

## The Many Lives of the Woman of Huaiyin in the Song (960-1279): Text, Genre, and Female Morality\*

Cong Ellen Zhang \*\*

Department of History  
University of Virginia

### ABSTRACT

Sometime in the Song dynasty, a merchant died while traveling on the road. Without realizing that her husband had been murdered, the merchant's wife later remarried his killer. Several years passed, during which the couple had two sons. The killer, thinking that his wife would disregard his crime, confessed to her. The woman immediately notified the authorities, who had the man arrested and executed. The above story appeared in six accounts by five Song authors. In addition to large discrepancies in the time and place of the incident and the relationship between the two men, these records diverged in their portrayal of the heroine's remarriage and her reactions upon learning of her marriage to her first husband's murderer. This paper traces the evolution of the story based on these Song texts, focusing its discussion on the changing notions of female morality and representation of spousal relationships. Another goal of the study is to show how both textual and oral transmission shaped the woman's image and memory over the course of a hundred and fifty years. Above all, this examination aims to illustrate the fluidity of various literary genres and offer a case study of the balance Song *biji* writers attempted to achieve between their authorial intentions and goal of recording reliable material.

**Key words:** Song dynasty, female morality, text and oral transmission, Xu Ji 徐積, Zhuang Chuo 莊綽, Hong Mai 洪邁

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\*\* The author's email address: cz5h@virginia.edu

## 1. Introduction

Sometime in the mid-11th century, a man murdered his business partner while the two were traveling. The perpetrator committed the crime because he had been infatuated with his partner's beautiful wife and secretly lusted for her. Pretending that his partner had died of natural causes, the man took care of his victim's posthumous affairs and returned all of his belongings to his widow. The young woman was deeply moved by the man's support and kindness and later agreed to his proposal of marriage. Several years later, when the couple had two children together, the man confessed his crime to his wife. Blaming her good looks for her first husband's death, the woman immediately reported her murderer-husband to the authorities. She then drowned herself and the children in the Huai River.

Originally recorded by two Northern Song (960-1127) scholars, Lü Xiaqing 呂夏卿 (1015-1068) and Xu Ji 徐積 (1028-1103), the saga of the Huaiyin 淮陰 (Huai'an, Jiangsu) woman was incorporated into three Southern Song (1127-1279) *biji* collections, *Jile bian* 雞肋編 by Zhuang Chuo 莊綽 (1070s-1150s), *Liaohuazhou xianlu* 蓼花洲閑錄 by Gao Wenhū 高文虎 (c. 1134-1208), and *Yijian zhi* 夷堅志 by Hong Mai 洪邁 (1123-1202).<sup>1</sup> Modified versions of this story also appeared in other literary genres and local gazetteers in late imperial times, ensuring and demonstrating its widespread circulation over a thousand years. In spite of their many differences, these tales were almost unanimous in glorifying the Huaiyin woman as a moral exemplar, more specifically a *yifu* 義婦 (righteous woman), *jiefu* 節婦 (principled woman), or *liefu* 烈婦 (heroic woman).

How can we explain the continued interest in chronicling the life of an ordinary woman? What did her various "labels" reveal about contemporary ideas and ideals about female virtue? What can we learn from the existing texts about information transmission in the Song and beyond? This study considers these questions and more. The first part of

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<sup>1</sup> Beverly Bossler's recent work contains a brief discussion of the Huaiyin *yifu* and the life of Xu Ji. See Beverly Bossler, *Courtesans, Concubines, and the Cult of Female Fidelity: Gender and Social Change in China, 1000-1400* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2016), pp. 151-158.

the paper traces the evolution of the Huaiyin woman's story from the Song to the Qing (1644-1911). It aims to highlight boundary-crossing in literary production as well as textual and oral diffusion rather than assessing the reliability of each account; this is followed by a comparison of the extant Song versions (see appendix for the original texts and full translations). The last section of the study examines differing views on remarriage for women and female morality in the context of authorial intentions and genre conventions.

## 2. The Textual History of the Woman of Huaiyin

Records of the Huaiyin woman first appeared in the works of two prominent Northern Song scholars, Lü Xiqing and Xu Ji. Lü was an accomplished historian, a major contributor to the *Xin Tangshu* 新唐書 (*New Tang History*).<sup>2</sup> His version tells the Huaiyin woman's story in biographical form (*zhuan* 傳) and was included in his collected work (*wenji* 文集), which was lost by the early Southern Song.<sup>3</sup> Xu Ji was widely celebrated as a moralist and exceptionally filial son. His work is entitled “Two Poems on the Righteous Woman (*yifu*) of Huaiyin, with Preface (“Huaiyin yifu er shou bing xu 淮陰義婦二首并序”)” and was similarly compiled in his *wenji*.<sup>4</sup>

Both Lü and Xu presented the nameless Huaiyin woman (Miss Li, *yifu*, or *fu*) as a historical figure, who had earned their admiration with her extraordinary deeds. In the preface to his two poems, Xu Ji remarked, “Among those who were familiar with her

<sup>2</sup> Lü's official biography can be found in Tuotuo 脫脫 et al., *Songshi* 宋史, vol. 30 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1977), *juan* 331, pp. 10658-10659.

<sup>3</sup> Lü's collected work, *Lü Sheren wenji* 呂舍人文集, was compiled by Lü's son in 1094. The *wenji* has not survived, but Su Song's 蘇頌 (1020-1101) preface has. See Zeng Zaozhuang 曾棗莊 and Liu Lin 劉琳 (eds.), *Quan Song wen* 全宋文, vol. 61 (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe; Hefei: Anhui jiaoyu chubanshe, 2006, hereafter *QSW*), *juan* 1337, pp. 349-351. For a study on *biji*-style biographical writing, see Zhu Gang 朱剛, “Renwu yishi yu ‘bijiti zhuanji’ 人物軼事與「筆記體傳記」,” *Qinghua xuebao* 清華學報, 48.2 (2018), pp. 225-242.

<sup>4</sup> Part of Xu Ji's 30-*juan wenji*, *Jiexiao xiansheng wenji* 節孝先生文集, has survived. See *QSW*, vol. 74, *juan* 1616-1618, pp. 140-187; Beijing daxue guwenxian yanjiusuo 北京大學古文獻研究所 (ed.), *Quan Song shi* 全宋詩, vol. 11 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1998, hereafter *QSS*), *juan* 633-659, pp. 7551-7723. For a biography of Xu Ji, see Wang Zishen 王資深, “Jiexiao xiansheng xingzhuang 節孝先生行狀,” in *QSW*, vol. 120, *juan* 2594, pp. 271-275.

deeds, the courageous were inspired and moved to tears. Treacherous officials and traitorous factions also may have felt embarrassed.” Xu then proceeded to compare the *yifu* with virtuous female paragons from ancient times. He especially noted that, because the *yifu* was an ordinary woman, “It is a shame that her deeds will not reach the court and her principled and righteous acts [*jielie* 節烈] will not be displayed on banners in her hometown.”<sup>5</sup> For this reason, Xu took the initiative to preserve the *yifu*’s acts and memory.

If the *yifu* was a real-life person, when did she live? Based on Lü’s and Xu’s writing, it is plausible that the incident surrounding the Huaiyin woman took place in the early to mid-1040s. This is most likely the case because Lü Xiaqing was posted in Jiangning 江寧 (Nanjing, Jiangsu) in the mid-1040s, soon after he earned the *jinsshi* degree.<sup>6</sup> This was the only time in Lü’s career that he served in that region. It was around the same time, in 1043, that Xu Ji and his mother returned to the family’s native region of Huai’an after living with his mother’s natal family in Shaanxi for over a decade following the death of his father.<sup>7</sup> This timeframe would have given Lü and Xu some direct exposure to the woman’s heroic act.

Two other possibilities may explain why both men wrote about the same incident. First, even though the Huaiyin woman had passed a few decades earlier, her suicide following her husband’s execution would surely have been a public event and remain “headline news” in the community for years. In time, Xu, a native of Huaiyin, and Lü, a local official serving in a nearby location, heard about her and decided to record her story. Another way to make sense of Lü and Xu celebrating the same ordinary woman is that the two men knew each other. My main rationale for this supposition is that Lü and Xu spent many years in Kaifeng in the mid-eleventh century. Xu Ji even composed four poems that were addressed to a Palace Library Editor Lü Bijiao 呂秘校.<sup>8</sup> We cannot be entirely certain that this Lü man was indeed Lü Xiaqing, but there is no reason to deny

<sup>5</sup> *QSS*, vol. 11, *juan* 635, p. 7572.

<sup>6</sup> Tuotuo et al., *Songshi*, vol. 30, *juan* 331, pp. 10658-10659. Jiangning is about 130 miles (200 kilometers) from Huai’an.

<sup>7</sup> *QSW*, vol. 120, *juan* 2594, p. 271.

<sup>8</sup> The four poems can be found in *QSS*, vol. 11, *juan* 646, p. 7643; *juan* 647, p. 7652; *juan* 651, p. 7675; *juan* 651, pp. 7675-7676.

the possibility, as one of Lü's appointments was Auxiliary in the Imperial Archives 直秘閣. If the two men were indeed friends, one could very well have heard from the other about the Huaiyin woman, which would illustrate the importance of oral transmission in this particular case of information preservation.

However Lü and Xu may have learned about the Huaiyin woman's saga, an important point to be made is that both found value in her life story and decided to commit it to writing. Extant evidence does not allow us to pinpoint the exact time of Lü's and Xu's pieces. Lü Xiaqing died in 1068, meaning his biography of the Huaiyin woman was written before then. Xu Ji's work referred to the "treacherous officials and traitorous factions 姦臣逆黨" of the court, so it was likely composed in the midst of the New Policies Era (1068-1080s).<sup>9</sup> This makes us reasonably certain that Lü's biography predated Xu's writing.

The fate of Lü Xiaqing's and Xu Ji's writings differed greatly. Lü's fifty-*juan wenji* was compiled by his son in 1094, approximately a quarter of a century after his death. Unfortunately, as indicated by Zhuang Chuo, the *wenji* was already lost by the 1130s, presumably due to the widespread destruction characteristic of the transition from the Northern to Southern Song periods.<sup>10</sup> Zhuang specifically noted at the beginning of his version of the Huaiyin woman that, "My family used to have a copy of the *Collected Works of Lü Jinshu [Style Name] Xiaqing*, in which it recorded 'The Biography of the Principled Woman of Huaiyin.'" He then added at the end of his writing that, "The Lü family has lost his *Collected Works*. My family's copy also vanished in the war."<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> For a thorough study of factionalism in the Northern Song, see Ari Daniel Levine, *Divided by a Common Language: Factional Conflict in Late Northern Song China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008).

<sup>10</sup> Only five pieces by Lü are collected in the *Quan Song wen*. These included two official memorials, the biography of the Woman of Huaiyin, and two funerary biographies (*muzhiming* 墓誌銘). *QSW*, vol. 60, *juan* 1307, pp. 150-160.

<sup>11</sup> Zhuang Chuo 莊綽, *Jile bian* 雞肋編 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), *juan xia*, pp. 98-99; *QSW*, vol. 60, *juan* 1307, p. 152. While Zhuang Chuo attributed his narrative to Lü Xiaqing, he did not explain why, out of all the contents of Lü's *wenji*, he found this episode particularly appealing. In all likelihood, in the wake of the fall of the Northern Song, Zhuang tried to rescue all sorts of memorable material following the ruination of his family's book collections and the massive destruction of both private and government libraries in the country.

Zhuang's admission aside, it was certainly possible that important information contained in Lü's writing had been lost in Zhuang's transmission. Zhuang Chuo nonetheless served as a key link in the continual circulation of the Huaiyin woman's tale. Given the quick loss of Lü Xiaqing's *wenji*, it is no exaggeration to say that Zhuang had rescued this one item of Lü's from being permanently lost. The *Jile bian* must have been sufficiently well-circulated after its publication in the 1130s. Gao Wenhui, who was Zhuang Chuo's junior by one generation, included Zhuang's account of the Huaiyin woman in his *biji*, *Liaohuazhou xianlu*.<sup>12</sup> Only this time, Gao did not have to apologize for inaccuracies or forgotten details, as he copied Zhuang's version verbatim, even attaching Zhuang Chuo's name and the title of his *biji* at the end of the story. In this way, the account of Huaiyin woman experienced another text-to-text transmission and presumably gained more readers.

The Huaiyin woman's legend continued to spread in the Southern Song. The story eventually found its way into Hong Mai's *Yijian zhi* in the second half of the twelfth century. What is especially interesting is that Hong actually recorded the story twice. The first narrative appears in an episode, entitled "The Wife of a Zhang Man of Huaiyin 淮陰張生妻," which contains two tales about two different Huaiyin women.<sup>13</sup> The part about the woman under discussion here does not have a title of its own and takes up less space than the one about Zhang's wife. Hong Mai mentioned in the text that the story was based on Xu Ji's writing. Yet, at the end of the chapter, he credited all the entries in that chapter to a certain Zhu Conglong 朱從龍, making Zhu an oral transmitter of Xu's work and Hong a recorder of Zhu's narrative of Xu's account.<sup>14</sup>

Zhuang Chuo's and Hong Mai's integration of Lü Xiaqing's and Xu Ji's work into their own reveals the importance of existing texts in *biji* writing. Even when they attributed their *biji* work to their *wenjian* 聞見 ("things seen and heard"), Song authors like Zhuang and Hong freely copied or paraphrased from manuscripts and printed

<sup>12</sup> *Liaohuazhou xianlu* is compiled in Shanghai shifan daxue guji zhengli yanjiusuo 上海師範大學古籍整理研究所 (ed.), *Quan Song biji* 全宋筆記, 5th series, vol. 10 (Zhengzhou: Daxiang chubanshe, 2012), pp. 139-140. Gao's official biography can be found in Tuotuo et al., *Songshi*, vol. 34, *juan* 394, pp. 12032-12033.

<sup>13</sup> Hong Mai 洪邁, *Yijian zhi* 夷堅志, annot. He Zhuo 何卓 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981, hereafter *YJZ*), *zhi ding*, *juan* 9, pp. 1038-1039.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1042.

material.<sup>15</sup> Another observation is that, while Song *biji* writers routinely assured the reader of the reliability of their work, the actual level of “authenticity” varied greatly. Zhuang, for example, readily acknowledged the incompleteness of his account due to failings in memory when he wrote, “I do not remember the names [of the people in the story], so I have only related its outline here.”<sup>16</sup> Zhuang’s note implied that he had tried to stay faithful to Lü’s work. If he had missed anything, it was not intentional and involved only minor details. The permanent disappearance of Lü’s *wenji* made it impossible to assess Zhuang’s textual preservation efforts. His insistence on his faithfulness to Lü’s original, however, convinced the editors of the *Quan Song wen* to list his *zhuan* for the Huaiyin woman under Lü Xiaqing’s name.<sup>17</sup> In comparison, because Xu Ji’s original writing has survived, Hong Mai’s inclusion of Zhu Conglong’s retelling of Xu’s work afforded us an invaluable opportunity to see textual-oral-textual transmission in action and the evolution of the Huaiyin women’s story. A quick examination of Xu’s and Hong’s narratives shows that they differ in several places, indicating how casually storytellers like Zhu may have handled their sources, the problems derived from conveying details through memory, and the fluid boundaries between textual and oral transmission.

Toward the end of his life, Hong Mai recorded a similar story in the last installment of the *Yijian zhi*, entitled “A Zhang Man and the Floating Bubbles 張客浮漚.”<sup>18</sup> Given the large disparities in Hong’s two versions, it is hard to imagine that they might share any common sources. Since Hong offered no clues regarding his informant for the second entry, some speculations are in order: Hong was a contemporary of Gao Wenhui, so he might have read Zhuang Chuo’s or Gao’s work, became fascinated by it, and acted as a “re-teller” himself. Available textual foundations aside, it was also possible that Hong had received outside help. In the multiple prefaces to *Yijian zhi*, Hong made a habit of acknowledging the role that many informants played in the compilation of his voluminous work, listing the contributions of close friends, family members, and mere

<sup>15</sup> Cong Ellen Zhang, “To Be ‘Erudite in Miscellaneous Knowledge’: A Study of Song (960-1279) *Biji* Writing,” *Asia Major*, Third Series, 25.2 (2012), pp. 43-77.

<sup>16</sup> Zhuang Chuo, *Jile bian, juan xia*, pp. 98-99; *QSW*, vol. 60, *juan* 1307, p. 152.

<sup>17</sup> *QSW*, vol. 60, *juan* 1307, p. 152.

<sup>18</sup> *YJZ, bujuan, juan* 5, p. 1590.

acquaintances.<sup>19</sup> His first entry about the Huaiyin woman served as an example. For the second episode, Hong did not provide any names. This does not exclude the likelihood that “A Zhang Man and the Floating Bubbles” was based on an orally-circulated tale.<sup>20</sup> I am inclined to this possibility for two reasons. First, compared to his fellow *biji* authors, Hong Mai admitted that he had relied much more heavily on orally transmitted materials; second, Hong’s edition of the story deviated greatly from Lü’s, Xu’s, Zhuang’s, and even his first account. The large differences in the two records likewise indicate that the legend of the Huaiyin woman had undergone multiple “cycles” of oral transmission that owed their origins to either folk tales or modified textual material.

From Lü Xiaqing’s *zhuan* and Xu Ji’s poems and preface to anecdotes in Zhuang Chuo’s, Gao Wenhui’s, and Hong Mai’s *biji* works, the Huaiyin woman’s life story witnessed many “alterations” from the Northern to Southern Song. It continued to spread in late imperial times, celebrating a woman who avenged her first husband after she had been married to the husband’s murderer and had children with him. The Yuan (1271-1368) play by an anonymous author, “the Cinnabar-seller [Who Received Justice with the Help of] Falling Rain and Floating Bubbles 朱砂擔滴水浮漚記,” was based on the various editions of the Song stories.<sup>21</sup> A tale in the Ming *biji*, *Shuyuan zaji* 菽園雜記 by Lu Rong 陸容 (1436-1497), contained a similar plot.<sup>22</sup> As our discussion in the next section will show, what especially connects these Song, Yuan, and Ming works is the central role that the floating bubbles played in the wife’s revenge.

<sup>19</sup> Alister Inglis, “Hong Mai’s Informants for the *Yijian zhi*,” *Journal of Sung-Yuan Studies*, 32 (2002), pp. 83-125; “A Textual History of Hong Mai’s *Yijian zhi*,” *T’oung Pao*, 93.4-5 (2007), pp. 283-368.

<sup>20</sup> In a study on the *Mengxi bitan* 夢溪筆談, Ronald Egan finds that much of Shen Kuo (Shen Gua)’s material “came from hearsay and informal chats he had over the years, which he reenacted as he ‘chats’ with his ink stone and brush in writing the work.” Ronald Egan, “Shen Kuo Chats with Ink Stone and Writing Brush,” in Jack W. Chen and David Schaberg (eds.), *Idle Talk: Gossip and Anecdote in Traditional China* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2014), p. 132.

<sup>21</sup> An annotated version of the play is included in Wang Xueqi 王學奇 (annot.), *Yuanqu xuan jiaozhu* 元曲選校註 (Shijiazhuang: Hebei jiaoyu chubanshe, 1994), *juan* 1, *xia*, pp. 1086-1121. See also, Li Jianguo 李劍國 (ed.), *Songdai zhiguai chuanqi xulu* 宋代志怪傳奇敘錄 (Tianjin: Nankai daxue chubanshe, 1997), pp. 114-116; Shi Changyu 石昌渝 (ed.), *Zhongguo gudai xiaoshuo zongmu, wenyuan juan* 中國古代小說總目·文言卷 (Taiyuan: Shanxi jiaoyu chubanshe, 2004), p. 149.

<sup>22</sup> Lu Rong, *Shuyuan zaji, Qinding siku quanshu* 欽定四庫全書, vol. 1040 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1987), *juan* 3, pp. 12b-13a.

Another parallel transmission of the ordeal of the Huaiyin woman similarly lasted for centuries, further shaping and perpetuating her memory. In addition to serving as the model for Hong Mai's *Yijian zhi* entry, Xu Ji's writing and biography were fully incorporated into the local history of the Huai'an Prefecture 淮安府 in the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) periods. The *Daming yitong zhi* 大明一統志 (1461) by Li Xian 李賢 (1409-1467) listed Xu in its *Renwu* 人物 section.<sup>23</sup> The same gazetteer also named three Song *lienü* 列女. Xu's "Huaiyin *yifu*" was not one of them. Interestingly, the "Heroic Woman of Beishen, with Preface 北神烈婦并序," another woman distinguished by Xu Ji in a poem and long preface, was included. In fact, the woman's biography in the gazetteer was based entirely on Xu Ji's preface.<sup>24</sup> Xu's account of the Beishen woman will be discussed along with the Huaiyin woman shortly. For comparative purposes, here is a summary of Xu's account of the "Beishen *liefu*":

A beautiful woman traveled with her merchant husband on the Huai River. When the husband died at Beishen, she was too poor to take care of his burial. A rich merchant came to help, loaning her the money to cover the funeral expenses. Now that the woman owed him, the rich merchant kept pressuring her to succumb to his sexual advances. To demonstrate her fidelity to her husband, the woman chose to die by throwing herself and her baby into the Huai River.<sup>25</sup>

The Wanli edition of the *Huai'an fuzhi* 淮安府志 (1573) included both the Huai'an *yifu* and the Beishen *liefu* in its *Zhenjie* 貞節 (Chaste and Principled) chapter. Both summarized Xu Ji's work.<sup>26</sup> There were two minor changes: in the entry for the Beishen woman, her husband was said to have died in Beichen 北辰 instead of Beishen. The entry for the Huaiyin woman identified her as being a resident of Dayi Village 大義鄉,

<sup>23</sup> Li Xian 李賢 et al., *Daming yitong zhi* 大明一統志 (1461 woodblock print edition in Harvard-Yenching Institute Library, Cambridge, MA), *juan* 13, p. 17b.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 19b-20a.

<sup>25</sup> *QSS*, vol. 11, *juan* 635, pp. 7573-7574.

<sup>26</sup> Guo Dalun 郭大綸 and Chen Wenzhu 陳文燭, (Wanli) *Huai'an fuzhi* (萬曆) 淮安府志, *Tianyige cang Mingdai fangzhi xuankan xubian* 天一閣藏明代方志選刊續編, vol. 8 (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 1990), *juan* 19, p. 2b.

information that was missing from Xu's original writing.

Xu Ji's work continued to draw the attention of Qing *difangzhi* 地方志 writers. To give some examples, the 1748 edition of the *Huai'an fuzhi* listed both women in its *Lienü* 烈女 section.<sup>27</sup> Not only was the story of the Huaiyin woman completely based on Xu's preface, but his two poems were also cited in full. The Huaiyin woman is not found in the *Jiaqing Shanyang xianzhi* 嘉慶山陽縣志 (1796) by He Shuzi 何樹滋, which is puzzling, given that the county did not have much to record from the Song and earlier periods. Both the Huaiyin and Beishen women are included in the *Lienü* chapter of the *Chongxiu Shanyang xianzhi* 重修山陽縣志 (1873).<sup>28</sup> Two minor changes are worth noting: first, the Heroic Woman of Beishen became the Heroic Woman of Beichen Ward 北辰坊烈婦. Following the example of the Ming edition, the Righteous Woman of Huaiyin 淮陰義婦 remained a resident of Dayi Village. Second, the entry for the Heroic Woman of Beichen Ward cited Xu Ji's poem, but not the one for the Huaiyin *yifu*. The *Lienü* section of the *Guangxu Huai'an fuzhi* 光緒淮安府志, compiled in 1884, lists both women only by their names, under Shanyang County.<sup>29</sup> No details were given, most likely because hundreds of Ming and Qing women's names were added in this edition. In fact, so many women were categorized as heroic women that no specific deeds for any were provided. The *Xuzuan Shanyang xianzhi* 續纂山陽縣志 (1920) added many more women, whose names did not appear in the 1873 edition of the *Chongxiu Shanyang xianzhi*.<sup>30</sup>

To summarize, living in the 11th century, an ordinary woman in Huaiyin attracted the attention of eminent writers and local elites from the Song to Qing periods. The dramatic effect of her deeds aside, the story's enduring appeal makes us wonder about the

<sup>27</sup> Wei Zhezhi 衛哲治 et al., (Qianlong) *Huai'an fuzhi* (乾隆) 淮安府志, *Xuxiu siku quanshu* 續修四庫全書, vol. 699 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2002, Photocopy of the 1748 woodblock print edition), *juan* 23, p. 8b.

<sup>28</sup> Wen Bin 文彬, Sun Yun 孫雲 et al., *Chongxiu Shanyang xianzhi* 重修山陽縣志, *Zhongguo fangzhi congshu* 中國方志叢書, vol. 414 (Taipei: Chengwen chubanshe, 1983), *juan* 16, pp. 2a-2b.

<sup>29</sup> Sun Yunjin 孫雲錦, Wu Kuntian 吳昆田 et al., (Guangxu) *Huai'an fuzhi* (光緒) 淮安府志, *Zhongguo difangzhi jicheng, Jiangsu fuxianzhi ji* 中國地方志集成·江蘇府縣志輯, vol. 54 (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1998), *juan* 35, p. 1a.

<sup>30</sup> Zhou Jun 周鈞, Duan Chaorui 段朝瑞 et al., *Xuzuan Shanyang xianzhi* 續纂山陽縣志, *Zhongguo fangzhi congshu*, vol. 415.

role that luck and chance played in the preservation of texts, miscellaneous information, and historical memory. Zhuang Chuo's "chance" copying of Lü Xiaqing's work allowed for the survival of Lü's version after the disappearance of his *wenji*. Gao Wenhui's work was important in a similar way, as his *biji* was based on two dozen Song anecdotal collections, half of which did not survive. If the *Jile bian* had been among the "unlucky" ones, Gao's copy of Zhuang's *zhuan* for the Huaiyin woman might have become all that was left of Zhuang's *biji*.

The effect of chance can also be seen from another perspective. Zhuang Chuo helped preserve Lü's work, but seemed to have had no knowledge of Xu Ji's writing even though Xu was a well-known scholar and lived closer to Zhuang's time than Lü Xiaqing did. In all likelihood, Zhuang Chuo's family owned a copy of Lü's *wenji* because the Lüs and the Zhuangs had associated with each other: both families were natives of Quanzhou (in Fujian). Another indication that Zhuang was in touch with members of the Lü family is how he was informed of the loss of Lü's *wenji*. In this sense, personal and family connections proved instrumental in information transmission and preservation.

We are presented with a different scenario in the case of *difangzhi* writing. Why did the editors of the *Daming yitong zhi* choose to include Xu Ji's record of the Beishen woman but omit his account of the Huaiyin woman? Given that the Beishen woman's entry was copied in its entirety, the compilers obviously had access to Xu Ji's work. How and why then did they decide to use one but not the other? Was space a concern, since Xu's narrative of the Beishen *liefu* is substantially shorter than the one of the Huaiyin *yifu*? Was it because Xu's depiction of a remarried woman as a *yifu* posed a problem for the *difangzhi* compilers? The above occurrence makes us wonder about gazetteer writing in general and whether all sorts of editorial decisions were made deliberately or randomly. In the face of an insufficient or excessive supply of source material, what guided the compilers to exercise their editorial authority to include or exclude information about certain people or events? Other questions follow: How did the Huaiyin *yifu* become a resident of Dayi Village and the Beishen *liefu* become Beichenfang *liefu* and a resident of Beichen Ward? If none of the Song records mentioned specific residency information, who discovered it and added it to the two women's biographies?

The circulation and recreation of the Huaiyin woman's story over many centuries

reveals, above all, the fluidity of information transmission across literary genres. This cross-genre borrowing resulted in the Huaiyin woman being the subject of two poems and a *zhuan* in the eleventh century, five Song and Ming *biji* episodes, one Yuan play, and multiple Ming and Qing local gazetteers. This study is not concerned with the issue of authenticity. The continuous addition to information about an ordinary woman nonetheless forces us to reflect on the quality of historical sources: is it necessarily true that a *zhuan* included in a *wenji* is more reliable than a similar text found in a *biji*? Between Xu Ji's preface and poems and Zhuang Chuo's *zhuan*, which text would we consider more trustworthy? How do we assess *biji* authors' reliance on written- and orally-transmitted materials? What did *biji* authors' tendency to highlight the value of directly-acquired information reveal about contemporary views on the relationship among learning, writing, observing and recording information?<sup>31</sup> In the case of the two *Yijian zhi* anecdotes, what did Hong Mai's and Zhu Conglong's reference to and use of Xu Ji's writing reveal about information preservation? Scholars have been struggling to properly define *biji* as a genre. Do the four entries under discussion ease or further complicate our task at hand?

### 3. The Four Song Texts: A Comparison

This section compares the four extant Song texts, highlighting their similarities and differences in representing the Huaiyin woman and perpetuating her legacy.

A preliminary examination of the main plots of Xu Ji's, Zhuang Chuo's, and Hong Mai's renditions shows that the outline of the four accounts was consistent. All feature a merchant and his beautiful wife, as well as another man who murdered the merchant and married his widow. Several years of happy marriage followed, during which the couple had children. When the wife eventually learned the truth, contrary to the murderer-husband's expectations that she would forgive him and keep her silence, she immediately reported him to the authorities, which resulted in his execution. An additional thread

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<sup>31</sup> For a comprehensive study of these issues, see Ya Zuo, *Shen Gua's Empiricism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2018).

connects the stories: the second husband's confession was triggered by the appearance of water bubbles, which reminded the murderer of the crime scene.

Despite the above similarities, the four versions differ in noticeable ways. The following discussion compares Xu Ji's and Zhuang Chuo's, Xu's and Hong Mai's, and Zhuang's and Hong's episodes, respectively.

### 3.1 Xu Ji and Zhuang Chuo

The Xu and Zhuang stories bear close resemblances. In addition to those mentioned above, both authors described the murderer going out of his way to assist the widow with her husband's funeral and burial. In fact, it was because of the partner's kindness and generosity that the widow agreed to marry him. Xu Ji wrote, "He [the partner] returned to her all her husband's belongings without appropriating a single penny. The man then waited for Miss Li to complete her husband's burial and proposed marriage to her. Moreover, the man convinced her that he had treated her husband with righteousness. The *yifu*, deeply moved by what the man had done, agreed to marry him."<sup>32</sup>

Zhuang Chuo provided even more details regarding the "aftermath" of the murder: the merchant and his partner had been good friends. In fact, their families had long associated with each other. The closeness of the two families allowed the partner to treat the mother-in-law as if she was his own mother without generating any suspicion and project himself as the most ideal marriage prospect for the young widow. The man's performance successfully convinced not only the widow and her mother-in-law but also the entire community of his generosity and trustworthiness. Zhuang narrated, "The locals were also pleased by his righteousness 義." Having earned the gratitude of the two women and the approval of the mother-in-law and villagers, a marriage between him and the widow was to be expected.<sup>33</sup>

Xu Ji's and Zhuang Chuo's stories differ the most in their ending. While the woman in both stories felt responsible for the tragic death of the first husband and committed suicide, her attitude toward the "second husband" and the children she shared with him varied significantly. In Xu's portrayal, having avenged her husband, the *yifu* thought to

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<sup>32</sup> *QSS*, vol. 11, *juan* 635, pp. 7572-7573.

<sup>33</sup> Zhuang Chuo, *Jile bian*, *juan xia*, pp. 98-99; *QSW*, vol. 60, *juan* 1307, p. 152.

herself, “Not only had her good looks implicated her husband, but she had also married her husband’s murderer. The two sons she had with him subsequently became the sons of her husband’s enemy. According to the principle of righteousness, she should not continue to live. She therefore tied the two boys up, tossed them into the Huai River, and drowned herself.”<sup>34</sup> In Zhuang’s narrative, the woman similarly blamed her good looks as the reason for her husband’s catastrophic death. Unlike the *yifu*, she accepted the second man as her husband. In fact, she explicitly accused herself of having had “two husbands killed. What is the purpose of continuing to live? She subsequently threw her into the Huai River and drowned.”<sup>35</sup> This aspect of the story will be further discussed in the next section in the context of female virtue and the meaning of *yi* and *jie*.

This brief comparison of the Xu and Zhuang stories makes us curious about how Lü Xiaqing’s story would have compared to Xu Ji’s. Given that Lü and Xu were contemporaries of each other and might have had some first-hand knowledge of the event, it would not have been surprising if their writing had shared more similarities than Xu’s and Zhuang’s versions. More specifically, we cannot help but wonder, how did the woman in Lü Xiaqing’s story see her second marriage and the children that she and the murderer-husband had together? In other words, how faithful was Zhuang to Lü when he paraphrased Lü’s work based on memory?

### 3.2 Xu Ji and Hong Mai

Just like Zhuang Chuo, who attributed his entry of the Huaiyin woman to Lü Xiaqing, Hong Mai claimed that his tale, contained in “The Wife of a Zhang Man of Huaiyin,” was a reproduction of Xu Ji’s. Hong’s and Xu’s versions share many similarities. Both women were natives of Huaiyin. After suffering the death of the first husband, they remarried without knowing that their new husband was the first husband’s murderer. Both had a happy marriage and two sons. When they finally learned about the truth of the first husband’s death from the second husband’s confession, neither hesitated in reporting the criminal to the local authorities, which led to his execution. Both women demonstrated their loyalty to the first husband in the most explicit manner. Seeing the

<sup>34</sup> *QSS*, vol. 11, *juan* 635, p. 7573.

<sup>35</sup> Zhuang Chuo, *Jile bian*, *juan xia*, pp. 98-99; *QSW*, vol. 60, *juan* 1307, p. 152.

little boys as the children of their “only” husband’s murderer, the women drowned them before killing themselves.

For a story that claimed to be based on a piece contained in the collected work of an established scholar, Hong Mai’s entry departed from the original in two respects. First, in Xu Ji’s writing, the murderer was the victim’s business partner. In Hong Mai’s version, the husband was slain by a stranger, a bandit no less. Thus, the marriage between him and the widow was not represented as the calculated result of the murderer’s longtime obsession with the woman’s looks, but rather a chance outcome of the crime. Second, the wife in Hong’s story appeared even more adamant than her counterpart in Xu’s work in showing her fidelity to the first husband. In Xu Ji’s version, upon hearing about the murder, Miss Li waited for an opportune time to go to the authorities. The woman in Hong’s version, however, immediately “ran to the village head.” Similarly, Miss Li waited until justice had been served to drown first the boys, then herself. In Hong’s episode, the woman immediately threw the sons into the river to demonstrate her uncompromising hatred for the murderer and his children. She then waited and killed herself after witnessing the death of her bandit-husband.

An interesting question arises from this brief comparison: what would have happened if Xu Ji’s preface and poems had not survived? After the loss of Lü Xiaqing’s *wenji*, Zhuang Chuo claimed that he had “rescued” what he could remember about the Huaiyin woman from Lü’s biography for her. Hong Mai (and Zhu Conglong) implied the same. The survival of both Xu’s and Hong’s work therefore offers us a concrete example of the complexities and uncertainties of the circulation of both textually- and orally-transmitted materials. That someone was confident enough to have included his specific source does not necessarily increase the veracity of his writing. This applied to both Zhu Conglong the storyteller and Hong Mai the recorder. As specific as Zhu and Hong were, their version had multiple sources. In other words, Hong’s episode might have had its roots in Xu Ji’s writing, but it was still the result of a creative process that involved multiple storytellers like Zhu, who were responsible for the evolution of its plot.

### **3.3 Zhuang Chuo and Hong Mai**

No direct evidence, the kind with which Zhuang Chuo linked his writing to that of

Lü Xiaqing, connects Hong Mai's second episode, "A Zhang Man and the Floating Bubbles," with Zhuang's episode. It does not take much effort, however, for us to see the inter-connectedness between them, especially their characterization of the couple's happy marriage and the way the women reacted when they learned the truth about their first husband's death. Instead of acting shocked, scared, or disgusted, both women acted nonchalant about their second husband's revelation. However, as soon as they had a chance, both went to report their husband's crimes. Another element that linked Zhuang's and Hong's accounts is the role that the local authorities played in quickly adjudicating the case. Adultery, betrayal, and murders are common themes in *Yijian zhi*. More often than not, the miscreants died a quick and miserable death from an illness or were punished by a variety of natural and supernatural forces. The local government was not always diligent or effective in serving justice. In the stories under discussion, however, the authorities were shown to have been extraordinarily efficient in investigating the cases, confirming the criminals' wrongdoing, and bringing them to justice.

The most important similarity in the two stories—what has convinced me of Hong Mai's debt to Zhuang Chuo (or Gao Wenhui)—is how the water bubbles were designated as the "witnesses" to the crime. Compared to Xu Ji, both Zhuang Chuo and Hong Mai significantly highlighted the role of the water bubbles in the story. Xu wrote,

One day, their home flooded. Bubbles were floating on the [accumulated] water [on the ground]. Seeing them, the husband turned and grinned. When the righteous woman asked why, he did not answer. She kept pressing him. Since they already had two sons together, the man was no longer afraid that his wife would turn against him. He therefore told her the truth: "Your former husband's drowning was my doing. He was underwater, but re-emerged, and tried to save himself. I stabbed him with a pole. He then sank. The floating bubbles that popped up where I stabbed him looked exactly like those I saw just now."<sup>36</sup>

In Xu Ji's narration, the murdered husband did not notice or say anything about the

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<sup>36</sup> *QSS*, vol. 11, *juan* 635, p. 7573.

bubbles. Rather, the murderer was the one reminded of the similarity between the bubbles formed in their yard and those at the murder scene. The role of the bubbles, however, grew in importance in both Zhuang's and Hong's versions. Zhuang wrote,

The villager pushed the merchant into the water. [Before he died,] the merchant pointed to the water bubbles [caused by his falling and struggling] and said, "They will be my witness someday." ... One day, it rained heavily. The villager was sitting under the eaves alone. Seeing the accumulated water in the yard, he laughed to himself. The wife asked the reason, but he was not willing to say. She became more suspicious and did not stop inquiring, so he told her the truth, saying "Because I loved you, I murdered your first husband [in order to have you]. When he was dying, he pointed to the water bubbles as his witness. I saw the water bubbles just now. But what could they do? This was why I laughed."<sup>37</sup>

Hong Mai wrote,

Zhang fell without making a sound. [Upon regaining consciousness,] he cried out to beg for his life. Seeing the floating bubbles forming and bursting under the eaves, Zhang realized that he would not live. He then said to the bubbles, "I was murdered by my servant. I count on your help in the future to redress the injustice that I have suffered." Li could not help but laugh. Zhang then died. ... Once when they were eating [a meal] together, it happened to rain. [Li Er the servant] saw the water bubbles and smiled. His wife asked him, "Why did you smile?" Li said, "Mr. Zhang was very foolish. [When] I hit and killed him, he pointed to the floating bubbles as his witness. Is it not ridiculous?"<sup>38</sup>

Both Zhuang and Hong made it clear that the victim counted on the water bubbles to be their witness and anticipated that they would help bring the murderer to justice. This

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<sup>37</sup> Zhuang Chuo, *Jile bian, juan xia*, pp. 98-99; *QSW*, vol. 60, *juan* 1307, p. 152.

<sup>38</sup> *YJZ, bujuan, juan* 5, p. 1590.

represents a large departure from Xu Ji's account. The centrality of the water bubbles, hence the connectedness of the two stories, can be seen from another perspective. While the murdered husband in both versions said they wanted the bubbles to make their injustice public, neither of the murderers believed in the power of this prediction. Zhuang Chuo recorded, when the murderer saw the water bubbles again and was reminded of what the dead had said to him, his response was, "But what could they possibly do?" Likewise, the servant in Hong Mai's version thought, "Mr. Zhang was very foolish. When I hit and killed him, he pointed to the floating bubbles as his witnesses. Is it not ridiculous?" In both cases, however, the criminals were proven wrong. Despite the loving relationship they had with the second husbands, both wives reported the murderers to the authorities, which led to their execution. In the end, the bubbles proved their usefulness in helping the wife and local government in convicting and punishing the murderers. In his typical manner of stressing the inescapability of retribution, Hong Mai added, the servant had not planned to admit his crime to the wife. He lost control of the situation because "[at the time it felt like] a ghost slapped my mouth, urging me to confess."

I hope that the above analysis is convincing that, even with a completely different title and other changes, "A Zhang Man and the Water Bubbles" may have originated from Zhuang Chuo's version (or Gao Wenhua's reproduction). However, given that seven decades separated the two versions, it was completely plausible that a fair amount of the information relayed to Hong Mai might have undergone a long process of text-oral transmission and recreation. This gave Hong and his informants the reason to believe that they were hearing the story from the original source, without realizing that it had a textual base, but had been in oral circulation for years or even decades.

Another way to support the above supposition is that the *Yijian zhi* episode is substantially different from Zhuang Chuo's "Biography of the Principled Woman of Huaiyin." The two stories took place in two geographic regions, Huaiyin and the E (Hubei)-Yue (Hunan) area. The familial situation of the murdered merchant also varied. While Zhuang Chuo's story underlines the closeness of the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law as well as the senior woman's approval of the new marriage, Hong Mai emphasizes the age discrepancy between the husband and wife and the illicit affair between the wife and servant. The relationship between the two men likewise varied.

They were friends and business partners in the first story and master and servant in the second. Next comes the murder scene: one drowned while the other was killed with a heavy object in a local shrine. Hong's reconstruction of the murder scene was much more vivid. While Zhuang simply said that the merchant was pushed to the river by his partner and drowned, Zhang's death in the Hong version included descriptions of their surroundings, the murder weapon, and Zhang's plea for his life.

The area was poor and desolate, so lodging was extremely rare. They were trekking in the wilderness on a stretching ridge when it suddenly rained. Seeing a shrine in the woods on the left side of the road, they went in to have a short rest. Looking around and seeing no one in sight, Li suddenly had murderous thoughts. He raised a large brick to hit Zhang on the head. Zhang fell without making a sound. [Upon regaining consciousness,] he cried out to beg for his life.<sup>39</sup>

This comparison of the four texts shows that the story of the Huaiyin woman came a long way, evolving from one about a determined and principled woman to one exhibiting the power of retribution. In the context of *biji* writing, this development has revealed that a substantial amount of anecdotal writing owed its origins to text-based material. Generations of storytellers were nonetheless instrumental in the long-term survival of *biji* material. The broad scope in *biji*'s source material and its two-pronged circulation channels contributed to the diversity of its content and the flexibility that *biji* authors enjoyed in compiling their collections.

#### **4. Genre, Authorial Control, and Female Morality**

Two more factors, genre conventions and authorial intentions, contributed to the differences in the four versions about the Huaiyin woman. It was standard for poetry, *zhuan*, and local gazetteers to glorify virtuous men and women, but not as common for

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<sup>39</sup> YJZ, *bujian*, *juan* 5, p. 1590.

them to denounce unlawful or immoral behavior. In comparison, *biji* had the greatest flexibility when it came to representing people of diverse situations and their actions. These distinct genre conventions, compounded with the political stances and cultural and moral concerns of the authors, generated diversities and even irreconcilable contradictions in Xu Ji's, Zhuang Chuo's, and Hong Mai's portrayals of the Huaiyin woman. The following discussion focuses on two issues, female remarriage and the meanings of *yifu*, *jiefu*, and *liefu*.

#### 4.1 Remarriage and Extramarital Affairs for Women

None of the three authors showed any reservations about the Huaiyin woman's second marriage, nor did they hesitate in characterizing her relationship with the second husband as loving and devoted. This is in accordance with scholarly consensus that, while female fidelity was celebrated and remarriage for women was frowned upon in rhetoric by some Song scholar-thinkers, it was commonly accepted and practiced in elite as well as ordinary households.<sup>40</sup> This was especially true of young widows such as the Huaiyin woman. That she married twice and got along well with both husbands would not have caused any concerns under normal circumstances. What distinguished her case was Xu Ji's and Zhuang Chuo's intentions to promote her as a moral exemplar. In order for the Huaiyin woman to qualify and be recognized as such, both authors felt the need to "justify" her remarriage. Seen from a different perspective, Xu's and Zhuang's writing was among the earliest attempts to elevate a twice-married woman as a paragon of female fidelity.

Of the two, Xu Ji seemed to have felt more strongly about the matter, depicting the woman's second marriage as her way to pay back the "righteous" conduct of her husband's partner. Xu wrote, "The man waited [for Miss Li] to complete her husband's burial and proposed marriage. [To persuade Miss Li to marry him], he convinced her that he had treated her late husband with righteousness (*yi*). The *yifu* was moved by what the

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<sup>40</sup> Patricia Ebrey, *The Inner Quarters: Marriage and the Lives of Chinese Women in the Sung Period* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 204-216. For a study of a filial and faithful Northern Song woman, see Cong Ellen Zhang, "A Family of Filial Exemplars: The Baos of Luzhou in the Northern Song," *Journal of Chinese Literature and Culture*, 4.2 (2017), pp. 360-382.

man had done, so agreed to marry him.” Here Xu implied that Miss Li agreed to marry for a second time because she sincerely believed that the man had taken care of her husband in his last moments. He then continued,

Some might say, because she served two husbands in her life, she should not be considered righteous. This is grossly wrong. This is [an example of] putting unrealistically high expectations on others [literally, putting unlimited demands]. In the Eastern Han, after Cai Wenji [active, late second and early third centuries] lost her husband [i.e. Wei Zhongdao], she became the wife of a barbarian [a Xiongnu chieftain], then married [Dong Si after she returned to the Han]. [Despite her remarriage], she was remembered as a heroic woman [*liefu* 烈婦]. If we examine Cai’s feelings [心迹], they differed greatly from those of the righteous woman. Miss Li married [her husband’s partner] out of gratitude. She thought that the man had demonstrated righteousness [*yi* 義] to her husband. After marrying the man, they had two sons. Since the marriage was strong, no human emotions burdened her heart.<sup>41</sup>

It is clear that Xu’s long passage was not intended to address his or society’s opposition to female remarriage. Rather, he was counteracting real or anticipated attacks on the “eligibility” of a remarried woman to be labeled as “righteous.” Xu disagreed, arguing that one should not put overly stringent expectations on others. If Cai Wenji had been accepted as a heroic woman, the Huaiyin woman, who took her own life and the lives of the children that she had with the second husband in order to show her loyalty to the first husband, should certainly be considered a morally superior person.<sup>42</sup> To Xu, it was the *yifu*’s act upon learning the truth of her husband’s death that made her an extraordinary woman. Whether she had remarried or not therefore ceased to be an issue.

Just like Xu Ji, Zhuang Chuo did not see the Huaiyin woman’s remarriage as a barrier to her being established as morally superior. Zhuang’s account included two important elements that were missing from Xu’s: first, the young widow had pondered

<sup>41</sup> *QSS*, vol. 11, *juan* 635, p. 7573.

<sup>42</sup> I have not found any other Song references to Cai Wenji as a *liefu*.

remarriage. She only hesitated because of her concern for her mother-in-law's old age; second, her mother-in-law and the villagers took it for granted that she would remarry. Having her marry the former husband's partner was an attractive option to them. Zhuang narrated,

He [the murdering partner] would go to the merchant's house every day and treat the merchant's mother as if she was his own. For years, he acted the same way. Because her mother-in-law was old, the merchant's wife could not bear to leave her [to remarry]. Both were moved by the villager's kindness. The locals were also pleased by his righteousness. Thinking that her daughter-in-law was still young and the villager, whom the mother-in-law treated as a son, was unmarried, the mother-in-law married the daughter-in-law to him.<sup>43</sup>

Here, Zhuang detailed the murderer's meticulous efforts to win the heart of the young widow and the approval of both the mother-in-law and the villagers. All the parties involved agreed that, since the woman was expected to remarry, the husband's former partner was the best possible candidate. A union between the two would cause minimal disruption in the two women's lives, allowing the daughter-in-law to continue to fulfill her filial duties to the mother-in-law. In the end, the mother-in-law decided to marry the daughter-in-law to the man, making her second marriage all the more legitimate. To Zhuang, such an arrangement should not be counted against the young woman's moral character. If anything, what she had done already proved her to be an extraordinary woman.

Hong Mai's rendition of Xu's piece followed the same logic. First, the woman's second marriage was portrayed as completely legitimate. Not only did the bandit hire a matchmaker, but he also went through the proper rites for a marriage, including the presentation of the bridal money. The relationship between the couple was similarly described as solid. The bandit-husband was so confident that the wife would not turn against him for what he had done that he told her about the murder with a smile on his face. However, as soon as the woman learned the truth, she showed even less hesitation

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<sup>43</sup> Zhuang Chuo, *Jile bian, juan xia*, pp. 98-99; *QSW*, vol. 60, *juan* 1307, p. 152.

than her counterpart in Xu's version. In this way, Hong showed that the woman's second marriage in no way hindered her capacity for moral behavior.

Hong Mai's second episode departed from the above pattern in two important ways. First, the merchant's wife had been in a licentious relationship with the family's servant, who was only half the husband's age. Second, the widow's marriage to the servant seemed to have happened immediately after the husband's death, and there is no reference at all to her mourning her husband properly. Hong recounted,

Upon his return, he [the servant] fooled Zhang's wife, saying "My master fell ill and died in a village temple. Before he died, he left instructions that you marry me." Thinking that it was also her wish, the wife agreed. In three years, they had two sons. The couple had deep feelings for each other.<sup>44</sup>

Hong's version presented us with a young wife and a much older husband. That the woman was beautiful and dissolute and their servant "healthy and strong" portended an illicit relationship.<sup>45</sup> These factors not only provided interesting twists to the story, but also served as the foundation for an expedited second marriage. If the Huaiyin woman in Xu's and Zhuang's accounts took her time to be convinced of the husband's business partner's worth as marriage material, Zhang's wife did not. She was already in a sexual relationship and had a convenient reason to marry him: her late husband approved of her remarriage. In the end, in recording a quick union, Hong Mai glossed over the extramarital affair and a marriage between a servant and his master's wife.

How do we make sense of Hong's absence of moral judgment in this anecdote? Here I suggest one possible explanation: *biji*, as a more "casual" genre, gave the author more flexibility in recording information as it was communicated. As a result, *biji* work included more diverse voices or views that echoed those of its sources. Put it another way, the less morally strict message conveyed in Hong's anecdote did not necessarily represent Hong's position on female remarriage. Rather, it was a popular notion that found its way

<sup>44</sup> YJZ, *bujuan*, *juan* 5, p. 1590.

<sup>45</sup> The *Yijian zhi* includes several similar stories. For two examples, see *ibid.*, *zhi gui*, *juan* 4, p. 1403; *san zhi*, *xin*, *juan* 3, p. 1595.

into Hong's writing. In more than one way, "A Zhang Man and the Floating Bubbles" is a typical *Yijian zhi* story: illicit affairs between married, even unmarried, women and servants, neighbors, Buddhist monks, and men younger than the women's husbands are a staple in *Yijian zhi*.<sup>46</sup> To give several examples, in one story, the son of a widow in an illicit relationship with a butcher was humiliated by his mother's behavior and eventually plotted to have the man and his children killed.<sup>47</sup> In another, a married woman had an extramarital affair and eloped with her lover. Along the way, the two deserted the woman's son, which led to a lawsuit that almost ended in an innocent man's execution.<sup>48</sup> A third narration involves a man's tremendous humiliation when he realized that he was the last in the village to learn about his wife's dissolute relationship with a Buddhist monk.<sup>49</sup> Yet another account features a wife pushing her much older husband to adopt a young man with whom she had been having an affair.<sup>50</sup>

"A Zhang Man and the Water Bubbles" is atypical in other respects. Rarely did Hong Mai depict an adulterous man and woman getting married, having children, and enjoying a loving relationship. It was unheard of for this to happen between a widow and the family's servant. Moreover, Zhang's wife, along with the women mentioned in the above stories, remained unpunished. This absence of calamitous consequences for the women in extramarital affairs appeared all the more significant when compared with Hong's representations of spousal jealousy and unfilial children. In many *Yijian zhi* stories, Hong recorded both men and women enduring disastrous punishments from their jealous spouses due to real or prospective remarriage. Hong's depiction of the outcome for unfilial behavior was even more catastrophic. The unfilial were always chastised by supernatural interventions. Many were put to death in the most hideous ways.<sup>51</sup> In contrast, "A Zhang Man and the Water Bubbles" does not refer to Zhang being suspicious

<sup>46</sup> Cong Ellen Zhang, "Anecdotal Writing on Illicit Sex in Song China (960-1279)," *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 22.2 (2013), pp. 253-280.

<sup>47</sup> *YJZ, zhi jia, juan 8*, pp. 772-773.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid., ding, juan 7*, pp. 598-599.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid., zhi jing, juan 10*, pp. 960-961.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid., zhi gui, juan 4*, p. 1252.

<sup>51</sup> Cong Ellen Zhang, "Negative Role Models: Unfilial Stories in Song Miscellaneous Writing," in N. Harry Rothschild and Leslie V. Wallace (eds.), *Behaving Badly in Early and Medieval China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2017), pp. 39-55.

of his wife, nor does it mention his spirit wreaking havoc after the wife's remarriage, especially considering the new husband was a former servant and his murderer.<sup>52</sup> The end of the story even implies that nothing terrible happened to the woman and that she and her children with the servant continued to live their lives without any moral or supernatural repercussions. Hong Mai's inclusion of "A Zhang Man and the Water Bubbles" attests to the strong effect of oral transmission on the integrity of its source base and the great amount of "freedom" that *biji* writers had at their disposal. By Hong Mai's time, generations of storytellers had transformed a tale about a morally extraordinary woman into one with four dramatically different yet equally attention-grabbing plots. These include an unhappy marriage between an older man and his much younger wife, an affair between a beautiful and licentious woman and the family's servant, a man killing his master in order to possess his lover, and a murder confession spurred by the long-awaited appearance of water bubbles that were destined to serve as witnesses for a gross injustice. Combined, these elements made a sensational narrative that, for Hong Mai the storyteller and his audience, was every bit as engrossing as a virtuous woman killing herself over concerns about the loss of moral principles.

Hong's decision to adopt "A Zhang Man and the Water Bubbles" was also the result of Hong Mai exercising authorial control to promote a dominant theme in his story-telling: the inevitability of retribution and the power of supernatural intervention. Placing the water bubbles in the title clearly conveyed Hong's view on their significance in the anecdote. Moreover, in Hong's narration, Li Er the servant ridiculed his master when the latter entrusted the water bubbles to help him expose the truth. In the end, Li was proven wrong: even if he had not intended to confess to his wife, words simply came out of his mouth, as if a ghost had compelled him to confess. This sudden turn of events is a trademark of Hong Mai's writing: all wrongdoings were being watched and kept track of. When the local authorities failed to enforce the law, gods, deities, and ghosts were there to help. In fact, in many Hong Mai stories, more often than not, the government and the supernatural were often found to work towards the same goal. Li Er's case confirmed the effectiveness of this collaboration.

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<sup>52</sup> For a discussion of spousal jealousy in the Song, see Patricia Ebrey, *The Inner Quarters*, pp. 164-171.

Hong's decision to make the water bubbles the centerpiece of his story was at least partly responsible for his negligence of the woman's fate. Another factor might have been schedule-related. The *Yijian zhi* had been a publication phenomenon, so much so that Hong was under increasing pressure to produce more material faster in the last years of his life.<sup>53</sup> This reality allowed Hong Mai little time to edit the stories he recorded, even if he had wanted to. The time constraints similarly increased the chances of internal inconsistencies in many of his tales and their overall quality. His portrayal of Li Er is an example of this. Right after describing the servant as "hardworking and sensible and by nature loyal and simple-minded," Hong went on to reveal that Li and Zhang's wife had committed adultery. In this context, the negligence of the woman in the end of the story becomes understandable.

This section has shown that, in the Song, female remarriage was common as a social practice. In fact, remarriage did not even "disqualify" a woman from being celebrated as a virtuous paragon, something that would become incomprehensible in late imperial times.<sup>54</sup> Compared to other "vices," such as unfiliality and spousal jealousy, society's attitude towards extramarital relationships was similarly more open. Hong Mai and his informant did not bother to hide the extramarital affair or make the woman's second marriage appear more "proper," nor did they take care to add that the woman suffered grave consequences for her actions. Nowhere else in *Yijian zhi* did Hong present the marriage of a widow and a servant, indicating that such a union was extremely rare and unacceptable in local societies. We cannot help but wonder, was this a case of the *biji* author completely surrendering his authorial control for the purpose of recording a story just as he heard it?

#### 4.2 The Making of a *Yifu*, *Jiefu*, and *Liefu*

In promoting the Huaiyin woman, Xu Ji, Zhuang Chuo, and Hong Mai celebrated the wife of a merchant who proved fully capable of realizing her moral potential by

<sup>53</sup> See the multiple prefaces to the different installments of the *Yijian zhi*.

<sup>54</sup> For two major studies on the cult of female chastity in late imperial China, see Weijing Lu, *True to Her Word: The Faithful Maiden Cult in Late Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008); Janet Theiss, *Disgraceful Matters: The Politics of Chastity in Eighteenth Century China* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005).

avenging her first husband, seeing to the execution of his murderer, and severing her relationship with the second husband in the most direct and violent manner.<sup>55</sup> Of the three authors, Xu Ji was the most vocal in addressing the woman's family background. His long preface to the two poems on the Huaiyin *yifu* lamented that the *yifu*, unlike women from more distinguished families, would remain nameless. Xu therefore felt strongly about helping memorialize her outstanding life. His preface to the poem on the "Heroic Woman of Beishen" was more explicit in his support for women of non-elite households.

If we examine the family backgrounds of virtuous women in ancient times, [we see that] they practiced their virtues by following their nature. It has been a long-standing tradition to emphasize their origins [in helping their moral cultivation]. This is why poets celebrated Zhuangjiang and Marquis Han's wife. As for [women] from merchant families, [people tend to think that] because they are ignorant, they cannot understand the meaning of righteousness. Yet, when misfortune suddenly occurred, [a woman from such an upbringing] was able to disregard [her own life and death] with a resolution as firm as the unshakable Mount Tai. This is because she knew the difference between righteousness and profit and the relative importance of life and death, to the extent that she was willing to kill herself without any hesitation.<sup>56</sup>

Here Xu Ji agreed that women from merchant families were not as learned or cultivated as those from elite backgrounds, but believed that people knew right and wrong from birth. Xu felt strongly that morally outstanding women from lesser backgrounds had been neglected by historical writing. About the Beishen *liefu*, he stated, "It is a shame that her family name and native place have been lost. Since she died in Beishen, I have named her the Heroic Woman of Beishen." To Xu Ji, even though, and exactly because, both women would be absent from official records, it was his responsibility to commemorate

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<sup>55</sup> For a study of the discourse on women and sanctioned violence in earlier periods, see Manling Luo, "Gender, Genre, and Discourse: The Woman Avenger in Medieval Chinese Texts," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 134.4 (2014), pp. 579-599.

<sup>56</sup> *QSS*, vol. 11, *juan* 635, p. 7574.

them. Zhuang Chuo and Hong Mai seem to have shared the same sentiments.

Xu's, Zhuang's, and Hong's agreement in celebrating a paragon of virtue from an ordinary family aside, they differed in their representation of the Huaiyin woman's defining virtue, resulting in her being praised as a *yi* (righteous), *jie* (principled), and *lie* (heroic) woman, respectively. Of the three authors, Hong Mai characterized the woman as one of "lofty aspirations and righteousness (*zhiyi*)," but stopped short at expanding on the significance of *zhi* or *yi*. In contrast, Xu Ji and Zhuang Chuo went to greater length to articulate their view on female morality. The rest of this section will discuss the meanings of *yi*, *jie*, and *lie* through the lens of Xu's and Zhuang's writing.

### 4.3 *Yi* and the Making of a *Yifu*

Altogether, Xu Ji used *yi* ten times in his writing of the Huaiyin woman (excluding in the compound, *yifu*) and two times in the story of the Beishen woman. *Yi* appeared once in Zhuang Chuo's biography of her. Three observations can be made about the meanings of *yi* based on these usages. First, *yi* was not seen as a gendered virtue and could be used to extol men and women. In addition to the Huaiyin woman being labeled a *yifu*, the partner-murderer in Xu's story self-claimed that "he had treated the husband with righteousness (*yi*)." Moreover, Zhuang recorded that local people were pleased by the partner's righteous conduct (*yi*) and approved of his marriage to the young widow. In both cases, there was a general agreement among the authors, the young woman, and family and community members that what the man did after the death of the first husband was *yi* in nature.

Second, in Xu Ji's rendition, a person who has committed *buyi* 不義, unrighteous deeds, deserved to die. Xu Ji narrated,

Having avenged her [first] husband, she contemplated that not only had her good looks implicated him, but she had also married his *chou* [enemy]. Her two sons were also children of her husband's *chou*. Based on the principle of *yi*, she should not continue to live. She therefore tied the two boys up and

tossed them into the Huai River. She then drowned herself.<sup>57</sup>

Xu recounted that, as soon as the *yifu* learned the truth of her first husband's murder, she concluded that her second marriage was an unrighteous act. Subsequently, the second husband became her enemy (*chou* 讎) and the sons they had together her first and only husband's adversaries (*chouren* 讎人). This articulation of the *yifu*'s self-identification explained her determination to die. Only by killing herself and the children she had with the murderer could she redeem herself and stay true to her husband.

Third and most importantly, Xu framed *yi* in unequivocal terms both in his poems and the preface. Written in the Huaiyin woman's voice, the first poem is a declaration of a resolute woman deciding to rid herself of the tarnishing of her body and person.

Now that the cruel murderer and evil *chou* has been eliminated,  
 Having been burdened by injustice and shame, I holler.  
 At the time, I only lamented your unnatural death,  
 It is not until today did I learn that I am responsible for your demise.  
 Choosing life over righteousness is truly a despicable thing,  
 Killing myself and drowning the boys is the right choice.  
 The humiliation of the past years I have no way to wipe out,  
 [The only alternative] is to have the clear Huai water clean my body forever.<sup>58</sup>

The poem makes clear the woman's pledge of loyalty to her only husband and her attempt to redeem the "unrighteousness" in her conduct. In this light, the several years of good life that she had shared with the "second" husband were seen as humiliating memories and impossible to erase. Even the children they had were part of this moral burden. This made death for her and the children her only option. Specifically, the woman juxtaposed "life (*sheng*)" and "righteousness (*yi*)" and affirmed her resolve to choose righteousness over life in the same way that Mencius (fourth century B.C.) did.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 7573.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> "Life is something I desire; righteousness is also something I desire. If I cannot have both, I will forsake life and select righteousness. Life is something I desire, but there is something that I desire more than life.

Xu took it for granted that women, including women of merchant families, understood the principle of *yi* and could act as righteously as men did. He then proceeded to explain his understanding of the *yifu*'s feelings:

[She did this because] she thought it was worse to live a life of unrighteousness than to die righteously. I therefore call her a *yifu*. ... She was able to take revenge, killed the sons [of her *chou*], and committed suicide. [In this way], she avenged a gross injustice of the past and broke a vast, hidden resentment. Her intentions were made clear like the bright sun shining upon the underworld. Such righteousness [that she has demonstrated], how could one not consider it *yi*?<sup>60</sup>

Xu's highly moralistic tone in this episode was consistent with the way he lived his life and his public image as a dedicated follower of orthodox ritual guidelines. Xu's record of conduct (*xingzhuang* 行狀), composed by Wang Zishen 王資深 (1050-1128) and his official biography in the *Songshi* depicted him as an extremely filial son, upright person, generous clan member, and knowledgeable scholar. Above all, he was a disciplined practitioner of proper family rituals, especially in his daily dealings with his mother. His reputation continued to spread after his death. In 1116, he was granted the posthumous title of Mr. Principle and Filiality 節孝先生.<sup>61</sup>

There is another way to look at Xu's celebration of the *yifu*. As Beverly Bossler has shown, the second half of the Northern Song saw the beginning of a "heightened interest" in female fidelity and filial piety. The celebration of "principled women" (*jiefu* 節婦) in literature and official policies, however, was meant to offer moral guidance to court officials at a time of factional strife and serve as a model for male loyalty to the court.<sup>62</sup> Xu's commendation of the Huaiyin woman should therefore be understood through the

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Hence I will do just anything to obtain it. Death is something I hate, but there is something that I hate more than death. Hence, there are calamities I do not avoid." Mencius, *Mencius*, in Philip J. Ivanhoe and Bryan W. Van Norden (eds.), *Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: Hackett Publishing, 2005), p. 150, 6A10.

<sup>60</sup> *QSS*, vol. 11, *juan* 635, pp. 7572-7573.

<sup>61</sup> *QSW*, vol. 120, *juan* 2594, pp. 271-275.

<sup>62</sup> Beverly Bossler, *Courtesans, Concubines, and the Cult of Female Fidelity*, pp. 137-150.

lens of contemporary political circumstances. In the preface to the poem on the *yifu*, Xu wrote:

Therefore, among those who heard about her conduct, courageous men and heroic martyrs were inspired, to the point that they held their wrists and were moved to tears. Treacherous officials and traitorous factions also may have felt embarrassed. This is why gentlemen criticized Liu Xin 劉歆 [50 B.C.- A.D. 23] for living an ignoble life and considered those like Wang Jian 王儉 [452-589], Ren Fang 任昉 [460-508], and Fan Yun 范雲 [451-503] traitors to one's country. As for Chu Yanhui 褚彥回 [435-382] and the like, how are they even worth mentioning? Ever since the Wei [220-265] and Jin [266-316], many court officials ordered others to rebel against and murder their kings.<sup>63</sup>

Here, Xu Ji contrasted the *yifu* with her unrighteous male counterparts. After naming a list of evil officials, disloyal factionalists, traitors, and regicides, Xu asked, "What would the righteous woman think of them?" Xu's underlying message was loud and clear. Not only was Cai Wenji of the Han a lesser role model than the *yifu*, plenty of past and current male scholar-officials were also morally inferior beings compared to her.

#### 4.4 *Lie, Lieshi, and Liefu*

In addition to labeling the Huaiyin woman a *yifu*, Xu Ji also characterized her as "determined and heroic (*juelie* 決烈)." In his second poem, Xu remarked:

How determined and heroic was the woman of Huaiyin!  
 She was as beautiful as flowers and her heart was as hard as iron.  
 It took her [only] a moment [to decide] to kill herself and drown her sons,  
 Even though her body has perished, her reputation will not die out.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>63</sup> *QSS*, vol. 11, *juan* 635, p. 7573.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

To praise the *yifu*'s determination and heroism, Xu depicted the woman as beautiful and gentle as flowers on the outside, but firm and resolute in her heart. As soon as she learned about the "role" she had played in her husband's death, she showed no hesitation in avenging his injustice. In this sense, Xu made *yi* and *lie* inseparable qualities. To do the righteous thing, the Huaiyin woman had to resort to extreme, heroic measures, including killing herself and her boys.

In Xu's rendition, *lie*, just like *yi*, was a virtue applicable to both men and women. His preface referred to Cai Wenji as being widely remembered as a *liefu* and juxtaposed "lofty and heroic men 壯夫烈士 (*zhuangfu lieshi*)" with "treacherous officials and traitorous factions." In addition to affirming the capabilities of men and women to act heroically, these references to *liefu* and *lieshi* confirmed the utility of *lie* as a moral category in depicting their deeds.

Xu Ji demonstrated the same sense of admiration in his poem on the Beishen *Liefu*.

Seawater can flood,  
 Your body cannot be violated.  
 The Huai River can flood [and cease to be clear],  
 Your reputation cannot be smeared.  
 Phoenixes can be domesticated,  
 Ice and frost can be held dear [even if they are cold].  
 [But] one is either the [pure and bright] moon among the [gray] clouds,  
 Or she is the clouds next to the moon.<sup>65</sup>

In this poem, Xu Ji used multiple similes to highlight the woman's determination in defense of her chastity. If the Huaiyin woman had found it necessary to correct all the unrighteousness surrounding her husband's death and her marriage to the husband's partner, the Beishen woman did not have to address any unrighteousness (*buyi*). She faced a challenge of a different sort: to demonstrate her absolute fidelity to her husband by fending off another man's sexual advances. Xu wrote in the preface, "She knew that, in the end, she could not escape his violations. Rather than being dishonored and

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 7574.

continuing to live, it would be better to die as an uncontaminated person.” To the *liefu*, what she faced was a life-or-death scenario that had no room for a compromise: one could either be the pure and bright moon or the gray and gloomy clouds. Xu continued, “Alas! She was so determined and heroic. How could we not call her an outstanding woman 奇女子?”<sup>66</sup>

#### 4.5 *Jie* and *Jiefu*

While Xu Ji recognized the Huaiyin woman as a *yifu*, Zhuang Chuo called her a *jiefu* without articulating the meaning of *jie*. The only other place that *jie* was used in the texts under discussion is in a compound, *jieyi* 節義, in Xu Ji’s preface about the *yifu*. Xu wrote, “It is a shame that her deeds will not be known to the court and her principled and righteous act [*jieyi*] will not be displayed on banners in her hometown.” Xu’s statement suggests that, although he did not specifically label the Huaiyin woman as a *jiefu*, he would certainly have agreed with Zhuang’s characterization.

One way to understand the meanings and significance of *yi* and *jie* is to closely examine Xu Ji’s and Zhuang Chuo’s portrayal of the Huaiyin woman. The *yifu* and *jiefu* differed the most in their view of their marriage to the murderer-husband. While the *yifu* completely rejected the second husband and the children she had with him, the *jiefu* continued to treat the second man as her husband and the children she had with him as their children. Seen from a different perspective, in the *yifu*’s understanding and Xu’s rendition, there was no middle ground between *yi* and *buyi*. A person of *yi* would be willing to give up her life to redeem a *buyi* deed. In comparison, Zhuang showed much more interest in presenting a more wholesome image of the Huaiyin woman than Xu Ji did with the *yifu* and the Beishen *liefu*. Zhuang stated that the *jiefu* served her mother-in-law dutifully when her first husband was alive. Her filiality continued after the husband’s death. Even her marriage to the first husband’s business partner was therefore portrayed as the perfect solution to her dilemma, allowing her to continue to be a filial daughter-in-law. Concerning the last moments of her life, Zhuang stressed that, even though the *jiefu* had a good relationship with the second husband, as soon as he confessed his crime, she reported him to the authorities. She did this knowing full well that, by having caused two

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

husbands' deaths, she could not continue to live. For dealing with all the familial obligations and serious challenges in her life in laudable ways, Zhuang Chuo called the woman a *jiefu*, a woman of principle.

How do we account for the differences in Xu's and Zhuang's approaches to the Huaiyin woman? Compared to Xu, who attempted to use the *yifu*'s life story to convey strong moral and political messages, Zhuang (and perhaps Lü Xiaqing) appeared more interested in telling a good story in a holistic manner. Without employing any emotionally or morally strong undertones, Zhuang portrayed a commoner woman who strived to act properly, which, given her life experience, was not an easy task. The variances in the two versions also had much to do with genre conventions. Zhuang's inclusion of all sorts of miscellaneous information was made possible by the nature of the *biji* genre. In comparison, Xu's poetic work on the Huaiyin and Beishen women called for a focused, dramatic representation of their most extraordinary acts.

## 5. Concluding Remarks

The Song witnessed the flourishing of *biji* and *zhuan*, which greatly contributed to the recording and circulation of information about the daily life of men and women of all classes and various sorts of occurrences that appealed to elite and public sensibilities. This case study has attempted to illustrate this development using several extant Song versions of the deeds of one commoner woman. The Huaiyin woman's saga contained multiple elements that would inspire a writer and capture his audience's attention and imagination: a beautiful young wife and her merchant husband, the suspense of businessmen on the move and facing uncertain circumstances, love and lust, betrayal and murder, a happy marriage with a dirty secret, revenge and retribution, and the resolve of a heroic woman to do the right thing.

That her life story became the subject of multiple narratives from the Northern to Southern Song demonstrates the diverse way texts were transmitted and preserved as well as the different directions a story could take when presented in different literary forms. The quick loss of Lü Xiaqing's *zhuan*, the circulation of a distorted version of Xu Ji's writing in the form of a *biji* episode, the long process that eventually transformed Zhuang

Chuo's *zhuan* of the *jiefu* into Hong Mai's floating bubbles story, and the rediscovery of *difangzhi* writers of Xu Ji's writing in late imperial times point to the chances of survival for a good story as well as the role casual or random factors played in information preservation. In addition, this examination has illustrated the fluidity and boundary-crossing of various literary genres (poetry, *zhuan*, *biji*, plays, and *difangzhi*) and offered a case study on the balance that Song *biji* writers endeavored to maintain between their authorial intentions and their goal of preserving worthy material for various purposes.

The above dynamics, along with the authors' intellectual inclinations and political stances, conditioned their representation of women and female virtues. All three authors felt strongly about women's moral caliber as righteous and principled people as well as remarriages and loving relationships between spouses. Female chastity was surely a highly desirable quality, but did not occupy a central place in these accounts. The Huaiyin woman was first and foremost a person of *yi* and *jie*, an equal of morally superior men, and a role model for both men and women. This commendation is all the more significant if we take into account the fact that she was from a merchant family. The findings of this case study correspond to Beverly Bossler's recent work on female fidelity: it was not until the Southern Song and Yuan dynasties that more attention was paid to female fidelity. By the fourteenth century, the most virtuous women were chaste widows (*jiefu*). In the process *jie* was transformed from a classical ideal of moral integrity without gender discrimination to a female-exclusive virtue.<sup>67</sup> The various representations of the Huaiyin woman offer a nuanced example of this complex, centuries-long development.

(Proofreader: Li Qi-hong)

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<sup>67</sup> Beverly Bossler, *Courtesans, Concubines, and the Cult of Female Fidelity*, pp. 406-407.

**Appendix I**  
**徐積, “淮陰義婦二首并序”<sup>68</sup>**  
**“Two Poems on the Righteous Woman of Huaiyin, with Preface,”**  
**by Xu Ji**

淮陰義婦富商之妻李氏，有姿色。邑人有同商者見而說之，因道殺其夫，厚為棺殮，持其喪以歸，給云溺死，且盡歸其財，無一毫之私焉。於是伺其除葬，謀為婚媾。且自陳有義於其夫，義婦亦為之感泣，遂許而嫁之。

The righteous woman of Huaiyin, Miss Li, was the wife of a rich merchant and a beautiful woman. Her husband's partner, who was from the same township, saw her and became infatuated with her. [In order to possess her,] the man murdered Miss Li's husband while the two were traveling. He then prepared a nice coffin for the husband and returned with his body. The man lied [to Miss Li] that her husband had drowned and returned to her all her husband's earnings without appropriating a single penny. The man then waited [for Miss Li] to complete her husband's burial and proposed marriage. [To convince Miss Li], he also added that he had treated the husband with righteousness. The righteous woman was moved by what the man had done, so she agreed to marry him.

迺一日，家有大水，水有浮漚，其夫輒顧而腥。義婦問之，未應。遂固問之，恃已生二子，不虞其妻之讎已也。即以實告之曰：「前夫之溺，我之所為。已溺復出，勢將自救，我以篙刺之，遂得沈去。所刺之處浮漚之狀，正如今日所見。」

One day, their home flooded. Bubbles were floating on the water. Seeing them, the husband turned his head and grinned. When the righteous woman asked why, he did not answer. She kept pressing him. Counting on the fact that they already had two sons together, the man was no longer afraid that his wife would turn against him. He therefore told her the truth: “Your former

<sup>68</sup> *QSS*, vol. 11, *juan* 635, pp. 7572-7573.

husband's drowning was my doing. He was underwater, but re-emerged, and tried to save himself. I stabbed him with a pole. He then sank. The floating bubbles that popped up where I stabbed him looked exactly like those I saw just now."

義婦默然，始悟其計，而復讎之心生矣。即日俟其便，即以其事奔告有司，卒正其獄，棄其讎子。夫讎既復，又自念以色累夫，以身事讎，二子讎人之子也，義不可復生，即縛其子赴淮投之於水，已而自投焉。

[Upon hearing her husband's confession,] the righteous woman did not say anything. Now that she had become aware of his scheme, she plotted revenge. On the same day, she found an opportune time and ran to report the crime to the government office. She finally brought justice [for her former husband] and deserted the enemy's sons. Having avenged her husband, she thought to herself, not only had her good looks implicated her husband, but she had also married his enemy. The two sons were children of [her and her husband's] enemy. Based on the principle of righteousness, she could not continue to live. She therefore tied up the two boys and tossed them into the Huai River. She drowned herself afterwards.

蓋以謂不義而生，不若義而死也，故謂之義婦。或者以其生事二夫，不得謂之義，是大不然，是責於人者終無已也。東漢時，蔡文姬者喪夫之後，一為胡婦，一再嫁之，其傳名為烈婦，考其心迹，與義婦不同遠矣。嫁，蓋其心出於感激，謂其人真有義於其夫也。既嫁之後，凡再生二子，閨房帷幄之好已固，於人情無毫髮可以累其心者。故能復讎殺子，又自殺其身，雪沈冤於既往，豁幽憤之無窮，昭乎如白日之照九泉也，如此之義，是豈可不以為義乎。

She must have done this because she thought it was worse to live a life of unrighteousness than to die righteously. I therefore called her a righteous woman. Some might say, because she served two husbands in her life, she should not be called righteous. This is grossly wrong. This is [an example of] putting unrealistically high demands on others. In the Eastern Han, after Cai Wenji lost her husband, she remarried even though she had been the wife of a barbarian. [Despite her remarriage], she was remembered as a heroic woman.

If we examine her true feelings, they differ greatly from those of the righteous woman. [Miss Li] married [her husband's partner] out of the gratitude in her heart. She thought that the man had been truly righteous to her husband. After she married, they had two sons. The marriage was strong and no human emotions burdened her heart. That she would take revenge, kill the sons, and commit suicide in order to avenge a crime of the past and publicize her abundant, hidden resentment to the world [lit., just like the bright sun shining upon the underworld], such righteousness, how could one not consider it so?

故聞其風者，壯夫烈士爲之凜然，至於扼腕泣下也，而姦臣逆黨亦可以少自訕矣。故君子謂劉歆爲苟生，王儉，任昉，范雲之輩爲賣國，褚彥回之輩何足道哉！蓋自魏晉而下，佐命之臣教人持兵以殺其君者多矣，使義婦視之以爲何物耶？惜乎事不達於朝，節義不旌於里，哀哉！

Therefore, among those who heard about her conduct, courageous men and heroic martyrs were inspired, to the point that they held their wrists and were moved to tears. Treacherous officials and traitorous factions also may have felt embarrassed. This is why gentlemen criticized Liu Xin [50 B.C.-23 A.D.] for living an ignoble life and considered those like Wang Jian [452-589], Ren Fang [460-508], and Fan Yun [451-503] traitors to one's country. As for Chu Yanhui [435-382] and the like, how are they even worth mentioning? Ever since the Wei [220-265] and Jin [266-316], many court officials ordered others to rebel against and murder their kings. What would the righteous woman think of them? It is a shame that her deeds will not be known to the court and her principled and righteous act will not be displayed on banners in her hometown. Alas!

酷賊姦讎既已除，銜冤抱恥正號呼。

當時但痛君非命，今日方知妾累夫。

捨義取生真鄙事，殺身沈子乃良圖。

幾年汙辱無由雪，長使清淮滌此軀。

Now that the cruel murderer and evil enemy has been eliminated,

Having been burdened by injustice and shame, I holler.

At the time, I only grieved your unnatural demise,

It is not until today did I learn that I am responsible for your death.  
Choosing life over righteousness is truly a despicable thing,  
Killing myself and drowning the boys is the right choice.  
I have no way to wipe out the humiliations of the past,  
[The only alternative] is to have the clear Huai water clean my body forever.  
淮陰婦人何決烈，貌好如花心似鐵。  
殺身沈子須臾間，身雖已死名不滅。  
How determined and heroic was the woman of Huaiyin!  
She looked as beautiful as a flower and her heart was as hard as iron.  
It only took her a moment to kill herself and drown her sons,  
Even though her body has perished, her reputation will not die out.

## Appendix II

### 徐積, “北神烈婦并序”<sup>69</sup>

#### “The Heroic Woman of Beishen, with Preface,” by Xu Ji

烈婦有美色。夫為小商，舟行上下載以自隨。至於北神，其夫病死，貧無以殮，同舟富商者假貸與之，喪費所需，一切皆具，是自恃有恩，顧其妻以為己物。烈婦既葬之三月，復墓以歸，勢且甚迫，遂取其嬰兒縛置胸前，母子號呼赴淮而死。是其所以自度者，其勢終不得免焉也，與其被汙而生，不若潔己而死也。嗚呼！其決烈如此，是豈可不謂之奇女子乎？

The heroic woman was beautiful. Her husband was a small merchant who brought her along when traveling up and down the [Huai] River on a boat. When they arrived at Beishen, her husband died from an illness, but she was too poor to encoffin him. A rich merchant on the same boat loaned her [enough funds] to cover his funeral expenses. For this reason, he considered himself her benefactor and possessor. Three months after the heroic woman buried her husband, she returned after completing the tomb construction. [The rich merchant] pressured her even more [with his advances]. She then took her baby and bound him around her chest. The mother and son hollered, threw themselves in the Huai River, and died. [She did this because] she knew that, in the end, she could not escape [his violations]. Rather than being dishonored and continuing to live, it would be better to die as a clean person. Alas! She was so determined and heroic. How could we not call her an outstanding woman?

蓋古之賢女，藉其家世，因性而習之，淵源漸漬，其所從來者遠矣。此詩人所以賦莊姜與夫韓侯之妻也。至於負販之家，見聞之陋，安知義之所在乎？乃一日猝然變生不幸，毅然不顧，如泰山之不可搖也。是知其義利之分，死生之輕重，故至於殺身而不悔也。

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., pp. 7573-7574.

If we examine the family backgrounds of virtuous women in ancient times, [we will see that] they practiced their virtues by following their nature. The origins took a long time to form and their history was long. This is why poets wrote rhapsodies to celebrate Zhuangjiang and Marquis Han's wife. As for [women] from merchant families, [people tended to think that] since they were ignorant, they cannot understand the meaning of righteousness. Yet, one day, when misfortune suddenly occurred, [a woman from a merchant family] was able to disregard [her life] with a resolution as firm as the unshakable Mount Tai. This is because she knew the difference between righteousness and profit and the relative importance of life and death, to the extent that she was willing to kill herself without any regret.

惜哉亡其姓氏，且不知何許人也，以其死於北神，故號為北神烈婦。

It is a shame that her family name and native place have been lost. Since she died in Beishen, I have named her the Heroic Woman of Beishen.

海水猶可泛，君身不可犯。

淮水猶可瀦，君名不可汙。

鸞鳳猶可馴，冰霜猶可親。

不是雲間月，即是月邊雲。

Sea water can flood,

Your body cannot be violated.

The Huai River can accumulate,

Your reputation cannot be smeared.

Phoenixes can be trained,

Ice and frost can be dear.

If one is not the moon among the clouds,

She is the clouds next to the moon.

**Appendix III**  
**莊綽, “淮陰節婦傳”<sup>70</sup>**  
**“The Biography of the Principled Woman of Huaiyin,” by**  
**Zhuang Chuo**

余家故書，有呂縉叔夏卿文集，載《淮陰節婦傳》云：

Among the old books my family used to own was the *Collected Works of Lü Jinshu [Style Name] Xiqing*, in which was recorded “The Biography of the Principled Woman of Huaiyin.” The story went:

婦年少，美色，事姑甚謹。夫為商，與里人共財出販，深相親好，至通家往來。

A woman was young and beautiful. She served her mother-in-law dutifully. Her husband was a merchant. Together with a fellow villager, they combined their wealth to peddle goods. The two men were extremely close, to the extent that the two families often associated with each other.

其里人悅婦之美，因同江行，會傍無人，即推其夫水中。夫指水泡曰：「他日此當為証！」

The villager had been captivated by the woman’s beauty. [Once], when he and the woman’s husband were traveling on the [Huai] River, nobody happened to be nearby. The villager pushed the merchant into the water. [Before he died,] the merchant pointed to the water bubbles [caused by his falling and struggling] and said, “They will be my witness someday.”

既溺，里人大呼求救，得其尸，已死，即號慟，為之制服如兄弟，厚為棺殮，送終之禮甚備。錄其行橐，一毫不私。至所販貨得利，亦均分著籍。

After the merchant drowned, the villager shouted for help and, [assisted by others,] found the man, who was already dead. The villager howled and wept. He wore mourning as if the deceased was his brother. He was generous in preparing the merchant’s coffin and other funeral items. Death rituals were

<sup>70</sup> Zhuang Chuo, *Jile bian, juan xia*, pp. 98-99; *QSW*, vol. 60, *juan* 1307, p. 152.

very well-prepared. The villager then recorded the merchant's belongings without misappropriating the tiniest amount. As for the profit they had made over the merchandise they peddled together, he divided it into two equal shares and registered them with the government office under their households.

既歸，盡舉以付其母，爲擇地卜葬。日至其家，奉其母如己親。若是者累年。

When the villager returned, he presented [the aforementioned items] to the merchant's mother. He selected a plot and divined for the [merchant's] burial. He would go to the merchant's house every day and treat the merchant's mother as if she was his own. For years, he acted the same way.

婦以姑老，亦不忍去，皆感里人之恩，人亦喜其義也。姑以婦尚少，里人未娶，視之猶子，故以婦嫁之。夫婦尤歡睦，後有兒女數人。

Because her mother-in-law was old, the merchant's wife could not bear to leave her [to remarry]. Both were moved by the villager's kindness. The locals were also pleased by his righteousness. Thinking that her daughter-in-law was still young and the villager, whom the mother-in-law treated as a son, was unmarried, the mother-in-law married the daughter-in-law to him. The couple led a very happy and harmonious life. Later, they had several sons and daughters.

一日大雨，里人者獨坐檐下，視庭中積水竊笑。婦問其故，不肯告，愈疑之，叩之不已。里人以婦相歡，又有數子，待己必厚，故以誠語之曰：「吾以愛汝之故，害汝前夫。其死時指水泡爲証，今見水泡，竟何能爲？此其所以笑也。」

One day, it rained heavily. The villager was sitting under the eaves alone. Seeing the accumulated water in the yard, he laughed to himself. The wife asked the reason, but he was not willing to say. She became more suspicious and did not stop inquiring. The villager thought that since he and the wife loved each other and already had several children together, she would treat him with leniency. So he told her the truth, saying "Because I loved you, I murdered your first husband. When he was dying, he pointed to the water bubbles as his witness. I saw the water bubbles just now, but what could they

do? This was why I laughed.”

婦亦笑而已。後伺里人之出，即訴於官，鞠實其罪，而行法焉。婦慟哭曰：「以吾之色而殺二夫，亦何以生爲？」遂赴淮而死。

The woman also laughed and did not say anything. Later, she waited for the villager to go out and informed the authorities, who, after interrogating him and proving his crime, had him executed. The woman wailed, “Because of my looks, I had two husbands killed. How could I keep on living?” She subsequently threw her into the Huai River and drowned.

此書呂氏既無，而余家者亦散於兵火。姓氏皆不能記，姑敘其大略而已。

The Lüs no longer have the *Collected Works*. My family’s copy was also scattered by the war. I do not remember the names [of the people in the story] and have only recounted its outline here.

## Appendix IV

### 洪邁, “淮陰張生妻”<sup>71</sup>

#### “The Wife of a Zhang Man of Huaiyin,” by Hong Mai

……《徐中車集》載淮陰一婦之夫，隕命盜手，而婦弗知。其後盜憑媒納幣，聘為室，居三年，生二子矣。因乘舟過夫死處，盜以為相從久，又有子，必不恨我，乃笑而告故。

... The *Collected Works of Xu Zhongche* [Zhongche was Xu Ji's style name] recorded: the husband of a Huaiyin woman died by the hands of a bandit, but the woman did not know [that he had been murdered and who the murderer was]. Later, the bandit sent a matchmaker [to propose a marriage] and paid the bride money to [complete the engagement]. They had been married for three years and had two sons when they took a boat and passed by where the [former] husband died. The bandit, thinking that, because they had been married for a long time and had children together, the woman would not hate him, so he told her the truth with a smile on his face.

婦勃然走投保正，擒盜赴官。大慟語人曰：「妾少年嫁良人，為盜死，幸早聞之，定不與俱生。兩雛皆賊種，不可留於人世。」俱擲諸洪波。俟盜伏辜，亦自沉而死。此二女志義相望於百年間云。

The woman was enraged. She ran to the village head, who arrested the bandit and brought him to the authorities. The woman was tremendously pained [by the truth] and said: “I married a good man when I was young. He was murdered by the bandit. If I had known this earlier, I would not have married him. The two boys are the bandit's descendants and should not be left in this world.” She threw both into the ranging waves [of the Huai River]. After the bandit was put to death, she also drowned herself. The aspirations and righteousness of these two women were separated by a hundred years.

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<sup>71</sup> YJZ, *zhi ding*, *juan* 9, pp. 1038-1039.

## Appendix V

### 洪邁, “張客浮漚”<sup>72</sup>

#### “A Zhang Man and the Floating Bubbles,” by Hong Mai

鄂岳之間居民張客，以步販紗絹爲業。其僕李二者，勤謹習事，且賦性忠朴。張年五十，而少妻不登其半，美而且蕩，李健壯，每與私通。

A man named Zhang resided in the E [in Hubei] and Yue [in Hunan] area and specialized in peddling gauze and thin silk. His servant, Li Er was hardworking, sensible, and by nature loyal and honest. Zhang was fifty. His young wife was not even half his age. She was beautiful and licentious. Li was healthy and strong and often had illicit intercourse with her.

淳熙中，主僕行商，過巴陵之西湖灣，壤地荒寂，旅邸絕少。正當曠野長岡，白晝急雨，望路左有叢祠，趨入少憩。

During the Chunxi reign [1174-1189], the master and servant were on a business trip and passed by some [unnamed] lake West of Baling [Yueyang, Hunan]. The area was poor and desolate, so lodging was extremely rare. They were trekking in the wilderness during the day on a stretching ridge when it suddenly started raining. Seeing a shrine in the woods on the left side of the road, they went in to have a short rest.

李四顧無人，遽生凶念，持大磚擊張首，卽悶仆，連呼乞命，視檐溜處，浮漚起滅，自料不可活，因言：「我被僕害命，只靠你它時做主，爲我伸冤。」李失笑，張遂死。

Looking around and seeing no one in sight, Li suddenly had murderous thoughts. He raised a large brick to hit Zhang on the head. Zhang fell without making a sound. [Upon regaining consciousness,] he cried out to beg for his life. Seeing the floating bubbles forming and bursting under the eaves, Zhang realized that he would not live. He then said to the bubbles, “I was murdered by my servant. I will rely on you to support me in the future to redress the injustice that I have suffered.” Li could not help but laugh. Zhang then died.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., *bujuan*, *juan* 5, p. 1590.

李歸給厥妻曰：「使主病，死於村廟中，臨終遺囑，教你嫁我。」妻亦以遂己願，從之。

Upon his return, Li fooled Zhang's wife, "My master fell ill and died in a village temple. Before he died, he left instructions that you marry me." Thinking that it was also her wish, the wife agreed.

凡三年，生二子，伉儷之情甚篤。嘗同食，值雨下，見水漚而笑，妻問之：「何笑也？」曰：「張公甚癡，被我打殺，卻指浮漚作證，不亦可笑乎！」

In three years, they had two sons together. The couple was deeply in love. Once when they were eating together, it happened to rain. [Li] saw the water bubbles and smiled. His wife asked him, "Why did you smile?" Li said, "Mr. Zhang was very foolish. [When] I hit and killed him, he pointed to the floating bubbles as his witness. Is it not ridiculous?"

妻聞愕然，陽若不介意，伺李出，奔告里保，捕赴官。訪尋埋骸，驗得實，不復敢拒。但云鬼擘我口，使自說出。竟伏重刑。

The wife was shocked [by Li's confession], but pretended she did not mind. She waited for Li to go out and ran to the village head [to report the crime]. Li was arrested and sent to the authorities, who investigated and found the buried body. When his crime was confirmed, Li did not dare to deny it. He simply said that, [at the time it felt like] "a ghost slapped my mouth, urging me to confess." He was eventually executed.

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## 文本，文體，女性道德：

### 宋代一位淮陰婦女的前世今生

張 聰

維吉尼亞大學歷史系

cz5h@virginia.edu

#### 摘 要

宋朝年間，商人甲在出販途中身亡，其妻在毫不知情的情況下再嫁謀害甲之真凶乙。數年之後，兩人已育有二子。乙仗夫妻感情日深，向妻子坦白了自己殺害甲的事實。其妻將乙告官，乙終伏法。以上述梗概為基礎的記載至少見於五位宋人的六種著述。幾位作者對事件發生的年代、地點，及甲乙關係的說法各異。但這些版本最大的不同在於他們對甲妻再嫁和乙坦白真相後其妻反應的描述。本文根據這些材料追述故事的由來，著重討論不同作者對女性道德的定義，同時展示文本及口述傳播如何塑造了故事中宋代婦女的形象及記憶。研究這一案例的另一初衷是說明不同文體間的互通以及宋人如何處理作者意圖和記錄可信材料之間的關係。

**關鍵詞：**宋代，女性道德，文本及口述傳播，徐積，莊綽，洪邁

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