

organs be seen is rooted in our libidinal inclination, which has been long and deeply buried in our unconscious. Freud writes:

> It is easy to observe the inclination to self-exposure in young children. In cases in which the germ of this inclination escapes its unusual fate of being buried and suppressed, it develops in men into the familiar perversion known as exhibitionism. (Standard Edition VIII, 98)

He adds:

> A desire to see the organs peculiar to each sex exposed is one of the original components of our libido. It may itself be a substitute for something earlier and go back to a hypothetical primary desire to touch the sexual parts. As so often, looking has replaced touching. (Standard Edition VIII, 98)

So, the exhibitionist tendency revealed in these two fox stories is simply an old part of human nature; and these two stories provide a space for that libidinal desire to emerge from the unconscious.

Doubtless, in these two stories, the major focus is the penis. In addition to its common theme of exorcising fox fairies, in the first story it is also presented as a weapon of self-defense, while in the second story it is an organ of joy, through which the scholar might have the opportunity of experiencing ultimate sexual ecstasy. Particularly in the second story, the scholar's confidence in his sexual potency as well as in his tremendous sexual power seems completely built upon the unusual size of his genital. Such exaggerated braggadocio and over-concern about the male sexual organ makes us speculate that perhaps the intended initial situation in this story is not that he is seduced

by a fox fairy, as happens in most fox stories, but that the female fox fairy is lured by his unusual endowment so that she appears in order to experience what could be supreme sexual bliss. These attitudes and concerns about the male genital suggest a kind of phallus worship, which can be traced back to the early days of primitive societies. About this aspect, Freud remarks:

> The laborious compilations of the student of civilization provide convincing evidence that originally the genitals were the pride and hope of living beings; they were worshipped as gods and transmitted the divine nature of their functions to all newly learned human activities. (Standard Edition XI, 97)

Nevertheless, here, the penis does not merely appear as the organ of male pride and male hope of salvation, but also as the organ of sadism--"a desire to inflict pain upon the sexual object" and to "bring into prominence the pleasure in any form of humiliation or subjection" (Standard Edition VII, 157) This reveals the death instincts existing in the male mind. When Freud elaborates on his idea of the incessant rivalry between sexual instincts and death instincts, he mentions: "The second class of instincts was not so easy to point to; in the end we came to recognize sadism as its representative" (Standard Edition XIX, 40). Then, he adds:

> This hypothesis throws no light whatever upon the manner in which the two classes of instincts are fused, blended, and alloyed with each other . . . . It appears that, as a result of the combination of unicellular organisms into multicellular forms of life, the death instinct of the single cell can successfully be neutralized and the destructive impulses be diverted on to the external world

> through the instrumentality of a special organ. This special organ would seem to be the muscular apparatus; and the death instinct would thus seem to express itself--though probably only in part--as an instinct of destruction directed against the external world and other organisms. (Standard Edition XIX, 41)

Judging by the brutality carried out by these two male characters' penises in the stories, we can say that here the penis is the "special organ" meant by Freud and is the organ of death instincts.

In light of Freud's ideas, the male sadistic tendency expressed in the stories is nothing but his rudimentary, cannibalistic desire of gaining mastery over the female. In "Three Essays on Sexuality," he states:

> The sexuality of most male human beings contains an element of aggressiveness--a desire to subjugate; the biological significance of it seems to lie in the need for overcoming the resistance of the sexual object by means other than the process of wooing. (Standard Edition VII, 157-58)

But, he continues:

> The history of human civilization shows beyond any doubt that there is an intimate connection between cruelty and the sexual instinct . . . . According to some authorities this aggressive element of the sexual instinct is in reality a relic of cannibalistic desires--that is, it is a contribution derived from the apparatus for obtaining mastery, which is concerned with the satisfaction of the other and, ontogenetically, the older of great instinctual needs. (Standard Edition VII, 159)

Expressed via the route of violence, sadism ultimately steps upon the path of pleasure, but in an insinuated way. In the same essay, Freud writes: "Thus sadism would correspond to an aggressive component of the sexual instinct which has become independent and exaggerated and, by displacement, has usurped the leading position," and that "It has also been maintained that every pain contains in itself the possibility of a feeling of pleasure" (Standard Edition VII, 158 and 159). In the sadistic maltreatment presented in these two stories, the female pain will be the medium which enhances the satisfaction of the male sexual desire.

In the article "Stalking the Qing Ghost Story," David R. McCraw mentions that P'u's name is often connected with concern for females and for love in that repressive society; thus some scholars even regard P'u as China's first feminist author (32). In these two stories, we indeed witness sexual liberation endowed on these two female characters, since they are the initiators in demanding sex with the men. However, taking the contents of the stories into closer examination, we find that these two females are rather presented as shadowy figures, who only serve as the two male characters' sexual objects. Their appearance, especially that of the second one, is similar to "a classical but basic formula," described by Hom, that

> she suddenly appears out of nowhere. She is attractive and sexy, and she is pleasant and submissive to the man's advances. When he approaches her, she may show slight reluctance, but she always yields to his demands in the end. Therefore, in this initial meeting, she is by and large a "free" and passionate

> woman, offering herself to the man without any regret or hesitation about her chastity and honor. (272)

As we can see, nevertheless, in the stories the description of the two females is kept to a minimum. Seemingly, the only reason for their existence is their gender. In addition, before plunging into their libidinal pursuits, the men have already attached various bad names to the women, accusing them first in order to justify their aggressive behavior. In the first story, she is a malicious fox fairy, who haunts that historian for long time; in the second story, besides being an evil fox fairy, she is also assigned the role of a runaway girl, who might have seriously violated the social norms and had little moral concern for her own behavior. So, by male standards, they need to be destroyed or punished. Displayed in these two stories, the males' bias of gender cannot be more apparent.

In this male-centered and male-dominated world, these two females are endowed with their gender alone, and are reduced to "an imaginary status of the visible and primordial" (Nettelbeck, 336). They are the "male accessories," and "male possessions or rejections" (Cornillon, 127). Their existence in these two stories is what is asserted by Simon de Beauvoir as

> . . . simply what man decrees; thus she is called "the sex," by which meant that she appears essentially to the male as a sexual being. For him she is sex--absolute sex, no less. She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute--she is the Other. (307)

As far as the contents of these two stories are concerned, however, what could be given as a tangible reason to explain the males' hostility against the females, who are also their desirable sexual objects, beyond Freud's suggestion about the male desire of gaining mastery and pleasure over the female? A possible answer might be provided by a clue gleaned from the first story. But, before the answer is given, some facts about the Chinese *ars erotica*, the ancient sex manuals and the historian's marvelous "medicine," might be a helpful hint for us to elucidate some nebulous points. In Causality and Containment in Seventeenth-Century Chinese Fiction, Keith McMahon writes:

> One of the most significant premises of these manuals is the sexual superiority of women, who are assumed to have the capacity for more pleasure than men. Great value is attached to female pleasure. Virtually all techniques are geared to her satisfaction, especially the methods by which the man minimizes or suppresses ejaculation in order to maintain endurance. To be sure, the male economization of sperm or yang-energy, a fundamental principle of the manuals, also serves the purpose of allowing the man to make love to an increasing number of women. (64)

Thus, returning to the first story, what could be the historian's inner turmoil in his plight of being long haunted by a female sex-thirsty fox fairy? His trouble has already given away his secret: what really troubles him is the fear of his deficiency in sexual potency--to lose too much of his yang-energy, to be unable to make love with more women, and to fail in satisfying his female sexual partners' needs and demands. Fortunately, that fear of impotency--a symbolic castration and a "symbol of losing one's manhood and identity"--

is dispelled after his taking that wonderful medicine, the art of bedchamber; so, at least, in the fantastic world, his worries and fears can be temporarily relieved (Hom, 269).

Male concern and fear of impotency is a universal phenomenon from Freud's point of view. He states: "If the practicing psycho-analyst asks himself on account of what disorder people most often come to him for help, he is bound to reply--disregarding the many forms of anxiety--that it is psychical impotence" (Standard Edition XI, 179). Often, according to him, this concern and fear are mixed with a hostility towards women, which can even be traced back to primitive society. In "The Taboo of Virginity," Freud writes:

> Wherever primitive man has set-up a taboo he fears some danger and it cannot be disputed that a generalized dread of women is expressed in all these rules of avoidance. . . . The man is afraid of being weakened by the woman, infected with her femininity and of then showing himself incapable. The effect which coitus has of discharging tensions and causing flaccidity may be the prototype of what the man fears; and realization of the influence which the woman gains over him through sexual intercourse, the consideration she thereby forces from him, may justify the extension of this fear. In all this there is nothing obsolete, nothing which is not still alive among ourselves. (Standard Edition XI, 198-99)

Therefore, prompted by these mixed feelings, the portrayal of the female figures in these two fox stories becomes an ambiguous presentation of male lust and fear. For the males, these females are "the object of male desire," yet they are at the same time "the signifier of the threat of castration" (Storey, 129).

B. "Scholar Tung": the Ambiguity of Death

In this section, I will mainly use Freud's ideas about id, ego, superego, the dynamic formation of dreams, and the instincts of death to explore the inherent meanings of the story "Scholar Tung."

Before discussing the story, I will briefly describe Freud's explanations of the terms "id," "ego," and "superego," and their major implied meanings. In Freud's earlier treaties, he divides human mental activities into two parts, the conscious and the unconscious. Freud distinguishes the unconscious from the conscious by regarding the former as the general basis of psychical life and as a large sphere which includes the smaller sphere of the conscious. The dynamic core of energy in the unconscious is the sexual instincts, which consist of inner pressure and need. These instincts invade and transform experiences, particularly in dreams and fantasies, with their powerful libidinal drives (Standard Edition V, 612).

But, in "The Ego and the Id," published in 1923, Freud adopts a different way of illustrating the picture of human mind. In this work, elaborating upon his earlier ideas of conscious and unconscious, Freud divides the topography of human psyche into two major parts, the id and the ego, from the latter of which is split another entity, the superego.

Explaining the id, Freud states that "we shall now look upon an individual as a psychical id, unknown and unconscious, upon whose surface rests the ego . . ." (Standard Edition XIX, 24). The id is a part of the mind, which contains repressed wishes and

operates unconsciously; it is also the area from which feelings and desire emerge (Bocock, 76-7). As for the ego, Freud states that

> We have formed the idea that in each individual there is a coherent organization of mental process; and we call this his ego. It is to this ego that consciousness is attached; the ego controls the approaches to motility--that is, to the discharge of excitations into the external world, and which goes to sleep at night, though even then it exercises the censorship on dreams. (Standard Edition XIX, 17)

He adds that "the ego does not completely envelop the id, but only does so to the extent to which the system Pcpt. [perception] forms its surface . . . . The ego is not sharply separated from the id; its lower portion merges into it" (Standard Edition XIX, 24). "The ego is that part of the id," he continues, "which has been modified by the direct influence of the external world through the medium of the Pctp.-Cs. [perception-conscious]; in a sense it is an extension of the surface-differentiation" (Standard Edition XIX, 25). Freud sums up by saying that "the ego represents what may be called reason and common sense, in contrast to the id, which contains the passion," and "the ego is in the habit of transforming the id's will into action as if it were its own" (Standard Edition XIX, 25).

As for the superego, Freud states that we can "assume the existence of a grade in the ego, a differentiation within the ego, which may be called the 'ego-ideal' or 'super-ego'" (Standard Edition XIX, 29). When discussing his ideas on infantile sexuality and the Oedipus complex, Freud suggests that a child's parents, especially his father, are usually the embodiment of the child's superego. He states: "The child's parents, and especially his father, were perceived as the obstacle to a realization of his Oedipus

wishes; so his infantile ego fortified itself for the carrying out of the repression by erecting this same obstacle within itself" (Standard Edition XIX, 34). He continues:

> The super-ego is, however, not simply a residue of the earliest object-choices of the id; it also represents an energetic reaction-formation against those choices. Its relation to the ego is not exhausted by the precept: "You *ought to be* like this . . . ." It also comprises the prohibition: "You *may not be* like this . . . ." (Standard Edition XIX, 34)

With a basic understanding of these terms and their major implied concepts, now we can start our discussion of the second fox story "Scholar Tung." As I have already suggested, Freudian theories should be read with care. For example, a model of the psyche such as this is certainly not implicit in these texts, but, used prudently, they reveal significant aspects of the stories.

The summary of this story is as follows.

> One winter night, Scholar Tung was invited for drinks by friends. At the host's house, Tung met a doctor, who was good at making diagnoses by examining the so-called "Primordial Pulse." The doctor told Tung and Tung's another friend, Scholar Wang, that both of their pulses were strange--their pulses were noble yet were with meager prospects at the same time. Though feeling a little uneasy, Tung was not much bothered by the doctor's words.
>
> When Tung returned to his house around midnight, he was surprised to find a naked girl sleeping in his bed. Tung fumbled her lower body and located a hairy tail. In great fear, he tried to run away. But, the girl, awaken, grasped

Tung's hand at once, then asked him to feel the end of her spine again. This time, nothing was there. The girl explained that she had been his neighbor ten years before and, because she had recently lost her in-laws and her husband, she had to come to Tung seeking help. On hearing these words, Tung's doubts and misgivings were relieved. He took off his clothes and happily slept with her.

Months later, Tung had become greatly emaciated. He went to see the doctor whom he had met before. The doctor only told Tung that his prediction about his meager prospects were being proved correct and it was now too late to do anything. The doctor only bade Tung to try to refuse the girl's approaches by all means. Tung returned home. Later, when the girl asked for intercourse with him again, Tung replied: "Leave me alone! I am dying now!" Embarrassed, the girl said angrily: "Do you think that you still have a chance of living?" That night, Tung dreamed of making love with her again and before waking up he had already ejaculated. Although his wife kept vigils over him the following nights, Tung kept having the same dreams. Several days later, he vomited a lot of blood and died.

Later on, alone in his studio, Scholar Wang saw a beautiful girl arrive. Attracted by her beauty, he quickly had sex with her. A few days later, Wang too fell sick. Tung appeared in Wang's dream and warned him, "The girl who has endeared herself to you is a fox fairy in disguise. She has already killed me and now intends to harm you. I have sued her in the court of Hell to vent my wrath. On the night of the seventh, don't forget to burn incense sticks outside your

room." However, on that night, although intending to avoid intercourse with the girl in the beginning, Wang finally gave in after listening to the girl's persuasion, even though he felt regretful. The girl plucked up the incense sticks and threw them away. That night, Tung again appeared in Wang's dream to blame him for his disobedience. Knowing that he would again have difficulty following Tung's words, Wang appealed to his family for help. On the following night, Wang's family members lit the incense sticks after Wang had gone to bed with the girl. The girl felt surprised and frustrated, then she sighed: "Your fate has much fortune in store for you. I killed Tung then came to you; it was really my fault. Now, I will go to the court of Hell to face Tung and state my reason. If you still cherish our past endearment, please keep my body intact." Then, she died, returning to her vulpine shape. Wang's household skinned the fox corpse immediately. After a while, the fox came back and told Wang: "I have been to the court of Hell. The judge said that Tung was actually doomed by his own lust, so he deserved death. But the judge also blamed me for mesmerizing people, so he took away my magical pearl and let me return to the human world. Now, where is my body?" Wang replied that his family had skinned the body already. In great anger and disappointment, the fox left. Wang did not recover from his illness until half a year later.

Applying the Freudian terms and concepts of id, ego, and superego to read and interpret this story, we find that new layers of meanings can be revealed through various plots, and the story's didactic intention clearly comes to surface. This story presents

these two scholars with embarrassing situations in following the id's libidinal drives or abiding by the forbiddance exerted by the superegos. At the end of the story, Wang finds salvation because of compliance to the superego's command. Nevertheless, judging Tung's dreams and his death in light of Freud's thoughts on dreams and death, as well as by the ending of the story, we would rather say that this story tells us of a triumph of the id.

The most prominent feature in this story is the dualistic relationship between sex and death. To greater or lesser degrees, this aspect is also touched upon in P'u's other fox stories, but here it is especially highlighted through these two scholars' successive encounters with the same fox fairy. In this story, sex is presented as very desirable but is also extremely formidable, even demonic, because it will eventually bring about a destructive result--death. Due to their sexual desire for the fox fairy, both scholars put themselves in jeopardy. In fact, judging by this pre-set causal relationship between sex and death, we can keenly sense that a didactic purpose has been implicitly instilled into this story.

The main focus of this story is sexual desire, which is developed in most scenes. Even the initial settings for the two scholars' individual encounters with the fox fairy is highly suggestive. In Tung's case, the initial setting is the bed which he has in his studio, whereas in Wang's case it is simply his studio. For a scholar, these two places are doubtless very important and private. In the studio, he spends much of his time in thinking and studying in order to enrich his spiritual life or, for a more practical purpose, to pass the civil service examinations to earn a promising future. As for the bed, it is the

place where he finds repose, sleeps, reflects on daily activities, organizes thoughts, or has intercourse with his sexual partners. So, these two places carry a special meaning for the two scholars' first encounters with their fatal seducer, as well as for the story as a whole.

If we pay attention, we will find that many similarities exist between these two scholars, and according to Robert Rogers's statement in his A Psychoanalytic Study of the Double in Literature, we even can say that Wang is Tung's mirror image and his wishfulfillment (18-39). They are friends, and both have the same social status of scholar. The third character "ssu" 思 (thoughts) in their given names is the same. Moreover, both share the same ominous future, predicted by the doctor at the beginning of the story. Both also encounter the same seducer and face the same dilemma of succumbing to their sexual desire or giving it up. In addition, in their common ordeals, where Tung stumbles, Wang rises up. Therefore, Wang is Tung's mirror image and his wish-fulfillment. In the story, Tung's ego can be regarded as identifiable with Wang's ego. The situation is as Freud describes:

> The ego is in its very essence a subject; how can it be made into an object? Well, there is no doubt that it can be. The ego can take itself as an object, can treat itself like other objects, can observe itself, criticize itself, and do Heaven knows what with itself. In this, one part of the ego is setting itself over against the rest. So the ego can be split; it splits itself during a number of its functions--temporarily at least. (Standard Edition XXII, 58)

Applying Freud's terms and concepts about id, ego, and superego to read this story, which focuses on these two scholars' sexual indulgences and tribulations due to erotic

desire, we might well read this story in a somewhat allegorical sense. The enclosed intimate space of sexual fantasy depicted in the story can be seen as a stage portraying the inner activities of these two scholars' egos and their egos' direct encounters with the libidinal desire. The fox fairy, with her incessant sexual requests, becomes the embodiment of these two scholars' libidinal desire, which arises from the unconscious id and perpetually prompts sexual drives. As stated by Tzvetan Todorov, "Desire, as a sensual temptation, finds its incarnation in several of the most common figures of the supernatural world, and most especially in the form of the devil. To simplify, one might say that *devil* is merely another word for *libido*" (127).

So, in the story, when Tung finds the naked fox fairy lying in his bed, his immediate response is an understandable "ecstasy." Indeed, this fox fairy represents a very desirable female which most men would dream of in their sexual fantasies: she is young, beautiful, inviting, and well-prepared for Tung's approach. If Tung has the intention, he can anticipate plunging himself soon into a world of corporeal pleasure. However, after discovering a tail on the girl's body, Tung hesitates and is worried. According to clues provided by the story, Tung's hesitation and worries seem to be mainly because he fears that the girl is a fox fairy and knows that excessive sex can bring harm to his health. Based upon the doctrine of Chinese herbal medicine, semen is the pure *yang* element (Eberhard, 45). So, in sexual engagements, if one has excess discharge of semen, one will lose much of his *yang* essence and become debilitated or even vampirized (McMahon, 67). For this reason, intercourse with a sex-thirsty fox fairy will be not only

risky, but deadly. So, after discovering the tail on the girl's body, Tung stops right away, feeling scared, and intends to escape.

Applying Freudian terms and concepts into this plot, however, we can make a different interpretation. When unexpectedly finding such a desirable sexual object lying in front of him (and his ego), Tung's momentary hesitation and misgivings are perhaps prodded by an inner prohibition--from the superego. When encountering the embodiment of id, normally the ego has no reason to run away. Freud states that "There is no natural enmity between Ego and Id, they belong together and in a healthy case there is in practice no division between them" (Freud, Dictionary, 66). [4] Moreover, as we have already known, "the ego is in the habit of transforming the id's will into action as if it were its own." So, in the story, this ego's hesitation must be owing to the superego's prohibition. According to Freud, this superego is the "ego-ideal." It could be consideration of one or more factors, such as concern about social status, the requirements demanded by the social norms, the sense of ethics conveyed through education, or the conscience (Standard Edition XIX, 34). The superego appears right at the moment when the ego is about to plunge itself into the id's embrace. All of a sudden, it admonishes the ego: "You should have more moral concern about your behavior!" and "You ought not to fall into the libidinal abyss so easily!" The situation as explained by Freud is that

> We may reject the existence of an original, as it were natural, capacity to distinguish good from bad. What is bad is often not at all what is injurious or dangerous to the ego; on the contrary, it may be something which is desirable and

> enjoyable to the ego. . . . A great change takes place only when the authority is internalized through the establishment of a superego. The phenomena of conscience then reach a higher stage. (Standard Edition XXI, 124-25)

At that transient moment, the superego exerts a quick moral censorship to suppress the ego's obedience to the id's invitation, and prevents any possible degradation of dignity in the "culturally inferior" sexual engagement (Standard Edition XI, 96). This superego assumes an inner voice, another's voice, to guard the ego from the reckless pursuit of sexual pleasure. Its voice is as described by Jennifer Church:

> Another's voice, on the other hand, need not be experienced as spatially external to me; to be distinct from mine, it is enough that it addresses itself to me, or carries on a conversation with me. Thus, unlike the gaze of another, the *voice* of another may influence me as I merely deliberate about what to do; it will influence mere *intentions* to act. The superego, as inner voice, oversees my conscious (hence, articulated) desires, not just the results of those desires; it comments on what ego *is*, not just what it *does*. (216)

In the story, however, Tung's hesitation and misgivings are swept away soon after listening to the fox fairy's explanations. She tells him that she was his former neighbor during their childhood, that she was married to a retarded husband who had recently died, and that she had lost her in-laws, too. Thus, she is completely alone and is in urgent need of Tung's assistance. As for the reason why she gets undressed in his bed, she explains that it is due to the harsh winter weather outside, thus she needs to stay in blankets in order to keep warm. On the surface, these explanations about her past and her sudden

appearance in Tung's studio are very moving and difficult for Tung to refuse. They refer to past affection and to her current plight, so they will enormously evoke Tung's sympathy for her current misery as well as for her frail female body. Therefore, emotionally and morally speaking, Tung needs to give her a helping hand by taking care of her and accepting her suggestion of providing her with a shelter.

But in the same plot, we can easily detect that beneath the surface of these glib explanations there exist several dubious points which need to be clarified. For example, can she also explain how the door of Tung's studio, which he locked earlier, was opened? Where is the hairy tail which Tung is certain that he felt attached to her? Is she really his former neighbor? And why was it necessity for her to get "undressed" and lie in his bed to keep warm? Although these are obvious anomalies, Tung does not give them a second thought; in the story, he immediately accepts the fox fairy's explanations without suspicion, sleeps with her, and feels happy.

Through Tung's momentary hesitation, the fox fairy's explanations, and Tung's easy acceptance, this plot implies symbolically that although the superego has prevented the ego's strong tendency, prompted by the id, from following the natural drives, the prohibition is only a transient one and is either not yet keenly aware of or not powerfully put in force, thus the ego easily neglects it and soon forgets it. The explanations given by the fox fairy use the kind of words which the ego tends to adopt for convenient self-persuasion. Stimulated by the urge arising from sexual instincts, before wholeheartedly indulging in libidinal pleasure, the ego needs to find reasons to relieve the pressure imposed by the superego and to convince itself that whatever it does will eventually be

innocuous or justifiable. So, in order to set out upon the path indicated by the id, the ego uses the fox fairy's explanations as an excuse to persuade itself, to justify its motivation, and to cover up its real intention, disregarding the flimsiness of the excuse, or if it can stand the test of questioning. This is explained by Karen Horney as, "the constant tendency of a part of the ego to cast aside the burden of an ideal which is no more than an elaborate moral bluff" (cited in Flugel, 48).

Unfortunately, in the story, Tung's sexual desire for the fox fairy whose name is "Ah-so" 阿瑣 , meaning "Lock," has already foreshadowed his ruin. Like a prisoner, Tung has been locked inside a cell built by his sexual desire. Over the course of several months, sexual engagements with the fox fairy lead to his emaciation until at last, after several nights of having the same dreams in which he makes love with the fox fairy, Tung vomits much blood and loses his life.

According to the doctor's words, Tung's death is a direct result of his excessive sexual engagements with the fox fairy which caused him to lose too much of his *yang* energy, to become debilitated, and finally to die. But, when looking at this plot in light of Freudian ideas, Tung's death can be regarded as the ultimate penalty announced to the ego by the superego. This death is the severest assertion of criticism from the superego towards the ego for those sexual sins so recklessly committed and for its negligence of the superego's admonition. In Freud's words, "The super-ego torments the sinful ego with [a] feeling of anxiety and is on the watch for opportunities of getting it punished by the external world" (Standard Edition XXI, 125). The superego, with a higher moral

sense, criticizes the fallen ego and imposes an internalized aggression against it. As stated by Freud,

> His aggressiveness is introjected, internalized; it is, in point of fact, sent back to where it came from--that is, it is directed towards his own ego. There it is taken over by a portion of the ego, which sets itself over against the rest of the ego as super-ego, and which now, in the form of "conscience," is ready to put into action against the ego . . . . The tension between the harsh super-ego and the ego that is subjected to it, is called by us the sense of guilt; it expresses itself as a need for punishment. (Standard Edition XXI, 123)

Thus, through the device of death, with a sense of guilt the ego obtains a "fulfillment of a punishment" and a "self-punishment," and, in so doing, the ego is "at the same time killing an object with whom [it] has identified [itself]" (Standard Edition XVIII, 162-63). Then, we can infer that his death follows from extreme pressure from his super-ego and is his suicide. As we can see from this plot, through Tung's lust and ensuing death, this story's moralistic intention is to condemn excessive sexual desire.

Tung's death terminates his sinful past, and in the rest of this story his dilemma and struggle are continued by his double, Scholar Wang. Like Tung, Wang is tempted by the same fatal seducer and has only a slim chance of surmounting the obstacle. But he resists the temptation and ultimately passes the test.

In comparison with Tung, Wang is allotted a better chance for conquering his trouble, since he has three warnings to keep him aware of the danger lurking ahead. The first warning is directly from the fox fairy herself: she informs him of Tung's death and

reminds him of guarding against lascivious fox fairies. However, these words are not a genuine warning out of good intention, but are rather a deception, through which the fox fairy succeeds in disguising her identity, dispelling Wang's suspicion, and winning his trust and affection, as well as his body. Here, the fox fairy's words are like the coercive "sweet talk" constantly uttered to the ego from the id. Wang's gullibility and eagerness in his pursuit of libidinal pleasure illustrate that the ego always maintains a strong tendency to succumb to the needs of the id. It is as stated by Freud: "On the whole the ego often has to carry out the intentions of the id; it fulfills its duty if it succeeds in creating the conditions under which these intentions can . . . be fulfilled" (Freud, Dictionary, 67).

The second and third warnings are from Tung. An indignant apparition in Wang's dreams, he foretells Wang's peril, prohibits his intoxication in carnal pleasure, and offers him the means of escaping from his deeply-dug sexual pit. Unfortunately, although intending to avoid intercourse with the fox fairy, Wang is ultimately unable to resist her sexual attraction and entraps himself once again. In this plot, Tung has evidently assumed the role of the superego, forbidding the ego from repeating the same mistake. Here, "the ego is a pitiable, precarious entity, battered by the external world, scourged by the cruel upbraidings of the superego," and "plagued by the greedy, insatiable demands of the id" (Eagleton, 161). However, as exemplified in this plot, the difficulty in the ego's resistance to the id's requirements is always tremendous. Although the ego intends to follow the instruction given by the superego, the pull from the id is always stronger than the prohibition imposed by the superego, thus the id usually wins. So, in the story,

Tung appears again in Wang's dream the following night, and, in the superego's severest voice, reproaches Wang for violating his injunction. At the last moment, Tung's words work: Wang listens to him, takes necessary measures, and removes himself from the imminent crisis.

Why does Wang survive his ordeal? There are three main factors which coincide with the three important points which this story intends to stress. The first factor is that Wang finally listens to Tung's instruction and changes his behavior. By way of Wang's decision, this plot implies that the ego must listen to the superego's admonition and supervision, to comply with a higher requirement of moral standard and to renounce excess libidinal desire. If the ego ignores commands from the superego and keeps indulging in carnal pleasure, it will never have the chance of salvation. In this plot, the ego has obtained the "conscience," which is a "reaction" and a "formation against the evil that is perceived in the id" (Standard Edition XIX, 133).

The second factor is that, despite having been extinguished intermittently, the incense sticks keep burning. In the story, the light shed from the burned incense sticks seems to carry some mysterious or religious power, but, the light from the incense sticks can be symbolically taken as the means of enlightening the ego's illusion. Thus, the darkness inside the ego can be expelled, so that the ego's fascination with carnal pleasure as well as the fallacy of that erotic desire can be clearly recognized; in other words, with the light on, with the source of enlightenment constantly inside, the ego will be able to look forever upward to a higher moral standard and obtain an inner clairvoyance in the long run.

The third factor is the assistance of Wang's family, which symbolically means Wang's return to his family. This plot indicates that the importance of family can never be neglected, and one should always hold his family in the first place. This plot also implies that one should keep control over sexual desire, and that sexual desire should be appropriately confined within the marriage and should be only for the purpose of procreation in continuing the family line.

At the end of the story, Tung's sentence, announced by the judge of Hell and repeated by the fox fairy, thunders an overall judgment on Tung's behavior, his desire, and his death, as well as declares the last point which this story wants to emphasize. As is usual in Chinese stories, Hell carries a special meaning because "it is a replica of the living with a similar social structure and moral values" (Wu, 1986, 105). But, what is more important, it is also "understood to abide always and ultimately by the supra-conception of universal justice (Heavenly Law)" (Kao, 1994, 215). Evidently, this judgment is also uttered in the superego's voice to address the story's point of view on the subject of sexual desire, and confirms that Tung is actually ruined by his own lascivious desire. Driven by his excessive lust, he indulges himself in carnal pleasure, completely unable to exercise self-control, which consequently results in his death. Thus, Tung is completely responsible for his own death. This judgment points out that what is sexually desirable is not sinful at all, but the lustful mind is at the root of all evils; if the mind is free of lust, it will be impregnable to all outside sexual seduction. So, in comparison with Tung, the seductive fox fairy is less sinful and is allowed to return to the human world.

After applying Freud's terms and ideas about id, ego, and superego to read and interpret this story, and through various meanings revealed in different themes in the story, we find that the didactic intention of this story becomes more apparent. This story intends to send its reader several messages: excessive sexual desire is sinful and needs to be severely punished; although illicit sexual seduction is always strong and almost irresistible, one should not become blinded by it, but rather try to restrain erotic desire as much as possible; and, the importance of family should be properly stressed, and within marriage it should be the only place where sexual instincts are obeyed.

However, if we return to look at Tung's erotic dreams and his death, which directly relate to this story's major concern, in light of Freud's ideas on dreams and death, we find that these two important themes can send us a completely different message.

In the story, Tung's dreams as well as Wang's dreams are working as the "twilight zones," where Tung encounters the fox fairy again and where their actions retain their effects on the waking world. Because of the intercourse indulged in these dreams, Tung is deprived of too much *yang* essence so that he ultimately loses his life. The dreams are a prelude to his death. According to Freud, however, these dreams should have their own special meanings, because they carry the function of fulfilling a dreamer's wishes. In this regard, Freud states:

> Dreams are not to be likened to the unregulated sounds that rise from a musical instrument struck by the blow of some external force instead of by a player's hand; they are not meaningless, they are not absurd . . . . On the contrary, they are psychical phenomena of complete validity--fulfillment of wishes; they can be

inserted into the chain of intelligible awaking mental acts; they are constructed by a highly complicated activity of the mind. (Standard Edition IV, 122)

Freud also states that the sources of the wishes expressed in dreams are mainly originated from the unsatisfied or suppressed part of the unconscious. He states:

> I can distinguish three possible origins for such a wish. (1) It may have been aroused during the day and for external reasons may not have been satisfied; in that case an acknowledged wish which has not been dealt with is left over for the night. (2) It may have arisen during the day but been repudiated; in that case what is left over is a wish which has not been dealt with but has been suppressed. (3) It may have no connection with daytime life and be one of those wishes which only emerge from the suppressed part of the mind and become active in us at night. (Standard Edition V, 551)

Then, based upon this statement, what could be the unsatisfied and suppressed source of Tung's dreams? Is it the wish for the expression of sexual desire as shown by the erotic form of these dreams themselves, or the wish of being severely punished as interpreted in the preceding part of this paper?

In the aspect of the dynamics of dream-formation, Freud also states that as well as being the fulfillment of a wish or a part of the unconscious, dreams also deal with anything with which our waking life is concerned. He concludes:

> The motive power for the formation of dreams is not provided by the latent dream-thoughts or day's residues, but by an unconscious impulse, repressed during the day, with which the day's residues have been able to establish contact

> and which contrives to make a wish-fulfillment for itself out of the material of the latent thoughts. . . . If we disregard the unconscious contribution to the formation of the dream and limit the dream to its latent thoughts, it can represent anything with which waking life had been concerned--a reflection, a warning, an intention, a preparation for the immediate future or, once again, the satisfaction of an unfulfilled wish. (Standard Edition XVIII, 241)

So, according to the description of the story and the earlier interpretation, Tung's erotic dreams could be taken as a reflection of his lustful deeds, and a warning as well as a preparation for the upcoming death which he has to face as a result of his debauchery. If this is so, in Tung's erotic dreams, in which any possible pleasant element generated by sexual stimulation could be set aside, what is left is mainly the unpleasurable feelings owing to the compulsive deprivation inflicted upon him by the fox fairy. These dreams are the "unpleasurable dreams," which express Tung's unconscious need for a severe punishment demanded by the superego.

Following Freud's lead again, these unpleasurable dreams can be traced further to delve into the very sources of the unpleasure. About this, Freud states:

> In the course of things it happens again and again that individual instincts or parts of instincts turn out to be incompatible in their aims or demands with the remaining ones, which are able to combine into the inclusive unity of the ego. The former are then split off from this unity by the process of repression, held back at the lower levels of psychical development and cut off, to begin with, from the possibility of satisfaction. (Standard Edition XVIII, 11)

But Freud continues:

> If they succeed subsequently, as can so easily happen with repressed sexual instincts, in struggling through, by roundabout paths, to a direct or to a substitutive satisfaction, that event, which would in other cases have been an opportunity for pleasure, is felt by the ego as unpleasure. (Standard Edition XVIII, 11)

Let us examine Tung's erotic dreams according to this statement. Here, what is asked to be suppressed is sexual instinct, since it is incompatible with the superego's expectation of correct behaviors. The repressed sexual instinct brings about unpleasure. So, by way of these dreams, the sexual instinct takes "roundabout paths" in order to have an opportunity for a "direct" or "substitutive" satisfaction of pleasure. In this application, we can clearly see that between the unpleasurable dreams meant by Freud and the case at hand there exists a great disparity, because Tung's dreams are in the form of "erotic" dreams and their purpose is not supposed to be the gratification of sexual pleasure. Obviously, Tung's unpleasurable dreams are not the kind of unpleasurable dreams meant by Freud.

In fact, if we observe Tung's dreams from a different angle, we will find that Tung's dreams are very self-contradictory. They are "oxymoronic," and are like "a paradox made up of contrasting values, opposite trends, and even contradictory facts" (Shneidman, 2). In these erotic dreams, the sexual instinct is the target which is required to be repressed, but in the dreams sex, presented with a disagreeable tinge, is adopted as the very means to punish and suppress the instincts of sex. In other words, in these

dreams the measure adopted to attain a purpose is exactly what has been already denied by the purpose since the very beginning; then, these erotic dreams will put themselves in a perpetually self-contradictory state. Actually, this irreparable disparity extant between Tung's dreams and Freud's unpleasurable dreams implies not the inapplicability of Freud's dream theories into Tung's case, but rather exposes the impossibility of using sex as a measure to suppress sex in erotic dreams, in view of Freud's years of clinical experiences.

If these dreams do not belong to dreams for unpleasurable punishment, then they must be simply dreams with erotic forms, contents, and intent, and their negative association with death is only a literary device used for a didactic purpose. In these dreams, "the id 'shows through' in just those places where the ego is least efficacious" (O'Shaughnessy, 226). These dreams do not mean the suppression of sexual desire and are not a "coexistence within the same individual of pleasure and unpleasure, related to each other but assignable to 'two different sites'" (Laplanche, 104). Instead, they are an adamant and impenitent declaration of the pursuit of libidinal pleasure. Or, if there is any element of unpleasure within these dreams, as we are informed by the story, it must be simply the ego's subtle and tactful disguise to cover up its real intention in following the id's command. By way of the disagreeable overlay in these dreams, the ego seems to comply with the demand from the superego, but, after circumventing the superego's supervision, it can enjoy its pursuit of libidinal pleasure in a carefree way. The situation is similar to that discussed by Roland de Souca:

> [if] the reality principle takes the place of the pleasure principle in determining rational choice, we cannot infer from any given choice that its object is of "genuine value" (or genuinely wanted): it might be chosen as a compromise or for the sake of something else. (197-98).

In the same regard, Freud's words give us a further description: "The ego achieves this [freedom] by what appears to be an act of compliance: it meets the demand with what is in the circumstances the innocent fulfillment of a wish and thus disposes of the demand," but "this replacement of a demand by the fulfillment of a [real] wish remains the essential function of dream-work" (Freud, Dictionary, 61).

Moreover, following Freud's words on death instincts to consider Tung's death, his demise might be a desirable one, instead of a formidable one. If we pay attention to the details in the story, we find that Tung himself carries out his own death step by step: he approaches his ruin by ignoring the doctor's warning, denying the easily visible clues and facts, indulging himself in carnal pleasure, and consuming himself in his erotic dreams. In this sense, from a Freudian point of view, Tung's death is achieved as a result of his own death instincts. Freud says:

> all instincts tend towards the restoration of an earlier state of things. . . . *It seems, then, that an instinct is an urge inherent in organic life to restore an earlier state of things* which the living entity has been obliged to abandon under the pressure of external disturbing forces; that is, it is a kind of organic elasticity, or, to put it another way, the expression of the inertia inherent in organic life. (Standard Edition XVIII, 36)

Freud continues:

> It would be in contradiction to the conservative nature of the instincts if the goal of life were a state of things which had never yet been attained. On the contrary, it must be an *old* state of things, an initial state from which the living entity has at one time or other departed and to which it is striving to return by the circuitous paths along which its development leads. If we are to take it as a truth that knows no exception that everything living dies for *internal* reason--becomes inorganic once again--then we shall be compelled to say that "the aim of all life is death" and, looking backwards, that "inanimate things existed before living ones." (Standard Edition XVIII, 38)

Thus, Tung's death is achieved out of a motivation to follow the tendency to return to an "old," "initial," "inorganic," and "inanimate" state. For Tung, death is not fearful at all, since it is just what he has been looking for.

Tung's deadly dreams reflect the complex dialectic between sex and death extant in fantasy, as described by Ann Morris:

> [We] now recognize what fantasy has demonstrated for centuries: the complex dialectic between sex and death. Man not only sublimates the fear of death in sexual fantasy, but in the midst of copulation he also augments his enjoyment by fantasizing about death. In these fantasies, he personifies death as both erotic and horrifying; he even welcomes death as a demon lover and sees it, like sex, as a creative stimulus. (77)

So, in these dreams, sex and consequent death are not "frightening" and "destructive," but each represents "a break from rational society, a break that [has] plunged man into a violent and beautiful world" (Morris, 78 and 84). Tung's dreams and his death evidently violate what this story intends to bring to the moral attention of its reader, but at least they can serve as a good footnote to support the judgment declared from Hell that Tung is indeed destroyed by his own lust. However, inevitably, here irony lies in clarity.

In addition, judging by the ending of this story, we find that it can hardly be claimed as a presentation of the victory of the superego through Wang's survival. Right to the end of the story, we cannot find clear evidence to convince us that Wang has rejected sexual attraction and surmounted the temptation of his own free will. His success in passing through his tribulation relies mainly upon the assistance of his family. But, outside help can never last long, and only the inner strength obtained from self-discipline and will power can guarantee his avoidance of the same pitfall in the future. If we pay attention to detail, we notice that, ironically, while his family is busy rescuing him, Wang is still lying in bed with the fox fairy. In fact, judging by these two scholars' successive tribulations, as well as Tung's death and dreams, we should say that the real message from this story is that sexual desire can never be blocked by any means because it will always find a way to emerge to the surface and a means to be released; and, as suggested by the reprieve of the fox fairy back to the mundane world, what one can do and must do is learn how to live with sexual desire within appropriate moral boundaries.

C. "Scholar Leng": Sex as a Catalyst of Wishfulfillment and Social Criticism

In this section, I will mainly make use of Freud's statements upon anxiety and writing to help explain certain plots. The translation of the story is as follows.

Scholar Leng lived in City of P'ing. Leng was very slow-witted, so, although already in his twenties, he still could not thoroughly understand any of the classical texts. One day, a fox fairy arrived, who made love with him. After that, people often heard him talking all night, but Leng refused to reveal any details about it, even at his brothers' questioning. Things went on like this for several days, then, all of a sudden, Leng developed an illness which made him prone to madness. From then on, whenever he was going to write, he shut the door, sat silently for long time, then burst out loud with laughter. Then he would quickly take up a pen and start to write, finishing his writing in one breath. What is more important, his writing was brilliantly embellished with elegant phrasing and subtle thoughts. During the same year, Leng passed the civil service examinations and entered a public school set up by the government; the following year, he received a stipend. In the examination hall, whenever he was about to write, Leng kept laughing aloud so that, in consequence, he got the famous nickname--"The Laughing Student." Unfortunately, the former examination official retired, so Leng's strange behavior was not known by the new examiner, who demanded that the students conduct themselves in a serious manner in the examination hall. When he heard Leng's abrupt laughter, he became enraged. He gave orders to people to arrest Leng and planned to punish Leng for his

inappropriate behavior. Those in charge hurried to explain Leng's abnormal behavior to the official. The examiner's anger was slightly lessened, so he released Leng but expelled him from the examination hall. After that, Leng indulged himself in poetry and wine. During his life, Leng wrote four excellent works named "The Topsy-Turvy Drafts."

The Historian of the Strange comments: Such laughter is no different from the Buddhist "sudden enlightenment." To finish writing with loud laughter is really a great joy. So, why is Leng dismissed simply for this reason? Such an examiner, isn't he ridiculous?

In this story, sex is treated as the very seed for the genesis of various plots within the story. Because of his intercourse with the fox fairy, Leng fulfills his two wishes: his sexual needs as well as his desire to gain success in the civil service examination, the latter being the major source of his anxiety and the very cause of his unusual laughter in the story. Through temporary sex with the fox fairy, Leng obtains a new ability in writing, which later becomes the vehicle for him to express his once suppressed sexual instincts. As well, in this story, sex is also used as a starting-point for the author P'u to instigate his social criticism against the civil service examination system.

This story somehow reads like a fairy tale in which the protagonist fulfills his wishes through the assistance of a magic helper. This magic helper is, of course, the fox fairy, and its help to Leng is marvelously accomplished via sex. Quite unlike the other fox stories, here, sex is not fearful at all, but extremely desirable. Although allocated minimal description in the story, its role is crucial because the influences it has are

fundamental yet tremendous. It is the catalyst for all the following events: it enables Leng to gain intelligence and outstanding abilities in writing; to attain success; and to bid farewell to his arid past. Here, sex is treated as the creative power of all the wonders; it is "the precursor and symbol of life, of renewal" and "death's antidote" (Palumbo, 3). As far as Freud's idea about the life-giving strength inherent within the sexual instincts is concerned, this story can definitely serve as one of the best examples.

Sexual engagements with the fox fairy doubtless fulfill Leng's sexual needs. According to the description at the beginning of the story, we know that although over twenty, Leng still cannot comprehend any classic text or pass civil service examinations due to his lack of intelligence. In fact, this description implies that the many years of fruitless preparation for examinations absorbed the majority of his time and energy, so Leng is unable to become economically independent and must rely upon his family's assistance. To take this a step further, this description also explains Leng's celibacy. Leng has actually been stripped off the possibility of setting up his own family because of his long years of futile preparation and lack of economic independence. In other words, this description tells us that for most of time Leng's sexual needs cannot be properly channeled but must be forcefully suppressed. The appearance of the fox fairy, therefore, provides him with an opportunity to satisfy such needs.

In addition to gratifying sexual needs, the most important benefit derived from intercourse with the fox fairy is that the copulation opens the door for Leng to attain his most cherished wish--success in the civil service examinations. Owing to intercourse,

Leng is endowed with intelligence as well as the capacity to write well. Thanks to these newly gained abilities, he has a chance of passing the difficult civil service examinations.

The civil service examination is definitely Leng's most feared nemesis. In fact, observing Leng's pitiable situation from another angle, we find that he is not alone in his ordeal, since thousands of scholars, including the author P'u himself, are also in the same predicament and have only a slim chance to pass. At this point, some historical background about how that examination system operated will help us understand why examinations have become Leng's major source of suffering.

The examination system started in the Sui Dynasty (581-618 AD). Through this system, the ruling governments obtained a pool of candidates from which they selected people to work inside the governing body (T'ien, 83). For the commoners, this system was significant, because it provided them with an open route to officialdom. Evidence can be obtained from the fact that during the Ming and Ch'ing Dynasties (1368-1911 AD) lists of successful candidates, posted in public, included detailed information about the candidates' social origins (Burke, 65). So, this system which offered social mobility to the talented allowed the ordinary man to become a member of the gentry and to gain government positions.

During P'u's time, this system mainly consisted of three parts. In his Ph. D. dissertation "P'u Sung-ling and the Liao-chai chih-yi, Themes and Art of the Literary Tale," James V. Muhleman states:

> During the Ch'ing period, there were always three parts to the examinations. In the early Ch'ing, the first part required essays on the Four Books and the

composition of a poem; the second consisted of essays on the Five Classics; the third consisted of discussion questions on government. Form rather than content was stressed, such as layout, nonuse of taboo characters, prosody, calligraphy, etc. Probably the most important skill was the ability to write the "eight-legged essay" (*pa-ku wen*). This was a highly artificial and tightly prescribed style of writing. The essay had eight parts, each of which had strict rules of composition, such as antithetical sentence construction, ranging from a first section of preliminary remarks to the final section of conclusions. (21)

Muhleman also notes that this examination system was mainly divided into three stages:

> The examination system was divided into three main stages: the prefectural, provincial, and metropolitan levels. At the lowest level, the prefectural test was preceded by two preliminary tests, the district examination and the preliminary prefectural examination. Successful students were called *sheng-yuan*, or licentiates (*Hsiu-ts'ai*, or flowering talent, was a more colloquial designation). This series of examination was held twice every three years. . . . The provincial examination was held once every three years in the provincial capital. Successful candidates were called *chu-jen*, or raised scholars. This status was much more prestigious than that of licentiate, and a much smaller percentage of candidates were allowed to pass. Besides having free access to the district magistrates, degree holders were eligible for certain offices and were qualified to take the metropolitan examinations, also held once every three years, in the national capital. This highest level of the examination system consisted of the

metropolitan test itself and the palace test, the latter serving chiefly to give a final ranking of the metropolitan graduates. All who passed these examinations became *chin-shih*, or presented scholars, and were immediately qualified for an official post. (21-23)

However, according to T'ien Ju-k'ang's description in his Male Anxiety and Female Chastity: a Comparative Study of Chinese Ethical Values in Ming-Ch'ing Times, the competition in all levels of examination became more and more difficult due to the breakdown in the integrity of the test as well as a great increase in the number of candidates (83). Such difficulty can be clearly reflected by the percentage of successful candidates in different levels of examinations. T'ien writes:

> The chances for success, by a rough estimate, were 1 to 10 for the elementary examinations, 1 to at least 100 for the most competitive provincial examinations, and one to 30 for the final examinations held in the presence of the emperors. . . . Hence, the prospect for a commoner to get the second title of *chu-jen* was 1 to 1000, and to ultimately get the highest degree was 1 to 30,000. (84)

Due to such extreme difficulty, numerous scholars had to spend a good number of years in preparation for these examinations. Mulheman quotes from a modern authority to show us the average ages of successful candidates:

> the title of *sheng-yuan* was obtained at approximately twenty-four, *chu-yen* at approximately thirty, and *chin-shih* at approximately thirty-five. Thus, for the fortunate ones, it took more than ten years of preparing on the average to rise

from *shen-yuan* to *chin-shih* while many others tried in vain throughout their lives to advance beyond the lower gentry group. (23)

"It was a virtual 'examination life'" and "a long and back-breaking grind," asserts Mulheman (23). Nevertheless, although the road to success in the examinations was studded with difficulty and unpredictability, many persisted. Muhleman explains that regardless of the difficult obstacles, there was never a dearth of candidates for the various degrees, simply because there was far more to be gained than lost:

> Although *shen-yuan* and *chien-sheng* already enjoyed [a] certain influence and prestige denied the commoners, their influence and prestige could be greatly increased if they succeeded in the *k'o-shih*, or qualifying examination to the provincial examination, and the *hsiang-shih*, or provincial examination, and became provincial graduates, holders of the *chu-jen* degree. Those in the position of *chu-jen* worked toward the *hui-shih*, or metropolitan examination, and the *tien-shih*, or palace examination, in order to secure immediate appointment to office, to gain a more influential position, to be admired and respected, and to bring glory to their ancestors. (23-4)

Quoting from another source, Mulheman also describes the various privileges enjoyed by the gentry:

> All these privileges meant that the gentry received legal protection such as was not enjoyed by the commoners. From earlier chapters the reader will recall that the common people, including wealthy landlords, were subjected to all kinds of persecution and annoyance by officials and their subordinates. Only when wealth

was combined with political power could the people secure protection for themselves and their families. This helps to explain the eagerness to become degree holders or officials. (24)

Because of these profitable rewards, numerous scholars were willing to spend many years in repeatedly taking examinations and waiting for success in this almost endless trial.

In his comment appended to the story Wang Tze-an 王子安 (1238-40), P'u uses "seven likes" to describe the successive progress of a candidate's inner turmoil in the civil service examination system. Lin translates them into English, as follows,

> First he looks like a beggar when he first enters the examination hall, bare-footed and with a basket in his hand; second, he looks like a prisoner as soon as the government officials start calling the roll; third, he looks like a lonesome autumn bee worrying about the advance of the year when he enters the assigned examination room; fourth, he looks like a sick bird just released from its cage when he comes out from his examination room exhausted and tranced; fifth, he looks like a monkey chained to a post, worried and uneasy, while he is waiting for the outcome of the examination; sixth, he looks like a poisoned fly, immobile and unfeeling, when he cannot find his name in the roll of honors, and then he begins to roar up, throwing all his stationery, books, etc., into the waste basket, cursing the blind examiners, and swearing never to take the examination again, until his fury subsides; seventh, he looks like a pigeon just breaking through the eggshell, beginning anew to prepare himself for the next examination. (379-80)

In fact, P'u's "seven likes" has provided us with a vivid picture to illustrate the ceaseless turbulence within the minds of most candidates, experienced by P'u himself as well as by our protagonist Scholar Leng. Also, through this illustration, we can clearly understand that while facing the examination system, with his strong desire, eager anticipation, yet crippled ability, what occupies Leng's mind is only "anxiety." About this particular feeling, in his "Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety," published in 1925, Freud comments: "Anxiety, then, is in the first place something that is felt. We call it an affective state . . . . As a feeling, anxiety has a very marked character of unpleasure" (Standard Edition XX, 128). In another work, he writes: "'Anxiety' describes a particular state of expecting the danger or preparing for it, even though it may be an unknown one" (Standard Edition XVIII, 12). As for the location inside the human psyche, Freud considers that "anxiety is an affective state and as such can, of course, only be felt by the ego" (Standard Edition XX, 140). But, he also points out that when wish feelings undergo repression, their unconscious becomes transformed into anxiety. He says: "On the other hand it very often happens that processes take place or begin to take place in the id which causes the ego to produce anxiety" (Standard Edition XX, 140). In the aspect of the production of anxiety, he states that "anxiety arises originally as a reaction to a state of *danger* and it is reproduced whenever a state of that kind recurs" (Standard Edition XX, 134). Elaborating upon this point, Freud writes:

> When the individual is placed in a new situation of danger it may well be quite inexpedient for him to respond with an anxiety-state (which is a reaction to an earlier danger) instead of imitating a reaction appropriate to the current danger.

> But his behavior may become expedient once more if the danger-situation is recognized as it approaches and is signaled by an outbreak of anxiety. In that case he can at once get rid of his anxiety by having recourse to more suitable measures. (Standard Edition XX, 134-35)

From this statement about anxiety, probably true for any culture anywhere, we are able to glean some clues to explain the most prominent feature of this story--Leng's unusual outburst of laughter. According to the story, Leng's laughter is preceded by a long spell of silence, then he suddenly laughs loudly before he starts to write. This story describes Leng's unusual behavior as "prone to madness." Due to the sketchy narration of the story, however, we cannot get a clear and complete picture of Leng's mental state, nor can we tell whether his laughing is completely uncontrollable and compulsive behavior or just a strong tendency to express his inner amusement openly. Likewise, a lack of professional knowledge in psychology and medicine makes us unable to judge whether Leng's unusual laughter is a serious psychotic disorder or just a minor aberration. Nevertheless, despite all these uncertainties, from Freud's words about anxiety, we can at least gather some related facts to conclude that Leng's laughter must be linked with his inner anxiety. Based upon the description of the story, Leng's laughing only occurs when he is going to write. In that situation, in addition to searching for inspiration, Leng must be haunted by his past memories which ooze from his unconscious and filter into his conscious mind during that long period of silence. These memories would include his frustration at being unable to understand the contents of classical texts, the pressures of writing while sitting in the examination room, his shame

making the same difficult yet futile preparations year after year. Although endowed with a new ability in writing after his supernatural encounter with the fox fairy, he cannot be certain if that ability will accompany him for the rest of his life, or if it will disappear in a wink as abruptly as it arrived. So, when he needs to write again, his old nightmarish memories come back to haunt him bit by bit. The new situation will consequently be read by his conscious mind, as well as by his unconscious, as a threatening situation similar to the old torture which he was obliged to undergo. Feelings of displeasure arise, followed by an outbreak of anxiety. So, Leng needs to get rid of his anxiety by having reccurse to some suitable measures.

Laughter becomes the means for Leng to release his anxiety. In his analysis about the status of anxiety, Freud provides us with this evidence:

> Anxiety, then, is a special state of unpleasure with acts of discharge along particular paths. In accordance with our general views we should be inclined to think that anxiety is based upon an increase of excitation which on the one hand produces the character of unpleasure and on the other finds relief through the acts of discharge already mentioned. . . . We are tempted to assume the presence of a historical factor which binds the sensations of anxiety and its innervations firmly together. We assume, in other words, that an anxiety-state is the reproduction of some experience which contained the necessary conditions for such an increase of excitation and a discharge along particular paths, and that from this circumstance the unpleasure of anxiety receives its specific character. (Standard Edition XX, 133)

From this statement, we know that Leng's stored anxiety can be relieved through "the act of discharge." As for "the act of discharge," Freud notes: "The clearest and most frequent ones are those connected with the respiratory organs and with the heart" (Standard Edition XX, 129). Then, while laughing, with an accelerated heart rate and an increased exhale of air from his lungs, Leng was discharged of anxiety. What is more significant, in such an act of discharge, Leng's laughter signifies his "acute awareness of victory over fear," because, as is asserted by Mikhail Bakhtin, laughter "knows no inhibitions, no limitations" (304-5). Also, "through this victory," Leng's laughter clarifies his "consciousness and [gives] him a new outlook on life" (Bakhtin, 304). "It unveils the material bodily principle in its true meaning," and "its external privileges are intimately linked with interior forces; they are a recognition of the rights of those forces" (Bakhtin, 306-7). Through his laughter, Leng announces his having passed through the new dangerous situation with success, proclaims his rebirth, and bids farewell to his stagnant, barren, and unproductive past years. Also, as is claimed by Tung Wan-hua, Leng's laughter is an index revealing the pressure which he bears from that examination system; the louder his laughter, the heavier the pressure upon his mind is meant to be (41). Then, through his laughter, Leng not only declares his relief from that pressure but also his triumph over that onerous burden.

If laughing means Leng's proclamation of rebirth, then his act of writing is its confirmation. Leng's writing, solid proof of his new ability, puts a clear end to his bleak past. Through his new act of writing, Leng emancipates himself from his old nightmares about writing, and reassures himself that an exuberant, vigorous new life has begun.

This new creative ability displayed in Leng's writing, in light of Freud's idea, is derived from his past experiences. On this subject, Freud states:

> Mental work is linked to some current impression, some provoking occasion in the present which has been able to arouse one of the subject's major wishes. From there it harks back to the memory of an earlier experience . . . and it now creates a situation relating to the future which represents a fulfillment of the wish. . . . [The creative mental work] carries about it traces of its origin from the occasion which provoked it and from the memory. Thus past, present and future are strung together, as it were, on the thread of the wish that runs through them. (Standard Edition IX, 147-48)

From this statement, we know that Leng's writings are linked inexorably with his past. But, which part of his past supplies Leng with the dynamic power to transform his memory into a new creative ability? From Freud's point of view, that strength comes from the libido--Leng's released sexual instincts.

In this regard, Freud once even directly compares the act of writing to the act of intercourse. He describes: "writing, which entails making a liquid flow out of a tube on to a piece of white paper, assuming the significance of copulation . . . ." (Standard Edition XX, 90). Freud calls this process of transforming libidinal impulse into creative imagination as the process of "sublimation." In "Civilization and Its Discontents," he states:

> Another technique for fending off suffering is the employment of the displacements of libido which our mental apparatus permits of and through which

its function gains so much in flexibility. The task here is that of shifting the instinctual aims in such a way that they cannot come up against frustration from the external world. In this, sublimation of the instincts lends its assistance. One gains the most if one can sufficiently heighten the yield of pleasure from the sources of psychical and intellectual work. When that is so, fate can do little against one. (Standard Edition XXI, 79)

In "The Libido Theory," he gives this process of sublimation a more elaborated description:

> An attentive examination of the sexual trends, which alone were accessible to psycho-analysis, had meanwhile led to some remarkable detailed findings. What is described as the sexual instinct turns out to be of a highly composite nature and is liable to disintegrate once more into its component instincts. . . . Each [component instinct] has furthermore as distinguishable features an object and an aim. The aim is always discharged accompanied by satisfaction, but is capable of being changed from activity to passivity. . . . The separate instincts can either remain independent of one another or--in what is still an inexplicable manner--can be combined and merged into one another to perform work in common. . . . The most important vicissitude which an instinct can undergo seems to be sublimation; here both object and aim are changed, so that what was originally a sexual instinct finds satisfaction in some achievement which is no longer sexual but has a higher social or ethical valuation. (Standard Edition XVIII, 256)

Through his sublimated act of writing, Leng releases his unconsciously repressed libidinal desire. His suppressed desire is allowed to emerge to awareness and works through imagination, so that its potential for causing harm--to himself or to others--is much reduced, and its force is made to serve a more positive purpose (Bettelheim, 7). Leng's act of writing is also, as described by Church, "driven by the pressure of unreleased desire" and is "rewarded by the pleasure of regained equilibrium" (210).

In light of Freudian thought, Leng expresses his libidinal desire through his act of writing; but, through writing the story of "Scholar Leng," the author P'u is mainly aiming at venting his pent-up feelings. Here, by way of his story, P'u intends to criticize the examination system in general, and the examiner in this very case in particular.

In the story, Leng's expulsion from the examination hall is due to the fact that his unexpected loud laughter irritates the new examiner. In fact, this plot has an extended implication: a real talent, such as Leng's, cannot be appropriately recognized by that examination system, as represented by the examiner, because the system emphasizes only formality and triviality, and fails to pay attention to the really precious individual qualities of the candidates. The plot also implies that, what is worse, the requirement of conformity demanded by the system for success in examinations does not encourage people to pursue and develop their intrinsically valuable literary talents either.

In addition, as is concretely exemplified through Leng's expulsion by the examiner, this story also shows us that because of the inevitable factor of personal interference involved in the selection of candidates, even an excellent talent will not guarantee a

candidate's being favored then selected by examiners. As is clearly pointed out by Dr. Kao,

> The civil service recruitment system used the examinations as a device for the selection of candidates to take government posts. In this selection, two factors were of crucial importance: the candidate's ability in essay writing and the examiner's recognition of that ability. It takes more than one's own talent and efforts to succeed in this enterprise--ultimately the selection hinges on the assessment by an examiner. Examiners therefore become the object of either sincere gratitude (considered both as a "master," *shi* 師, and a *zhiyin* 知音) or heart-felt resentment and spite. (1994, 213)

With talents unable to be recognized and emphasized by the examiner, Leng is henceforth deprived of a potential career in officialdom. Leng's misfortune directly relates to P'u's own personal experiences and feelings towards that examination system, because P'u always suspected that the reason for his repeated failure to pass the second level of examination was mainly due to the ineptitude or the corruption of the examiners (Lin, 371-72). So, a person like him with abundant literary talents had to suffer greatly for the examinations.

Beneath the supernatural surface of the story, there is a tinge of helplessness and despair, which is reflected by Leng's expulsion from the examination hall and heightened by P'u's commentary. Compared with P'u, Leng's demise in the story is a blessing in disguise, because, after his expulsion, Leng has an excuse to forsake his dreams of officialdom and gets rid of his heavy shackles for ever. Giving up the old quest, he can

indulge himself in wine and poetry, a free man and without misgivings, to live as an unbridled literary prodigy. But, what is more significant is that he also leaves valuable works, his "The Topsy-Turvy Drafts," to give solid proof to his real worth. Unfortunately, P'u did not have that kind of luck, because he had no tangible excuse for leaving the examination system, nor did he seem to want to. Regardless of his deep feelings of helplessness and despair, P'u still persisted in his struggle and plight until he reached fifty years of age (Mulheman, 67). His only hope, perhaps, was to attain Leng's success--to leave some valuable works behind to prove his worth despite the semblance of repeated failures.

D. "Huang Chiu-lang": the Return of Males' Repressed Homosexual Wish

In this section, Freud's statements upon homosexuality and the return of repressed desire will be my major tool to explain certain plots. The summary of this story is as follows.

One day around dusk, Scholar Ho, who had homosexual tendencies, noticed a young man, who looked much prettier than a girl.

Next morning, he waited for the young man by the road, but the young man did not appear until very late. Ho urged him to visit his house, but the young man did not stay for very long. From then on, Ho deeply missed the young man.

One day, the young man returned. He told Ho that his name was Huang Chiu-lang and that because his mother was ill and living at her parents' house, he went to visit her frequently. When Huang was about to leave, Ho locked the door, so Huang stayed there that night. Ho saw that Huang was as gentle and shy as a girl. Later, Ho forced Huang to sleep with him then asked for intimate relations. Huang refused, angrily saying: "I thought you were a respectable gentleman, so I stayed here. That kind of lustful behavior is like an animal." Next morning, Huang left.

Ho missed him severely. But, several days later, Huang returned. Ho felt very glad, and dragged Huang to his studio and asked for intercourse. First, Huang rejected him but finally gave in. When Huang was asleep, Ho caressed his body again. Awakened, Huang took his leave.

After that, Ho felt such a great sense of loss that he could not eat and sleep with ease, then day by day grew more emaciated. When Huang finally returned, He was shocked to see Ho's gaunt figure. In sobs, Ho told him that he had missed him so fondly that he had fallen ill. Huang said: "Our engagement brings me no benefit yet will bring you much harm; thus, I did not want to continue it. But, if you really like it, I don't mind it at all." After saying these words, Huang left. Feeling glad to hear Huang's words, Ho soon recovered.

A few days later, Huang returned and pressed Ho to ask his friend Dr. Ch'i for "Primordial Pills" to cure his mother's heart ailment. Ho got the pills, then forced Huang to have intercourse with him again. Huang told Ho that his cousin San-niang was a beautiful woman, who would be much better for Ho than he and that, if Ho had the inclination, he could serve as matchmaker. But Ho only kept smiling, without saying anything. Huang left. Three days later, he returned to ask for pills again, but Ho complained and reproached him for his late return. Huang replied: "I did not intend to hurt you, so I tried to distance myself from you. If you cannot forgive me, then do whatever you want to me. However, don't regret it later." From then on, they made love everyday.

Ho kept asking for the pills every three days, and this made Dr. Chi very curious. He told Ho that he had a demonic pulse and needed to beware of his sexual activities. Ho repeated these words to Huang. Huang sighed: "He is really a good doctor! To tell you the truth, I am a fox. If we stay together long enough, it will be very unlucky for you." Later, Ho fell very sick. The doctor came, then

said: "You did not tell me the whole truth. Now, I can do nothing at all." Huang also came to see Ho, complaining: "You did not pay attention to my words, so you must now face your death!" Soon Ho died, and Huang left in tears.

Now in the town, there lived a historian, who was once Ho's classmate. He offended his superior Ch'ing, so consequently he was deprived of his post. Ch'ing later became the governor of that province and kept looking for the historian's faults. Ch'ing found evidence that the historian once kept correspondence with a rebel king, so he threatened the historian with that evidence. Scared, the historian hanged himself. However, the next morning, the historian came to life and kept saying that he was Scholar Ho. This was because Ho's soul had borrowed the historian's body. But, Governor Ch'ing suspected that it was merely the historian's cunning scheme, so he asked for one thousand taels of gold from Ho. Ho felt very worried.

Huang arrived. They greeted each other happily. Later, Ho asked to make love with Huang again. Huang refused, saying: "Do you have three lives?" Ho replied: " I regret that life is a great burden, but death might bring me some ease." He informed him about his trouble.

Huang said that his cousin San-niang was intelligent, beautiful, and crafty, so she should be able to help relieve his burden. Ho asked to meet her. Huang thought up a plan to entrap his cousin at Ho's house. After she arrived, Ho saw her great beauty and said to Huang: "You did not tell me the whole truth. Now, I think I could die for her." They succeeded in entrapping San-niang. Ho asked for

intercourse with her, but she refused and said: "You have your own wife. Why do you want to inflict shame upon me?" Ho replied that he kept celibate. Finally, she gave in and accepted his request to be married to him. She asked Ho not to desert her, and, in return, she would abide by his words forever. Ho made his pledge.

Though pleased to get a beautiful wife, Ho remained apprehensive all the time. San-niang asked him for the reason, so he told her about his trouble. She said: "Only Chiu-lang can solve your problem. Governor Ch'ing is fond of singing and boys, so he will find Chiu-lang very attractive. Send him to the Governor, then Governor Ch'ing's rancor against you can be resolved and I can have my revenge, too."

Next day, Huang arrived and was told the plan. Although feeling reluctant, he finally acquiesced to Ho's request. Ho asked another historian, Wang, to invite Governor Ch'ing to Wang's place. There, Huang dressed himself as a beautiful girl to perform "The Dance of Heavenly Demons." Ch'ing took a great liking to Huang and would pay dearly in order to keep him. Wang told him about Ho's suggestion. Ch'ing accepted it happily, then renounced his enmity against Ho.

After he got Huang, Governor Ch'ing neglected all his concubines completely. Huang lived like a king, and Ch'ing sent him ten thousand taels of gold. Half a year later, Ch'ing fell very ill. Huang knew that Ch'ing would soon die, so he returned to Ho's place. After Ch'ing's death, Huang built houses and

bought property, maids and servants. He also fetched his mother and aunt to live with him. Whenever he left his house, he was accompanied by beautiful carriages and horses. But, nobody knew that he was actually a fox fairy.

The focus of this story is the depiction of male homosexual desire. Yet, as homosexual love violates the current social norms and mores of the time, the character Scholar Ho needs to undergo the process of sex, death, purgation, then rebirth in order to lead a morally acceptable heterosexual nuptial life. Although the didactic purpose in the design of this plot is evident, it is, nevertheless, artificial and illogical. It clearly reveals a charged antagonism towards people with homosexual tendencies. The dubious ending addresses an implicit wish for a return of the repressed homosexual desire--but, only if it could appear appropriate, or could be carried on clandestinely.

Compared with the other stories in P'u's anthology related to the depiction of homosexuality, such as "Hsia-nu" and "Nien-yang"念秧 (Swindlers) (564-74), the subject matter of homosexual desire is much more sharply focused in this story. Here, the language is direct, more scenes are allotted to the portrayal of this sexual tendency, and more characters are concerned with this desire. The characters' inner eagerness, fascination, and dilemma for pursuing or rejecting such desire are intensively and vividly displayed without any disguise. Doubtless, a pursuit of homosexual desire occupies the foreground of this story.

As in the treatment of sex in the story "Scholar Tung," sexual desire is negatively presented in this story. Here, sex is extremely desirable, yet it will eventually lead to a fatal result. So, Ho's lust for Huang has already paved the road to his death. Once again,

death is adopted as a didactic device to admonish people who have excessive erotic desire; and, as in "Scholar Tung," death is also used first as a form of punishment, then as a process of purgation. Owing to his death, Ho sheds his former sins, obtains a transmigration, and earns a rebirth. He then leads a new life in which he gives up his former homosexual lust and sets onto a path of heterosexual married life.

Ho's change in sexual preference after his death is, however, somewhat illogical and artificial. Since the first paragraph of this story, we have been clearly informed that Ho always has homosexual tendencies, which are habitual and strong, so much is he attracted and even overwhelmed by Huang's sexual appeal. Before his death, he longs to see Huang again, his anxiety in waiting for Huang's returns, and his illness due to his love-sickness only tell us how intense his homosexual desire is. In addition, within the contents of the story, no evidence of his sexual desire towards women has ever been mentioned before his transmigration. Thus, for Ho, his sexual desire should be strictly homosexual.

After his resurrection, Ho still intends to continue his former homosexual desire in the beginning, which is logical; however, after listening to Huang's reproach and considering self-preservation, he then "abruptly and completely" abstains from his former sexual preference and switches his sexual desire exclusively to women for the rest of the story, which is illogical. Freud's clinical experiences in his treatment of homosexual patients can give supporting evidence for this point. From the Freudian point of view, it can never be an easy task to switch sexual preference. In "The Psychogenesis of a Case of Homosexuality in a Woman," he remarks:

> Such an achievement--the removal of genital inversion or homosexuality--is in my experience never an easy matter. On the contrary, I have found success possible only in specially favorable circumstances, and even then the success essentially consisted in making access to the opposite sex (which had hitherto been barred) possible to a person restricted to homosexuality, thus restoring his full bisexual functions. (Standard Edition XVIII, 151)

In the same text, he continues:

> The number of successes achieved by psycho-analytic treatment of the various forms of homosexuality, which incidentally are manifold, is indeed not very striking. As a rule the homosexual is not able to give up the object which provides him with pleasure, and one cannot convince him that if he made the change he would rediscover in the other object the pleasure that he has renounced. (Standard Edition XVIII, 151)

What most clearly reflects Freud's attitude in the difficulty of changing homosexual patients' tendency is written on a note sent by him to an American mother, whose son was homosexual. In it, Freud writes:

> By asking me if I can help, you mean, I suppose, if I can abolish homosexuality and make normal heterosexuality take its place. The answer is, in a general way, we cannot promise to achieve it. In a certain number of cases we succeed in developing the blighted germs of heterosexual tendencies which are present in every homosexual, in the majority of cases it is no more possible. (Lewes, 33)

Then, he suggests to her: "What analysis can do for your son runs in a different line. If he is unhappy, neurotic, torn by conflicts, inhibited in his social life, analysis may bring him harmony, peace of mind, full efficiency, whether he remains a homosexual or gets changed" (Lewes, 34). So, judging from these statements, we can conclude that Ho's abrupt and complete change from his former homosexual tendency to a new heterosexual tendency in the story is not only illogical but almost impossible.

Ho might indeed have bisexual tendencies, and we have no reason to eliminate such a possibility. However, due to an unmendable fissure occurring in the design of the story itself, we can tell that if Ho is bisexual, it will not be a crucial and relevant matter at all to the purpose which this story intends to achieve. According to the contents of the story, Huang is a "male" fox fairy, with whom sexual engagements will bring forth death; whereas his cousin San-niang is a "female" fox fairy, yet with her sexual engagements will be innocuous. Temporary sex with Huang is disastrous, yet continual sexual relationship with San-niang will be completely harmless for the rest of Ho's life. This incongruity evidently has violated the pre-set causal relationship between sex with fox fairies and consequent death. This inexplicable incoherence gives us the message that the major concern of the story is an exposure of the anomaly of homosexual love, not whether or not Ho is bisexual. In this story, homosexual desire is presented with prejudice as an immoral erotic desire, a taboo, a sin, an object of abhorrence, a "moral insanity," and "a contribution to social decay" (Perrie, 176). In other words, Ho dies not of his excessive lust, but of his homosexual tendency.

This hostility and condemnation against homosexuality is most concretely demonstrated in the author P'u's commentary upon this story. Usually, when P'u attaches his comments to the stories, he adopts an alias--the Historian of the Strange. [5] P'u, assuming a pseudo-historical stance, usually assigns a strong didactic purpose to his stories. As Wu observes,

> many of P'u Sung-ling's fox tales are didactic tales. Every time he tells a tale, he has in the back of his mind an ethical framework from which he never strays. In all of his tales, there exists a strong tendency to elucidate cause and effects. If a fox spirit is good, Pu never fails to reward it. If a man is bad, at the end, he surely gets his due. This has become a literary formula which underlies the whole collection of *Liao-chai.* (1986, 151)

Therefore, right after finishing the last sentence of this story, P'u immediately continues with the statement, "I have a laughing judgment." He then comments severely upon the subject matter of this story, homosexual desire. Deserting his customary alias and thundering in the first person, P'u reiterates that homosexual love, as is presented in this story, can never be allowed and must be eradicated completely. He ends his comment with a harsh suggestion: "Thus, we should castrate all these homosexual men so that acts of sodomy will never happen again" (323). P'u's unfaltering hostility against homosexuality as well as his intended moralistic purpose of putting into the scenes of Ho's death and resurrection has been unreservedly expressed through such a suggestion.

For the story to continue successfully, therefore, Ho needs to switch to heterosexual love after his revival so as to find ultimate salvation. Consequently, because of his

change of behavior he is rewarded with a good wife, San-niang. According to the traditional Chinese male standard, San-niang is a most desirable wife with valuable feminine characteristics: she is beautiful, intelligent, chaste, submissive, devoted to Ho, capable, and willing to share Ho's burden. She is, as is stated by Hom, "an ideal companion for a man" (272). However, reflected through this male wishful portrayal of an ideal female is the difference between the idea of femininity and the reality of the female, as is described by Susan Kopelman Cornillon. Through such exposure, it is revealed that "in the male culture the idea of the feminine is expressed, defined, and perceived by the male as a condition of being female, while for the female it is seen as an addition to one's femaleness, as a status to be achieved" (113). San-niang's existence in this story only expresses a male's long-cherished wish to find a woman to cater to his various needs during different stages of life.

Ho finds his salvation by switching to heterosexual love, but Huang still remains a homosexual man, so he is supposed to be appropriately punished in order to abide by the didactic rule implicitly underlying P'u's stories. In most of P'u's stories which are related to the topic of homosexuality, men with homosexual desire or behavior will sooner or later encounter negative consequences. For example, in this story, Ho dies once and Governor Ch'ing also dies in the end; the fox fairy in "Hsia-nu" is beheaded and the young man in "Nien-yang" is severely punished at the end of story. According to this rule, Huang, the source of evil in this story, should also receive his due punishment.

To a certain degree, Huang's punishment is exemplified through his trial of being sent away by Ho as a gift for making peace with Governor Ch'ing. The cause of his

tribulation is a trick conceived by San-niang. That trick has a double purpose: it is her revenge so that she can get even with Huang for tricking her into being ensnared by Ho, and it also helps her to relieve her husband's worries at the same time. Unfortunately, her scheme only partly succeeds--Ch'ing dies but Huang survives, obtains a great fortune, and is well off at the end of the story.

Doubtless, such an ending for this story causes some confusion, because it does not follow the general rule that eventually negative results will occur to homosexual men in P'u's stories. Why does Huang survive and escape a severe punishment? Why does he obtain fortune in the long run? Why does he live far better off for the rest of his life than most human beings do? Moreover, according to the hint suggested by the last description of the story, Huang seems to live among the upper class of his society. Apparently, this kind of ending is contrary to what has been generally espoused in the preceding part of the story.

Through this ending various layers of ambiguity about Huang's character and behavior are revealed one by one. Why does Huang deserve good rewards in the end? The explanation might be that he still retains some of the respectability which a society holds dear, even though he has indulged in homosexual behavior. Since the beginning, Huang never has malicious intentions towards Ho. He is willing to sacrifice himself in order to prevent his intimate friend from trouble. His affection, or love, for Ho is genuine, which is clearly displayed while standing by Ho's death bed. Moreover, Huang is also a filial son, always concerned for his mother's well-being. What is most important, he is morally concerned about his own homosexual deeds and keeps trying to

avoid intercourse with Ho (quite unlike the traditional portrayal of fox fairies). Thus, even as a homosexual man, Huang escapes from harsh punishment and deserves a prosperous life instead.

In addition, if we have paid close attention to this ending, a dubious point within it should have caught our attention. According to this ending, when Governor Ch'ing is dying, Huang returns to live with Ho. The sketchy narrative of the story does not provide us with any further detailed information, but we cannot help asking the following questions. How do they live together? Do they still carry on their intimate relationship? We know that, although not mentioned again in the rest of story, Ho's homosexual desire has never been totally eradicated, even after he transmigrates and obtains a wife. In particular, this ending does not clearly inform us of whether Huang, with his riches, moves out of Ho's house and sets up his own family, or if they simply keep living together in the end.

This ending also tells us that nobody knows Huang's real identity, and what people see is only the facade of Huang's prosperous life of ostentation and extravagance. Does this ending imply that, even though people might have known Huang's secret, they actually can do nothing about it at all, because of Huang's enormous riches and their accompanying influence?

This ambiguous ending, in marked contrast to P'u's manifestly expressed antagonism towards homosexuality, leads us to form a speculation. It is that there might exist a previous story teller, who had a homosexual desire and who, consciously or unconsciously, expressed his wishful thinking by way of this story. Although on the

surface conforming with existing social mores in earlier parts of the story, his wish is ultimately expressed through the ambiguous ending. His wish is that people with homosexual preferences should be allowed to survive or even to thrive in society. A man, such as Ho, might well satisfy his homosexual desire and still be accepted as a member of his society without the danger of being repudiated, if only he could camouflage his desire by getting married and living under the pretense of having a heterosexual family life.

In light of Freud's thinking, the destructive role assigned to Huang is the indication of a repressed desire, for the "uncanny is in reality nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression" (Standard Edition XVII, 241). Thus, the ending of this story only more clearly informs us of a repression as well as suppression of the initial story provider's homosexual desire, his efforts to let that desire break through a moralistic milieu and emerge to the surface of consciousness, and his anxiety linked with that repressed desire. On repression, Freud states:

> Contrary thoughts are always closely connected with each other and are often paired off in such a way that the one is excessively intensely conscious while its counterpart is repressed and unconscious. This relation between the two thoughts is an effect of the process of repression. For repression is achieved by means of an excessive reinforcement of the thought contrary to the one which is to be repressed. (Standard Edition VII, 54-55)

On the relationship between repression and anxiety, Freud says: "It was anxiety which produced repression and not, as I formerly believed, repression which produced anxiety" (Standard Edition XX, 108-9). Thus, the anxiety derived from an intention to release the resurgent homosexual desire may have provided the genesis for this story, which turns out to be a concrete embodiment of this repressed desire.

In fact, this story not only tells of repressed sexual desire of the original story teller, but also of a wish to return to a lost tradition, because homosexual love has a long tradition in Chinese history. According to Bret Hinsch's Passion of the Cut Sleeve: the Male Homosexual Tradition in China, we can get a clear idea about the prevailing phenomenon of homosexuality in ancient China. He writes:

> Westerners were shocked by the perceived ubiquity and deep roots of homosexuality within Chinese culture. They were correct in sensing the existence of a historical tradition of homosexuality in China that dates back to at least the Bronze Age. It gave rise to highly developed expression, including well-patronized meeting places and an accumulation of literature catering to homosexual tastes. Many times homosexuality acted as an integral part of society, complete with same-sex marriages for both men and women. It spanned a range of social classes, from famed emperors and aristocrats to impoverished laborers. In all of these circumstances, homosexuality serves as a convenient mirror for viewing an intimate area of human experience. (2)

Hinsch adds:

> The long duration of tolerance allowed the accumulation of a literature and sense of history that in turn enabled those with strong homosexual desire to arrive at a complex self-understanding. In many periods homosexuality was widely accepted and even respected, had its own formal history, and had a role in shaping artistic creation. (4)

According to Hinsch, however, homosexual phenomena had been severely suppressed by the ruling government in the seventeenth century, which was close to P'u's period. He observes:

> After the Manchus restored order by establishing the Qing [Ch'ing] dynasty in 1644, a period of reaction set in against what many perceived as Ming libertinism. Literature generally became more circumspect, shaping our perceptions of the period. Some scholars have detected a growing social conservatism as well. Vivien Ng has suggested that the Qing dynasty represents a time when homosexuality was brought under increased regulation as an attempt to firm up the foundations of society uprooted during the late Ming. (139)

Hinsch also points out that the Kangxi Emperor, under whose reign P'u lived, "personifies the new Manchu morality through his violent hostility to Chinese homosexual customs" (142). Thus, judged upon this historical evidence, the story may be read as an expression of a wish to return to a banned tradition.

From Hinsch's book we are also able to find some clues about the real identity of the fox fairy Huang Chiu-lang. From San-niang's comments that Governor Ch'ing is fond of the thespian arts and young boys, and that both are Huang's "specialty," we sense

something suspicious. Do her words suggest that with his attractive appearance and feminine personality, Huang is a male prostitute and an actor, who cross-dresses during performances on the stage? Hinsch writes:

> Our knowledge of male prostitution from the Qing concerns almost exclusively the most elite group of male prostitutes: actors. . . . Acting teachers raised young actors in troupes and were concerned not only with developing a boy's talents but also with enhancing his looks. A winsome appearance could provide additional income, for as one observer noted, if an actor "has a clean, white complexion and is unusually good looking, it is safe to assume that he has other skills unknown to outsiders." (152)

He continues:

> Most of the boys in Beijing were brought from southern cities. They were trained to "speak and walk in the most charming manner and to use their eyes with great efficacy." . . . "Three or four months after the training program begins, these boys are delicate and genteel as lovely maidens. One glance from them will create hundreds of charms." . . . Their "teachers" acquainted them with thespian skills as well as training in the erotic arts. (152-53)

To sum up, Hinsch asserts: "there is no question that homosexuality was widespread almost to the point of universality among young actors" (153). Supported by these historical facts and the clues revealed through the story itself, it is fairly safe for us to infer that Huang, the fox fairy, is a transformation of a human actor who is also a male prostitute.

This discovery of Huang's real identity is not incidental at all, because in P'u's other stories or comments he has left both obscure and explicit clues to suggest that some of his fox fairies are in fact prostitutes. While discussing the plots of the story "*Hu-meng*" 狐夢(The fox dream) (618-22), Zeitlin notes: "The entire banquet scene in which Bi plays drinking games with various pieces of intimate feminine apparel reads like a parody of brothel entertainment" (275). In a comment appended to the story "*Ya-t'ou*"鴉頭 (600-6), which portrays fox fairies as prostitutes and depicts a madam's maltreatment of young prostitutes, P'u gives us an even broader hint. He states:妓盡狐也，不謂有狐而妓者；至狐而鴉，則獸而禽矣 (606). Dr. Kao translates this into English as: "All prostitutes are 'foxes'; but never was it heard that foxes could take up the profession to become prostitutes! Then for a fox to act as a procuress, the animal had indeed turned into a beast" (1994, 228). Thus, based upon these above-mentioned clues as well as evidence, some of P'u's fox fairies are indeed a transformation of human prostitutes, both male and female.

This discovery sheds a somewhat new light upon the story and opens up a new possible explanation for its dubious ending. The ending could have been utilized by P'u to allude to a "certain person" in his days, someone who was a male prostitute yet who was, ironically, extremely successful. From P'u's moralistic point of view, that kind of phenomenon is certainly "abnormal" and "strange," so that he feels a moral responsibility to write him into his story by transforming him into a supernatural fox fairy, then puts the story into his anthology as one of the stories of the strange.

Although we cannot exclude the possibility of such an explanation for particular aspects of the story, when the contents of the story as a whole are taken into consideration, the overall message transmitted through the text of the story itself is not affected. Indeed, what we have witnessed from this story is a representation of an evident display of male homosexual desire and its being forcefully suppressed by various means. Either they are the author P'u's intentional arrangement of plots, or the initial story provider's superficial conformity to the demands of social norms, which subtly pleads for understanding and acceptance. In fact, the forms of enforcement only make this desire, its suppression, and its attempt at acceptance inside this story more apparent. Particularly, conveyed through the ambiguous ending, a wish, an intention, and a proclamation are implicitly yet strongly addressed--they are an announcement that the homosexual desire is unquenchable, that it wants to break through outside restrictions to emerge again to the surface, and that it wants to carry on without any interruption.

This story illustrates Freud's opinions on the wish for a return of repressed desire. He states:

> what is past in mental life may be preserved and is not necessarily destroyed. It is always possible that even in the mind some of what is old is effaced or aborted--whether in the normal course of things or as an exception--to such an extent that it cannot be restored or revivified by any means; or that preservation in general is dependent on certain favorable conditions. It is possible, but we know nothing about it. We can only hold fast to the fact that it is rather the rule than the exception for the past to be preserved in mental life. (Standard Edition XXI, 71)

In his "Thoughts for the Time on War and Death," he reiterates this belief by saying:

> In reality, there is no such thing as "eradicating" evil tendencies. Psychological--more strictly speaking, psycho-analytic--investigation shows instead that the inmost essence of human nature consists of elemental instincts, which are common to all men and aim at the satisfaction of certain primal needs. These instincts in themselves are neither good nor evil . . . . [They] undergo a lengthy process of development before they are allowed to become active in the adult being. They are inhibited, directed towards other aims and departments, become commingled, alter their objects, and are to some extent turned back upon their possessor. (Freud, 1968, 7)

In the same work, he continues:

> It is otherwise with the development of the mind. Here one can describe the state of affairs, which is a quite peculiar one, only by saying that in this case every earlier stage of development persists alongside the later stage which has developed from it; the successive stages condition a co-existence, although it is in reference to the same materials that the whole series of transformations has been fashioned itself for years, but none the less it is so far present that it may at any time again become the mode of expression of the forces in the mind . . . . (Freud, 1968, 12)

Thus, with its repressed libidinal impulse and memory, this story "Huang Chiu-lang" becomes the site of a return of the repressed desire. It harbors "the presence of formal qualities which may be assimilated to those of the language of the unconscious," "the presence of contents censured by the social repression associated with sex," and "the

presence of contents censured by ideological or political repression" (Orlando, 139). Also, in this story, as is asserted by Stuart Hampshire, the anxiety which attaches to the threatening and painful thoughts, the repression of them, and the defenses against them which are elaborated in conscious attitudes and beliefs, should be acknowledged as a psychical reality (114).

Owing to the anxiety, the repression, as well as the defense against a hostile milieu as reflected in this story, the supernatural element is needed by the original story teller in order to help him "exempt the text from the action of the law, and thereby to transgress that law" (Todorov, 139). As is stated by Todorov, the fantastic is a means of combat against censorship, because "sexual excesses will be more readily accepted by any censor if they are attributed to the devil" (158). After being tinted with fantastic color, this story can make its homosexual characters and themes more acceptable to the general readers, since it suggests that homosexuality has little or no connection to their own circumstances; and, with dramatic distancing, homosexuality may seem less threatening to them and may avoid presenting itself as an issue confronting the reader in his or her own society (Riemer, 145).

Nevertheless, as we are told by Marcuse, although "the return of the repressed makes up the tabooed and subterranean history of civilization," it inevitably carries with it the "truth value of memory" (18). The truth value of memory within this story will help it to preserve "promises and potentialities which are betrayed and even outlawed by the mature, civilized individual, but which had once been fulfilled in his dim past and which are never entirely forgotten" (Marcuse, 18) Also, this truth value of memory will

perpetually commit it to "the past experience of happiness which spurns the desire for conscious re-creation" (Marcuse, 19). As summed up by Marcuse,

> The liberation of the past does not end in its reconciliation with the present. Against the self-imposed restraint of the discoverer, the orientation on the past tends toward an orientation on the future. The *recherche du temps perdu* becomes the vehicle of future liberation. (19)

Chapter III. Conclusion

These four stories, with the fox fairies' inseparable association with sexual instincts, have been utilized to freely explore the concerns of different domains: lust, death, rebirth, and alternative forms of sexual desire.

As is already known, a considerable number of P'u's stories have folkloric origins. The possibility of inherent folkloric characteristics within these four stories allows us a glimpse of the pervasive attitudes and concerns of the masses of P'u's age to a certain degree. In exploring the nature of folktales, Vladimir Propp tersely points out the importance of folklore to a contemporary culture. He states:

> Problems of folklore are acquiring more and more importance nowadays. None of the humanities, be it ethnography, history, linguistics, or the history of literature, can do without folklore. Little by little we are becoming aware that the solution to many diverse phenomena of spiritual culture is hidden in folklore. (3)

Although P'u does not clearly indicate the sources of these four stories, judging from the sketchy descriptions, simple structures, and crude themes existing in them, we cannot help speculating that some of them might have originated from folk tales. Moreover, several motifs appearing in these stories, such as the sudden arrival of the fox fairies, the foxes' ability to transform, the irresistible sexual appeal possessed by fox fairies and their incessant sexual quests, the disastrous results due to intercourse with foxes, and the return of the dead as well as the use of transmigration, are repeatedly adopted by P'u in his other fox stories as well as by writers in both preceding and contemporary ages. These repeated motifs suggests that some aspects related to fox fairies are widely

perceived by the masses and these four stories probably have carried folkloric connection.

Although P'u might well have given literary embellishment or added thematic emphases to his stories, "the place of the oral within the written" will still be traceable (Brooks, 76). With their folkloric connection, they quite possibly reveal the psychological reality of the common people in various ways. As asserted by Eric R. Robkin, in the transition from the oral to the written, "the story might become more conventionalized, the audience becomes more limited, the tellers become more sophisticated, the truth value becomes more symbolic and less literal, but . . . the issues remain the same" (29).

Freud's psychoanalytical theories provide only one of the available approaches to reading these fox stories. Adopting other theoretical treatises might expose different aspects within the stories, and different conclusions might be drawn. Borrowing the Freudian view, however, we do more clearly observe certain residual and timeless issues within them which are significant to human society. "Subjugation of the Foxes," shows us an ostensible display of male sexual instincts and the unwavering search for libidinal satisfaction. However, in this story, we also see that this expression of sexual desire has been restrained, tempered, and disguised with a socially acceptable form for presentation due to outside limitation. Also, while searching for sexual gratification, although the male regards the female as an attractive sexual objects, he simultaneously reveals his deep fear of impotence, castration, and loss of male identity. In the story of "Scholar Tung," through the establishment of a drastic polarity between sex and death, we find the

infusion of a strong moralistic attitude using death as a didactic, literalized device to warn against the expression of sexual instincts. But, in light of the Freudian point of view, we also discover that some of its themes suggest a contrary interpretation, namely, that the libidinal desire will never be easily bridled because it will always try different means, obvious or obscure, to circumvent any imposed supervision. In "Scholar Leng," we have seen that sex is desirable but success in the civil service examination is even more desirable. So, in the story, the life-giving strength of sex is borrowed to provide the function of wishfulfillment, fulfilling Leng's biggest need and lack. In the story "Huang Chiu-lang," we witness an undisguised display of homosexual desire, yet, we also see that an implicit moralistic restriction influences the expression of such an alternative form of sexual desire. However, at the end of the story, a wish is subtly delivered and this story ultimately tells of the intention to continue that forbidden homosexual love.

By making use of the fantastic form of fox stories and the connection between fox fairies and sexual desire, while dealing with the concerns of sexuality, these four stories also express the suppressed interior feelings of repression and anxiety, observed from Freud's point of view. In "The Uncanny," Freud states that:

> every affect belonging to an emotional impulse, whatever its kind, is transformed, if it is repressed, into anxiety, then among instances of frightening things there must be one class in which the frightening element can be shown to be something repressed which recurs. This class of frightening things would then constitute the uncanny . . . . (Standard Edition XVII, 241)

In the name of fantasy, these four stories not only "tell of" but also "expel" the repressed desire (Jackson, 3). They become the kind of text, "whereby bodies are speaking to bodies, not merely minds speaking to minds" (Wright, 4). Also, owing to a lack of reality in them, these four fox stories are able to interrogate and challenge the authoritative truths and replace them with something less certain (Jackson, 5). As Bakhtin declares, "the fantastic serves . . . not in the positive embodiment of the truth, but in the search after the truth, . . . and, most importantly, its testing" (1973, 94). These stories have been constructed themselves as a "genre of protest," as Marina Warner describes, in order "to express the thoughts of an inferior group" (163).

Prusek writes:

> P'u's stories are not empty fantasies, but are based on real life, and are a conscientious, deliberate remodeling of it. In spite of the fantastic colors in which he paints his background, and the strange forms in which he clothes his characters, everywhere we see the true face of life reflected in his stories, so that we have every right to speak of P'u Sung-ling's realism. (Prusek, 133)

Through the practice of applying Freud's various treatises and perspectives to these stories, we witness the desires with which these four fox stories are charged: the desire for the expression of sexual instincts; the desire for success in the civil service examination; and, the desire for a continuation of banned homosexual love. All these desires took root in their contemporary soil, but were often deprived of proper channels of expression due to the limitations imposed from outside. These stories have shown us "the unsaid and the unseen of culture," and what has been "silenced, made invisible,

covered over and made 'absent'" (Jackson, 4). These four fox stories are not merely stories of fantasy, but are also stories of desire, suppression, and repression. But, judging from the common feelings of impatience, restlessness, and agony with which they are imbued, it could be more appropriate to call these four stories "stories of anxiety". As expressions of anxiety, these four stories will enable themselves to exist as jarring and bellicose voices to address desire, to tell about suppression, to expel repression, and to break through barriers set up by their contemporary environment to reveal a psychological truth.

NOTES

[1] 文名藉藉諸生間，然入棘闈，輒心悸；慨然曰：「其命也夫！」用是決然舍其，而益肆力於古文辭。。。。而蘊結未盡，則又搜抉奇怪，著為志異一書。

[2] 才非干寶，雅愛搜神；情類黃州，喜人談鬼。聞則命筆，遂以成編。久之，四方同人，又以郵筒相寄，因而物以好聚，所積益夥。

The English translation is borrowed from Zeitlin's translation (44).

[3] In Wolfram Eberhard's A Dictionary of Chinese Symbols: Hidden Symbols in Chinese Life and Thought, he writes:

> The thousand-year-old fox has nine tails and is noted for its extreme sensuality. It was a thousand-year-old fox which assumed the form of the beguiling Dan-ji and led the last Emperor of the Shang Dynasty into such evil ways that he finally lost both his empire and his life. This tale is related in the famous Ming novel 'The Metamorphoses of the Gods' (*Feng-shen yan-yi*). (117)

[4] In Freud: Dictionary of Psychoanalysis, it provides Freud's explanations of various terms appearing in his different works. Yet, this dictionary does not provide detailed information about the sources of its listed items, such as publication years, editions, and page numbers. Here, I use "Dictionary" to indicate that my quotes are from the dictionary.

[5] This alias has its inherited meaning, as is explained by Judith Zeitlin:

In a somewhat more arresting step, Pu Songling derived a second and more evocative literary name, *Yishi shi*--the Historian of the Strange--from an ancient tradition. Many scholars have pointed out that he modeled this epithet after the title Grand Historian of Sima Qian of the second century B.C. and have found a connection between the two titles not only in their similar wording but also in their paralleled usage: Sima Qian employed "Grand Historian" when commenting on his historical narratives; Pu Songling called himself the "Historian of the Strange" only in the interpretive and evaluative comments he appended to his tales. (1)

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