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## PU Sungling's Creative Legacy as a Classic Example of Medieval Chinese Literature

### Abstract

*This article discusses Pu Sungling's creative legacy as a classic example of medieval Chinese literature. The novel, more precisely, is the substance of form and should be considered within the framework of general theory. Small genres are more like coincidences, and no matter how interesting it is to study them, they remain limited by their nature without any theoretical consequences. The artistic level of some of them was so high that they deserved a worthy place in the history of Chinese literature.*

**Keywords:** Pu Sungling, Creative Legacy, Classic Example, Chinese Literature, Novel, Framework, General Theory, Nature, Theoretical Consequences, Artistic Level, History of Chinese.

### Introduction

Pu Sungling's "古文" ("classical language") in "Liao Jai's Stories about Miracles" "聊斋志异" continued the tradition of the small epic genre of prose, writing a series of nearly 500 fascinating stories called Supernatural. Completed in 1679, the collection is reminiscent of the first literary storytelling tradition, as it contains a number of Tang period stories that are told in small modifications, embellished to make the characters more realistic and the plots more convincing.

In Pu Sungling's stories, traditional, at the same time, supernatural beings, such as fox spirits who took the form of images of beautiful women, first took on human form in Chinese fiction. Despite the success of these stories, the author soon recognized the limitations of the Guven style for fiction and began to create works in the vernacular. Unbelieving Pu Sungling's response to his colleagues' use of spoken language as a literary medium, he published the longest Chinese novel of this old school under a separate pseudonym (Kao, 1985).

By the early XIX century, China had failed to subdue the West, and after the First Opium War (1839-1842), Chinese port cities were forced to expand ties with foreigners. Over time,

samples of western literature written on various topics have been translated into Chinese. The artistic level of some of them was so high that they deserved a worthy place in the history of Chinese literature (Chang Chun-shu, 2001).

### The Main Findings and Results

Using the term "popular" in relation to traditional medieval Chinese works, it is necessary to distinguish two cases. First, it is the universality and relative prevalence of these works in the printing culture of that period. In this way, popularity can be defined in terms of popularity, which is measured by the number of reprints of a work. Novels about wars, stories about gods and monks, and martial arts were the most famous works of art of the XVI and XIX centuries.

Once a work of art is defined as "popular" in terms of its presence in a publication, it is determined by the division between "high" and "low", or the linguistic division between populism and classicism, as opposed to authorship or internal aesthetics. Scientists often classify them in this light. For example, the novel "Noetic" and "Jinghua Yuan" may have been written by the author to demonstrate his extensive knowledge, but it was also the best-selling book, published

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more than twenty-four times, such as "Gulliver's Travels", because of its depiction of strange places. The Lyao Jai collection was written in classical Chinese, but it was designed to be close to the vernacular, which could be easily understood even by the villagers. This means that most of the masterpieces of Chinese fiction are popular works and have been published more than ten times.

As Franco Moretti points out, for many literary critics, there is a stark difference between the genres of "novel" and "novella". The novel, more precisely, is the substance of form and should be considered within the framework of general theory. Small genres are more like coincidences, and no matter how interesting it is to study them, they remain limited by their nature without any theoretical consequences (Moretti, 2016).

Dozens of genres of traditional Chinese literature, hundreds of novels, major "popular" genres, and commentary on their development are real problems. But the connection between history and fiction can be a useful starting point. At the same time, Chinese history serves as a repertoire of both positive and negative moral models. Therefore, it occupies a central place in Chinese culture.

J. Tsetlin places the reading of Lyao Jai's selected stories under the heading "crossing the border" and identifies three distinct themes that reflect the "live interest" inherent in the literary culture of the later Ming Dynasty. These are: ambiguity, gender, and aspirations (Zeitlin, 1993). J. Tsetlin also focuses on long fairy tales, acknowledging their complex plots and twists, in general.

"Liao Jai's Stories about Miracles" was not popular in Pu Sungling's life. Liao Jai's status in literature was long questioned even after the author's death. The idea that "Liao Jai's Stories about Miracles" was a masterpiece of Chinese literature was little known until the nineteenth century. Due to the complexity of the form and genre of the work, it remained unclear whether "Liao Jai's Stories about Miracles" should be included in the literature. From the beginning of the XX century, the literary status of "Liao Jai's Stories about Miracles" began to decline again.

Chang Chunshu and Chang Xuelun argued that Pu Sungling's work could be a "private alternative way to realize his ambitions as a scientist" (Chang Chun-shu, 2001). It was the practice of collecting and recording anomalies occurring in the field as a way of fighting the forces at the center. It is a description of the official historiographical resistance chiguay literary practice, calling it to struggle. These conflicting concepts, in which the author emphasizes the private, social, political, and ideological implications of genre and subject choice, help reinforce the critical perspective of

this study. "Liao Jai's Stories about Miracles" is a collection of stories about spirits that introduced Pu Sungling's work to the world on a large scale. No other major work on Chinese literature has been so clearly known on the subject that it serves as a specific dashat. Spirits not only embody the main theme and characters of the work, but they also provide a point of view. From this point on, it will also be possible to study fairy tales about ghosts about Chinese fantasies about fantasies.

Fantasy stories make up a large percentage of the play, making them the most widely read and known because they are so common in popular culture. Moreover, in the English versions of the work, Pu Sungling did not approach the works from the point of view of ghosts. Such extreme caution may be partly based on the risk of the unspoken use of chiguay as a primary source material for the study of Chinese religion.

At the same time, many researchers focus on the image of the spirit in the work; They prefer to study fairy tales about ghosts, using terms such as "supernatural", "grotesque" or adopting Western-specific religious concepts such as "fiction" and "supernatural". These terms can in a sense be useful for expressing specific Chinese traditions and ideas through cultural barriers. However, the frequent use of these terms is sometimes misleading, and these shortcomings are reflected in the generalization of the specific cultural functions of Chinese tales about ghosts.

In studies devoted to the study of spirits directly, the relative approach may be of a typological nature due to the need to distinguish spirits from other forms of spirit. Such a typological approach is primarily concerned with thematic content rather than with a descriptive function. Although the typological approach gives a general idea of the distribution of symbolic species, they provide very little information about the relationships between these species. Some commonly accepted labels, such as karmic revenge or criminal rule, place ghosts into an existing belief system that does not take into account the sufficiently orthodox, non-institutional lineage of ghosts.

The typological approach reflects a structural and synchronous view of spirits, more or less, in a constant cosmological background. Emphasis on type rather than cultural function limits the understanding of the complexity of narrative-level expression.

All the typologies, the image of the fox is particularly noteworthy because it is frequently featured in fiction and is deeply rooted in popular belief. The invisible, mysterious face of the supernatural world is clearly seen in "Liao Jai's Stories about Miracles". Although Pu Sungling has paid great attention to the differences between species, it is not his desire to

differentiate and categorize that drives his interest in such details. American scholar R. Huntington's description of foxes and related metaphysical worlds in Chinese literature during the Ming and Ching dynasties, and the "Prose of Foxes and the Last Dynasties", discusses the strange creatures that humans may encounter. R. Huntington writes, "Pune's foxes have more similarities with other supernatural heroes than foxes of any other category ..." (Huntington, 2004). This confession supports our definition of a ghost, which includes a spectrum of spiritual manifestations.

What is clear is that the spirits of ghosts, foxes, fairies, and human-like ghosts, animals, and plants occupy exactly those areas of Pu Sungling's artistic imagination. The ghost is not used as a generalizing word for a collection of different forms of spirits, but as a concept that emphasizes literary and cultural functions that are common to all species. Although the definition of the term can be replaced by supernatural, anomalous, supernatural, or spiritual concepts, the word "ghost" realizes such abstract concepts. The result is a view of the literary image that can be seen as a character, not as an idea.

Drawing vivid, vivid portraits of souls as full-fledged characters in "Liao Jai's Stories about Miracles" shows that Pu Sungling did not view the spirit world as a holistic taxonomy, but as a constantly evolving discourse of human identity and human perception of the world. At the center of the discourse is the image of the soul with multi-layered functions such as the projection of the human psyche, the subject of religious beliefs, literary motives, aesthetic tastes and, finally, the field of cultural and ideological debates.

Another difficulty in communicating with the soul, as presented in "Liao Jai's Stories about Miracles", is to maintain a balance between the roots of the soul and its artistic image in popular belief. In the XVII century, J. Tsetlin used the term "literary ghost" in the study of stories, poems and dramas about ghosts in "The Ghost Hero (Woman)". He is very sensitive to cultural roots, especially the relationship between ghosts and sex, but rejects the notion of belief that underlies the study of literature on spirits (Zeitlin, 1993).

Recent advances in the study of Chinese folk religious teachings show that although texts about them have come to us mainly in literary forms, faith is still relatively important in the study of ghosts. According to K. Bell, beliefs do not precede action or are inseparable from human behavior; they are not mental, cognitive, or linguistic as opposed to physical or active movement. Bell argues that it is more accurate and interesting to read a text not as a representation of a static, coherent situation, but

as a reasonable, proven practice involving the complex separation of ideas (Bell, 2002). The problem of belief in literary notions about ghosts is, in our view, not in the way a person believes or disbelieves in ghosts, but in the process in which perceptions about spirits are formed to perform different cultural functions. It is clear from the Chinese discourse on ghosts that this notion has always been discussed and continues to be the case, and stories about ghosts have been the cause of such debates.

S.K. Yang introduced the term "widespread religion" in opposition to institutional religion. He noted that in traditional Chinese society, the prevalent religion was ubiquitous and always primary. Therefore, the old model of considering the Chinese religion, which first took into account the instructions of the organized religions, and then other forms of religion, was used. It is a mistake to say that the radical expansion of the concept of populist religion means the elimination of all social, economic and ideological differences. In fact, the study of folk religion requires a more acute sense of cultural differences and peculiarities once previously divided social groups have merged into a common cultural sphere (Yang, 1961).

Liao Jai, while telling tales from mythology, Taoist, Buddhist traditions, and folklore, suggests that the "folk religion" is an ideal textual and literary similarity to it as a coherent dialogic process. A ghost is a concept that is derived from preconceived beliefs and customs. He is also a person who is able to work with different moral and religious views. A new perspective is proposed that requires the avoidance of traditional sectarian labels commonly used in the study of chiguay traditions through ghosts (shadow, ghosts).

For Lyao Jai, ghosts are not just a subject to write about, but also a literary tradition that has not yet been inherited, a field of cultural discourse, negotiation and debate that has not yet been continued. Thus, the cultural roots of the soul and the literary roots of Lyao Jai are intertwined.

A broader look at Pu Sungling's work in a cultural-historical context, however, requires special attention to the theme of ghosts. Observing the long life of the ghost, from his transition to chiguai to Lyao Jai's "transition ceremony" and his symbolic death and post-mortem life, Lyao Jai not only inherits and masters the story of wonder and anxiety. Imaginative images, ideas, letters, as well as numerous textual migrations and reincarnations, played an important role in the modern development of later imperial and Chinese ghost discourse. Not only the world of ghosts in "Liao Jai's Stories about Miracles", but also the afterlife, figuratively speaking, the spiritual nature of the book, is the subject of this study.

Emphasizing the social, political and anthropological aspects of literary genres, M. Bakhtin said briefly and succinctly that "each genre has its own direction in life" (Bakhtin, 1982). Both ghosts and stories about ghosts occupy a marginal place in Chinese culture. In addition, they always respond from the center of events and stand up against injustice. Just as ghosts fill in the gaps in the Confucian worldview, Lyao Jai also rises up against cruelty and finds a place in Chinese literature for such work. Although Liao Jai's collection we are studying is one of the Chinese classics, the image of a ghost tells us that the book has a modest beginning. It begins as a *syashou* in the sense of its first "aristocratic conversation" or "secondary discourse". It is as a secondary discourse that Lyao Jai operates at important moments in the history of his perception. Lyao Jai's world of ghosts is full of cultural memory in its own right. Pu Sungling's works are a treasure trove of ancient traditions, images, ideas, concepts and views on Chinese ghost culture.

No writer better than Pu Sungling has been able to portray in a figurative sense the events of the palace period of imperial ghosts and to combine discursive complexity. Although Pu Sungling's "Liao Jai's Stories about Miracles" dates back to the XVII century, it was widely published in the middle XVIII century. Much of the work on ghosts was naturally influenced by "Liao Jai's Stories about Miracles". Thus, Pu Sungling's literary vision of ghosts, his worldview, will be useful for understanding the discourse of ghosts in China. In particular, the discrepancy between the author's general outlook as a Confucian writer and Lyao Jai's superstitious and unconventional outlook, described in Pu Sungling's behind closed doors, shows that he effectively used fairy tales as a way to fully reveal his identity.

The first *chiguay* world is a world that is not hospitable to man. People treat it with reverence for wild animals and other elements of nature. As the two genres developed at the same time, first from "djiguay" (志怪) to "chuanchi", then there was a process of joint humanization of the two. Amazing animal and human hybrids gradually left the genre, and hand-held options such as ghosts and fox spirits became constant characters in later period tales. In very complex stories in the *Chuanchi* style, we see that subtle forces have developed subtle ways of communicating with ghosts through sexual and romantic relationships. These stories are mainly manifestations of sexual and cultural fantasies. The concept of "Subjugation of Ghosts" implies a humane approach to the relationship between ghosts and humans. Hence, the concept of "subjugation of ghosts" itself is based on male fantasy. From a woman's point of view, hand

training is not based on sexual fantasies; it became a process in which the fear was gradually overcome and the woman lost her way and tried to alleviate the fate of the ghost. Hand-training from the point of view of a ghost is no longer based on antagonism, but on empathy, compassion, which allows one to seek out and shape a person.

What happens when a ghost has a personal identification as an anonymous "organless body"? In the *Chuanchi*-style Lyao Jai stories depicting beautiful, lustful female spirits, the personality of the soul is based not only on beautiful and clearly defined physical descriptions, but also on social and family relationships. They often appear in an unknown way, and this indicates that it is not passed down from generation to generation, but, in the end, they are identified by someone, and sometimes in a family relationship. Moreover, the strongest affirmation of ghost identity stems from the protagonist's desire to engage the ghost in sexual intercourse and the ghost's willingness to consent to such sexual intercourse in order to restore his or her private life or be accepted in human society. Hence, the improvement in the appearance of a ghost does not necessarily mean a growing sense of its individuality; it is basically a manifestation of male fantasy. In this way, a beautiful ghost is an additional product of the sexual spirit or a necessary condition for his intimate relationship with the protagonist.

In Lyao Jai's stories, sex can attract the spirit that follows him in society, but love is definitely needed to keep him there. "Beloved girl" ("梅女") in the story, M Sue misses her lover's soul and goes to the cemetery to get her body back. When she opens her lover's grave, she sees that the body is alive. Even though the girl's clothes are rotten, her skin still looks like a living person. Then the girl's body stood up and confessed to Sue: "*I stole the gold of the woman I was serving. I got sick, hid my gold because I had no relatives, and committed suicide. Bekam loved me so much that she buried me along with so many precious stones. The power of gold and precious stones kept my body as it was. If you ask me to go home, then never force me to eat or drink. Otherwise you will irritate and warm my soul*" (Sun Tonghai, 2001).

After that, Sue builds a beautiful house and lives there with the ghost woman. The girl speaks like a living being, laughs, but does not eat, does not rest, avoids meeting other living beings. At the end of the year, Sue gets drunk and forces the ghost wife to drink. The ghost woman fainted and began to bleed from her mouth. At the end of the day, it becomes a corpse again. Sue is deeply remorseful for what she has done and is buried by the king.

The "Beloved Girl" depicts a middle state in which the ghost body is reborn, but it is not endowed with the perfect human blessing. Living with the life-giving power of gold and precious stones, not at the expense of the masculine nature of his body, gives him a certain degree of autonomy - she decides to return to life on his own terms. But the autonomous, non-sexual way of resurrecting a girl seems to have put an end to her social relationship - she can never take on a fully human form. At the end of this story, the author states: "A beautiful body is not good with a strong spirit". Pu Sungling's preference for a "living" ghost over a dead body is in line with his noorthodox worldview. At the same time, it is a worldview that values such false human qualities. The ghost's willingness to give up his imaginary but moving being and accept a limited and dangerous human identity is a shining example of this.

Thus, there is a place for the ghost to have its own personality, i.e. it is a weakening of spiritual power and autonomy. In Lyao Jai's romantic stories, the body of the soul is often depicted in a weak, sickly form.

Despite the centralization of the physical body in Pu Sungling's literary conception of spirits, sexual, family, and social relationships ultimately determine the personality of the soul. In Lyao Jai, the attainment of the individual identity of the ghost requires that his "body without organs" be subject to sexual and social order.

J. Tsetlin points out that fear between ghosts and people like Lian Suo is re-inspired by the Freudian projection. According to the scientist, this projection is further enhanced by the "gender of the soul". This makes the ghost woman "doubly shy and defenseless" in her relationship with the man (Zeitlin, 1993). J. Tsetlin's observations on the migration of fear are astonishing, and this strategy is clearly manifested in the mask of the spirit used in the folk rituals of exoticism.

The concept of "gender equality" in the image of the soul as a woman requires further research in this area. By depicting interpersonal gender inequality, dominant relations in the form of spirits, and their rebirth in the supernatural world, these tales were able to separate animals, demons, and spirits that were once powerful. But the fact that the ghost is female is that the ghost is not an ancestor and should be taken into account in his relationship with people after death. If the return of fear to the female spirit helps the male protagonist to overcome the fear, then the female spirit, which is "twice as shy and defenseless," no longer absorbs the fear, but the desire, equality, and compassion in the man.

By the time Pu Sungling wrote his tales, the place of human beings in the world had already been determined and defined. In the writings of

Djiguay and Chuanchi, there are subtle changes in the energetic relationship between human society and the rest of the world. Many of Liao Jai's stories are not tied to the wild and much rougher species found in Chiguai. The demon in "painted skin" is the norm, not the exception. Most of the ghosts of Liao Jai live in peace with men, seem to be disarmed, domesticated. Clearly, teaching them at home should not be seen as a controversial process, but rather taken as information. Domesticated species of ghosts, fairies, and foxes are portrayed as charmingly beautiful women who captivate men, enter into romantic relationships, seek nothing but love and recognition from men, family, and human society.

However, the relationship between a ghost and a human being after being captured cannot be without the complexities of power and obedience. In Liao Jai's stories, which are constructs of human uniqueness and male preference, women who were once feared are not threatened by ghosts. The spirits of ghosts, animals, and plants, the captured species of fairies, continue their relationship with the protagonists (mostly males), allowing them to see the psychological state of both the characters and their creator. Ghosts and spirits are also not exactly trained to be captured. In fact, in "Liao Jai's Stories about Miracles", Pu Sungling created the most powerful female characters in classical Chinese literature - rude and demanding, even destructive.

A strong supernatural woman is drastically different from a weak and ineffective male scientist. In the story "Crazy Book Worm", the male protagonist Lang Yuychju is so absorbed in book research that he neglects all the necessary, important social skills in life. "He hasn't thought about getting married even though he's in his twenties, but he hopes that one day a beautiful girl will come out of his books. If a guest or relatives come to his house, he does not know how to please them..." (Sun Tonghai, 2001). For men, a formal exam, which is the only way to achieve real success in life, is also a barrier to Lang's integration into society. Socially, he seems to fit nowhere and immerses himself in books that give him hope of finding wealth and the woman of his dreams.

When a beautiful girl emerges from the picture in the cover of Han Stories, Lang's fantasies come true. At first glance, a girl named Jade is so moved by Lang's love and devotion that she appears alive. But on a psychological level, the girl could be an anime-projection of Lang's overly high emotions. They overshadow the ability to think and move, but a jade-colored face is not a symbol of any emotion.

She demonstrates that he is an excellent coach in all aspects of life, from communication to sexual skills. She gives birth to her son Langa

and prepares him for a successful and royal life on one condition. The purpose was to stop her son from reading a book. Lang faces a number of personal tragedies as a result of her refusal to submit, including the disappearance of her wife and her imprisonment. But after a short period of failure, everything ends happily, Lang is freed with the help of a jade-faced spirit and passes a high official exam.

J. Tsetlin's theory of "three waves" more or less describes the chronological process in terms of genre. Therefore, after the publication of "Liao Jai's Stories of Miracles" in the mid-eighteenth century, it gradually broke away from the Chiguai tradition and became a masterpiece of fiction again. His prestige and influence increased in the 19th century. While the assumption that "Liao Jai's Stories of Miracles" was originally accepted as a jigsaw puzzle in the trajectory of this genre transformation is also speculated that it was reconsidered as a XIX century work of art. In order to classify the diversity of Pu Sungling's genre references and literary styles, it meant that, as a genre, whether historical or artistic, the work needed to be modified in terms of text.

Chinese spirit discourse began to face new challenges with the end of the dynastic era and the emergence of various modernization projects in China in the XX century. The practice of writing stories about spirits is likely to have doubled in the twentieth century, when literature was weakened by the crisis of classical traditions and anxiety about ghosts and superstitions arose. A significant rhetorical change in the speech of Chinese ghosts took place in the early twentieth century. Collections of stories about ghosts, such as "聊斋志异", began to be seen not as a secondary discourse in need of protection or promotion, but as a collection of symbolic or symptomatic writings in relation to backward, superstitious, and "feudal" cultural traditions.

## Conclusion

In fact, depicting ghosts, ghosts, fairies, mysterious and strange other worlds is not an easy task, but the poetic value of Pu Sungling's "Liao Jai's Stories about Miracles" famous in medieval Chinese classical literature is a treasure trove of world literature with its metaphorical nature. When it comes to contemporary Chinese literature, of course, Pu Sungling's literary services are acknowledged, and "Liao Ja's Stories about Miracles" is recalled.

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