

Qiu Jin's Imaginary:

Voices in *Jingwei Stone*

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Master of Arts in International and Regional Studies Thesis

April 27, 2023

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## Introduction

Qiu Jin 秋瑾 (1875-1907) is best remembered as a revolutionary and a feminist who played a large part in bringing about the fall of the Qing dynasty. In addition to her revolutionary work, Qiu Jin was a prolific writer who completed hundreds of poems and lyrics in her lifetime, and many of her writings have been translated into English. Her only *tanci* 彈詞, *Jingwei Stone* (*Jingwei shi* 精衛石; 1905-1907)<sup>1</sup> was left unfinished upon her death. Literally translated as “plucking rhymes” or “plucking lyrics,” this form of *tanci* has been referred to as *tanci xiaoshuo* 小說, highlighting its connection with vernacular fiction, and also as “literary *tanci*,” highlighting its written rather than oral form. This study focuses specifically on the written form of *tanci* intended to be read rather than performed.<sup>2</sup> In English language scholarship, *Jingwei Stone* is almost never the focus of a study, merely a portion of broader studies discussing Qiu Jin and her writings, used to support the stance that she was an important revolutionary figure and feminist, but not examined further.

*Jingwei Stone* provides insight to the changing *tanci* style during the late Qing. Qiu Jin employs many *tanci* style elements in her story while also dealing with subject matter that

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<sup>1</sup> The title *Jingwei shi* 精衛石 has multiple English translations. It is commonly translated as *Stones of the Jingwei Bird*, as seen in the scholarship by Wilt Idema and Beata Grant, and Amy Dooling and Kristina Torgeson. Additionally, Li Guo has translated it as *Pebbles of the Jingwei Bird* and Lingzhen Wang has translated it into *Jingwei Stone*. The most literal of the translations, Wang’s translation to *Jingwei Stone*, is the one I use throughout the essay due to its closeness to the original Chinese. In French, it has been translated as *Pierres de l’oiseau Jingwei* by Catherine Gipoulon and in German scholarship Sabine Hieronymus chose to leave the title untranslated. The title itself references the myth of the Jingwei Bird, described by Li Guo as an ancient symbol of feminine heroism that was also evoked in the earlier *tanci Mengying yuan* 夢影緣. Qiu’s choice to invoke the Jingwei myth in her title has been explored in detail. For translated titles, see Idema and Grant, *The Red Brush: Writing Women of Imperial China*, 786; Dooling and Torgeson, *Writing Women in Modern China*, 43; Guo, *Women’s Tanci Fiction in Late Imperial and Early Twentieth-Century China*, 25; Wang, *Personal Matters*, 53; Qiu Jin and Catherine Gipoulon, *Pierre[s] de l’oiseau Jingwei*, 2; Hieronymus, “Frauenbilder,” 25. For exploration into the implications of the title’s reference to Jingwei, see Guo, *Women’s Tanci Fiction in Late Imperial and Early Twentieth-Century China*, 87; Wang, *Personal Matters*, 55; Dooling and Torgeson, *Writing Women in Modern China*, 43.

<sup>2</sup> For explanations of this form of *tanci*, see: Widmer, *The Beauty and the Book*, 14; Hu, “Literary *Tanci*,” 3; Guo, *Women’s Tanci Fiction in Late Imperial and Early Twentieth-Century China*, 1; Zhang, *Interfamily Tanci Writing in Nineteenth-Century China*, xv.

reflected the political and social issues that mattered to her. She combines the female *tanci* style with emerging reform and revolutionary *tanci* styles to advance the *tanci* style as a whole. While studying abroad in Japan in 1905, Qiu Jin started the task of writing *Jingwei Stone*, a project she continued, on and off, until her execution in 1907, by which time she seems only to have written the preface and five full chapters, as well as the beginning of another, though the table of contents lists couplet titles for twenty chapters. There is uncertainty over how many of the chapters of *Jingwei Stone* were published during the late Qing. However, Jun Di 均地 believes that none of the chapters were published during Qiu Jin's lifetime.<sup>3</sup> Jun Di states that only the sixth chapter was published by Xiang Lingzi 湘靈子 in his book *Yuehen* 越恨 (*More Hate*; 1909) two years after her death, meaning the story was unable to fulfill its purpose.<sup>4</sup> The extant manuscripts were collected and edited fifty years after her death and the first full publication of what survived of *Jingwei Stone* can be found in *Qiu Jin shiji* 秋瑾史跡 (*Historical Relics of Qiu Jin*; 1958) followed by a second printing in a complete collection of her writings, *Qiu Jin ji* 秋瑾集 (*Collected Works of Qiu Jin*; 1960).<sup>5</sup> The version of *Jingwei Stone* found in the 1965 reprint of the original *Qiu Jin ji* published in 1960 is the copy used in this thesis and all quotes from the text use the primary rather than the parenthetical text except when specified.

This thesis endeavors to examine the multiple voices Qiu Jin employs throughout the text in order to disseminate her ideas to a broad audience. I argue that Qiu Jin's *tanci* serves as a guidebook for women and men, serving to raise the consciousness of readers and rouse them to take action to transform their social position into that of citizen, and then fulfill their

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<sup>3</sup> Jun Di 均地, "Du 'Jingwei shi' can gao—Jinian Qiu Jin jiu yi 55 zhounian" 讀'精卫石'残稿—纪念秋瑾就义 55 周年 [Reading the Remnant Manuscript of 'Jingwei shi' - Commemorating Qiu Jin's 55th Anniversary], 96.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

responsibility as citizens to save China and found a republic.<sup>6</sup> I argue that Qiu Jin speaks to two audiences and crafts particular messages to each: one is intended for talented readers who will become heroes<sup>7</sup> and take on leadership positions in founding a Chinese republic, and the other is intended for readers who will take on supporting roles in the establishment of this republic and work together with the heroes to save China. These two messages are expressed to the reader through multiple voices throughout the text: the preface, narrative, conservative and supernatural voices offer guidance to the audience as a whole, while the protagonist voices speak to her first audience and the supporting character voices address her second audience. Qiu Jin carefully tailors each voice to her imagined audience, crafting persuasive arguments for her readers that illuminate paths to liberation for themselves and for China.

This thesis will begin with a summary of *Jingwei Stone* and a review of previous scholarship that examines female and revolutionary *tanci* and *Jingwei Stone*. It will then move into an examination of *Jingwei Stone* as a *tanci* and will work to contextualize Qiu Jin's *tanci* within the wider field of *tanci* studies. Following that, I will move into a discussion on the voices in the text, particularly how the voices Qiu Jin crafts reflect how she conceives of herself and the world around her. Finally, I will examine how Qiu Jin separates the six voices that I identify in the text: preface voice, narrative voice, protagonists' voices, supporting characters' voices conservatives' voices, and supernatural voice, respectively.

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<sup>6</sup> Though I use the term reader, I acknowledge that this *tanci* was meant to be both read and listened to and the term reader is used simply to refer to the person accessing the text through whatever means, it is not specific to those accessing the text through the act of reading.

<sup>7</sup> What Qiu Jin means when she employs the term "hero" *ying* 英 is not a discussion within the scope of this essay. An exploration into the theme of heroism in *Jingwei Stone* can be found in the German language work by Sabine Hieronymus, see Hieronymus, "Frauenvorbilder."

### *Jingwei Stone*

*Jingwei Stone* opens with a preface where Qiu Jin crafts a preface voice resembling her own to directly address her audience. It is followed by a table of contents listing twenty chapters, each titled with a couplet summarizing the main events in the chapter. The chapters then begin with an authorial comment, a direct address of the reader by Qiu Jin's authorial narrative voice, a persona imbued with autobiographical information to give the impression of an unmediated author. The opening authorial comment introduces Qiu Jin as an authorial narrator and discusses China's fraught political situation as well as women's inferior status. These authorial comments continue throughout the text, beginning and ending each chapter, and also as insertions into the story for Qiu Jin's authorial narrative voice to comment on its events. Qiu Jin's authorial narrative voice both frames and narrates the main story in the text, a story of the mythical Huaxu Kingdom 華胥國.<sup>8</sup>

The Huaxu story begins with the political background of Huaxu and its descent into ruin due to ill and sleep-addled rulers, and myopic and muddled officials. Near the end of the first chapter, Xiwang mu 西王母 (Queen Mother of the West) is introduced and expresses her anger at the state of affairs in Huaxu. She decides to dispatch the spirits of female and male heroes such as Mulan 木蘭 and Yue Fei 岳飛 to rouse the sleeping country and set things right once more. The story continues at the end of chapter one with the introduction of the Huang 黃 family of Zhejiang.<sup>9</sup> The madam and patriarch of the family are Lady Sang 桑氏 and Prefect Huang 黃

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<sup>8</sup> A country of legend, Huaxu was mentioned in the *Liezi* 列子, a Daoist text, as a land visited by the Yellow Emperor *Huangdi* 黃帝 in a dream and now refers to a dreamland or a utopia.

<sup>9</sup> Literally translating to "yellow," Huang is a common surname that also serves as an abbreviation for the Yellow River 黃河. Allegorical figures representing China, such as the Yellow Emperor, are often surnamed Huang. In *The Travels of Lao Can* 老殘遊記 by Liu E 劉鶚, a novel published in 1907, there is a character surnamed Huang who symbolizes the Yellow River and who is used to represent issues in China. See Harold Shadick's translation of Liu E 劉鶚, *Lao Can Youji* 老殘遊記 [The Travels of Lao Ts'an].

知府。When their daughter, Huang Jurui 黃鞠瑞, the main protagonist of the story, is born in chapter two, her father refuses to see her, staunchly adhering to his belief in the inferiority of women. His conservative perspective is later challenged by his maternal cousin, Yu Zhupo 俞竹坡 (Tutor Yu),<sup>10</sup> a progressive man who makes a strong argument to Prefect Huang for women's education, and is permitted to educate Huang Jurui alongside her older brother, Huang Zuyin 黃祖蔭。When Huang Jurui reaches the age of fourteen, Liang Xiaoyu 梁小玉 (Little Jade), the concubine-born daughter of the Liang family, is introduced and the two girls, recognizing themselves as of the same mind and sympathies, become sworn sisters.

The arrival of Madame Bao 鮑母 and her daughter, Bao Aiqun 鮑愛羣 (Unity),<sup>11</sup> to the Liang household, adds another young female protagonist to the group. Liang Xiaoyu and Bao Aiqun quickly become friends and Liang Xiaoyu is eager to introduce her sworn-sister, Huang Jurui, to her new companion. Bao Aiqun dispatches her maid, Xiurong 秀蓉 (Hibiscus), to the Huang household to inquire after Huang Jurui and finds that Huang Jurui's parents have arranged an unsuitable marriage for her to an unattractive and doltish son of a merchant. In the meantime, two more girls, Zuo Xinghua 左醒華 (Awaken) and Jiang Zhenhua 江振華 (Vitality), join Bao Aiqun and Liang Xiaoyu at the Liang household.<sup>12</sup> Liang Xiaoyu's beating from her older brother and news of Huang Jurui's unhappy engagement prompt the four girls to discuss their collective suffering as women in Huaxu Kingdom. Though they lament the social systems that fetter them, they conclude that nothing can be done, and accept their fate. When Huang Jurui

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<sup>10</sup> Dooling-Torgeson translate this name as "Tutor Yu" and the other "translated" names given for the characters in parenthesis also come from the Dooling-Torgeson translation.

<sup>11</sup> The name Bao Aiqun translates as "love the people" or "love the masses."

<sup>12</sup> Zuo Xinghua and Jiang Zhenhua's names both include the character hua 華 which is also a name for China. The girls' names are a play on "awaken China" and "revitalize China" respectively, further emphasizing Qiu Jin's desire to rouse her compatriots and save China.

arrives at the gathering, she challenges this viewpoint by announcing that she will not accept her arranged marriage, instead planning to escape to Japan and receive an education. Her impassioned speeches convince the four other girls to join her on her adventure and they begin to concoct their plan to run away. Xiurong overhears their planning and decides to aid them, but is unable to join them in Japan. On Madame Bao's birthday, the girls use going to pray at a temple for Guanyin as the pretense for their escape. Xiurong and Yu Zhupo help the girls to reach their boat and depart. The story is cut short once the girls reach Japan and join with a like-minded community abroad.

Based on the chapter titles in the table of contents that summarize the plot of each chapter in a couplet, Qiu Jin planned many more events for her story. In chapter eight, it is suggested that more women's schools would open, and in chapter eleven factories would be opened. A military component arises in chapter thirteen when women with unbound, natural feet would undergo military training and the banner of independence would fly. In chapter sixteen, Qiu Jin planned for there to be a joining together, presumably of the female military with the male army, to organize volunteers, and a single woman, likely Huang Jurui, would demonstrate her heroism. In chapter nineteen, the forces would erect the Han banners and restore their territory. Qiu Jin intended for the *tanci* to end with chapter twenty depicting joyful celebrations of China's recovery and, at last, the establishment of a republic.

### Literature Review

In 1976 Catherine Gipoulon produced a French translation of *Jingwei Stone* along with a commentary on its story and on feminism during the fin-de-siècle period.<sup>13</sup> Despite this French

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<sup>13</sup> Qiu Jin and Catherine Gipoulon, *Pierre[s] de l'oiseau Jingwei*.



translation and various articles and studies in Chinese, there has been little focus on *Jingwei Stone* in English scholarship and there exists no full English translation of the story. The *tanci* genre has seen renewed interest in recent years with multiple books focused on examining the genre in new ways. In both her dissertation and subsequent monograph, Siao-chen Hu examines six important literary *tanci* that helped shape the genre of female produced and consumed *tanci*.<sup>14</sup> Her book gives a full examination of the development of the genre over time, from the Ming through the Qing dynasty. Her extensive study has prompted new scholarship on *tanci* by providing foundational information necessary for close examination of key texts as well as by making space for an exploration of women's contribution to this genre of Chinese prosimetric fiction. Building on early *tanci* scholarship, Ellen Widmer, Guo Li, and Yu Zhang, among others, have all produced monographs looking at specific *tanci* or the question of female production and consumption of traditional vernacular fiction and offer new methodologies in their examinations.<sup>15</sup> Unlike Qiu Jin's unfinished *tanci*, the *tanci* examined in these books were published and became key pieces within the genre, offering looks at differing themes and aspects of interest within the wider study of the *tanci*.

Few English-language studies have examined *Jingwei Stone* specifically, and usually include only a brief comment on the work within a broader examination of Qiu Jin's poetry. Exceptions to this include Lingzhen Wang and Hu Ying who analyze *Jingwei Stone* in concert with a close examination of Qiu Jin's poetry. Wang focuses on Qiu Jin's emotional and bodily

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<sup>14</sup> Hu, "Literary Tanci"; Hu Siao-chen 胡曉真, *Cainü cheye wei mian*.

<sup>15</sup> Preceding the publication of her book, Guo Li also produced an article on women's literary *tanci*. It examined cross dressing in *tanci* and makes a number of comments about Qiu Jin as a crossdresser and crossdressing in *tanci*. See Guo, "The Legacy of Crossdressing in *Tanci*," 592; Widmer, *The Beauty and the Book*; Guo, *Women's Tanci Fiction in Late Imperial and Early Twentieth-Century China*; Zhang, *Interfamily Tanci Writing in Nineteenth-Century China*.

experiences in her examination of Qiu Jin's autobiographical writings.<sup>16</sup> Also treating *Jingwei Stone* as a work of autobiographical fiction, Wang examines the story to gain insight into Qiu Jin's emotional life and to show that its protagonist, Huang Jurui, is an idealized self-recreation. Hu Ying also aims to uncover the emotional side of Qiu Jin in her monograph that takes the form of a biography.<sup>17</sup> Her book examines Qiu Jin in the context of her two sworn sisters and uses a brief examination of *Jingwei Stone* as an autobiographical work to further explore this sisterhood.

While many scholars look at *Jingwei Stone* in concert with Qiu Jin's poetry, because of the importance of verse in it, some scholars have focused solely on the *tanci*. These studies tend to focus on a wider thematic study of modernization or feminism in China, such as examining themes of sisterhood or the "new woman." One such example is Ruihua Shen's dissertation that focuses on the creation of the "new woman" in two prototypes: the nationalist and the individualist.<sup>18</sup> In her dissertation, Shen argues that Qiu Jin's *tanci* is autobiographical fiction and compares Qiu Jin to the story's protagonist, Huang Jurui. Shen argues that Qiu Jin challenged patriarchal power and likewise, in her writing, developed a character who challenged the oppression of women. This idea is at odds with other scholars' notion that women's writing before the New Culture Movement was not transgressive enough to be considered feminist.<sup>19</sup> The themes examined in Shen's study represent only a few of the themes present in this multifaceted story. There is certainly more to be excavated from the text. This is reflected in a

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<sup>16</sup> Wang, *Personal Matters*, 60.

<sup>17</sup> Hu Ying, *Burying Autumn*, 6.

<sup>18</sup> Shen, "New Woman, New Fiction."

<sup>19</sup> In Charlotte Beahan's examination of the Chinese women's press at the turn of the twentieth century, she concludes stating that "Women's rights were henceforth a cause which was indissolubly linked with, yet subordinate to and defined by, the interests of the nation," asserting that the feminist tones in these newspapers worked within the existing patriarchal framework to support the needs of the nation rather than challenging the patriarchal system and thereby were not truly feminist (Beahan, "Feminism and Nationalism in the Chinese Women's Press, 1902-1911," 414).

dissertation by Yun Zhu that examined the theme of sisterhood in four authors' writings, including Qiu Jin's *Jingwei Stone* as a comparison for Shao Zhenhua's 邵振華 1909 novel, *Xiayi jiairen* 俠義佳人 (*Chivalric Beauties*).<sup>20</sup> In her dissertation she notes that “neither *Stones of the Jingwei Bird* nor *Chivalric Beauties* has attracted enough scholarly attention,” suggesting that there is still plenty of room for new scholarship on *Jingwei Stone*.<sup>21</sup> Although Yun Zhu acknowledges that *Jingwei Stone* is a *tanci*, she examines it in comparison to a novel and treats *Jingwei Stone* as a novel as well, leaving many particularities of the *tanci* style in the text unexamined.

Although a full English translation of *Jingwei Stone* has yet to be produced, substantial portions of the story have been translated in anthologies of late-imperial and early modern Chinese women's writing. Amy Dooling and Kristina Torgeson, on the one hand, as well as Wilt Idema and Beata Grant, on the other, have produced the fullest partial translations of *Jingwei Stone* in English. Dooling and Torgeson, in their anthology *Writing Women in Modern China: An Anthology of Women's Literature from the Early Twentieth Century*, translate Qiu Jin's preface, the end of chapter one, all of chapter two, the majority of chapter three, the second half of chapter four, all but the end of chapter five, and the beginning of what exists of chapter six, providing brief summaries of the portions they did not translate, except for the last part of chapter six.<sup>22</sup> This translation has increased access to, and awareness of, Qiu Jin's story, but Dooling and Torgeson do not distinguish the verse sections, completely obscuring the prosimetric nature of the work. Wilt Idema and Beata Grant provide a partial English translation of the first chapter of *Jingwei Stone* in their anthology that does reflect the prosimetric nature of

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<sup>20</sup> Zhu, “The Dynamics of Sisterhood in the Modern Chinese Imaginary, 1890s–1930s.”

<sup>21</sup> Zhu, 49.

<sup>22</sup> Dooling and Torgeson, *Writing Women in Modern China*, 39–78.

the text, as well as translations of some of Qiu Jin's other writings.<sup>23</sup> They intentionally avoided commenting on the writing in their anthology as much as possible in order to allow the excerpts to speak for themselves.<sup>24</sup> Dooling and Torgeson provide an introduction to their translation, but all but the last paragraph of it is about Qiu Jin; in that paragraph they introduce the genre of *tanci* but explain that the prosimetric nature of the original has not been maintained in the translation "in the interest of preserving the flow of the narrative in English."<sup>25</sup> Therefore, these anthologies present the story but refrain from analyzing or examining it.

### *Jingwei Stone and the Tanci Style*

The literary *tanci* style was well developed and quite popular by 1904 when Qiu Jin chose to begin writing a *tanci* of her own. When she began writing her *tanci*, she entered a well-established history of writing in a specific style, with set structures, features, and intended audiences. What Qiu Jin produced was not an oral *tanci* to be performed by a pair of artists, one playing the *pipa* 琵琶 and the other the *sanxian* 三弦, but a piece of writing to be read, perhaps aloud.<sup>26</sup> Written *tanci* was produced as early as the Ming dynasty by both men and women, and it was not until the Qing dynasty that *tanci* became known as women's writing.<sup>27</sup> All *tanci*, whether composed for performance or reading are prosimetric. *Tanci* for performance could be very long and had to be performed in daily sessions, similarly, literary *tanci* could also be quite lengthy. In her dissertation on literary *tanci*, Siao-chen Hu examines six *tanci*, ranging from

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<sup>23</sup> Idema and Grant, *The Red Brush: Writing Women of Imperial China*, 784–96.

<sup>24</sup> Idema and Grant, *The Red Brush: Writing Women of Imperial China*, 8.

<sup>25</sup> Dooling and Torgeson, *Writing Women in Modern China*, 42.

<sup>26</sup> For scholarship examining orally performed *tanci*, see Børdahl, "The Storyteller's Manner in Chinese Storytelling;" Bender, *Plum and Bamboo*.

<sup>27</sup> Hu, "Literary Tanci," 13.

sixteen chapters to three hundred and sixty chapters.<sup>28</sup> Writing such lengthy pieces could take the author decades, and it was not unusual for an author to leave a piece unwritten upon her death and for another to take up the task of finishing it, as seen in the case of Chen Duansheng's 陳端生 *Zaisheng yuan* 再生緣 (*Destiny of Rebirth*; eighteenth century) that was edited and published years later by Hou Zhi 侯芝.<sup>29</sup> As a separate style of *tanci* by and for women became established, certain stylistic features came to distinguish it.

As Li Guo describes it, the genre of literary *tanci* was generally structured into volumes (*zhang* 章) or scrolls (*juan* 卷), and further divided into chapters (*hui* 回), with each chapter often being titled with a parallel couplet summarizing the chapter.<sup>30</sup> These chapters would often begin with an authorial comment before the story was resumed from the previous chapter. This aspect of autobiographical narration, or authorial comments, was initiated by the author of *Yuchuan yuan* 玉釧緣 (*Love-Bond of the Jade Bracelets*; eighteenth century) and the autobiographical narration often serves as a medium for the author to speak to the reader and comment on the writing process or the story itself.<sup>31</sup> The chapter was then written in rhymed seven- or ten-character lines of verse interspersed with prose dialogue, narration, authorial comments, or other additions outside of the verse. Although literary *tanci* was not a highly regarded form of writing, the style necessitated a high level of skill and learning, meaning that authorship of this kind of *tanci* was reserved for the educated.

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<sup>28</sup> *Zaizao tian* consisted of sixteen chapters while *Lihua meng* reached three hundred and sixteen chapters; see Hu, "Literary Tanci," 23.

<sup>29</sup> Widmer, *The Beauty and the Book*, 71.

<sup>30</sup> Guo, *Women's Tanci Fiction in Late Imperial and Early Twentieth-Century China*, 11.

<sup>31</sup> Hu, "Literary Tanci," 21.

Early *tanci* from the Ming dynasty were generally written by men and the topics tended towards the historical.<sup>32</sup> In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, male-authored *tanci* began to emerge once more, but they focused on revolutionary themes and social activism.<sup>33</sup> Throughout the Qing dynasty, however, literary *tanci* was dominated by women who wrote stories specifically aimed at a female audience. Their stories often dealt with romance and some critiqued them for negatively influencing women's morals.<sup>34</sup> Another way in which the genre was thought to be transgressive was how women in the stories were able to evade gender prescriptions that severely restricted the mobility of elite females by having them crossdress and venture out of the women's quarters into society. This use of crossdressing in *tanci* has been examined in English language scholarship.<sup>35</sup> In such stories women could vicariously explore experiences such as becoming magistrates, passing civil exams, and becoming warriors, in addition to falling in love and making friends with like-minded people. Simply depicting women in roles outside of those traditionally expected for them and putting these imaginaries into writing was a powerful act. As Li Guo notes, "*Tanci* authors endorse women's social, moral, and narrative authority through storytelling, construing *tanci* as a source of female empowerment for readers."<sup>36</sup> These Qing dynasty *tanci* authored by women created a new arena for women's experiences to be developed and shared. The imaginaries depicted women engaging in new experiences outside the home and taking on new responsibilities such that these stories could be seen both as transgressive and as empowering for women cloistered at home.

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<sup>32</sup> Hu, 13.

<sup>33</sup> Guo, *Women's Tanci Fiction in Late Imperial and Early Twentieth-Century China*, 10; Hu Ying 胡纓, *Fanyi de chuanshuo*, 201.

<sup>34</sup> Dooling, *Women's Literary Feminism in Twentieth-Century China*, 51.

<sup>35</sup> Li Guo has written extensively on this theme in her 2015 monograph and in dedicated articles. For a specific examination of crossdressing in *tanci*, see Guo, "The Legacy of Crossdressing in *Tanci*."

<sup>36</sup> Guo, *Women's Tanci Fiction in Late Imperial and Early Twentieth-Century China*, 15.

The consensus, however, is that these *tanci* ultimately upheld Confucian traditions and moral standards. Li Guo, for instance, says that “the authorial insertions and narrative portrayals of women espouse the traditional values of female chastity and filial piety,” showing that the female authorial voice that begins the chapter would serve to preserve Confucian morality even while the story depicts women in new roles.<sup>37</sup> Even though some *tanci* depicted women in empowering ways, Ellen Widmer notes that “as often as not, this genre conforms to rather than resists the status quo.”<sup>38</sup> Many forms of *tanci* were produced and while some may have transgressed boundaries, a large portion of *tanci* ultimately reinforced gender norms and Confucian traditions, depicting stories that encouraged women to accept their position in society or including authorial comments that undercut the transgressive imaginary. Where *tanci* transgressed in some respects, Widmer summarizes the underlying message as “substantially comparable with *guixiu* culture, particularly with its normative principle that a woman’s parents-in-law, parents, husbands, and sons be served.”<sup>39</sup> Early women’s *tanci* did not vary greatly in terms of its message from other forms of women’s writing and Widmer’s discussion of Hou Zhi 侯芝 in *Beauty and the Book* illustrates the complicated nature of women’s *tanci* production and the conflicting factors that enabled her *tanci* to be published and gain popularity.

As mentioned above, during the Ming dynasty, *tanci* was primarily male-authored, and male-authored *tanci* began to reemerge during the late Qing. From authorial commentary in the text of, and prefaces to, female *tanci*, we know that “the imagined audiences of these texts are identified by the authors as female readers in the inner chambers.”<sup>40</sup> When Hou Zhi was editing

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<sup>37</sup> Guo, 15.

<sup>38</sup> Widmer, *The Beauty and the Book*, 15.

<sup>39</sup> *Guixiu* 閨秀, also known as talented writers of the inner chambers, refers to educated gentry women from the late imperial period who transformed the inner chamber into a space that prized women’s voices and authorship. See Widmer, 14.

<sup>40</sup> Guo, *Women’s Tanci Fiction in Late Imperial and Early Twentieth-Century China*, 3.

and producing *tanci*, she did so within a community of other women writers with whom she would share her writings, illustrating one way *tanci* were passed around between women.<sup>41</sup> When writing their *tanci*, female authors must have expected the audience to be other women, among whom they could either be “shared collectively or even chanted from person to person,” and circulated in manuscript copies in circles of women.<sup>42</sup> This intended audience both shaped the stories women produced, aiming to appeal to an audience of women, and the comments in their writing where they may out-right state that they hoped other women would enjoy their writing. Amy Dooling quotes the preface to Zhong Xinqing’s 鐘心青 1910 *tanci*, *Ershi shiji nüjie wenmingdeng tanci* 二十世紀女界文明燈彈詞 (*The Torch of Civilization of the Twentieth-century Women’s World*): “people of all classes compete in the art of *tanci*,” showing that by the late Qing *tanci* had gained in popularity, reaching a broad audience that was not limited to women alone.<sup>43</sup>

When Qiu Jin embarked on her own *tanci* writing journey, she employed many of the same techniques and styles that had established women’s *tanci* as a distinct form of writing. Like the *tanci* that came before, Qiu Jin structured *Jingwei Stone* into chapters and titled each chapter with a parallel couplet summarizing its events. Her table of contents lists twenty chapters, shorter than most *tanci*, but longer than others. In her preface, she established her intended audience by stating her reason for using vernacular Chinese: “I desire to allow everyone to understand” 欲使人人能解, yet in chapter one, upon assuming the voice of the authorial narrator, she speaks

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<sup>41</sup> Widmer, *The Beauty and the Book*, 85.

<sup>42</sup> Guo, *Women’s Tanci Fiction in Late Imperial and Early Twentieth-Century China*, 3; Widmer, *The Beauty and the Book*, 85.

<sup>43</sup> Dooling, *Women’s Literary Feminism in Twentieth-Century China*, 51. This *tanci* is also referenced by Li Guo, who dates it at 1911 rather than 1910 and translates the title as *Twentieth Century Tanci: Light of Civilization in the Women’s World* (Guo, *Women’s Tanci Fiction in Late Imperial and Early Twentieth-Century China*, 11).



specifically to a female audience, whom she refers to as her “sisters with ambitions” 有心諸姊妹, tying her writing back into the conventions of women’s *tanci*.<sup>44</sup> By portraying a female-oriented perspective and stating that she imagines her audience to be women in chapter one’s opening authorial comment, Qiu Jin continues the female-oriented element of women’s *tanci* writing. However, her comment in the preface acknowledges that, in spite of the authorial comment’s posturing, she intends her audience to include both men and women, vocalizing the realities of her audience in a way that previous *tanci* had not.

Literary *tanci*’s transformation from a form of writing produced by men into a form of writing assumed to be written by women for women was largely due to the cultivation of a female-oriented perspective in the writing. The authorial comments that laced the chapters were key to developing this perspective. Discussing these semi-autobiographical comments, Yu Zhang states such commentary was a “significant and meaningful effort to establish and reassure women’s authorship as serious writers.”<sup>45</sup> These comments were part of establishing authorship and reassuring women that the writing was produced by a woman. Yu Zhang continues, describing the content of the comments as providing “abundant information about the woman author’s personal life and private monologues” that then enabled the author to “preserve their cultural identity and communicate intimately with the ‘imagined audience.’”<sup>46</sup> This authorial commentary emerged in the early literary *tanci* *Yuchuan yuan*, whose preface is dated 1842,<sup>47</sup> and became an integral part of establishing authorship and connecting with the reader in the genre. These authorial comments showcase this sense of *tanci*’s female authorship, cultivating an

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<sup>44</sup> Qiu Jin 秋瑾, *Qiu Jin ji* 秋瑾集 [Collected Works of Qiu Jin], 122, 125.

<sup>45</sup> Zhang, *Interfamily Tanci Writing in Nineteenth-Century China*, xxiii.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> Although the preface is dated 1842, Hu argues that it was likely produced during the late eighteenth century and, in her footnote, she notes that others believe it was a late Ming work, (Hu, “Literary Tanci,” 21).

image of a female author writing to pass the time and entertain female friends. The comments develop the imagined audience and then write specifically to reach them.

When authors wrote *tanci*, they imagined a specific type of educated female audience. It took skill to produce the prosimetric writing and it also required a certain level of literacy and education due to the quality of language used. Siao-chen Hu states that the writing was “of such refined language that one really needs some education to comprehend them as a reader,” showing that the imagined female audience was an educated group who likely ran in similar circles as the authors themselves.<sup>48</sup> The language used in the *tanci* was accessible to an extent; Li Guo describes it as “very close to [that of] the traditional vernacular novel.”<sup>49</sup> This use of language made *tanci* more accessible and motivated women to use the *tanci* style for their writing. Speaking of Hou Zhi’s opinion of *tanci*, Ellen Widmer writes, “*Tanci* are clearly inferior to poetry, she argues, but when published they endure.”<sup>50</sup> This comment on *tanci*’s inferiority is likely the result of the wider condemnation the *tanci* form received from men. As Yu Zhang summarizes, “Fiction had long been considered threatening to individual morality and to social order in late imperial China, and *tanci* fiction (as well as *tanci* performance) with its romantic themes was seen as particularly dangerous.”<sup>51</sup> Hou Zhi’s comment above highlights that she saw a benefit to *tanci* that she could not find in poetry: fame, and this was desirable enough for her to abandon her poetry in favor of an “inferior” form of writing. *Tanci* were accessible in a way that other pieces of writing were not, and the stories and style made them popular. While the author may expect their unpublished *tanci* to move through educated circles and perhaps be read aloud to friends and family, the rhythmic style and simple writing of published *tanci* lent itself well to

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<sup>48</sup> Hu, “Literary *Tanci*,” 34.

<sup>49</sup> Guo, *Women’s *Tanci* Fiction in Late Imperial and Early Twentieth-Century China*, 11.

<sup>50</sup> Widmer, *The Beauty and the Book*, 84.

<sup>51</sup> Zhang, *Interfamily *Tanci* Writing in Nineteenth-Century China*, xix.

reaching a broad audience. Its origin in oral performance and the cadence and rhythm of the rhymed verses made it an accessible form of writing for the literate and illiterate alike. Amy Dooling has translated a description of how female *tanci* were consumed that appears in Zhong Xinqing's preface mentioned above, "they gather in crowds, laughing and talking as they listen; they sing at the beginning but during the silences there is none who is loud. And when it is over, they dwell upon it with great relish, describing it over and over with words and gestures."<sup>52</sup>

Other comments on *tanci* also highlight the performative aspect even of written *tanci*. Zhong Xinqing's preface shows one way *tanci* was enjoyed in the early twentieth century and emphasizes the oral and performative aspects of the text. By 1910, *tanci* could be shared between large groups and, when read aloud, the rhythmic elements of the text enabled the listeners to engage with the text and the style of writing made the text memorable for listeners.

In 1905, the audience Qiu Jin expected to reach with her *tanci* likely more closely resembled Zhong Xinqing's audience than Hou Zhi's. In her preface, she states her intention in choosing *tanci* as the mode of relaying her message: "I composed this as *tanci* and I wrote it using common words, because I desire to allow everyone to understand" 余也譜以彈詞，寫以俗語，欲使人人能解。<sup>53</sup> Qiu Jin believed that this form of writing would be accessible to everyone, literate and illiterate, and she made a concerted effort to use the vernacular in order to increase access further. Discussing her structure, she says: "The episodes are elaborated on one by one, and in exhaustively describing the bad habits, suffering, and humiliation of women's society, I desire the reader to be startled" 逐層演出，并盡寫女子社會之惡習及痛苦恥辱，欲使讀者觸目驚心。<sup>54</sup> She aimed to capitalize on the oral component of *tanci*, and in her

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<sup>52</sup> Dooling, *Women's Literary Feminism in Twentieth-Century China*, 51.

<sup>53</sup> Qiu Jin 秋瑾, *Qiu Jin ji* 秋瑾集 [Collected Works of Qiu Jin], 122.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

exhaustive descriptions and repetition of events she shows she was writing for a listening audience just as much as a reading audience. This contrasts with, and even contradicts the authorial comment that begins chapter one, in which she states she is passing the time writing her *tanci* for her sisters to comment on and evaluate under the lamplight after drinking tea 以供有心諸姊妹，茶餘燈下一評之。<sup>55</sup> Qiu Jin was a vocal advocate of speeches because of their ability to reach a wide audience and her embrace of oral modes of communication is echoed in her choice of *tanci* as a written medium for spreading her message.

By 1910, *tanci* was popular with people of all classes, according to Zhong Xinqing's preface, and this likely was due in large part to the accessibility of the language.<sup>56</sup> Qiu Jin also used vernacular, and in doing so works to further this trend in *tanci* writing and presaged the wider movement to adopt vernacular Chinese as a standard that emerged around the May Fourth Movement in the early twentieth century. It is well documented that Lu Xun 魯迅 (1881-1936), the father of modern Chinese literature and one of the most influential figures advocating for a shift in the Chinese language, was acquainted with Qiu Jin, having attended one of her impassioned speeches while they were both studying abroad in Japan. In a discussion of Qiu Jin's impact on Lu Xun, Eileen Cheng states that following Qiu Jin's execution in 1907 after the failed Anhui rebellion, "Lu Xun participated in several memorials commemorating Qiu Jin and paid tribute to her in his short story 'Medicine.'"<sup>57</sup>

In addition to using vernacular in her *tanci*, Qiu Jin revolutionized that vernacular by including neologisms emerging from Japanese translations of western works to communicate her ideas about citizenship, the nation state, and women's rights. For example, Qiu Jin used *nüquan*

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<sup>55</sup> Qiu Jin 秋瑾, 125.

<sup>56</sup> Dooling, *Women's Literary Feminism in Twentieth-Century China*, 51.

<sup>57</sup> Cheng, *Literary Remains*, 85.

女權 to refer to women's rights, a term that only emerged in China around 1900, and that by 1902 became a slogan in conversations around women's liberation and women's rights.<sup>58</sup> Qiu Jin's use of neologisms in a text she specifically tried to make accessible highlights another way she embraced the *tanci* style while also pushing forward new ways of employing it so as to support her own goals. The mix of accessible language and new forms of language emphasize Qiu Jin's combination of traditional *tanci* style with the needs of a changing China to produce a new form of *tanci*.

Qiu Jin thus co-opts traditional features to push forward her own agenda and make her message palatable to a wide-ranging audience. In her choice of *tanci* as the medium for a revolutionary message about women's rights and a Chinese republic, we see a shift in how *tanci* is employed during the late Qing. The many political and technological changes in China altered the way that people engaged with *tanci*, and *Jingwei Stone* highlights one way that a *tanci* author co-opted and helped to advance *tanci* style. New forms of printing and publishing technology in the late Qing meant that *tanci* were easier to publish and print, making the hand copied versions of *tanci* unnecessary. Qiu Jin saw the potential in new printing technologies, and in 1906 she founded *Zhongguo nübao* 中國女報 (China Women's Newspaper).<sup>59</sup> In an examination of Qiu Jin's timeline in writing *Jingwei Stone*, Jun Di suggests that her plans to produce a newspaper prompted Qiu Jin to resume writing her *tanci* with the aim of serializing it and publishing it in her newspaper.<sup>60</sup> Her stated intentions in the preface and the short length of the *tanci* at only

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<sup>58</sup> Sudo, "Concepts of Women's Rights in Modern China," 17.

<sup>59</sup> Qiu Jin only managed to produce two issues of her newspaper before her funding sources ran dry. The first she published in 1906 and the second in early 1907, but in neither did she publish any part of *Jingwei Stone*. See Guo Yanli 郭延礼, *Qiu Jin nianpu* 秋瑾年譜 [Yearly Chronology of Qiu Jin], 86.

<sup>60</sup> Jun Di, "Du 'Jingwei shi' can gao, 98.

twenty chapters certainly suggest that Qiu Jin intended to make use of new printing technologies to spread her message as widely as possible and intended to print her writing in her newspaper.

Qiu Jin also made use of the *tanci* style to discuss new topics of revolution and the Chinese nation. These matters had not traditionally been spoken of in *tanci*, but after the turn of the twentieth century, wider conversations regarding contemporary political matters and concerns began to seep into *tanci*. Li Guo lists multiple *tanci* produced by progressive men in the early twentieth century that center on social activism and political and cultural movements for women: *Faguo nüyingxiong tanci* 法國女英雄彈詞 (*Tale of a French Woman Hero*; 1904) by Yu Chenglai 俞承萊, *Yanzhixue* 胭脂血 (*Rouge Blood*; 1908) by Zhou Shoujuan 周瘦鵑, the previously mentioned *Ershi shiji nüjie wenmingdeng tanci*, and a collection by Cheng Zhanlu 程瞻庐 entitled *Tongxinzhi* 同心樞 (*Heartlocked Cape Jasmine*; 1915).<sup>61</sup> By taking up issues of citizenship and women's rights, Qiu Jin adds to the wider conversations in Chinese politics regarding the state of the country and the "woman question" and furthers the development of *tanci* that engage with these themes. The question of women's citizenship that Qiu Jin engages with in her *tanci* is a theme that continues after her death and the establishment of the Republic of China, as seen in *Fengliu zuiren* 風流罪人 (*The Valiant and the Culprit*; 1926), a *tanci* that grapples with Chinese citizenship and the new roles women were entering and negotiating.<sup>62</sup> Qiu Jin's use of *tanci* to engage with these political questions presages later *tanci* that continued to grapple with these issues and shows her contribution to the evolution of the *tanci* form.

Unlike many *tanci* writers before her whose work is unsigned or signed with a pseudonym that cannot be traced to the author, Qiu Jin signed her *tanci* with a pseudonym that could be

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<sup>61</sup> Guo, *Women's Tanci Fiction in Late Imperial and Early Twentieth-Century China*, 11.

<sup>62</sup> Guo, 161.

traced to her, there is other evidence to support her as the author of *Jingwei Stone*. Her use of a pseudonym (penname), *Hanxia nüer* 漢俠女兒 (Swordswoman of the Han race), however, also situates her within the sphere of other *tanci* writers who did sign their works using pseudonyms.<sup>63</sup> Because authorship is difficult to determine in earlier *tanci* works, Siao-chen Hu writes that although it is certain that “*Zaisheng yuan* is not the pioneer of the female literary *tanci*,” it is “the earliest literary *tanci* work we know to have been written by a woman.”<sup>64</sup> In the *tanci Tianyuhua* 天雨花 (*The Heavens Rain Flowers*; preface dated 1651), the author is claimed to be Tao Zhenhuai 陶貞懷, but Maram Epstein’s investigations into its authorship show that there is no historical record to support the existence of such a person, suggesting that this name is a pseudonym.<sup>65</sup> Dating and ascertaining authorship prove to be difficult tasks with many early *tanci* and the assertion of authorship is a complicated question.

Many great works of literature were published without the author’s real name, and for women authors, further questions about propriety also affected their decision about whether to attach their name to their works. Often, the author of a non-authorial preface will state the name of the author and/or attribute authorship to a family member or a friend, but this information can be difficult to support without further evidence, as in the case of *Xianü qunying shi* 俠女群英史 (*A History of Women Warriors*; 1905).<sup>66</sup> Qiu Jin’s choice to publish under a penname rather than her own name ties into these wider conversations on authorship and voice in the study of *tanci*. The development of authorial comments that assume a female perspective and imagine a female

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<sup>63</sup> *Hanxia nüer* is translated as “Swordswoman of the Han Race” by Hu Ying in *Burying Autumn* (97) and translated as “Chivalric Daughter of the Han Race” by Yun Zhu, “The Dynamics of Sisterhood in the Modern Chinese Imaginary, 1890s–1930s,” 52. The pseudonym appears at the very beginning of the *tanci*’s publication in Qiu Jin 秋瑾, Qiu Jin ji 秋瑾集 [Collected Works of Qiu Jin], 121.

<sup>64</sup> Hu, “Literary Tanci,” 22.

<sup>65</sup> Although the preface is dated 1651, Maram Epstein (“Patrimonial Bonds,” 2) argues for a production date no earlier than 1804.

<sup>66</sup> Guo, *Women’s Tanci Fiction in Late Imperial and Early Twentieth-Century China*, 141.

audience were integral in establishing *tanci* as women's writing and strengthening women's claims to authorship in a style where authorship was difficult to discern.

*Jingwei Stone* represents Qiu Jin's contribution to the *tanci* style and showcases classic elements of female *tanci* while also contributing to *tanci*'s continued evolution as a literary style. As Lingzhen Wang puts it, Qiu Jin's *tanci* is "in keeping with both new types of *tanci* narrative developed in the late Qing, namely female *tanci* and reform *tanci*."<sup>67</sup> Qiu Jin continues to deal with the theme of women's issues, but with a focus on revolutionary rather than romantic themes. She writes for a wide audience but employs authorial comments to produce a female-oriented perspective that posits women as the ideal audience. By balancing traditional *tanci* styles with a modern context, *Jingwei Stone* serves as a precursor to political and social issues that followed. She co-opted this writing style and its features for her own purposes and wrote it in a new way, modernizing the *tanci* style.

### ***Jingwei Stone* as a Multi-Voiced Text**

In literary *tanci*, each chapter is usually preceded by a brief passage of text written in the voice of the author and these authorial comments are also inserted throughout the text. This authorial commentary lends this *tanci* style an autobiographical air. Across the chapters, these authorial comments describe events in the "author's" life and, in doing so, they cultivate a female-oriented perspective.<sup>68</sup> The authorial comments are why many English language scholars refer to literary *tanci* as an autobiographical or semi-autobiographical form of writing. It is the autobiographical information in the comments that make the text relatable to its imagined female

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<sup>67</sup> Wang, *Personal Matters*, 54.

<sup>68</sup> Guo, *Women's Tanci Fiction in Late Imperial and Early Twentieth-Century China*, 91.



audience and that mediate the connection between the author and audience. The information these authorial comments present seems to offer great insight into the author and their experiences, but it is important to remember that these authorial comments are cultivated to present a particular image of the author for the imagined audience.

Utilizing authorial comments opens a line of communication between the author and audience, and allows the author to shape the audience's interaction with the text. The author controls how much information to share and the "biography" that the authorial comments paint may not offer a true or full picture of the author, rather the comments may depict a persona or perspective of the author that is tailored to suit the aims and needs of the *tanci*. It is often difficult to discern between the author and the persona of the author projected or implied in the text. In the case of Hou Zhi, for instance, Widmer has written that there is "ambiguity about where biographical fact ends and rhetorical pose begins."<sup>69</sup> While the truth of the biographical information presented may be disputed, these autobiographical comments provide insight into the author's sense of "self," the constructed "self" they chose to project to the world.<sup>70</sup> When discussing autobiography and *Jingwei Stone*, Ruihua Shen argues that *Jingwei Stone* is "the earliest piece of a modern woman's fictional writing about the self."<sup>71</sup> Her emphasis on the self mirrors Siao-chen Hu's note that the autobiographical aspect of literary *tanci* can offer value in its insight into women's "recognition and expression of the abstract concept of 'self'" 她們對「自我」這一抽象概念的認知與表達。<sup>72</sup> Each form of voice the author creates in her *tanci*, whether through authorial comments, narrative voice, or the voice of characters, illuminates different aspects of the author's conception of the "self." Where autobiographical writing was

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<sup>69</sup> Widmer, *The Beauty and the Book*, 89.

<sup>70</sup> Robertson, "Changing the Subject," 176.

<sup>71</sup> Shen, "New Woman, New Fiction," 12.

<sup>72</sup> Hu Siao-chen 胡曉真, *Cainü cheye wei mian*, 90.

once considered solely to be in men's domain, the inclusion of autobiography in the *tanci* form has a tremendous impact on the way the style evolved to be a form of women's writing.<sup>73</sup>

Qiu Jin's *tanci* has a significant autobiographical component. The authorial comments beginning each chapter discuss political circumstances similar to Qiu Jin's and the story Qiu Jin develops closely mirrors her own path to emancipation. Moreover, the creative element of the storytelling allows Qiu Jin to expand on the autobiographical aspects of her text and create an imaginary that alters her own biographical data into a fictional account. In a discussion of autobiography regarding the May Fourth Movement, Janet Ng links autobiographical writing of that time with nation building: "Self-writing is then a redesigning of the self and, even more, the world. The writing of autobiography means a self-consciousness of the significance of one's existence, role, and responsibility in society."<sup>74</sup> Like May Fourth writers, Qiu Jin's writing also exists in the context of shifting conceptions regarding China's status on a global scale and the relation between the individual and the nation. Her writing also exhibits this self-consciousness and recognition of responsibility to society; similarly, it engages in the work of redesigning the self and nation building. In *Jingwei Stone*, Qiu Jin combines the autobiographical with the imaginary to build a Chinese republic and reconceive her own sense of self.

The voices Qiu Jin develops in her *tanci* each offer insight into how she conceives of her "self," as well as her imagined audience. My understanding of the way self is employed borrows from Maureen Robertson, who, writing of Chinese women's poetry, states: "The term 'self' (like its more ideologically colored alternative, 'individual') refers to the commonly experienced sense, at any given moment, of a unitary presence and identity, an 'unconsciously structured illusion of plentitude.' 'Self' can be understood as a figment or reification of consciousness present to itself,

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<sup>73</sup> Hu Siao-chen, *Cainü cheye wei mian*, 89.

<sup>74</sup> Ng, *The Experience of Modernity*, 19.

an overarching idea that consciousness has about consciousness.”<sup>75</sup> With this understanding of self, we can see how Qiu Jin has imbued her *tanci* with this “self” through her autobiographical writing. At each level, Qiu Jin uncovers an aspect of herself for the audience, offering her “self” through a variety of different voices in the text. These voices relate to the “self” with different degrees of closeness, but I argue that all of the voices Qiu Jin constructs in her *tanci* represent parts of her “self,” given the depth of autobiography and self-writing in *Jingwei Stone*. Through an examination of the voices Qiu Jin constructs throughout the text, we may be able to gain insight into Qiu Jin’s conception of herself in addition to the messages she attempted to develop for her readers. Robertson uses the terms “authorial subject” and “textual subject” to differentiate between levels of subjectivity and voice in *shi* poetry in order to shed light on the degree of mediation between the author as a person and the implied author as narrator in the text.<sup>76</sup> These terms will be employed to distinguish between Qiu Jin as an author crafting a specific message in her writing to address her imagined audience and the Qiu Jin that her audience is in contact with through the voices within the text.

Three of the voices Qiu Jin constructs are imbued with autobiographical information such that they imply a higher degree of relation to Qiu Jin as an authorial subject for the reader. She presents the preface voice as herself speaking directly to the reader. She constructs the narrative voice in the authorial comments as a persona of the authorial subject; and she imbues the fictional protagonist Huang Jurui’s voice with many of her own experiences, such that all three of these voices have a close degree of relation to her authorial subject. While she also writes the voices of other fictional characters so as to offer insight into her own views to an extent, the lack of direct autobiographical information embodied in them suggest they offer more insight into

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<sup>75</sup> Robertson, “Changing the Subject,” 176.

<sup>76</sup> Robertson, “Changing the Subject,” 177.

Qiu Jin's understanding of the world around her and her own world building in her imaginary than about her "self."

It is implied that each voice in the text is presented by Qiu Jin and ultimately mediated through her authorial subject, either through the perspective of a self-referential narrator, or an external narrator enunciating the voices of her fictional characters. This style, whereby the author directly addresses their audience, was popular during the late Qing, when it was found in styles such as *xiaoshuo* fiction. In an examination of narrative voice in late Qing fiction, Patrick Hanan identified its various forms: the personalized storyteller, the virtual author, the minimal narrator, and the involved author.<sup>77</sup> Subsequently, Yu Zhang considered the authorial insertions in *tanci* in terms of Hanan's conception of the "involved author." Yu Zhang quotes Patrick Hanan, extending the conception of the "involved author," writing: "Hanan has proposed the concept of the 'involved narrator.' He argues that late Qing authors had gradually become aware of their 'narrating self,' a development from the 'traditional omniscient storyteller to the more self-restricted narrator.'" <sup>78</sup> Describing the involved author, Hanan states: "I mean not merely that the narrator openly professes to be the author, but that the writing situation itself is dramatized." <sup>79</sup> In the first example he gives to illustrate this form of narrator, Hanan finds that this "involved author," "himself appears at the beginning," inserting himself into the text.<sup>80</sup> In another example Hanan offers, the author speaks personally and discusses the writing process directly with his audience. This form of narration is similar to that of the authorial comments in literary *tanci*.

Qiu Jin's use of autobiographical content throughout her *tanci* show that she also exhibited this awareness of her "narrating self" and inserted herself into her text, crafting voices

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<sup>77</sup> Hanan, *Chinese Fiction of the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries*, 10-29.

<sup>78</sup> Zhang, *Interfamily Tanci Writing in Nineteenth-Century China*, xxiii.

<sup>79</sup> Hanan, *Chinese Fiction of the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries*, 22.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

that hint back to herself even when presenting a separate voice, as in the fictional characters. The use of voice in the text is an act of narrative representation and voice is used as a narrating instance representing other narrating instances, all stacked upon one another to represent Qiu Jin as a textual subject narrating the text as a whole. In her preface and narrative voices, Qiu Jin inserts herself into the text as a textual subject commenting on the story she is narrating, assuming the position of both character-bound narrator who is a figure in the text and external narrator relaying to the reader the voices in the story she is narrating. As Mieke Bal puts it, “this narrating subject is always a ‘first-person.’ In fact, the term ‘third-person narrator’ is absurd.”<sup>81</sup> Even when the Huaxu story is being presented, the implied narrator is always Qiu Jin, though her presence is less intrusive in these instances. Each voice Qiu Jin presents in the text is ultimately presented by her as the narrator, though the credibility of her statements is dependent on which narrative stance she takes. Didier Coste and Wlad Godzich explain the relation between author, narrator, and characters as such: “The author would be responsible for the whole text, using an intermediate specialized instance—the narrator—to tell (within the text), whereas characters are elements of content in the presented world whose role is to be and to act.”<sup>82</sup> This essay assumes Qiu Jin as a textual subject to be the narrating voice in the text, and as an authorial subject to be the creator of the text itself and the voices therein.

The following analysis attempts to dissect the voices and stories throughout the text, differentiating between the types of voice and the stories they narrate. I will argue that Qiu Jin imagined her readers to consist of two audiences: the first is an audience of female heroes or those with leadership potential; the second is everyone else, both men and women. As discussed previously, Qiu Jin aimed to reach as wide ranging an audience as possible and intentionally

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<sup>81</sup> Bal, *Narratology*, 13.

<sup>82</sup> Coste and Godzich, *Narrative as Communication*, 166.

utilized the *tanci* style in order to reach her two imagined audiences. Additionally, I argue that her *tanci* served as a handbook to citizenship for both her audiences, her first message advising those of her readers with means and talent who would take leadership roles in establishing a Chinese republic on the steps they must take in order to reach that goal, and her second message directed at the second audience guiding them through the process of stepping up to their role as citizens in the new Chinese republic and the role they will play supporting the heroes who found it.

The voice that Qiu Jin develops for the preface writer and the narrator are designed to help spread her message to both audiences. They develop stories that apply to both audiences and establish the shared goals of liberation, self-reliance, and a desire for a Chinese republic. The fictional character voices Qiu Jin creates offer positive or negative examples, with the former speaking to her two audiences respectively, offering each audience an example of how to apply her guidance and realize the goal of Chinese liberation. The protagonist voices develop Qiu Jin's first message, the one directed to potential heroes and leaders, while her second message is articulated through the voice of the supporting characters, those who do not embark on the adventure themselves, but who are nevertheless integral to its success. The conservative voices serve to increase the persuasive potential of the previous two voices by supplying the arguments Qiu Jin imagined her audience might use to discount her guidance. The supernatural voice of the Xiwang mu character acts as a fictional device that helps to reduce and explain some of the more complicated aspects of Qiu Jin's messages, such as questions of agency.

Qiu Jin created each of these voices to persuade her imagined audience, and the degree of autobiographical information she imbues into the voices correlates with the degree of mediation between her authorial subject and textual subject. While all of the voices are narrated by Qiu Jin

as a textual subject, her presence in the text varies depending on the voice she utilizes. When speaking to her audience as a whole, she generally assumes a voice that implies direct address from her authorial subject, but when showing her reader how her advice can be practiced using her fictional characters, the degree of mediation is higher, further helping immerse the reader in her imaginary. The two messages she articulates through the voices she employs serve to support her understanding of herself as a citizen with a responsibility to China and her beliefs about what citizenship entails for Chinese women and men.

### **Preface Voice**

The modern reader first approaches the text through the preface, a piece of writing Qiu Jin originally appended to the end of chapter five and likely wrote afterwards, but that appears at the beginning of the modern version. In this part of the text, the reader has the clearest sense of connecting directly with the author. The voice Qiu Jin uses in the preface gives a sense of her authorial subject, discussing the text with the reader. Only in the preface does Qiu Jin use the first person pronoun *yu* 余, a self-referential classical Chinese term meaning “I” that points to the self as the speaker. In no other part of the text is the degree of mediation between the preface voice and Qiu Jin as an authorial subject so small. However, while the language in the preface may suggest that it is providing the reader with Qiu Jin’s unmediated thoughts, the preface serves to create a voice within the text that tells a story of her reasons for writing *Jingwei Stone*, and her views on the political situation in China and the suffering Chinese women face. The preface voice may at first seem to offer the reader significant insight into Qiu Jin’s personal thoughts, but the format of the printed text intimates the various forms of mediation between Qiu Jin as an

authorial subject and as a textual subject, highlighting the fact that it is presenting a crafted message rather than a freely spoken one.

Qiu Jin begins the preface speaking through the preface voice, situating herself in a transitional period for China as one who has taken advantage of new opportunities. Written in prose, her preface voice begins: “Finding myself in this transitional era, I avail myself of a ray of civilization’s light to cast off limits” 余也處此過度時代，趁文明一線之曙光，擺脫範圍。<sup>83</sup> Here, she situates herself temporally and establishes her position before moving on to discuss the position of the women around her. Unlike her preface voice, who has made use of the new opportunities of civilization, the women around her are still “ignorant and unaware” 不識不知。<sup>84</sup> In the first few lines, her preface voice sets Qiu Jin apart from those the voice wants to address. In the process, she also uses the preface voice to situate herself within the wider context of reform and revolutionary voices present during the late Qing. Lingzhen Wang comments on the preface saying: “Like other reformists and revolutionaries of the time, Qiu Jin also presented herself as one of the few foreknowers or saviors who knew what to do for women and the nation—and who knew how to do it.”<sup>85</sup> In this opening sentence of the preface, Qiu Jin used the preface voice to present her understanding of herself vis-à-vis other revolutionaries and Chinese people more generally.

Qiu Jin’s voice in the preface presents Chinese women as willing slaves who ignorantly serve men. The picture of Chinese women she paints is one where women “serve as men’s playthings, their slaves, and have no sense of shame” 作男子之玩物、奴隸而不知恥，<sup>86</sup> a

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<sup>83</sup> Qiu Jin 秋瑾, *Qiu Jin ji* 秋瑾集 [Collected Works of Qiu Jin], 121.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Wang, *Personal Matters*, 55.

<sup>86</sup> Qiu Jin 秋瑾, *Qiu Jin ji* 秋瑾集 [Collected Works of Qiu Jin], 121.



charge few readers would likely be pleased to have directed at them. Having situated her female compatriots in the category of ignorant slaves, her preface voice then claims an epiphany and offers women a new category into which to place themselves. Here, the preface voice introduces the category of women as heroes and offers advice to aid women in their transition from slave to heroine. Describing potential heroines, Qiu Jin's preface voice offers the reader insight as to why they have not yet actualized into their position as heroes: "They suffer from the complete lack of knowledge, and their experience is not extensive" 苦於知識毫無，見聞未廣, but she is quick to offer a solution: "Therefore, I have composed my message as a *tanci* and I wrote it using common words, because I desire to allow everyone to understand, and help them ascend from darkness into civilization" 故余也譜以彈詞，寫以俗語，欲使人人能解，由黑闇而登文明。<sup>87</sup> According to the preface voice, the *tanci* offers the information these women need in a form that is accessible to them. *Jingwei Stone* serves only as a guide, however, not the actual means of transformation; the preface voice is clear that the onus is on the readers to "energetically rouse themselves" 奮然自振.<sup>88</sup> Having outlined women's state in China, described categories of women, and the role of the *tanci* as the guide to help larger contingent of women transition to the smaller, she then puts the agency into the reader's hands.

In a final lyric written to fit the "reformed" tune matrix of "Hangong chun" 漢宮春, her preface voice shifts to a discussion of the state of China and how her compatriots relate to the state. Having developed a narrative of women as slaves to men, the preface voice then turns to describe all Han Chinese people as slaves as well. The scope changes, but the narrative remains the same: "they willingly prostrate before others" 甘屈伏他人胯下, but "with some luck, loyal

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<sup>87</sup> Qiu Jin, 122.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

and righteous heroes will be born again” 幸得重生忠義士, and they will “bring to order the old heaven and earth anew” 從頭收拾舊乾坤.<sup>89</sup> Here, however, the agency for transformation of China is not placed in the people’s hands, but in the hands of luck and Heaven. Qiu Jin ends the poem stating that “heaven will cause women to bring peace and stability to the ‘divine’ capital” 天教紅粉定神京.<sup>90</sup> While the table of contents depicts the protagonists succeeding in establishing a republic in China, there is a supernatural aspect to the story that is hinted at by the notion of heaven and luck and the mention of the “Divine” Capital in this final comment by the preface voice. The guidance in the *tanci* is limited to consciousness raising and rousing the audience to action, how the action is put into practice to meet Qiu Jin’s goal of saving China by founding a republic, on the other hand, is left up to Xiwang mu as the supernatural force. Though chapter two hints that Huang Jurui and Liang Xiaoyu are reincarnations of heroic spirits, the extent of the supernatural forces impact on the story is unknown in what is extant.

In the published version of the preface, additions and deletions that one scholar attributes to someone other than Qiu Jin are enclosed in parentheses and smaller characters, highlighting the potential of two voices outside of Qiu Jin’s own to impact the textual subject. The inclusion of parentheses is a stark reminder of the editor’s voice, an invisible voice that underpins the entire published text. Qiu Jin’s manuscripts did not contain such parentheses, nor were they formatted for print and in a publishable state.<sup>91</sup> The published, typeset version of *Jingwei Stone* presented to readers is one which has already been mediated through editorial intervention.<sup>92</sup> Throughout the text, the editorial voice comes through in the placement of punctuation and

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Images of the original manuscripts can be found in Qiu Jin 秋瑾, *Qiu Jin Shiji* 秋瑾史跡 [Historical Relics of Qiu Jin].

<sup>92</sup> See editorial note 1 in Qiu Jin 秋瑾, *Qiu Jin ji* 秋瑾集 [Collected Works of Qiu Jin], 123.

parenthetical suggestions that a word may be missing. This instance of voice brings to light the many voices that mediate the manuscripts whenever *Jingwei Stone* is published and translated; a new voice overlays Qiu Jin's own with each new hand that touches the text.<sup>93</sup> During the editing process, two voices were identified by the editors: one they think was Qiu Jin's voice, and one they think may have come from a separate editor who found the manuscripts at an earlier time.<sup>94</sup> The editors split these two voices and chose to present one as the primary version of the preface and the other as an alternative encased in parenthesis, leaving both in the text so the reader could judge which voice in the text best conveyed Qiu Jin's authorial subject.

While it is impossible, given available resources, to determine whether the changes to the preface come from Qiu Jin or not, there are clear differences in the two voices despite the parenthetical voice also utilizing the first-person pronoun *yu*. The parenthetical voice generally uses language that is stronger and more powerful than the preface voice of the main text. Where the preface voice says, "they [women] are subjected to ten thousand levels of suppression, yet they are unaware of the pain. They are subjected to maltreatment and humiliation and still they have no sense of shame" 受萬重之壓制而不知痛，受凌虐折辱而不知羞，the parenthetical voice expands that text into: "they are subjected to ten thousand levels of suppression, subjected to every possible form of maltreatment and humiliation, but do not know to harbor resentment and be roused to indignation, to escape from the abyss of suffering" 受萬鈞之壓制，受百般之凌虐折辱，而不知銜恨憤激脫離苦海。<sup>95</sup> Although both voices put forth similar messages, reading the preface through the parenthetical voice heightens the sense of suffering and urgency.

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<sup>93</sup> Examining the textual variants in Tao Yuanming's poetry, Xiaofei Tian's comments on manuscripts culture and the world behind the printed text can be extended to also examine the way *Jingwei Stone*'s manuscripts have been handled and the multiple levels of mediation between Qiu Jin's writing and the text we see today. See, Tian, *Tao Yuanming & Manuscript Culture: The Record of a Dusty Table*.

<sup>94</sup> See editorial note 2 in Qiu Jin 秋瑾, *Qiu Jin ji* 秋瑾集 [Collected Works of Qiu Jin], 123.

<sup>95</sup> Qiu Jin, 121.

Many of the claims made by Qiu Jin's preface voice are echoed by the authorial narrative voice laced throughout the text. The type of audience outlined by the preface voice and the narrative about women and China that it enunciates is then reinforced within the text through the various voices and stories they build up in the main body of the text. As the threshold to the main text, the preface serves to prime the reader for the messages they will receive throughout the text. The preface voice cultivates a sense of closeness to Qiu Jin as an authorial subject while still being mediated through the textual subject. This artificial closeness adds credence to the statements in the preface and gives the reader a sense of the space they will step into in the text.

### **Authorial Narrative Voice**

The narrative voice undergirds the entire *tanci* proper, voicing the authorial comments that lace the *tanci*, during which it is more prominent, and narrating the Huaxu story, during which it is less obtrusive. Where the authorial comments explain the social construction of women's inferiority in China and describe the various forms of suffering women face, like the preface voice, it also widens the scope to describe how the Han Chinese people became slaves to outside rulers and their suffering in a decaying China. Qiu Jin utilizes her narrative voice to problematize her own position as a citizen and a woman and to raise her reader's consciousness about their own problematic position.

In addition to directly addressing the audience and working to help them realize their own agency and ability to change the problematic social situations they endure and perpetuate, Qiu Jin's narrative voice also enunciates the Huaxu story, in which the messages are presented less directly. By constructing the imaginary of the Huaxu story, Qiu Jin provides her reader with examples of exactly how to apply her advice and achieve the goal of citizenship and the

establishment of a Chinese republic. Many of the same points Qiu Jin voices directly to her audience through her authorial narrative voice are reiterated to the audience through the fictional character voices within the Huaxu story and serve to emphasize the critical points Qiu Jin first outlines in her authorial comments.

*Jingwei Stone* implies Qiu Jin as the narrator even while it offers the reader insight into the Qiu Jin as textual subject rather than an authorial subject. Where the separation between Qiu Jin the authorial subject and the textual subject embodied in the preface voice is somewhat vague, the authorial subject's separation from the authorial narrative voice is clearer. Although Qiu Jin imbues the authorial narrative voice with the sense of an author narrating her story, this voice presents Qiu Jin in a way that suits the *tanci* style and her aims in writing. It is written to be just as persuasive as the fictional characters she develops in the Huaxu story and articulates many of the same messages these characters articulate in an effort to reach her audiences and persuade them to follow her advice. Though parts of the narrative voice are imbued with autobiographical information that offers insight into Qiu Jin's "self," this authorial narrative voice also brings light to how Qiu Jin conceives of the world around her, how she understands women's experience in China, and how she imagines China's future and the world she wants to build.

Although the authorial narrator's voice implies Qiu Jin as an authorial subject speaking directly to her audience, her authorial narrative voice is a crafted persona that presents the textual subject as a relatable and trustworthy authority facing the same challenges as the reader. A useful indication of the distance between Qiu Jin and the authorial narrative voice she crafts is the use of the first person pronoun *wo* 我. Where in the preface voice Qiu Jin used *yu* 余 to refer to herself and represent direct dialogue between her as a person and her reader, her employment of

wo 我 in the narratorial voice indicates no clear self-reference to Qiu Jin as a person, but only to the voice of the narrator Qiu Jin has created. Consistent with the *tanci* style, Qiu Jin presents her authorial narrator as a female persona, explicitly speaking to a female audience about matters related to women. Whereas the preface voice stated that the intention in creating a *tanci* was to rouse everybody, in the authorial narrator's voice, as discussed previously, Qiu Jin creates an image of a woman writing for other women only: "I hold my brush and fill these lyrics like the Jingwei Bird filled the sea, in order to provide it for all of my sisters with ambitions to comment on over a cup of tea under the lamplight" 執筆填成精衛詞，以供有心諸姊妹，茶餘燈下一評之。<sup>96</sup> Here, Qiu Jin's narrative voice specifies that the imagined audience for the text are ambitious women, and rather than aiming to rouse her audience or spread her message far and wide, she intends to distribute the *tanci* only for readers to comment on and consider. Where the preface voice announced that Qiu Jin wrote the *tanci* in an effort to rouse her compatriots, the authorial narrative voice is already practicing this effort to rouse the audience from the opening sentence. Presenting the author as writing the *tanci* as a project to fill the author's time: "There's nothing I can do, so I still bide my time" 無可奈，且待時, the authorial narrative voice enacts the expected authorial voice appropriate for a *tanci* and makes the writing legible to *tanci* readers.<sup>97</sup> This persona Qiu Jin creates with her authorial narrative voice in the authorial comments provides insight into how Qiu Jin realizes her goal of persuading a wide-ranging audience of *tanci* readers, showing which arguments and presentations she imagined her audience would relate to and the type of audience she intended to reach.

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<sup>96</sup> Qiu Jin, 125.

<sup>97</sup> Qiu Jin, 125.

The persona Qiu Jin creates with her authorial narrative voice is of one who is aware of the problems facing China and the limitations imposed on her. It is the voice of a revolutionary who recognizes her role as a citizen of China and who is working to help others realize that they also face problematic situations. She sets the example for her readers, problematizing her situation first before moving on to problematize theirs. Qiu Jin's authorial narrative voice describes herself as a nationalist, saying "my love for my country is so deep that it's driving me mad" 愛國情深意欲痴.<sup>98</sup> Once she has voiced her deep love for China, she then identifies herself as a citizen with responsibilities to the country she loves: "I am also a citizen, how can I sit by and watch and shirk blame?" 亦是國民一分子，豈堪坐視責難辭。<sup>99</sup> Further identifying herself as a woman, she explains that China's social situation causes these two identities, citizen and woman, to conflict. She points out to the reader that "To think helplessly that only men have lofty aspirations is a narrow view of life; / Even so, I also have ambitions and am not willing to yield to men" 無奈是志量徒雄生趣窄；然而亦壯懷未肯讓鬚眉。<sup>100</sup> Rather than accepting her inferior position, she refuses to yield and dedicates herself to changing the social system and taking up the mantle of a citizen. Part of changing the system is raising awareness in her compatriots; having established her personal situation, Qiu Jin's authorial narrative voice turns to problematizing her compatriot's situation so they can also take up their role as citizens and save China alongside her.

She first addresses the issue of women's subordination. Her authorial narrative voice has already made clear that she has personally experienced the limitations imposed on women and that she is aware of them and working to overcome them. She says that many of her female

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

compatriots, however, are ignorant of the harmful practices of men toward women and have internalized their inferior social standing to the point that they accept it as fate and perpetrate harm on other women. Qiu Jin's authorial narrative voice describes various forms of harm women suffer: foot binding, unequal divorce laws, being cloistered away from the world, abuse from husbands and in-laws, and sickness resulting from these practices. Rather than sympathize with these women, however, Qiu Jin's authorial narrative voice is dumbfounded as to why women allow themselves to be treated in such a way. In prose, she says:

The only surprising part is that you regard yourselves as having little value, you don't go out and seek your own life skills or learning but only know to rely on men. You instead desperately suck up and flatter men, and by hook or crook, you come up with ways to get the favor of men.

祇怪自己把自己看得太不值錢，不去求自己生活的藝業學問，祇曉靠男子，反死命的奉承巴結，諂諛男子，千方百計，想出法子去男子前討好。<sup>101</sup>

For Qiu Jin's authorial narrative voice, the onus and agency lie with women. She does not believe there are essential differences between men and women, stating: "they are completely the same; their duties and rights are also the same" 俱是同的；天職權利，亦是同的, and so the reason for women's inferior position is due to women's own acceptance of men's lies, nothing more.<sup>102</sup> By showing women the many forms of abuse that they put up with and by explaining how these practices were created by men to harm them, Qiu Jin's authorial narrative voice effectively problematizes women's situation and makes her readers aware that they have the power to change what they used to see as their fate. They are equal to men in their rights, but also equal in their duties and just like Qiu Jin's authorial narrative persona, they have a

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<sup>101</sup> Qiu Jin, 127.

<sup>102</sup> Qiu Jin, 126.



responsibility to China. Like her, in order to fulfill their duty to their country, women must first reckon with their inferior status.

Where women are slaves to men and must overcome this problem before they can fulfill their responsibilities to China, Qiu Jin's authorial narrative voice also presents all her four hundred million compatriots, both men and women, as slaves to foreign powers. Having problematized women's situation, she moves on to problematize the situation both men and women face in China in order to raise their consciousness and rouse them to take action. She says: "Han people to the utmost degree conduct themselves as slaves" 漢族盡為人奴隸, working to awaken them to the reality she sees.<sup>103</sup> After describing the harm her compatriots endure under Qing governance, she says: I "exhort the Han people to hurry and wake to reality without delay, wash away past humiliation and stir up their spirit" 權漢人快些醒悟休但攔, 洗除積恥振精神.<sup>104</sup> Again, Qiu Jin's authorial narrative voice shows that the agency lies with the people themselves, that they have the power to overcome their position as slaves to races other than their own and to save China from its precarious position.

Qiu Jin's authorial narrative voice problematizes her audience's positions, but she also offers guidance to her audience on how to overcome their subordination. For women, she is insistent on self-reliance: "But I hope all my sisters attempt to stand on their own two feet, never again relying on men as patrons" 但願我姊妹人人圖自立, 勿再倚男兒作靠山.<sup>105</sup> She advocates education and learning practical skills as a path for women to stand on their own two feet and no longer rely on men, and this is a pathway she exemplifies through her protagonists in the Huaxu story. As for men, her advice is the same: she states that "Everyone as soon as

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<sup>103</sup> Qiu Jin, 131.

<sup>104</sup> Qiu Jin, 132.

<sup>105</sup> Qiu Jin, 155.

possible should seek a livelihood” 大家及早圖生計, indicating that the pathway to China’s salvation and fulfilling one’s duties is through self-reliance and public contribution.<sup>106</sup> Qiu Jin employs her narrative authorial voice to awaken her readers and then offer them paths forward to simultaneously solve their problems and strengthen China.

Qiu Jin also uses her authorial narrative voice to tell the story of Huaxu Kingdom, a fictional kingdom with many parallels to China. The fictional space her narrative voice brings to life allows Qiu Jin to provide her audiences with examples of how to realize her advice and fulfill their duty to China. While this story takes place in a fictional far away place, the parallels to late Qing China are so clear that at times descriptions of Huaxu’s history and the situation Qiu Jin’s authorial narrative voice developed blur together. The Huaxu story represents a China framed through Qiu Jin’s perspective, an imaginary where she can engage in world building exercises whose fictional boundaries allow her to gloss over conflicts that would otherwise limit the ideas she puts forth. For example, Qiu Jin’s narrator claims that “the Han Emperors were all wise” 漢皇都是很英明的, but then uses a fictional plot to explain their downfall: a somnolent sickness so severe that “there are even times when they [the emperors] die in their sleep without realizing” 不知不覺的一睡死了的時候都有.<sup>107</sup> In the Huaxu imaginary, Qiu Jin is able to manipulate reality to support her needs, creating a persuasive environment for her characters to act out gaining awareness and saving China.

After describing the political situation in Huaxu, Qiu Jin’s narrative voice turns to introducing the characters in her story, beginning with the family of her protagonist, Huang Jurui, whose parents both represent conservative voices in the text. In introducing the Huang

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<sup>106</sup> Qiu Jin, 132.

<sup>107</sup> Qiu Jin, 125.

family, Qiu Jin mixes fact with fiction, stating that “In Zhejiang province there is a clan with Huang as the surname” 浙江氏族黃為姓。<sup>108</sup> Where Huaxu Kingdom is a fictional place, Zhejiang is a real province in China, and Qiu Jin’s home. The mix of fiction and reality serves to ground her advice and show that the story she narrates is not a wholly disconnected imaginary, but a realistic form of practice that her audience can imitate. As headmistress at Datong school, Qiu Jin began giving her female students weapons training under the guise of “physical education,” in preparation for the upcoming revolution, and the title of chapter thirteen suggests she planned for her protagonists to undergo a similar experience, showing the connections between her plans for her protagonists and her own experiences.<sup>109</sup> While the fictional elements allow Qiu Jin to gloss over certain aspects of the reality that don’t support her argument, such as using a somnolent sickness to explain Manchu control of China, the autobiographical and real data she includes in her imaginary make it a practical space for her readers to visualize enacting her advice and easily transfer that practice into their lives.

Qiu Jin’s world building in the *tanci* is made more realistic for the audience by the autobiographical content woven into each story. Where most *tanci* isolate their autobiographical content to their authorial comments and tell a primarily fictional story, Qiu Jin inserts autobiographical data into multiple voices and constructs many plot elements from her own experiences. The world her narrative voice builds in the Huaxu imaginary closely reflects the world she has experienced and the similarities between the fiction of her imaginary and the reality in China both ground the fiction and also obscure the propagandistic elements of her text. So closely are the descriptions related in certain parts of the text that these similarities can make it difficult for the reader to discern between fact and fiction in the stories her narrative voice

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<sup>108</sup> Qiu Jin, 132.

<sup>109</sup> Lee, “T’ung-Meng Hui and the Chinese Revolution, 1905-1912,” 246.

articulates: at points the location she describes seems to be China, but it could just as easily be Huaxu. While the Huaxu story is presented as fictional, the authorial narrator's experiences and those she describes of her compatriots are presented as Qiu Jin's true experiences and thoughts, despite also being carefully crafted persuasive stories. Each story the narrative voice enunciates is working towards achieving the goals Qiu Jin's preface voice articulated: to rouse her readers so they can bring peace to China.

### **Protagonist Voices**

There are five protagonist voices in the Huaxu story: Huang Jurui, Liang Xiaoyu, Jiang Zhenhua, Bao Aiqun, and Zuo Xinghua. All of the girls come from gentry families and are in their teenage years when they meet and quickly become friends. They are all presented to the reader as heroines, with special characteristics that set them apart, highlighting their purpose as guides to Qiu Jin's first audience. The girls' path to escape and their journey to save China is written to offer readers an example of a path they can take to realize their own ambitions and escape from the strictures of Confucian Chinese society.

The experiences and ideas presented through the protagonist voices are not intended to speak to all readers, but through their example Qiu Jin presents an experience that is as achievable for her imagined first audience as it was for her. As Yun Zhu describes them, all of the protagonists "are mostly girls with similar family backgrounds and life experiences" to Qiu Jin, suggesting that Qiu Jin expects that the audience these protagonist voices speak to are persons who also have her means and privileges.<sup>110</sup> Each of the protagonists present a different form of heroine a reader might become and are intended to directly persuade and speak to these

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<sup>110</sup> Zhu, "The Dynamics of Sisterhood in the Modern Chinese Imaginary, 1890s–1930s," 52.

readers who will take leadership positions in establishing a republic in China. Though each girl comes from a different family background, for example Huang Jurui is the daughter of the first wife whereas Liang Xiaoyu is concubine born, they all come together and become sisters, each voice representing how the imagined heroic audience will unite and work together to save China.

Of all the protagonists, Huang Jurui stands out as exceptional. She is often regarded as a figure representing Qiu Jin given the many parallels between their experiences and offers Qiu Jin an opportunity to reimagine herself and her story. Huang Jurui is the leader of the protagonists who enlightens her companions and shows them that they do not need to accept a subordinated social position. She stands apart from the other girls, understanding the situation in a way that they do not and helping the others to realize their potential, a standpoint similar to the one Qiu Jin takes in her preface and narrative voices, an enlightened figure capable of guiding her audience. In her first speech, Huang Jurui already voices a high level of consciousness regarding her situation: “Not having freedom is detestable, and I am often wishing and wishing to make great efforts to jump from the slave pen” 不能自由真可恨，願只願時時努力跳奴圈。<sup>111</sup> Her high level of awareness presages her ability to find a solution to this problem in later chapters. Consciousness raising is not miraculous, but often prompted by an outside force. For Qiu Jin, moving to Beijing and joining revolutionary circles helped her to understand China’s perilous position, and for Huang Jurui the teachings of Yu Zhupo gave her insight her companions lacked. As Huang Jurui rouses her sisters, she simultaneously serves to rouse the sympathetic reader. In this way, Huang Jurui acts out the desire to rouse her compatriots that Qiu Jin articulated in the preface voice, showing how the Huaxu imaginary serves as a laboratory to illustrate how Qiu Jin’s guidance can be enacted through experimentation and courage.

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<sup>111</sup> Qiu Jin 秋瑾, *Qiu Jin ji* 秋瑾集 [Collected Works of Qiu Jin], 139.

In chapter four, Liang Xiaoyu, Jiang Zhenhua, Bao Aiqun, and Zuo Xinghua come together to lament their miserable lives. They repeat the circumstances Qiu Jin's authorial narrative voice described regarding the bitter experiences women face, taking turns to discuss the future in store for them as gentry women. While Qiu Jin's authorial narrative voice discursively stated the various forms women's lives may take, through the voices of her protagonists, Qiu Jin shows through concrete and personalized examples how these problems really exist in women's lives. The protagonists, in voicing the suffering they face as women, illustrate a certain degree of consciousness, but at first they decide that there is nothing to be done. Rather than working out a plan to change their fate, after making their speeches and lamenting women's situation, they simply sat "thinking about the various sufferings, particularly dreading what they would endure in the future" 思至諸痛苦，尤恐他年身自經, resigning themselves to the same life as the women who came before them.<sup>112</sup> As Amy Dooling puts it, "for all their indignation, a crucial element is missing from their conversation: namely, the ability to conceive of alternative possibilities."<sup>113</sup> It is at this point that Huang Jurui, their enlightened friend and representation of Qiu Jin within the imaginary, enters the conversation and offers them an alternative, just as she is offering the reader an alternative.

When Huang Jurui visits the other protagonists, she immediately addresses the problem of her arranged marriage in an impassioned speech written in verse. She rejects Liang Xiaoyu's advice that she accept the match, stating: "still it must be understood that I refuse to obey this" 我卻須知不服焉, before explaining to her sisters that there are alternative experiences for women and expounding on Western norms regarding women.<sup>114</sup> Huang Jurui's refusal to accept

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<sup>112</sup> Qiu Jin, 153. This translation is modified from: Dooling and Torgeson, *Writing Women in Modern China*, 68.

<sup>113</sup> Dooling, *Women's Literary Feminism in Twentieth-Century China*, 58.

<sup>114</sup> Qiu Jin, 155.

the suffering her sisters accepted as fate is one of the most powerful parts in the book. It represents a refusal to continue to endure the status quo and is a show of Huang Jurui's recognition of her own agency, despite her status as a young woman. With this refusal, Huang Jurui betrays the conservative values her family has attempted to inculcate in her and highlights Qiu Jin's own embrace of progressive ideas regarding women and the role she hopes they will play in China. Huang Jurui stands against the tide with her refusal, and in so doing begins to shift the current. Empowered by her embrace of the agency she does have despite her inferior status as a woman, she exemplifies the messages about agency and mental states that Qiu Jin crafted through her narrative voice.

As mentioned above, Huang Jurui follows her refusal with an explanation of Western ideas regarding the treatment of women. In rhyming couplets, she claims:

And they also say men and women are all equal, / With innate unbiased advantages and rights.

Powerful nations and peoples wholly rely on women, / And family education is entirely based on the mother's instruction.

并言男女皆平等，天賦無偏利與權。  
強國強種全靠女，家庭教育盡娘傳。<sup>115</sup>

Here, Huang Jurui presents Western practices as an ideal for Chinese women to strive for. Her speech shows Qiu Jin's awareness of how Western practices were advertised in certain circles, but not a deeper understanding of the major disparities and inequalities that haunted Western practices. This speech advocates using Western practices to strengthen China even while they will be used in service to save China from the West. This idea of using Western ideas to strengthen China so that it could then stand against Western powers on their ground was common during the late Qing. Huang Jurui's speech is directed at her sisters and so her voice

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<sup>115</sup> Qiu Jin, 155.

also seems to be addressing a female audience as she reiterates that there is not an essential difference between men and women and stresses that women are integral to the national agenda. Presenting these Western ideas to the reader helps to grow their awareness of the world around them and the possibilities that exist for women. Huang Jurui relied on Yu Zhupo to learn of these ideas, but through her voice, the reader can also be exposed to them. By voicing her understanding of Western practices in her *tanci* and through Huang Jurui's voice, Qiu Jin serves to take on the very same role Yu Zhupo did for Huang Jurui.

After explaining the positive aspects of the Western treatment of women, Huang Jurui turns her focus to Chinese women and compares the two. She briefly reiterates all the suffering Chinese women undergo before presenting her solution to the group. After choosing not to accept the fate her parents chose for her, she developed a plan of action: "I now want to pursue my studies in Japan" 妹今要求學想東瀛.<sup>116</sup> This is the very same tactic Qiu Jin used to escape her own unhappy marriage and it is a technique she chose also to suggest to her readers through the voice of Huang Jurui. The other girls voice a potential snag in the plan, bringing up the financial aspect of this plan. However, this is a point Huang Jurui has already considered and together the girls work out a plan to attain the money they need to make their escape.

Qiu Jin uses the protagonist voices to speak to a specific audience of gentry women who share certain experiences of suffering that each protagonist laments, making them relatable voices crafted with this intended audience in mind. Standing on one's own two feet and taking on the responsibilities of a citizen are Qiu Jin's primary messages to these gentry women who she undoubtedly expects to follow the protagonists lead, and her own, and further educate themselves about China's urgent political situation before stepping up and effecting change.

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<sup>116</sup> Qiu Jin, 156. This translation is modified from: Dooling and Torgeson, *Writing Women in Modern China*, 73.



### Supernatural Voice

In the preface, Qiu Jin's preface voice mentioned that heaven would teach women how to bring peace to China. This supernatural component is continued briefly in the extant chapters of *Jingwei Stone* through the voice of Xiwang mu who looks down on the events in China and is filled with rage. The inclusion of a supernatural component is not uncommon in *tanci*, and the inclusion of this component may indicate Qiu Jin's adept wielding of the *tanci* style, employing recognized elements of the *tanci* tradition to engage her audience and appeal to a wider range of readers.<sup>117</sup> This choice on Qiu Jin's part again highlights how she utilized expected *tanci* elements to make her story persuasive and attractive to *tanci* readers. Additionally, the supernatural voice may play a wider role in the story and aid Qiu Jin by providing an explanation for components of her argument that are outside the scope of her *tanci*.

Whether the character of Xiwang mu is commenting on the situation Qiu Jin presents in China or Huaxu is difficult to determine as Qiu Jin uses the authorial narrative voice to introduce the two as separate and herself mixes the history of Huaxu closely with the history she describes as China. Though the inclusion of the supernatural component is fiction, the situations described are so similar that Xiwang mu, when commenting on Huaxu, seems almost to be commenting on China. Having described the situation in China, Qiu Jin's authorial narrative voice states that, "there's an extreme discontent all over the earth, yet it makes that Xiwang mu of Jade lake bitterly disappointed as well" 怨氣沖天彌大地，卻使那瑤池王母也心寒, before immediately switching tracks and saying in prose, "and now to continue with the story of this evil legacy" 且

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<sup>117</sup> Guo, *Women's Tanci Fiction in Late Imperial and Early Twentieth-Century China*, 23.

說這遺毒 and discussing the problems in Huaxu.<sup>118</sup> Similarly, after discussing Huaxu for a time, Qiu Jin's authorial narrative voice then turns to Xiwang mu again, moving from prose to verse: "Let's talk now about that Xiwang mu of Jade lake in the palace" 且說那瑤池王母在宮中.<sup>119</sup> The shift in format between verse and prose when discussing the two situations, that of Huaxu and that of Xiwang mu in heaven, emphasizes the shift between the two levels of voice. Qiu Jin used prose to write out large parts of the situation in China and Huaxu, but transitioned to verse when beginning the story of Xiwang mu in the palace and only briefly mixes prose into the supernatural story.

In the supernatural story, Xiwang mu is filled with anger when she learns of the abuse women face and quickly assembles the celestials to rectify the situation, tagging on at the end a concern for the political situation in China, as well. She says:

Because men think that mortal women are the ones who are incapable, I lament their degenerate practices, we must send a crowd of celestial youths and maidens. Moreover, the house of Liu is on the verge of extermination, so we must dispatch a person of outstanding ability to be born into the world.

因思那塵寰婦女無能者，挽頹風，必須差遣衆仙童。  
況且漢室行將滅，須遣英才降世中。<sup>120</sup>

Once these celestials are assembled, Xiwang mu makes a speech that echoes the comments Qiu Jin has just made through her authorial narrative voice. This speech begins with Xiwang mu stating clearly the objectives of these celestial heroes she will send down to earth:

Try your best to sweep away the foreign race's presence and set the country at ease, for a long time men and women have needed equal rights. Innate human rights were originally without differentiation, men and women still without exception are burdened.

掃盡胡氛安社稷，由來男女要平權。

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<sup>118</sup> Qiu Jin, 129.

<sup>119</sup> Qiu Jin, 130.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

人權天賦原無別，男女還須一例擔。<sup>121</sup>

Qiu Jin repeats her goals through multiple voices as a persuasive technique to reach her readers. Although the celestial heroes she sends down will become the protagonists and are intended to offer guidance to her first audience, the figure of Xiwang mu speaks to both audiences, reminding them again of Qiu Jin's two goals. First, Qiu Jin calls on her audience to establish equal rights between men and women so that both can take up their role as citizens with equal responsibilities, they are then tasked with working together to oust the foreign rulers and reestablish Han rulership in a republic.

Qiu Jin's inclusion of a supernatural component adds complexity to the question of agency in the text. Her preface voice and authorial narrative voice are both very clear that the onus is on women to free themselves from the fetters of servitude to men; likewise, her compatriots are expected to realize that China is in a precarious situation and take action. However, the higher power of Heaven's will as articulated through Xiwang mu lessens that agency to an extent. When Huang Jurui and Liang Xiaoyu meet for the first time, the narrative voice explains that "At first sight Jurui immediately felt tenderness towards her; it was like a previous incarnation they constantly met" 令人一見生憐惜，恍似前生相見常, suggesting that Huang Jurui and Liang Xiaoyu, the heroines of the story, are reincarnations of past heroines sent down by Xiwang mu to rectify China's perilous situation.<sup>122</sup> If these protagonists are reincarnations of celestial heroes, then they do not have the same level of agency to change their situation because it is not through their own will that they rise up, but because of a task assigned to them by Xiwang mu.

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Qiu Jin, 137.

In *Personal Matters*, Lingzhen Wang comments on the supernatural component in the text, saying: “in appealing to the heavenly world to set up the right order, Qiu Jin showed herself fully aware of the absence of any powerful agent that could work for women’s emancipation or for the nationalist enterprise; she understood her own lack of power to ‘mend the sky.’”<sup>123</sup> This interpretation of the scene brings to light the relationship between Qiu Jin’s supernatural voice in *Xiwang mu* and her conception of herself. Qiu Jin’s inclusion of the somnolent sickness to explain away the foreign control of the throne is a similar instance of her employing a fictional tool to gloss over complicated issues she could not fully explain or address in her *tanci*. By invoking the voice of *Xiwang mu*, Qiu Jin adds the authority of a higher power to the message she sends about equality. Just as Qiu Jin uses the authorial narrative voice to outline the situation in *Huaxu* for the reader, she likewise takes up the voice of *Xiwang mu* to further delineate the stakes for the *Huaxu* story. And much in the same way that Qiu Jin as an authorial subject orchestrates the story in the text, *Xiwang mu* as a supernatural figure seems to orchestrate the story of Huang Jurui and her sisters’ escape.

Toward the end of this section, Qiu Jin’s invocation of the supernatural is tempered by a reminder from her authorial narrative voice that all forms of the supernatural are simply lies meant to fool the desperate. Using the authorial narrative voice, Qiu Jin outlines the various ways that spiritual beliefs are used to lead people astray in China. The issue of agency that the supernatural raises is addressed here: “The diseased and poor entrust their lives to it, not thinking of standing on their own two feet to protect their corporeal body” 疾病貧窮委之命，不思自立衛生身。<sup>124</sup> Qiu Jin blames religion as one of the reasons that her compatriots were able to be

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<sup>123</sup> Wang, *Personal Matters*, 57.

<sup>124</sup> Qiu Jin, 131.

subdued for so long, which has swindled them out of their money and their agency. This is a problem she addresses directly through her authorial narrative voice by discussing the faults of religion together with the political situation in China. Qiu Jin states: “It is only the likes of loyal and righteous heroes whose corporeal bodies may die but whose souls still exist” 祇有英雄忠義輩，肉身雖死性靈存, invoking the previous idea of celestial heroes.<sup>125</sup> Her emphasis on heroism in both the authorial comments and in the supernatural component is meant to invigorate her readers and remind them that they, too, can become heroes just like the historical figures. China’s future depends on them choosing to take action and turn themselves into heroes rather than praying that another force will take control of the situation. As Qiu Jin mentioned earlier in chapter one when appealing to the elder generation to stop giving their money as alms and instead to invest it in building schools, the best way to create a brighter future and be remembered for generations is to take action in the present to save China.

The inclusion of Xiwang mu’s voice is not intended to give the reader false hope that a higher power will rectify the situation, but to remind the reader that heroes have existed in the past and that the heroic spirit can take hold in them, as well. Qiu Jin uses the supernatural voice as another form of narrator who sets up the Huaxu story and reiterates to her audience the critical situation China faces as well as the goals they must work toward, tasking the celestial heroes and the reader simultaneously with China’s salvation. By emphasizing the emptiness of religion and the harm it causes, Qiu Jin works to strengthen the idea that agency is in the hands of the individual, not a higher power. The list of celestial heroes who congregate to listen to Xiwang mu is in fact a list of Chinese historical figures, reminding the reader that these heroes were once people just like them who took up the mantle of saving China and thereby became heroes. The

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

supernatural component in the story works to further persuade readers that the advice Qiu Jin provides in her *tanci* and the goals she establishes are the best course of action to bring them fame and glory.

### Supporting Character Voices

The supporting characters in the Huaxu story, characters apart from the protagonists and those who do not continue onto the journey to Japan, are representative of Qiu Jin's imagined second audience: her many compatriots who are integral to reshaping China, but who won't necessarily take on the role of hero. These characters represent the various other ways that people can support the cause from different classes and backgrounds. The voice of the protagonist Liang Xiaoyu illustrates the difference between the two audiences in her comment in chapter four: "If you are from a low class family, you can make a different living as a servant, and avoid this horrid treatment" 若是下等人家的，堪為僕婦另營生，免教受骯髒氣。<sup>126</sup> Though Liang Xiaoyu's understanding of the experience of those outside the gentry class is extremely flawed, there is a clear understanding that the supporting characters enjoy a sense of self-reliance that the protagonists have not yet attained. These supporting figures represent the portion of Qiu Jin's imagined audience who already have the capacity and freedom to work, even if their labor is not generally respected. Qiu Jin voices the importance of being self-reliant and able to stand on your own two feet through multiple voices in the text. In this comment, it is clear that the supporting figures already have a semblance of independence, especially compared to the gentry protagonists, and so the guidance Qiu Jin offers this audience through the supportive voices she crafts naturally reflect this difference.

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<sup>126</sup> Qiu Jin, 152. This translation is modified from: Dooling and Torgeson, *Writing Women in Modern China*, 67.

Two of the supporting characters take prominent positions in the Huaxu story: the Bao family maid, Xiurong, and the Huang family tutor, Yu Zhupo. Although they are background characters, during particular points in the story their voices are elevated and move to the forefront. The technique of elevating a minor character's voice can be quite persuasive, becoming integral parts of the story, as Maria Franca Sibau explains based on a study of marginal characters in early Qing drama and fiction: "'elevated' minor characters often serve as messengers, advisors, purveyors of privileged wisdom, or even main architects for the action in the realm of the story."<sup>127</sup> Both Xiurong and Yu Zhupo, despite their marginal status, become integral to ensuring the protagonists can escape and that their story can continue. The elevation of their voices to equal, or perhaps surpass, the voices of the protagonists in importance speaks to the value of this contingent in the story and the role they play in ensuring a Chinese republic is successfully established.

Xiurong enters the story alongside Madame Bao and Bao Aiqun and is introduced in a similar fashion to the protagonists. When Qiu Jin's narrator voice describes Xiurong, she indicates that there is something special about her, highlighting her cleverness and dependability. She is often present in scenes alongside the protagonists, visiting the Huang household in search of Huang Jurui, bringing them snacks during the chapter four consciousness raising conversations, and eavesdropping on the girls' plans to escape and helping them get away. Though she is not one of the protagonists, Qiu Jin and the girls often treat her as one of them, highlighting her importance despite her marginalized position as a maid.

In chapter three, Xiurong is dispatched to check up on Huang Jurui who has not visited the Liang household in quite some time. Upon her arrival, Xiurong is told of Huang Jurui's

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<sup>127</sup> Sibau, "Maids, Fishermen, and Storytellers," 26.

arranged marriage by another maid. Qiu Jin chooses a conversation between maids to convey Huang Jurui's difficult situation and relay to the reader the various perspectives the Huang household members take towards the arranged marriage. Where the other maid disapproves of Huang Jurui's attitude, Xiurong "understood in her heart as soon as she heard those words" 聞語心明白 and supports Huang Jurui's perspective.<sup>128</sup> Although she is in a marginalized position, she more closely resembles the protagonists in ideology and character than she does the other maids.

Although Qiu Jin in this way addresses her second audience through the voices of marginalized characters, that does not indicate that she values them to a lesser extent. On the contrary, by elevating Xiurong's voice and imbuing her with many of the same characteristics as her protagonists, Qiu Jin shows the importance of her second audience. The relationship between Qiu Jin's two imagined audiences is reflected in Xiurong's conversation with Huang Jurui. Upon meeting her, Huang Jurui asks Xiurong to "Please have a seat" 請坐, to which Xiurong responds, "A maid in attendance should stand" 小環侍立正應該.<sup>129</sup> Rather than accept the difference in their positions, Huang Jurui insists she sit: "Don't be that way, people do not have a high and low, so please stop refusing" 休若此, 人無貴賤請休推.<sup>130</sup> Qiu Jin uses Huang Jurui's voice to convey that there is no difference between her two audiences, they are equals in her eyes, they simply take on different roles in the imaginary and in their purpose. Whereas the protagonists will become the prominent figures in establishing a Chinese republic, the wider community are just as important to its success, supporting the leaders in their efforts. Without Xiurong's

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<sup>128</sup> Qiu Jin 秋瑾, *Qiu Jin ji* 秋瑾集 [Collected Works of Qiu Jin], 143. This translation is modified from: Dooling and Torgeson, *Writing Women in Modern China*, 60.

<sup>129</sup> Qiu Jin, 143. This translation is modified from: Dooling and Torgeson, *Writing Women in Modern China*, 61.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.



assistance, it would have been difficult for the girls to escape, likewise, a handful of leaders cannot protect China, it takes all four hundred million of Qiu Jin's compatriots standing up and accepting their duty to enact the changes Qiu Jin envisions for China.

The second such elevated supporting voice comes from Yu Zhupo, Prefect Huang's maternal cousin who takes on the role of tutor for Huang Jurui and her brother. Yu Zhupo, a progressive thinker, is presented as supportive of women's education. His example gives the second audience a male voice to relate to and in his support of Huang Jurui and the other protagonists, male readers are given an example of how they can be an ally for their female compatriots.

Qiu Jin uses the forward-thinking voice of Yu Zhupo to present her arguments for women's education and the merits of being a forward thinker as well as to point out the flaws in the governmental system given it is foreign ruled. Yu Zhupo's voice is elevated in chapter two when he advocates for Huang Jurui's education, and women's education generally, in a debate with Prefect Huang. That Qiu Jin chose to take on a male voice to present this debate is noteworthy; it is one thing for a female character to speak to women about their education and entirely another for the figure of an educated man to advocate for them. The voice of the man supporting women's education is a strategic move on Qiu Jin's part to persuade her readers of a point she feels strongly about. Amy Dooling in discussing the feminist press suggests of women that "by framing their critique of the feminine condition in terms of national interest they were able to legitimize an otherwise potentially threatening heterodox gender discourse that challenged many of the most cherished values of Confucian culture."<sup>131</sup> Perhaps by framing her argument through the voice of Yu Zhupo, Qiu Jin was able to craft a persuasive and effective

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<sup>131</sup> Dooling, *Women's Literary Feminism in Twentieth-Century China*, 48.

argument for women's education in a nonthreatening voice that her imagined audience would be more likely to accept. Yu Zhupo engages in a long debate, spanning around half of the second chapter, with Prefect Huang, and is able to address each of Prefect Huang's points with ease, eventually winning the argument and the right to continue Huang Jurui's education. Qiu Jin used her authorial narrative voice to vocalize her support for women's education and its value in helping women learn practical skills they could employ to gain independence from men and in elevating Yu Zhupo's voice to reiterate and expand on this point, she ensures that both her audiences will be significantly impacted by the message.

Xiurong and Yu Zhupo's voices are both elevated at certain points to highlight the relationship between her two audiences and the importance of the role her second audience is called on to take in China's salvation. Through their examples, they show this second audience how they can contribute to the revolutionary movement and the value in their role as supporters in establishing a republic in China. The supporting character voices depict figures who already have practical skills that they can use to earn money and be self-reliant, meaning that they can already participate in fulfilling their responsibilities as citizens. These figures are further along in the pursuit of Qiu Jin's stated goals because of they participate in public society and can generate their own incomes, making them somewhat more self-sufficient than the protagonists. Despite their marginal roles in the Huaxu story, the elevation of their voices emphasizes their outsized importance on the lives of the protagonists. Without them, the heroines would not have the awareness or the means to undertake their journey. These voices indicate that the second audience is integral, along with this set of supporting characters, to the wider success of Qiu Jin's mission and that she expects each of the two audiences to work in tandem to save China.

### Conservative Voices

Throughout the story, Qiu Jin employs conservative voices to simulate the wider debates her audience may experience and the messaging they receive from society and increase the realism and persuasive capacity of her *tanci*. The conservative voices are presented as those who perpetrate the social system constricting women and participate in keeping them in their inferior positions. Prefect Huang is a primary example of the conservative voice in the text, as are the other parental figures, such as Madame Bao and Lady Sang. While they vary in the degree to which they adhere to the expectations of the social system, they all perpetuate the system and exhibit internalized traditional Confucian values. The conservative voices give life to the authorial commentary outlining how women's subordination is constructed, imbuing the idea that women are inferior into certain characters that interact with Qiu Jin's protagonists. These voices serve to enhance the persuasion in Qiu Jin's arguments because they speak to the flaws of these standpoints and depict the oppression of women in a way that the authorial comments do not.

Prefect Huang's voice represents a staunchly traditional perspective of regarding men as superior to women. When Huang Jurui is born, Prefect Huang angrily announces that a girl is "simply merchandise sold at a loss" 無非是個賠錢貨.<sup>132</sup> This is a common perspective that Qiu Jin voices in order to then comment on, assuming the voice of the authorial narrator to ask the audience: "I ask dear reader, birthing a son and birthing a daughter both continue the family line, what reason is there to regard the two as different?" 問看管，生男生女皆親系，何故看承却兩歧。<sup>133</sup> This interaction between Prefect Huang's conservative voice and the voice of the authorial

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<sup>132</sup> Qiu Jin 秋瑾, *Qiu Jin ji* 秋瑾集 [Collected Works of Qiu Jin], 134.

<sup>133</sup> Qiu Jin, 134.

narrator illustrates the usefulness of employing a conservative voice in the *tanci*. Qiu Jin again employs Prefect Huang's voice in chapter two in the debate on women's education with Yu Zhupo discussed above. Prefect Huang vocalizes the opposition's stance, offering Qiu Jin an opportunity to utilize Yu Zhupo's voice to address each and every argument her opponents make in the wider debate on women's education that was being had by intellectuals at the time. As Yu Zhupo continues to rebut each of Prefect Huang's arguments, it becomes clear that Prefect Huang's arguments are quite shallow. When he argues for tradition, Yu Zhupo reminds him that he wears the more recent Qing fashion, not the older Han clothing, indicating that the arguments for tradition are quite hollow. Their debate shows the limits of the conservative viewpoint against more progressive views and the false beliefs that this viewpoint is based on.

Though Lady Sang is introduced by the narrator as a kind woman and Huang Jurui speaks of her mother positively, she represents a conservative voice that presents the reader with an example of the situation of internalized discrimination perpetrated by women onto other women. Lady Sang suffers in her marriage, her husband having married two conniving concubines, and is quite unhappy, yet when she considers her daughter's future, she continues the same practices and turns to a matchmaker. Though the marriage the matchmaker arranges greatly upsets Huang Jurui, Lady Sang shows no sympathy. Her perspective on the marriage is voiced indirectly, quoted by a maid speaking in verse of how Lady Sang addressed her daughter: "Stop making such a bother, the decision maker still must be the parents, can you really be so shameful and fearless, could you really not have heard of the three obediences and ancient rites?" 自己休多管，作主還須父母親，豈有自己羞不怕，三從古禮豈無聞。<sup>134</sup> Lady Sang's

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<sup>134</sup> The "three obediences" *sancong* 三從 refer to old concepts of propriety that consider that women must obey their father at home, obey their husband once they marry, and upon their husband's death they must obey their son. Qiu Jin, 142.

invocation of the Confucian code of conduct for women makes clear to the readers her judgement of how a woman should behave. She has no patience for her daughter's disagreement even though she is the one causing her daughter such unhappiness. Qiu Jin chose to voice Lady Sang's reprimand through the voice of a maid rather than directly, making the comment stand out in the text. It is a story within a story and Lady Sang's harsh words sting even more coming from the mouth of a maid who then tacks on her own thoughts about the marriage. These conservative viewpoints are made to stand in stark contrast to Xiurong, who, as discussed previously, immediately takes Huang Jurui's side in the conflict.

In the first chapter, problematizing women's experience, the narrative voice described mothers binding their daughter's feet despite the girl's cries of pain, and of mothers-in-law blaming every disappointment on their new daughters. Through Lady Sang's quoted voice, Qiu Jin reiterates these messages that the unjust system is perpetuated by women as well, and shows the audience exactly how women participate in fettering one another. By voicing this perspective through a marginal character and offsetting it with Xiurong's elevated voice, Qiu Jin highlights the injustice in the conservative perspective and how deeply rooted these conservative beliefs are.

The addition of minor characters voicing conservative, oppositional perspectives strengthens Qiu Jin's message throughout the text. It offers her an opportunity to voice the perspectives she is arguing against in conversations in her real life and the viewpoints she imagines her audience might also be influenced by and the ability to address them in a subtle manner. Qiu Jin frames the conservative voices in such a way that the absurdity of these viewpoints is made starkly clear for her readers, thereby discounting them and further persuading

her readers of her point instead. How Qiu Jin wields the conservative voice provides insight into the audience she imagines and the world in which she exists.

Qiu Jin uses six voices throughout the text to present specific personas to appeal to her readers and to send two clear messages to her two main audiences. She uses each character's voice as a mouthpiece to further her stated agenda of rousing her compatriots and saving China. Authorial voices, such as the preface voice and the authorial narrative voices imply the voice of the author despite being intentionally constructed voices that only show an aspect of Qiu Jin's self. The supernatural voice of Xiwang mu serves to further narrate the Huaxu story and emphasize the need for her readers to use their agency. The character voices within the Huaxu story serve to reach Qiu Jin's first and second audiences in different ways, offering two different examples of pathways that practice the advice Qiu Jin urges her compatriots to follow in her authorial voices. Each voice is utilized to advance Qiu Jin's agenda in specific ways and bring insight into Qiu Jin's understanding of China, the situation women faced, and the means of solving these problems. Through the combination of these six voices, all reiterating similar messages and highlighting various aspects of Qiu Jin's wider understanding of the best way to move forward to strengthen China, Qiu Jin sought to rouse her four hundred million compatriots and guide them to liberate themselves and China.

### **Conclusion**

*Jingwei Stone* reflects the shifting political climate of the late Qing. The subject matter Qiu Jin contends with engages the intellectual conversations during the late Qing regarding the "woman question" and how Chinese politics should move forward. By combining female *tanci*

and reform *tanci*, Qiu Jin helped to advance the *tanci* form. The *tanci* style suited her needs as she endeavored to reach as broad an audience as possible. The low levels of literacy required due to the accessibility of the language and its increasing popularity meant that the style was ideal for her purpose.

Qiu Jin created her *tanci* to serve as a guide for her readers, both telling them how they should proceed and also providing them with a fictional world in which she could show them how her advice could work in practice. She wrote for two distinct imagined audiences: a small population of heroes who would take on leadership positions in the establishment of a Chinese republic, and the wider population whom she imagined would do everything in their power to support the aforementioned leaders, working together with them to save China. In her writing, she problematized the positions of women in late Qing China and of all Han Chinese, establishing both as “slaves” who accept their inferior situation rather than changing it. Qiu Jin saw her four hundred million compatriots as citizens with equal rights and duties, and by highlighting their subservient position she worked to spur them to take responsibility for the fate of their country. Addressing each audience, she advocated self-sufficiency and self-reliance, and urged them to work together to strengthen China by establishing a republic.

The voices Qiu Jin developed in her *tanci* reflect her as a textual subject and illustrate the ways she crafted her messages to reach her imagined audiences and persuade them to follow her advice. The voices she imbued with autobiographical information lessened the degree of mediation between her authorial subject and textual subject, increasing her presence in the text and the authority in the voices offering advice to readers. Distancing herself from the voices of her fictional characters despite narrating them, Qiu Jin increases the persuasive capacity of these voices. By crafting an imaginary that mirrored the real world, Qiu Jin was able to employ

fictional character voices to present her readers with a clear image of how to practice the guidance her authorial and preface voices offer. Each voice works in tandem to repeat Qiu Jin's messages in order to reach her audiences and impress upon them her message and her advice on how to realize it. Her voices work to awaken her readers, problematize their situation, and show them how to utilize their agency to alter it, saving themselves and China in the process.

As Qiu Jin worked to articulate her two goals, gender equality and Chinese liberation from foreign powers, she contended with issues of gender and race, while also broaching questions of class. Qiu Jin uses multiple voices throughout the text to argue that women and men are equal and there is no inherent difference between them. Language to discuss women's rights and gender equality had only just begun to emerge in China during this time, and Qiu Jin's discussion of the issue of gender and women's rights was at the cutting edge of progressive thought. Her comments on race mirrored the sentiments of many revolutionaries whose calls for revolution were often predicated on racist beliefs that an end to Manchu control and the Qing dynasty, and the return of control into the hands of Han Chinese would be key to strengthening China and ensuring its survival in the global competition for power. The key to national survival for Qiu Jin rested in both women and men becoming self-sufficient citizens who participated in generating income. Her views on self-reliance and education bring a level of class commentary into her text where the gentry girls use their dowry money to travel abroad and receive an education, yet lament that the maids are in a better position because they have the freedom to go out and work and earn their own money. This commentary on social class through the voice of Liang Xiaoyu in chapter four intimates the limitations of Qiu Jin's imaginary and beliefs. The world Qiu Jin develops in her imaginary is limited by her own understanding of the world in which she exists and her own background as a gentry woman. Each voice Qiu Jin crafts in her



*tanci* reflects her own conception of herself and the world around her as well as the audience she imagines her text will reach. This essay has focused on a single aspect of *Jingwei Stone* and does not presume to be a comprehensive exploration into the text or its content. While study of *tanci* has increased in popularity in recent years, thanks to scholarship by Siao-chen Hu, Li Guo, and Yu Zhang, there is still much to be examined.

*I thank David Rolston for his very helpful comments and suggestions on earlier versions of this thesis, and I am particularly grateful to S.E. Kile, whose guidance and feedback were invaluable.*

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