

ANDREW SCHONEBAUM

NOVEL

MEDICINE

HEALING,
LITERATURE,
and POPULAR
KNOWLEDGE
in EARLY
MODERN CHINA

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Andrew Schonebaum

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CHAPTER 3

Vernacular Curiosities

Medical Entertainments and Memory

The next day, the war drum of the Fan battle formation sounded like thunder. More than half of its soldiers were women. The Han camp drew up their troops. Shortly thereafter, Butterfly Bush Flower and Iris came out from the Fan camp to the beat of the drums. Holding swords in each hand, they challenged Mountain Arrowhead and Honeysuckle to come out from the Han formation and fight. The four women commanders fought more than twenty rounds. Suddenly, Honeysuckle slashed forth her swords and cut Butterfly Bush Flower's horse. Rearing up in pain, the horse threw Butterfly Bush Flower to the ground. Just then the two female immortals, Anemarrhena Root and Fritillary Bulb, came galloping in and fought with them in close quarters. Litharge jumped off of his Thorny Tiger to save his sister, and Iris fled back to their camp. Immediately, Fritillary Bulb used her Japan Stephania cane and Anemarrhena Root used her Dandelion weapon to fight with Honeysuckle. Then Anemarrhena Root went to fight with Mountain Arrowhead. They each displayed their unique martial skills. Anemarrhena Root suddenly took out a Gold Star Stone to blind Honeysuckle. Although Honeysuckle quickly dodged, the stone still hit her back and she spit up blood. Defeated, she fled. Luckily, others came to save her and return her to camp. Seeing this, Dendrobium was extremely worried. Privet said to him, "Marshal, ease your worries. In my opinion, your daughter is destined to face several calamities of blood loss, and although this wound is severe, it is not likely to take her life. I will give you a kind of medicine known as Drynaria Root, which is also called 'Repairs Broken Bones.' Cut it into pieces and apply them to the wound, and she will recover in a few days." Cassia Seed overheard this and sent some Spikemoss, also known as "Anti-death Grass" to take with it.

—*Annals of Herbs and Trees* (Caomu chunqiu yanyi), chapter 17

Annals of Herbs and Trees could very well be unique in all of world literature as the first, if not the only, full-length novel in which all of the characters have the names of pharmaceutical drugs. Not only are the characters all named after medicines, but so are most of their weapons and mounts, many of the locations in the novel, the battle

formations and tactics. Little is known about the author and nothing—save the preface—about his motives for writing such a book. Some believe it was written prior to 1688,¹ while others consider it a work of the Jiaqing period (1796–1820),² since the earliest extant volume that can be dated to a particular year seems to be an 1818 edition.³ There are records of least eighteen different editions printed prior to 1916, and the Qianlong period (1735–1796) seems to be when interest in the novel began, based on records of four printed editions published in that period.⁴ Editions were published in each subsequent reign period, usually one apiece, until the Guangxu (1875–1908), when four more editions were published between 1872 and 1908, and at least another two between 1909 and 1916.⁵ The preface claims that it was the Master of Cloudy Leisure (Yunjianzi) the sobriquet of Jiang Hong, who was responsible for “collecting and selecting” the novel, and the Man of Happy Mountain (Leshanren) who did the “editing and compiling,” but nothing is known of either. The title is a bit strange, and somewhat rare. *Caomu chunqiu* literally means “herbs, trees, spring, autumn,” but *chunqiu*, is usually rendered “annals” to indicate that such titles tended to record narratives of the state in chronological fashion. Thus, the title of this work could be “Annals of Herbs and Trees” or “Annals of Materia Medica,” since *caomu* was understood to refer to vegetation generally, or to medical drugs in particular. Most of the medicines in the novel are herbs, plants, and flowers, with an underrepresentation from pharmaceutical literature of stones, animals, and other objects. The *yanyi* or “historical romance” of the title points clearly to the book’s fictional narrative, and without it, the title sounds more ambiguously like a medical text, botanical work, or almanac.⁶ *Yanyi* signifies that this work is a novel but also suggests that it has been “novelized” or made into fiction from a previous account of true events.

Why this novel was written is not clear. The author’s preface states that he created the *Caomu* as a work of charity:

As for The Yellow Emperor tasting hundreds of herbs, it was to distinguish the spicy, sweet, weak, or bitter flavor of them; the cold, hot, warm, or cool nature of them; if they nourish [bodies] or enhance flow, or moisten or dry; if they can treat man’s diseases and cure illnesses. How enormous his merit is! Being influenced and moved [by this thought], I gathered many names of medicines and explicate their meanings in the form of fiction [*yanyi*] to spread it in the world. Although it partly seems a game, the novel contains in it metals, stones, grasses, trees, water, soil, birds, beasts, fish, insects, and the

like. Isn't it fitting to use these names to substitute those of heaven, earth, vessels and objects?⁷

It is possible, in the mind of the author at least, for a novel to be both a game and an act of service. The presumed entertainment value of novels serves as a delivery mechanism for this long list of medicine names. But he continues, subverting his previous claim by saying that “some ridicule this collection as depicting too much slaughter. Is it really because I hate medicine so much that I wrote it like this on purpose? I just created the novel by giving free rein to my writing brush!”⁸ The preface reads like a confession of writing a guilty pleasure, an illogical entertainment, and the author even calls into question his own charitableness by suggesting that his list of drugs all fighting each other to the death might be construed as his distaste for medicine. Circulating effective remedies was an act of merit, but it is not clear why circulating an extensive list of drugs buried in narrative would be as well. Perhaps the author considered his novel to be an aid to memory that would help doctors or pharmacists. Perhaps repackaging existing knowledge in narrative form was a way of making the difficulty of understanding the properties or of differentiating between drugs less difficult. Perhaps fictional narrative was the most effective vehicle to disseminate pharmaceutical knowledge. Perhaps the author simply could not resist a lengthy display of his own knowledge. Whatever the case, the preface to *Annals of Grasses and Trees* hints at the symbiosis of and pervasive tension between the novel's entertainment value and usefulness.

RIDDLES AND GAMES

Novels and encyclopedias contained many descriptions and explanations of how to play all sorts of games, from drinking games to word games to riddles. Some of these rely on the players having a high degree of botanical knowledge. Knowing something about plants and flowers had been part of reading and writing poetry since the *Book of Songs*, but gaining such knowledge was also a practical endeavor of men and women from their youth. Starting in the Wanli period a number of porcelain objects depicted both children and adults playing a game called “herb competition” or “match my plant” (*doucao* or *doubaicao*), a game dating from at least the Tang.⁹ This game is described in *Story of the Stone*, in which the participants (young female actresses) display knowledge of plants



Figure 3.1. Perhaps the earliest edition of *Annals of Herbs and Trees*. Kangxi era (1661–1722). Columbia University Library.



Figures 3.2a, 3.2b. (a) A scene of the game of “Match My Plant” played between two women on the cover of a porcelain box, Kangxi reign of the Qing dynasty. Collection of the Palace Museum, Beijing. (b) “Match My Plant” played between Zhen Yinglian/Xiangling (Caltrop) and others in *Story of the Stone*, chapter 61. From Gai Qi, *Pictures from Dream of the Red Chamber, with Encomiums* (Honglou meng tu yong), Waseda University Library, Japan.

and literacy through their performance in matching the names of plants and their symbols. One young woman says, “I’ve got some Guanyin willow.” Another responds, “I’ve got some Luohan pine.”¹⁰ In this matching pair, both “willow” and “pine” are trees, while both “Guanyin” and “Luohan” are Buddhist figures. One player says, “I’ve got a peony [*mudan*] from *The Peony Pavilion*.” Another responds, “I’ve got a *pipa* [loquat] from *The Story of the Lute* [Pipa ji, fourteenth century].” This version of the game “match my plant” recalls similar games played over wine. Like those drinking games (*jiuling*), the plant names are often juxtaposed in encyclopedias with other fragments of verbal literature.¹¹

Verbal games were often integrated into dramatic texts and became part of the dialogue. An aria sung by Student Zhang and Crimson in *Story of the Western Wing*, for instance, is filled with medical puns and deploys them for their literary and comic effect for readers who were expected to get the joke. The play finds Student Zhang desperately ill from longing for Yingying, and other characters make numerous jokes at his expense. Doctors have been called in, but their medicine does no good. Student Zhang tells the

audience that if only he could swallow a drop of his mistress's fragrant saliva, he would be cured. Crimson, Yingying's maid, arrives, telling the audience that Yingying sends young men to their deaths by making them long for her and then sending a prescription that will only make them sicker. Student Zhang admits that he knows his illness comes from lechery and that he has been invaded by a ghostly illness. Crimson offers him the prescription, explaining that each ingredient has its own use:

(Crimson sings:)

Cassia flowers sway their shade in the dead of night
Jealousy soaks the one who "ought to return."

(Male lead speaks:)

Cassia flowers are warm by nature, "ought-to-return" vivifies the
blood—what is the method of their use?

(Crimson sings:)

Facing the rockery, she turned her back and hid in the shade,
So the ingredients of this prescription are the hardest to find.
One or two doses will make people so.

(Male lead speaks:)

What should I shun?

(Crimson sings:)

To be shunned is the "knowing mother" not yet asleep;
To be feared is that "Crimson" might blurt it out.
Once taken,

It will surely "make the gentleman" "completely well."

(Crimson speaks:)

My mistress wrote this prescription out in her own hand.

(Male lead acts out looking at it. Bursting out with laughter, he arises.)¹²

In this aria the names of six medicines are used in a way that plays on their vernacular names and their properties. In the first line there is a pun on the words *yaoying* (waving shadows) and *yao yinzi* (something that is added to medicine to make it more palatable). Cassia flowers (*guihua*; *cinnamomum cassia*) are used as both a medicine and a flavoring for medicine. "Ought-to-return" (*danggui*) of the second line is usually identified as *Angelica sinensis*, an important drug in regulating the blood and for menstruating women, which is why, according to Li Shizhen, its name indicates the longing of a husband, akin to Student Zhang's longing for Yingying.¹³ Vinegar is used to treat swelling and sores but also to detoxify toxins of fish, meat, vegetables, and insects. "Vinegar" is also a common pejorative applied to young and callow students, as well as a symbol of jealousy. *Yin* ("to hide") also means a storage vessel buried in the ground. "Knowing

mother” (*zhimu*) is *Anemarrhena asphodeloides*, a drug used to treat “agitation, fever caused by yin deficiency, and the wasting diseases heat [due to] depletion [*relao*], corpse transmission and pouring [*chuanshibzhu*], and bone-steaming depletion [*guzhenglao*].”¹⁴ “Crimson” (literally, “the red maiden,” *hongniangzi*) is red ladybug—a constitutional tonic that makes one feel happy and vigorous. According to Li Shizhen, red ladybug is an effective treatment for the evil qi of confidantes (*xinfu xieqi*) and yin atrophy, and for bolstering vital essence or semen (*jing*) and enhancing willpower. When a boy is born whose father took a lot of this drug, the boy will develop into a man with strong sexual desire.¹⁵ “Make the gentleman” (*shijunzi*), according to Li Shizhen, takes its name from a Mr. Gao (official title, *shijun*) who used the drug to treat infantile diseases of all kinds, though it was also good for deficiency with heat, and for killing worms. “Completely well” (*can*) pronounced differently is ginseng (*shen*), which is good for treating the five types of overstrain and seven types of injuries, deficiency with dreams in men and women, and blood loss.¹⁶

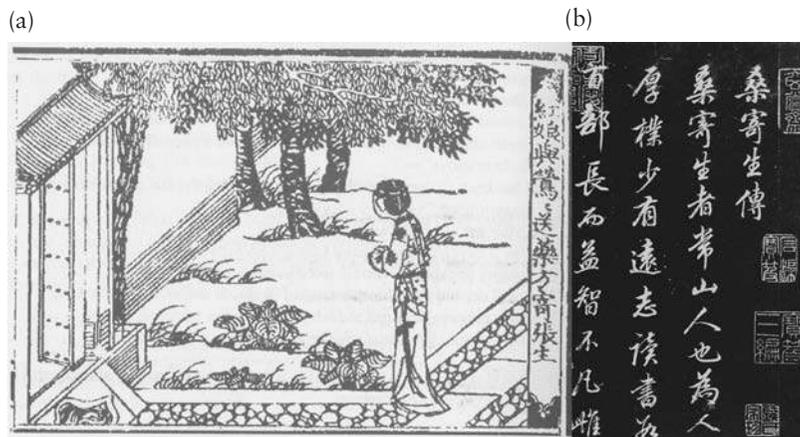
Given the medical knowledge expected of the reader (or audience member), the aria can be roughly paraphrased as follows:

Cassia flowers added to the medicine for draughts deep in the night,
 Angelica root soaked in vinegar,
 Taken face-to-face from the storage pit in the rear of the false rocks—
 This is the prescription that’s hardest to find.
 Don’t take this powerful diuretic before you go to bed;
 I guarantee this purgative [will get rid of what’s eating you] and a little
 bit of ginseng [will stimulate you].¹⁷

All of the medicines in this aria are related to diseases of love, longing, sex, and jealousy, which is why the Ming commentator Mao Xihe pointed out that Crimson is scolding Student Zhang with teasing language.¹⁸ The real meaning of this aria and of Student Zhang’s laughter is that Yingying is suggesting through Crimson that she is medicine for his illness. But if Wang Shifu was trying to incite laughter in his audience or in his reader, he depended on them having a ready knowledge of at least some of the most commonly used pharmaceuticals, their nicknames, and their uses. It is not just that the names of these medicines sound like something else—“knowing mother,” “crimson,” and “make the gentleman”—but the humor of this passage lies in the fact that these medicines, like Yingying herself, cure diseases of depletion caused by excessive longing (and sex or masturbation). Some believe that this sort of clever wordplay is

part of the tradition of the early prosimetric and vernacular narratives known as “transformation texts” (*bianwen*) of the late Tang and was a common feature of the urban stage in China. Certainly it was not lost on the Ming commentator Xu Shifan (fl. late 16th century), who pointed out, “The secretly concealed six medical names are *guihua*, *danggui*, *zhimu*, *hongniang*, *shi junzi*, and *shen*,” nor on Ming commentator Wang Boliang (ca. 1610) that this aria used the names figuratively; he said, “The six names of medicine all provide metaphorical meaning just like in ancient times when they used poems with names of medicine.”¹⁹ This kind of play with medical terms was not uncommon in dramatic literature, though this is a more sophisticated aria than others.²⁰ In this piece, though, the author does not simply rely on the audience to understand the joke; he relies on Student Zhang to understand it. Zhang has just acknowledged that his illness comes from lechery, but Yingying reveals to him through Crimson’s complicated aria that she knows it too.

Poems and literary games that employ medical knowledge appear in other genres of literature in the Ming and Qing, but they tend not to add much significance to the work in which they appear. While some texts, such as *The Story of Mr. Sangji* (*Sang ji sheng zhuan*, late Ming), employ the names of medicinals throughout, many works simply have a few flourishes of medical knowledge.²¹ In *Journey to the West* (*Xiyou ji*, 1592) for example, two poems feature puns on herb names. There is nothing consistent about the plants’ medicinal qualities, nor are they relevant to the plot of the novel or to the themes of fighting or warfare. Some commentators were not impressed by these poems, or perhaps by any such poems. Li Zhuowu (1527–1602) writes in a marginal note, “These names of medicines are irritating.”²² Poems of a similar nature are featured in *Plum in the Golden Vase*,²³ in the form of literary games such as those in which virtually every line contains the name of a fruit, flower, drug, coin, song title, or other specialty drawn from the realm of vernacular knowledge. The earliest extant works of this kind date from the Six Dynasties period (222–589) but became increasingly common in both elite and popular literature during the Song dynasty. These seem to have no other purpose in novels than showing off either the author’s talents or those of a character.²⁴ Superficially, *Annals of Grasses and Trees* does not seem, at least by design, to be much more than an extended version of this kind of word game. Its participation in a tradition of medical entertainments, however, suggests otherwise.



Figures 3.3a, 3.3b (a) In *Story of the Western Wing*, Hongniang takes Yingying's medical prescription to Scholar Zhang; Waseda University Library. (b) Rubbing of *The Story of Mr. Sangji*; Creative Commons.

THE PLAY OF CAOMU LITERATURE

The period in which *Annals of Grasses and Trees* was most popular, the late Qing, saw the performance of plays (*xiqu*) that also personified drugs and had plots designed to allegorize their functions, interactions, and properties.²⁵ Perhaps even before the publication of that novel, but certainly afterward, a number of such operas also had the title *Caomu chunqiu*. These were read and performed well into the 1930s.²⁶

Late-Qing and Republican-era medical manuscripts copy these plays with differing titles, including *An Illustration of Numerous Drugs* (Yaohuitu), *An Illustrated Study of Numerous Drugs* (Yaohui tukao), *Numerous Drugs, in Illustrations with a Musical Score* (Yaohuituqupu), *Tales of Herbs and Trees* (Bencao zhuan), *Records of Materia Medica* (Bencao ji), *Annals of Material Medica* (Bencao chunqiu), and *Opera on the Natures of Drugs* (Yaoxing bangziqiang and Yaoxing xi).²⁷ The variety of titles and numerous extant printed and transcribed editions attest to the popularity of these plays.²⁸ Those that survive all have either eight or ten scenes, but they were written in different regions and as such their content and language vary somewhat. Rural theater plays contributed mostly to public entertainment, but these seem to have been written in response to a perceived need for public education and for this reason have been

termed “pharmaceutical didactic operas.”²⁹ As the final rhyme in a 1932 manuscript copy of the play *Illustrated Study of Numerous Drugs* states,

Although all diseases are different, and each has its own cause,
A good physician will do his best
Everywhere to raise the dead and bring them back to life,
He also writes a play to be performed in the streets.

Tree and leaves, herbs and roots become fantastic figures.
Secret recipes assist to help everybody to be in perfect health.
If, in the future, the actors have performed this play,
There should be no patients any more.³⁰

The didactic and charitable impulse here is quite explicit.³¹ The lines claim that a doctor wrote the play but that it transmits secret recipes so that everyone who hears the play can treat themselves.

A late Qing manuscript edition of the *Caomu chunqiu* play has an identical table of contents to that of *Illustration of Numerous Drugs*, and the plots are very similar. One difference is that the former has two prefaces. The first records the story of an official, who in 1894 “followed the Eastern campaign of the Xiang army under General Xiong, and met an old priest on the way in Henan in the big temple of Zhangdefuku,” and who gave the official a medical book. The second preface is a sequel to the first. It tells how this official, from 1894 on, taught himself medicine: “Now, [I] gathered comments from all authors on a broad scale, excerpted their essence, corrected their errors, eliminated heterogeneity, supplemented omissions, explained what had not been explained before, and selected what should be the most important. And yet, I preferred not to be too concise in my words. Rather, my presentation should be fun. Hence, I compiled the piece *Caomu chunqiu*.” One version of the *Caomu* play with similar but not identical content dates from the Kangxi period, though it is possible that this record refers to the novel of the same title.³² Some of the late-Qing versions of these plays copied in medical manuscripts have a style of writing that indicates that they were copied from a printed book.³³ It is difficult to say which was written first, the novel or the play version of *Caomu chunqiu*,³⁴ but both became popular at the same time, and claimed to have been written for the purposes of charity, education, and entertainment.

There are some interesting differences between these pharmaceutical dramas. Plays with the title *Caomu chunqiu* are much

clearer and more detailed than the *Illustration of Numerous Drugs*. When characters come onstage, for instance, the *Caomu* does not introduce them with traditional designations, such as “girl speaks” (*danbai*) or “clown sings” (*chouchang*), but with abbreviated versions of their actual names. This is of definite advantage for understanding the plot if someone were reading the play, and it is a constant reminder that these are drugs speaking and singing. Both plays give dosages of the drugs to be used in pharmaceutical recipes, but they are more consistently given in the *Caomu*. This suggests that some versions were intended to serve more as practical textbooks, and others more as general guidelines. That these pharmaceutical plays were actually used in medical practice, at least by some, is borne out by a manuscript in the Berlin collection titled “Annals of Herbs and Trees, Rhymed Verses Used by Itinerant Physicians” (*Caomu chunqiu lingyi zhudiao*), which combines the play with the handwritten records of an itinerant healer. Another manuscript shows physical signs of use, with damaged margins and extensive marginal notes. The differences between these plays also suggests that they evolved over time. In the course of their transmission, either as texts or as performances, plots were revised and amended, and changed in accordance to medical theory and contemporary materia medica, just as other medical texts were amended, their errors corrected, heterogeneity eliminated, and omissions provided.

Household notebooks in the Berlin medical manuscript collection, such as the “General Notebook” (*Zongjilu*), which has entries from 1936 to 1951 in Ye County, Shandong, record both pharmaceutical treatments and various sacrifices. Sacrifices were made on many occasions, such as the seventh day after child was born, on children’s birthdays, when a child was ill, when a child was cured from illness, when a child suffered from pain in the eyes, when there was an insect plague, and when a horse was sick. The “General Notebook” records that to make or redeem a vow to a spirit, rather than making a physical offering or animal sacrifice on the altar of the spirit, one should sponsor a dramatic performance.³⁵ It may have been on such occasions that the plays centering on medical-pharmaceutical issues were performed. Other plays with medical themes, such as the legendary stories of the physician Sun Simiao, *King of Medicine* (Yao wang) and *The Story of Medicine and Tea* (Yaochaji—a case of poisoning and the medicinal tea that saves the day), may also have been performed

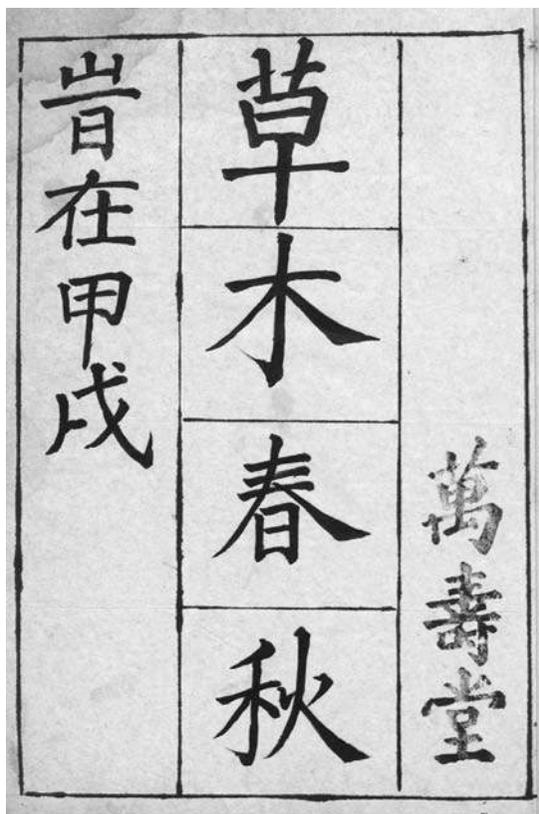


Figure 3.4. A medical manuscript that consists only of the complete play *Annals of Herbs and Trees*. The title page here is written to imitate the appearance of printed title pages, and carries what seems to be the studio/name of the copyist/owner, Wanshou Tang. The cover carries stamps of the bookseller. Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin—Preußischer Kulturbesitz, East Asia Department Slg. Unschuld 8095.

on these occasions, though neither of these plays seems intended to educate.

In the plays whose titles are *Caomu chungqiu* and *Illustration of Numerous Drugs*, the characters and plots are basically identical.³⁶ If they were meant to educate, their variety of entertaining and at times bawdy plots surely aided in keeping the audience's attention. The protagonist of the medicine plays is Gan Cao (licorice root), an

old scholar. He has a daughter named Ju Hua (chrysanthemum) who is engaged to Jin Shihu (dendrobium).³⁷ In scene 1 of most of these plays, titled “Zhizi is glib” (Zhizi douzui), four robbers, Da Ji (boor’s mustard), Yuan Hua (lilac daphne), Gan Sui (euphorbia root), and Hai Zao (seaweed), plan to abduct and rape Ju Hua. When she learns of this, she falls ill with fear. Gan Cao calls on his servant Zhizi (Cape jasmine) to search for a physician, but he is reluctant to go, and argues with Gan Cao. The second scene, “Monk Tuo flirts with a nun” (Tuoseng xi gu), cuts to Mituo (litharge), the priest of the Red Stove Temple, who flirts with the nun Ci Gu (arrowhead). Zhizi, searching for a physician, happens upon them in flagrante delicto. The priest and the nun drug Zhizi with monkshood root (*caowu*), rendering him unconscious, and they throw him on a heap of sweet wormwood (*qinghao*). After that, Mituo and Ci Gu return to secular life. When Zhizi regains consciousness in the next scene, “The bewitching snakes emerge” (Yaoshe chuxian), he sees two beautiful women who are really Black-striped snake (*wushaoshe*) and White-banded snake (*baihuashe*) in human form. Zhizi makes an obscene offer to them, after which they drag him into their snake hole. Jin Shihu, who happens to be looking for these snakes, arrives in time to rescue Zhizi in scene 4, “Shihu subdues the monsters” (Shihu xiangyao). He enters into a fight with the snakes and kills both of them. Zhizi says he is looking for a physician to treat Ju Hua, and Jin Shihu reveals that she is his fiancé. In scene 5, “Lingxian invades for the sake of peace” (Lingxian pingkou), Jin Shihu asks his friend Wei Lingxian (clematis root) to help him defeat the four robbers who intended to abduct and rape Ju Hua. After a violent fight, they defeat and burn the four robbers to death. Jin Shihu returns to Ju Hua in scene 6, “Seeking refuge with relatives at Gan Mansion” (Ganfu touqin), but the robber Mu (*muzei*, common scouring rush) plans to break in at night to rape Ju Hua and rob Gan Cao. His plot is foiled, and Jin Shihu and Ju Hua marry. In scene 7, “Hongniang sells medicine” (Hongniang mai yao), the story returns to Zhizi’s search for a physician. He encounters a girl, Hong Niang, selling medicinal drugs, and propositions her. The story returns to Jin Shihu in scene 8, “Calamity of the lost hairpin” (Jinchai yihuo), in which Shihu is traveling to the capital to take the examinations. On his way he stays at an inn run by Mituo and Ci Gu, who plan to kill their guests. Assisted by Zhizi, Shihu kills the former monk and nun. In the next scene, “Fanbie revolts” (Fan Bie zaofan), a foreign king’s son-in-law, Fan Biezi, starts an uprising and

(a)



(b)



Figures 3.5a, 3.5b. (a) The title page of the printed edition of *Medicinal Tea* (Yaochaji), formatted like a scripture printed for distribution and merit accumulation (as were many *baojuan* published in the Republican period). (b) its cast of (nonmedical) characters. University of Tokyo Library.

intends to invade China. Jin Shihu, who has passed his exam, and been appointed to the position of military doctor, is ordered to repel the invasion. A large battle ensues. In the course of the fight, Fan Biezi uses the drug sal ammoniac (*naosha*) to blind thousands of Chinese soldiers. In Act 10, “Gan Cao brings peace to the Country” (Gan Cao heguo), Gan Cao comes to Jin Shihu’s aid. He uses azurite (*kongqing*) to cure the eyes of all soldiers. Fan Biezi surrenders, and Jin Shihu returns in triumph.

So much action suggests that the intended audience was not very sophisticated, and that the purpose of such a play was to employ the structure as a comfortable rubric through which to disseminate practical medical knowledge. There are few diseases featured in the play—this was not the same kind of practical knowledge found in encyclopedias and formularies (this disease, this prescription). Rather, the knowledge transmitted depends on learning the hierarchy and interactions of the characters to discern the natures and interactions

of drugs, the sort of information usually found in *materia medica*. Perhaps this is why the play was copied out in medical manuscripts, given that much of the knowledge it transmitted was foundational for elite medical practice rather than for quick home remedies. These pharmaceutical plays seem aimed at helping the uninitiated to begin the study of medicine, to disseminate knowledge that could be used by laymen to detect the false prescriptions of quacks by understanding drug interactions. It is also possible that the unsophisticated playgoer may have had enough medical knowledge gleaned from word of mouth or life experience that they were able to use that medical knowledge to better understand the play—the interactions between characters, the alternate hierarchies into which their pharmaceutical namesakes place them, the attribution of gender or office to one or another drug, and the humor of base drugs brought into submission by powerful ones.

There are a few different ways in which medical knowledge is woven into the librettos of these plays. The most common and obvious are the drugs with leading roles. For example, when Gan Cao enters the stage for the first time, he introduces himself, “This old man’s family name is Gan; his personal name is Cao. His home is in the province of Shanxi in the district Fu [Fenzhou] in the hamlet of Pinghe.” Fenzhou in Shanxi is the primary place of origin of the drug *gancao*. The village of Pinghe (“peace and harmony”) is fictitious, but the name points to the mild effects of the drug and the ability of both character and drug to bring peace to the body politic.³⁸ Gan Cao then begins to sing:

Who is my equal? My nature is sweet and balanced.
 I am good at balancing all drugs.
 I am also good at bringing them together and at dissolving all sorts of
 poisons.
 My name has been famous for thousands of years.
 Simply apply me, and I will warm the center and eliminate cold.
 If roasted, I can be of help, too.³⁹

Gan Cao subverts the conceit by explicitly describing the natures and interactions of his pharmaceutical namesake, though they are reminiscent of an old man’s tolerant, honest nature. Gan Cao subdues the revolt initiated by Fan at the end of the play, which is an allusion to the drug *gancao*’s function of dissolving poison like the toxic drug *fanmubie* (*nux vomica*), the namesake of the rebel leader Fan Mubie. Gan Cao is awarded the honorary title of *guolao*, “elder

of the state,” which is one of the vernacular, alternate names of the drug *gancao*.⁴⁰

According to the concept of “eighteen oppositions” (*shiba fan*), a famous list of dangerous drug interactions which Gan Cao also recites,⁴¹ the drug *gancao* is “opposed” to the four substances *daji*, *yuanhua*, *gansui*, and *haizao*, the namesakes of the bandits out to rape his daughter. If drugs known to be “mutually opposed” (*xiangfan*) are consumed together, they will be toxic and evoke severe reactions in the patient. The play invokes this pharmacological conflict by portraying enmity between characters. It also illustrates drug affinities. For instance, the purgative rhubarb (*dahuang*) is often combined in medical formularies with the two substances hedge thorn (*zhishi*) and mirabilite (*mang-xiao*), and correspondingly, the character Gan Cao, working with Da Huang, has two assistants named Zhi Shi and Mang Xiao.⁴²

Toxic drugs tend to be cast in villainous roles.⁴³ A leading role in the play is the monk Mituo (Mituo seng). His name is a homophone of the pharmaceutical drug *mituoseng* (litharge), which is (mostly) lead monoxide, a toxic residue remaining in a furnace used to refine silver in Ming times and earlier.⁴⁴ It was also used to remove putrid flesh. The name includes the character “monk” (*seng*), leading the drug to be personified as an evil monk. Mituo introduces himself entering the stage:

Prepared as an ointment, the loitering monk Mituo cures sores and malignant boils.
 With liquor and meat he connects with his friends and is on good terms with all sorts of physicians.
 I am the monk Mituo from the Red Furnace Temple
 In the temple, the old teacher Silver was not willing to keep me any longer because my natural disposition is simply too poisonous.
 Many Mongolian physicians make use of me when they boil their ointments; they resort to me to cure sores and malignant boils.
 Every day I go out to many places to meet my best friends, and all we do is eat meat.⁴⁵

This statement refers to the preparation of *mituoseng*, a leftover of the alchemical processes used to refine silver, hence “the old teacher Silver was not willing to keep” it any longer. It is frequently used in Chinese external medicine to cure various types of abscesses and to remove rotten flesh, hence “it goes out to many places” and “eats meat.” Not only is the image of eating rotten meat off-putting, but since monks are not supposed to eat meat, it also implies taboo violation, adding to the overall villainy of the character. When Jin Shihu kills Mituo, he boasts

of having “smashed him and thrown him into an oil cauldron to boil an ointment,” a reference to the processing of *mituoseng*.

The opera structure allows for the easy insertion of poetry and rhymed instructions that were commonly found in pharmaceutical and recipe texts. In the *Caomu chunqiu*, characters also frequently quote verses verbatim from medical literature. For example, Mituo, Zhizi, and Ci Gu sing a verse often printed in pharmaceutical texts, the “nineteen fears” (*shijiu wei*), in which one drug’s toxicity or action is counteracted or reduced by another. Similarly, the Black-striped snake sings to her sister a rhymed list of drugs pregnant women must avoid that is found in many medical texts.

The play is interspersed with brief statements of proverbial medical knowledge, such as “whether it is sore or not, immediately drink a decoction with dandelion [*diding*]” and “for pacifying a fetus, mugwort leaf [*aiye*] may be fine, but one must add donkey-hide glue [*ejiao*] to see a wondrous [effect].”⁴⁶ Generally speaking, the author takes pains to work the medical knowledge into the story in a logical way—the libretto is not just a hodgepodge of rhymed instructions sewn together. For example, Mituo’s carnivorous inclination (taboo for a monk) is taken as an opportunity to discuss the medical properties of various kinds of meat:

Today I ate donkey meat; it excites wind and stimulates lust. I ate dog meat. Dog meat is warm; it strengthens the yang and benefits the kidneys. I ate mutton. Mutton is hot. It causes massive sores. I ate pork. Although it nourishes the spleen, it also has the disadvantage of generating phlegm. I ate beef. It supplements spleen depletion and is very beneficial to people. I ate soft turtle meat. It has a turtle shell that nourishes the yin and pushes back heat. I ate chicken meat. It has a chicken gizzard. It is in great demand to rub away amassments.⁴⁷

The plays repeatedly list groups of related substances, but the styles of such listings vary considerably. At times, drugs are mentioned together simply because their names all begin or end with the same character (such as *sha*, *zi*, *ren*, or *huang*), or because they contain homophones. For example, Mituo sings,

Bat’s dung [*yemingsha*] is able to cure sparrow eyes [i.e., night blindness].

Climbing Japanese fern [*haijinsha*] cools heat and opens the passage of water.

To harmonize the stomach and pacify the fetus, resort to amomum seed [*suosha*].

鳳凰風

第五回陀僧戲姑

義盛堂鹿記

副淨於陀僧
工傷引

浪蕩蜜陀僧熬膏治瘡亦酒肉結為友

相與家醫生白吾乃紅炉寺蜜陀僧是也寺內

銀老師因吾秉性最毒不肯容苗多蒙家醫

生用我熬膏代治瘡亦因此結為朋友每日間

只以吃肉為事唱我今日吃驢肉動了風淫吃狗

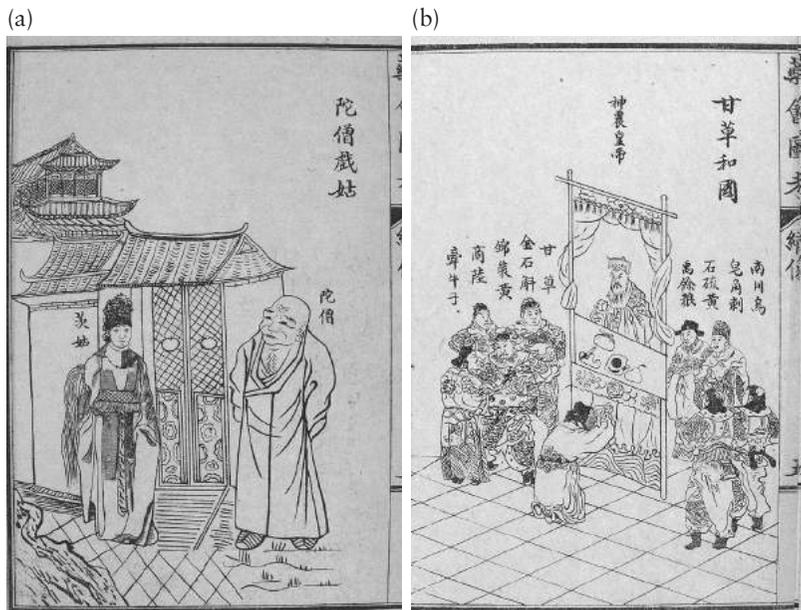
肉溫益氣壯陽吃羊肉白熱自瘡痕吃猪

肉養脾胃生痰有忌吃牛肉補脾土最能益

人吃鱉甲止陰退熱吃鳩肉用鳩膜磨積最神

白想我今日各樣肉無不可白今日跟只黃醫生

Figure 3.6. A Republican-era manuscript of *Annals of Herbs and Trees*, showing many writing errors (and calligraphy practice?), but with additional plot points and material added to the play. The scribe identifies himself at the bottom of the first line (Yisheng Tang, Lu ji). The scene is labeled as a “chapter” (*bui*), a usage more common in prose fiction and oral literature but which also appears, along with similar terms, in Pu Songling’s songs. Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin—Preußischer Kulturbesitz, East Asia Department Slg. Unschuld 88or.



Figures 3.7a, 3.7b. “The monk Tuo flirts with a nun” (a) and “Gancao restores peace to the kingdom” (b). From a 1935 lithographic edition of *Illustrated Congregation of Drugs* (*Yaohui tukao*), Wellcome Library, London.

To dissolve a swelling of the throat, there is borax [*pengsha*].
 To eliminate wind dampness, there is silkworm dung [*cansha*].
 To ease one’s heart and calm the spirit, use cinnabar [*zhusha*].⁴⁸

Printed pharmaceutical literature lacks these kinds of groupings, but they are certainly reminiscent of the many medical poems featured in practical medical texts such as the “Song on Natures of Medicines” (*Yaoxing ge*) that were designed to aid learning. Dai Baoyuan (1828–1888?), a doctor who compiled a set of medical verses, confessed that his reason for doing so

was really due to the fact that I was slow and not gifted, and I put myself in the shoes of [other beginners]. I was ashamed that I had not been successful in [Confucian] study. That was the reason why I took up medical studies with my late father. I was then already over thirty, and had lost the sharpness of the youthful mind. . . . Things in [medical] classics were forgotten almost as soon as they were learned, and it was not because I did not concentrate, but because of my age.⁴⁹

There was a perceived need for medical mnemonics, for practitioners or for the readers and audiences of plays. The presumption is

that medical knowledge is difficult to learn, which is why it was put in verse, but these medical didactic plays also presume that medical knowledge was not interesting, and so had to place the mnemonics in the context of an opera.

Elsewhere in *Illustrated Numerous Drugs* and *Caomu chunqiu*, pharmaceutical substances of a similar nature or action are grouped together. For example, when Zhizi goes out to seek the help of a physician named Huang Qi (astragalus root), he partly speaks, partly sings, “I think that Dr. Huang lives in the village of the Warmth family. So there should be many [family members] with a warm nature.” He then enumerates the male and female members of the family, all warming drugs, and the illnesses they treat. This speech is clearly a mnemonic device, personifying drugs with a warm nature as members of the same household, all of the “female” drugs being fragrant substances (i.e., having *xiang* in their names). This grouping relies on the medicine of systematic correspondence, but is also consistent with the taxonomy of practical medical texts that order drugs according to use.

Another approach to grouping substances is based on shared origins. In one scene of the play, Zhizi wants the medicine Hong Niangzi (red ladybug) is selling, but does not want to pay for it:

Female Clown [*choudan*]: You don’t look like someone who can afford to buy drugs!

Clown [*chou*]: How I look is none of your business. There’s a saying: The poor consume drugs, the rich pay for them.

Female Clown: If you think you can consume drugs without paying for them, you are wrong!

Clown: I don’t want anything for free. I just happen to have no money!

Female Clown: If you have no money, then why don’t you take drugs you can get for free?

Clown: Drugs you can get for free? Which ones are they?

Female Clown: Listen to me. (Sings:)

You could take “the yellow in man”
[*renzhonghuang*, a drug prepared from feces]. It is good to dissolve heat poison.

You could take “the white in man” [*renzhongbai*,

a drug prepared in urine]. It is capable of curing noma.⁵⁰

There is also sparrow droppings [*baidingxiang*], which can break up accumulations of poison.

There is also rat droppings [*liangtoujian*]. It relieves head-wind.

Then there is boys' urine [*tongzhibian*], which nourishes one's yin and brings down fire; as well as flying squirrel droppings [*wulingzhi*], which regulates the blood and stops pain.

There is also hare droppings [*wangyuesha*]. It pushes back cataracts and clears the eyes.

Finally, there are maggots in feces [*fenzhongchong*]. If the intestines are blocked, they can penetrate the blockage.

Clown: Are you saying you want me to eat shit and drink piss?

Female Clown: If you won't eat shit or drink piss, why should I give you other drugs for free?⁵¹

This aria is similar to Crimson's (and this Hong Niangzi might be referencing that Hongniang) in *Story of the Western Wing*, in which a prescription suggests that Student Zhang is suffering from a condition brought on by lust. But the medicine plays are not consistent in their pedagogical strategy. These plays employ the names of drugs as homophones or puns simply for the sake of wordplay, similar to the verses in *Journey to the West* and *Plum in the Golden Vase*.

Drugs grouped into prescriptions further illustrate the didactic impulse of these plays. For instance, when Wei Lingxian falls ill, he says, "Today cold evil has directed itself against my stomach, with the result of vomiting and pain. In my heart I experience turmoil; my intestines have diarrhea."⁵² His two wives, Zi Shiyong (amethyst) and Bai Shiyong (quartz), suggest the following:

Master is ill today; he must get some medications to cure his vomiting, disperse the cold, strengthen the spleen, and eliminate wind, and then he will be fine. (*Singing:*)

Take some beefsteak leaves [*zisyue*] to disperse the cold and bring down qi.

Take some esholtzia herb [*xiangru'er*] to discard summer heat and wind.

Take some Sichuan magnolia bark [*chuanhoupu*] to regulate the pain and dissolve the swelling.

Take some hyacinth bean [*baibiandou*] to benefit the spleen and harmonize the center.

. . . Zi Shiyang says: “Ah! Now, I too have developed a chill on my body. I assume I have been affected by something adverse—wind and cold. But I am not willing to spend money to purchase medication. What should I do? I have it!” (*Singing*;)

“I will consume some radish [*luobo'er*]; this will remove any distension.

I will drink a bowl of onion and ginger soup [*congjiang tang*]; this will disperse wind and cold.”⁵³

This scene teaches the audience how to treat a very common illness using the most basic, cheapest drugs and household food. The didactic impulse or charitable impulse to spread knowledge is clearer here than in the clever displays of knowledge found in the poems randomly interspersed in Ming novels, but these prescriptions are not common in the plays. What is common in these plays, however, is a great deal of information about aphrodisiacs, which is in keeping with tendencies found in practical medical texts. Mituo, for instance, recites such a recipe for men to enhance their potency:

Seven grains of clove [*dingxiang*] and eight grains of pepper [*jiao*], Manchurian wild ginger [*xixin*], dragon bones [*longgu*], and cuttlebone [*haipiaoxiao*], as well as a little calcined alum [*kufan*] mixed with honey, will let a girl of eighteen years sway her hips.⁵⁴

Providing the audience with such a prescription might seem to contradict or subvert the charitable impulse of these plays, but medical manuscripts, materia medica, and medical recipe books contain so much information about sexual dysfunction and aphrodisiacs that there must have been great demand for such information. The authors of these plays were at least sparing audience members from having to purchase such drugs from medicine peddlers, quacks, or charlatans. Moreover, Mituo's interest in aphrodisiacs serves the story in that it enhances his lechery and, as a presumably celibate monk, his villainy. These medical plays were popular in that they were printed and copied repeatedly, and were performed in different regions of the empire, but they were also popular in that they reflected the contents of popular, practical medical texts.⁵⁵ They

gave the audience what they wanted, and helped them to remember it, too.

Anthropomorphism is the most unique mnemonic device sustained throughout the play. Pharmaceutical drugs become people, and not only do they interrelate in a way that reflects the natures of drug interactions, but the characters are described in ways that reflect notable features of the drugs. In addition to the self introductions that included their primary functions and place of origin, a character's appearance, armor, horse, weapons, and fighting style could reflect the drug's characteristics. Cape Jasmine describes the foreign villain (*fanzei*):

(Sings:) When he was born, his complexion was that of green copper and he was able to cure festering eyes.

As an adult, he had red lotus hair and he was able to supplement involuntary seminal emission.

On his head he wore a white cockscomb and was able to administer a white girdle.

He wore pig-hoof armor and was effective in the management of anal fistula.

He availed himself of a horse the color of orange peel and converted phlegm and ended cough.⁵⁶

This character's description explicates the effects of the drugs copper rust (*tongqing / tonglü*), red lotus (*honglian*), white cockscomb (*jiguan*), pig trotters (*zhuti*), and orange peel (*juhong*), as well as their appearance. In this play, the evil monk, the irascible servant, and the cheeky medicine peddler all have similarly striking features that elaborate on the appearance and functions of the drugs for which they are named.

None of these medical plays is known to have existed prior to the Qing dynasty.⁵⁷ Still, personifying drug names and associating drugs with social roles have a long history in Chinese literature. Possibly beginning with the Han dynasty, drugs were categorized as "ruler" (*jun*), "ministers" (*chen*), or "assistants" (*zuoshi*), to show their role in a recipe that was believed to function like a social body: with one ruler at the top, several ministers below the ruler, and even more assistants at the bottom of the hierarchy. In subsequent dynasties, literati wrote poems in which the names of drugs were used to imply certain emotions.⁵⁸ When composing medical plays, authors had a variety of models upon which to draw, such as *Story of the Western Wing*, *Journey to the West*, and *The Story of Mr. Sangji*. However, the primary

aim of conveying pharmaceutical and medical knowledge to audiences by means of a folk opera appears to have been a completely new development in the Qing. The plays must have been the work of highly educated authors with a thorough knowledge of contemporary medicine, since they reflect contemporary concerns and discuss drugs that are not included in earlier works such as *Systematic Materia Medica*. These plays may have had an underlying purpose—to educate—but they did not lose sight of the crucial role entertainment played in the pedagogical project. A purely didactic play featuring the names of 550 drugs would likely have been as tedious then as it seems now, but the crafting of comic scenes, variety of word games, breaking of taboos, sexual innuendo, and regular use of low or vernacular speech were clearly employed to make these medical plays entertaining.

There is no way to know if these librettos were intended for performance. It may well be that the subtle allusions to certain pharmacological functions, as well as the passages with sexual themes, simply appealed to men of higher education and were written for their private reading pleasure. What we can be certain of is that these plays were written by authors with a great deal of medical knowledge, some literary and linguistic sophistication, and a charitable impulse to increase or standardize medical knowledge among those who could read—and perhaps those who could not. We also know from extant manuscripts and printed editions that they were used, annotated, supplemented, and commented upon.

ANNALS OF GRASSES AND TREES: A NOVEL

If the medical-didactic plays came first, the novel version of *Caomu chunqiu*, did not learn much from them. If the novel was first, the plays did not seem to garner much attention from subsequent literary critics. If the plays were meant to teach, or at least to entertain, the reason for the existence of the novel that shares their title is less clear. The sex, bawdy innuendo, taboo violation, witty repartee, and demons that entertain the reader or audience in medical plays are almost completely absent in the novel *Caomu chunqiu yanyi*. Its plot is completely different from that of the plays, and although almost all of the same characters reappear, they are often cast in different roles. The plot of the novel essentially has two parts. It opens with an introductory chapter in which Liu Jinu (wormwood) sits on the throne during the (fabricated) Zhongxuan years of the Han

dynasty (there is no discoverable dynastic period in the plays). He is a benevolent king, and the people are happy. The “old man of the country,” Gan Cao, along with two prime ministers, has helped to establish this long-lasting era of peace. The main characters are then introduced. The regional commander of Chang’an, Jin Shihu, has a large, loving family with two sons, Jin Yingzi (Cherokee rose) and Jin Lingzi (chinaberry), and a daughter, Jin Yinhua (honeysuckle). Jin Shihu, his sons, and his uncles are all skilled in martial arts. Jin Shihu was good friends from childhood with Huang Lian (Chinese goldthread), now the regional commander of the military in Yazhou, with three sons, Huang Qi (radix astragali), Huang Qin (scutellaria), and Huang Dan (lead oxide /minium). They, too, are well versed in the arts of warfare. The first chapter then moves to Buddha Cave on Mount Wudang, where Immortal Weiling (Chinese clematis) has four apprentices, but only one of them, Jue Mingzi (cassia seed), is unable to learn the secrets of the Dao.⁵⁹ Weiling predicts that the Kingdom of Hujiao (pepper), which is ruled by King Badou Dahuang (croton seeds and rhubarb), will invade the Han Empire, and he sends Mingzi down the mountain to assist Han.⁶⁰ Three years later, when Mingzi has quelled the invasion and restored peace, he may return to the mountain. Huang Lian visits Jin Shihu in the capital, and the two old friends agree to wed Jin Yinhua to Huang Qi. Yinhua had just recovered from an illness, and plans to travel to Temple Hai Jinsha (Japanese climbing fern) in Xuanzhou to redeem the vow she made to Guanyin when ill. Jin Shihu sends Jin Lingzi to escort and protect her. The first part of the novel (chapters 2 through 5) sees Lingzi and Yingzi set upon by bandits, but each is rescued by an immortal who brings them back to their abode and instructs them in medical and martial arts. They are told that they will see each other, and their parents, again in one year. Jin Shihu hears of his missing children and goes to wipe out the bandits. Shihu is joined by his brother-in-law, the regional commander of Xuanzhou, Mu Tong (*mutong* stem). With their combined troops, they defeat the bandits, and their leader, Tianzhu Huang (tabasheer), flees.

The second part of *Caomu chunqiu yanyi* makes up the bulk of the story. Chapters 6 through 32 follow the invasion of Han by Badou Dahuang and his army. The many characters from the first part of the novel are the primary heroes, particularly Jin Shihu, Huang Lian, and their children (Liangzi and Yingzi join the fight with new

powers), although the novel introduces over two hundred more characters, all of whom have the names of drugs. The great majority of characters are mentioned only once or twice, and many are the disciples of some more important figure. Disciples are to their masters as supplementing drugs are to a core drug. Each side has numerous victories and defeats, and each comes up with increasingly complex battle formations and increasingly severe weapons. Each side begins to draw on the talents of various immortals and demons that are loyal to their side, and employ their magic to inflict great losses on the enemy. Hujiao is joined by two other foreign kingdoms, but all are eventually defeated by a heavenly army of immortals called down by Weiling Xian and deployed in the unbreakable “heavenly web” (*tianluo*; luffa) formation; a *deus ex machina* that goes without explanation. Li Shizhen explains that when the fruit of *tianluo* (aka *tiansigua*) gets old, its fibers are exposed. These resemble the Channels and the Collaterals, which makes *tianluo* good for dredging them and for dispersing invading pathogenic wind, detoxifying toxin, eliminating swelling, dissolving phlegm, relieving pain, and killing worms. Hence, the name is useful in describing a weblike formation designed to purge invaders.⁶¹

The plot is thin, with little character development. Nor does it contain much in the way of direct speech, let alone banter. The complexity of *Caomu chunqiu yanyi* lies almost entirely in the descriptions and interactions of the many drugs introduced. The novel format allows for certain groupings that would be difficult in a play. For instance, Jin Shihu and his children all have names that are from the categories of herbs or woods, even though they share the common surname Jin (“gold”), and the novel takes pains in the first chapter to describe how Jin Shihu named each of his children, Jin Lingzi, Jin Yingzi, and Jin Yinhua. The author was drawing on materials more contemporary or popular than *Systematic Materia Medica* to make this grouping.⁶² The utility of these taxonomies is limited, though, because the drugs have nothing in common—their flavors, natures, origins, and treatments all differ markedly, they do not occur in prescriptions together very often, and it is only their names that have some overlap. The immortal Weiling, for instance, who in the novel is the originator of Daoism, has four disciples—Jue Mingzi (cassia sophera), Tian Xianzi (henbane seeds), Yi Zhizi (*alpinia oxyphylla*), and Yu Zhizi (*akebia* fruit—the names of which, aside from being medicinal drugs, sound like higher states that have been honed through spiritual devotion

(“clear decision,” “immortal,” “growing wisdom,” and “anticipation,” respectively). Classification based on these sorts of homophonic puns might suggest that the author was appealing to a readership with a bit more literary sophistication than the audience of the bawdy medical plays.

Some characters fight alongside others to indicate that those drugs are often used together in prescriptions, but providing the reader with useful recipes is clearly not a primary concern of the author. One common grouping, and perhaps the most significant for aiding memorization, is that of a character with its weapon and mount. For instance, Mituo is one of the primary villains in the novel. He is a powerful warrior and sorcerer and is put in charge of the invading army. He is cast as a villain, as he is in the plays, because it was a common role for strange monks in novels, who seemed particularly evil when transgressing their oaths of poverty, vegetarianism, abstinence, or nonviolence. The drug *mituoseng* is not particularly toxic or dangerous, though its uses enhance the monk’s evil image because it “eats” necrotic flesh and treats diseases of the nether regions—dysentery, hemorrhoids and anal fistula, sores and itching of the genitals, and bone infection due to having intercourse with a blood relation in the first month of pregnancy.⁶³ In battle formation, Mituo rides a tiger cihu (litharge) carrying a halberd huzhang (knotweed) in his hand.⁶⁴ He is associated with the tiger (*hu*) and the huzhang because the drug *mituoseng* was said to come from the Hu region.⁶⁵ But the drugs homophonous with Mituo, his tiger, and his weapon do not have much in common in terms of geographical provenance, effects, natures, or treatments, or as ingredients in the same prescription. *Mituoseng* also does not occur with or have much in common with his sister drug, pale butterfly bush (*mimenghua*), his master pumice stone (*haishi*), or king (*badou dahuang*). The rebus seems to mark a particular kind of allegorical thinking—it is blatantly literalistic, draws on homophones to signal basic information about a drug, and brings that knowledge to life.

The wordplay in the *Caomu* novel relies on information that is more like materia medica literature—giving natures, origins, or alternate names of a drug—than popular recipe books that pair drugs according to a taxonomic aim of practical remedy. For instance, the king of the invading country has the mandate of heaven in his own country, and is a good ruler. The drugs from which he takes his name, *badou* (croton) and *dahuang* (rhubarb), are two of the most

common drugs in Chinese medicine. *Badou* is toxic and a strong purgative, and it was used to treat stagnation in the viscera and bowels, as well as to facilitate urination, eliminate malignant flesh, and purge vicious agents such as invading ghosts or worms. *Dahuang* is non-toxic and is sometimes referred to by the name “military general” because “the drug pushes away the old and brings in the new, like a military general putting down a riot and bringing peace.”⁶⁶ Most of the prescriptions in which it is the primary ingredient are for treating accumulation and stagnation. “Attack” (*gong*) is one of the standard verbs used to describe the action of drugs that purge and break up stagnation, and it is likely for this reason that the author cast these useful drugs as benevolent invaders. One early Ming account criticizes doctors for thinking that it was always necessary to “attack and lead away” (*gongli*) stagnations of blood when treating traumatic injuries. It describes how, to treat the injuries of soldiers defending a besieged city, doctors used rhubarb (*dahuang*), switching to croton seed (*badou*) when they ran out.⁶⁷ Presumably these two drugs were thought to be pharmacological “doubles,” thus justifying the only such pairing of names in the novel. However, many of the most useful drugs in the physician’s arsenal were not cast in starring roles. Ginseng (*renshen*), to cite just one example, is a minor character in the invading army. Obviously (as we have seen with *hongniangzi*, *mituoseng*, and *weilingxian*), some drugs lend themselves to anthropomorphism simply because their names sound like those of a young woman, a monk, and an immortal, respectively. Other primary characters, such as *badou dahuang* and *huangqi*, were commonly used drugs in prescriptions, though just as often major characters, such as Fupen Zi and Mu Lan, are drawn from drugs that occur infrequently in pharmacopeia.⁶⁸ The *Caomu yanyi* employs vernacular knowledge of pharmaceutical drugs drawn from works of materia medica but rewrites it, not according to utility but according to literary logic. In this regard, it is like a “literati” novel in the respect that it relies on the reader having enough familiarity with the textual tradition to make sense of its rubric. But the texts it draws on were themselves compendia of all kinds of information, much of it popular and practical, and much of it reliant upon linguistic correlation, figurative language, and literary devices.

It is possible that the author of the *Caomu* novel had little practical medical knowledge or that he was just arranging the contents of some pharmaceutical text into taxonomic categories according to the



Figure 3.8. Mituo Seng frowning, riding a tiger and wielding a sword that creates a medical rebus. University of Tokyo Library.

demands of conventional military romance plots. He may have been criticizing the same sort of doctor lampooned by the author of *Journey to the West*, or perhaps he was even satirizing those who aped Sun Wukong in reality. In chapter 69 of *Journey to the West*, Wukong (“Monkey”) plays the doctor to the ruler of the scarlet-purple kingdom. He palpates the king’s pulses and prepares a prescription for the king’s illness. Wukong first asks for three pounds of each of the 808 different kinds of medicines to disguise the ingredients and quantities

of his marvelous prescription recipe (*shenmiao zhi fang*),⁶⁹ evoking the language of generational doctors rather than medically trained ones.⁷⁰ Wukong tells Bajie, “Bring me an ounce of *dahuang* and grind that into powder.” Sha Monk speaks up, “*Dahuang* is bitter in flavor; its disposition is cold and nontoxic. Its nature is sinking and not rising, and its function concerns movement and not fortification. It can take away various kinds of pent-up feelings and unclog congestion; it can conquer chaos and bring about peace. Hence its name is ‘General,’ for it is a laxative. I fear, however, that prolonged illness has weakened the person and perhaps you shouldn’t use it.” Smiling, Wukong says, “Worthy Brother, you don’t realize that this medicine will loosen phlegm and facilitate respiration; it will also sweep out the chill and heat congealed in one’s stomach. Don’t mind me. You go also and fetch me an ounce of *badou*. Shell it and strip away the membranes. Pound away the oil, and then grind it to powder.” Bajie speaks up, saying, “The flavor of *badou* is slightly acrid; its nature is hot and toxic. Able to pare down the hard and the accumulated, it will therefore sweep out the submerged chills of one’s internal cavities. Able to bore through clots and impediments, it will therefore facilitate the paths of water and grain. This is a warrior who can break down doors and passes, and it should be used lightly.” Monkey responds, repeating the sentiment, “Worthy Brother, you too don’t realize that this medicine can break up congestion and drain the intestines. It can also take care of swellings at the heart and edema in the abdomen. Prepare it quickly, for I still must use an auxiliary flavor to lend the medicines further assistance.” To this passage one commentator adds, “Bajie and Sha monk both have read some materia medica literature.”⁷¹ Another commentator finds Monkey’s prescription esoteric: “I fear that the ten famous Ming physicians also have not heard of this [prescription].”⁷²

Monkey also puts soot from the bottom of a frying pan into the prescription. “The proper name for this kind of soot is Hundred-Grass Frost [*baicao shuang*],” he says, “and you have no idea that it can soothe a hundred ailments.”⁷³ This soot, not unlike *mituoseng* (the ash residue left from refining silver), is good medicine, but the idea of feeding it to a king is a carnivalesque image that might elicit laughter in the reader. The humorous nature of this prescription is pushed further when Monkey requires half a flask of urine from their horse.⁷⁴ Laughing, Sha Monk responds, “Elder Brother, this is no joking matter! Horse urine is both pungent and stinky. How could you

put that into the medicine? I have seen pills made from vinegar, aged rice soups, clarified honey, or pure water, but never from horse urine. That stuff is so foul and pungent, the moment a person with a weakened stomach smells it he will vomit. If you feed him further with *badou* and *dahuang*, he'll be throwing up above and purging down below. You think that's funny?" It is doubly disconcerting that Bajie, who is himself the novel's clown, is worried that Monkey's medicine is a bad joke. Perhaps most interestingly, a chapter-end comment reads, "These days, there is no short supply of this sort of '*badou dahuang* doctor.' As for those who use *dahuang*, *badou*, pot soot, and horse urine to make a secret prescription, they know nothing . . ." ⁷⁵ There is no doubt that this scene is meant to be comical. Bajie has a difficult time getting the urine from the horse, and Monkey says he also needs as an adjuvant "the fart of an old crow flying in the air, the piss of a carp in swift flowing streams, the elixir ashes in Lao Tzu's brazier," and other similarly difficult-to-obtain ingredients. ⁷⁶ If these are unavailable, Monkey says, they can take the medicine with sourceless water, ⁷⁷ but in the end he substitutes dragon spittle. The humor of this passage is multivalent—all readers can understand that the king is going to be given strong and disgusting medicines, but for those readers who understand the natures of these medicines, and their practical effects, the scene is even more ribald, while showing how Monkey apes common practitioners.

Bajie and Sha Monk laugh when Monkey explains the name of his secret prescription to the king: "This is called the Elixir of Black Gold." Smiling, Bajie and Sha Monk say to themselves, "There's soot mixed in it, it has to be black gold!" One commentator had never heard of this medicine, saying that it had a strange name, but this only reveals his own highbrow background (or general ignorance), since "black gold" was the name of various prescriptions common among hereditary doctors. In fact, it was mentioned in the *Systematic Materia Medica* repeatedly, and Xu Dachun recommends it in *Medical Cases of Huixi*, so it was not exclusively the purview of nonelite healers.

"Black gold pills" (*wujin wan*) was a name and a concoction similar to "elixir surpassing [the value of] gold" (*shengjin dan*) and "black spirit pills" (*heishen wan*). ⁷⁸ All of them were core formulas that could be modified in their effects by ingesting them with different liquids. These "black gold" medicines, along with the likes of "the prescription offering Guanyin's all-encompassing help" (*Guanyin puji fang*)

and “pills prepared with old ink” (*gumo wan*), treated a wide variety of ailments (in one medical manuscript, twenty-nine, forty, and seventy-one ailments, respectively), and were extremely common formula in the Qing. The “black gold” formulas had at their core the drugs *dahuang* and *badou*. One medical manuscript from the Republican period states in its introduction, “Black gold powder [*wujin san*] cures all ailments, just as the wind bends the grasses. Other names [of this prescription] are ‘pine smoke elixir’ [*songyan dan*] and ‘black spirit pills’ [*heishen wan*]. It cures thousands of illnesses, just as the sun melts the frost.”⁷⁹

Black gold pills (*wan*), powder (*san*), paste (*gao*), and elixir (*dan*) were commonly employed to cure gynecological issues. A prescription named “black gold powder” was first recorded in the Song work *A Spring of Recipes in the Magic Park* (Lingyuan fangquan)⁸⁰ and was followed by references in the Southern Song prescription collection “Complete Collection of Effective Prescriptions for Women” (Furen daquan liangfang, 1237), *Formulas for Universal Benefit* (Puji fang, 1390), and other works. Over the centuries, numerous formulas, each with different ingredients, became known under the names “black gold powder,” “black gold pills,” and “black gold elixir.” The three designations of this formula result from the use of pitch (*mo*), a vernacular name for which is the “black gold” of these prescriptions.⁸¹

Monkey’s prescription reflects a historical reality, namely that the advent of the imperial pharmacy (*huimin yaoju*) in the Song required doctors who had previously relied on simple medicines with one or two ingredients to employ formulas with numerous substances whose composition followed theories of systematic correspondences.⁸² From this conflict between empirical and theory-based recipes arose a new type of prescription eventually consisting of a nuclear formula that could be adapted to the requirements of a given patient’s disease by omitting or adding individual constituents in accordance with his pathological condition. Monkey is preparing simple, trusted medicine at the core, namely *badou* and *dahuang*, and adding to it many exotic, unobtainable ingredients.

Badou features prominently, and usually with gynecological implications, in a few short stories of the late Ming and early Qing. Perhaps the most notorious is the alternately macabre and ribald comedy “The Female Chen Ping Saved Her Life with Seven Ruses” (Nü Chenping jisheng qichu, 1654), the fifth story in Li Yu’s *Silent Operas*.⁸³ In it, Geng the Second’s Wife, Geng Erniang seeks to protect herself

from being attacked by bandits who have overrun her village during the Ming-Qing transition. One bandit in particular tries to force himself on her. Erniang uses a rag soaked in her menstrual discharge to pretend that her period is not yet over to ward him off. On the second night, she applies *badou* around her forbidden area, so that its “jade skin became swollen, haloed with a purple hue. The deep slit rose to a shallow fold. There was no entrance door, because two halves became one. Though it still had a seam, it was very difficult to pry open. It looked like a steamed bun laid out for five nights, or rather, a mussel soaked in water for ten days.”⁸⁴ Erniang, an illiterate peasant woman, is compared to the resourceful Han tactician Chen Ping, who was famous for his stratagems, duplicity, and ruthlessness, hence the term “female Chen Ping.”⁸⁵ *Badou* here is medicine to repel men, and the description of its effects is both gruesome and coarsely comical.

The Geng Erniang story has a parallel in *Journey to the West*. It is funny, raunchy, and seems to critique the authority of kings, physicians, or both. This is particularly the case considering that Wukong diagnoses the heartsick king as having a “cessation of the menses” and then prescribes for him a common recipe to treat gynecological disorders. To understand this aspect of the carnivalesque comedy, or to realize that it was a mistake in the incorporation of medical materials into the novel, readers would have had to be quite familiar with medicine, at least enough to know that the medicine Monkey is preparing is consistent with his diagnosis.⁸⁶ Casting *badou* and *dahuang* as the invading king in *Caomu yanyi* likely does not reflect a negative attitude toward those drugs’ properties of purgation. It also does not seem to be the case that the author is critiquing *badou dahuang* physicians, since the invading drugs were all part of elite medicine too. If anything, the author is just as guilty of their overuse. Nor is the author of the *Chunqiu yanyi* making a clear distinction between domestic and foreign drugs. Some that are foreign in origin do seem to have been cast on the side of the invading country, but the author is not consistent in that regard. He does not regularly refer to the invaders as coming from the Black Pepper (Hujiao) kingdom. Most often they are said simply to be “Fan,” which could mean that the author was drawing on the medical plays or on some other source that discusses the foreign rebellion as coming from Fan, and being led by Fan Biezi, or it could simply mean “fan” in the generic sense of the term—“foreign.”

The *Caomu chunqiu yanyi* is thus not a cohesive or consistent allegory. There is no medical lens that adds meaning to the overall point of the novel.

Good, domestic heroes and immortals best evil, invading ones, but such situations do not correlate to the drug interactions. The overall story, the battle between Han and Fan, is not enhanced by the strange fact that all of the characters involved—and their weapons, mounts, formations, and many places—all have the names of medicines. If the author of the preface is to be believed, though, the benefit of this novel (other than simply naming medicines, which seems like a useless project given the availability of pharmaceutical literature at the time), was in the various groupings of medicine names that might facilitate memorization. While obviously sharing many of the categorical groups that we can find in similarly titled plays, the *Caomu yanyi* does take advantage of the novel form to group some medicines according to linguistic, homophonic, and symbolic relationships. The only other justification that the author gives for writing such a novel—that the *Caomu Chunqiu yanyi* was a useful method to disseminate medical information—is borne out in reality given its multiple printings and its fame as a literary display of knowledge.

Despite the claims of the author, the novel does not seem to be terribly useful, especially compared to the play versions of these stories.⁸⁷ So, if it is not useful, what is its entertainment value? One answer to this question was that it drew on the narratives and metaphors found in pharmaceutical literature. For instance, Liu Jinu is cast as the Han Emperor, likely because, as the *Systematic Materia Medica* recalls, the drug is named after an emperor:

Li Yanshou in his work *History of Southern Dynasties* [Nan Shi, 420–589] recorded: Liu Yu, with the nickname Jinu, Emperor Gaozu of the Song, was once leading his troops to conquer rebels in Dixin prefecture before he was crowned. He saw a big snake and shot at it with his bow and arrow. The next day, returning there, he heard a sound of husking. He saw a group of young lads husking herbs under a brush. When Liu asked them what they were doing, the youths replied, “Our master was shot by Liu Jinu and we are preparing drugs for him.” Knowing that the lads were preparing drugs for the wounded serpent, he realized these were not ordinary people. So, Liu asked again, “Why not kill Liu Jinu since he wounded your master?” The boys answered, “No, Liu will be a king and cannot be killed.” Liu shouted at them, and the boys disappeared. So, Liu took back the drug and used it to treat those suffering from battle wounds. It was very effective. Later the drug was called Liujinucao [herb of Liu Jinu].⁸⁸

Badou, as Monkey reminds us, is a warrior who can break down doors and passes, a statement echoing that of Zhang Yuansu, who is quoted in the *Systematic Materia Medica* as saying, “*Badou*

is a warrior that fights fiercely and bravely.”⁸⁹ The same text calls *dahuang* “the general who pushes out the old to make way for the new.”⁹⁰ The metaphors and stories found in pharmaceutical literature are the guiding logic for casting Liu Jinu and Badou Dahuang as leaders, since they are all drugs placed in a metaphorical military hierarchy, and all were used to treat injuries sustained by soldiers. The entertainment value in this regard is to highlight or develop the literary aspects already extant in materia medica literature. There are wars and alliances between drugs metaphorically scattered about and hidden in the classificatory structures of pharmaceutical literature. In other words, the *Caomu chunqiu yanyi* is not a medical allegory, it is a hodgepodge of collected medical metaphors, based on their descriptions, origins, and actions. *The Caomu Chunqiu yanyi* is pharmaceutical literature as entertainment; it highlights the literariness latent in materia medica literature and at the same time strips materia medica literature of its usefulness.

The *Systematic Materia Medica*, with the exception of some early chapters devoted to particular diseases and their remedies (*baibing zhuzhi yao*), gives a historical survey of each drug, along with first-hand accounts of its uses. Entries typically begin with an explanation of names (*shiming*) that discusses the drug category, followed by definitions and variant names as found in a wide variety of texts. Li often refers to the early dictionary *Explaining the Graphs and Analyzing the Characters* (*Shuowen jiezi*) in this section and gives his own opinion as to which name is most fitting, and which are not. Collected notes on origins, harvesting, and production (*jijie*) follow, with lengthy quotations from previous medical, historical, and literary works. Li provides his comments on each throughout. A section that expresses doubts and corrects errors (*bianyi* or *zhengwu*) follows, as do sections for adapting and preserving the medicine (*xiuzhi*), the smell and toxicity of the drug (*qiwei*), and indications and curing efficacy of the drug (*zhuzhi*). The last two sections of each entry for a drug consist of Li Shizhen’s and his predecessors’ experience with the medicine (*faming*), and prescriptions (*fufang*), including methods of preparation, quantities, and evaluations of effectiveness. In the narrative of one drug army invading the kingdom of another there no explicit discussion of any given drug’s properties, and when alternate names, drug affinities, origins, properties, or uses are mentioned, they are done so obliquely (though not necessarily subtly) through the historical romance paradigm.

If its compass and utility were far inferior to materia medica literature, at least the *Caomu yanyi* shared a similar general project: to classify and reclassify the potent natural world.⁹¹ The *Systematic Materia Medica*, according to some, was innovative in its reclassification of the entire materia medica according to a new logic that was to a greater or lesser extent motivated by the “investigation of things” (*gewu zhi xue*).⁹² The *Caomu yanyi*, clearly not beholden to the *Systematic Materia Medica*, reclassified materia medica according to a literary logic—that of linguistic correspondence and metaphors drawn from stories of derring-do. In this regard it could be said that the *Caomu yanyi*, rather than being a materia medica stripped of its usefulness, was rather an attempt to reveal the literary logic that tied these drugs together in a web of relationships.

Some were still reading and writing about this novel in 1926, such as Liu Dabai (1880–1932), who, for instance, suggested that the eighteenth-century comic novel *Which Source?* (*He dian*), a collage of standard sayings and clichés, was descended from “reductionist” literary ancestors, in which only a single aspect of reality, or single register of the language is used, such as *Annals of Herbs and Trees*, *History of Roaches* (Zhang shi, late Qing), and poems composed entirely of names of things from a certain category, such as stars (*xingming shi*) or medicines (*yaoming shi*).⁹³ Others in this genre would include *Story of Various Fruits* (Baiguo zhuan, late Qing), in which all characters have the names of fruits (which is apparently a late imitation of the *Caomu chunqiu*), and *The Story of Beheading Ghosts* (Zhangui zhuan, 1688), in which the world is described as being inhabited only by various kinds of ghosts. In some cases this limitation seems to have been chosen as a means of attracting special attention to a given area of literary virtuosity, but often the one-sidedness is clearly a device for satire and caricature.⁹⁴ Based on the number of late Qing and early modern editions, *Annals* was popular among readers, but it was also notorious for its peculiarity, and often mentioned in essays on literature. The twentieth-century writers Lu Xun and Mao Dun both mentioned it, although both recognized it only as a curiosity.⁹⁵

The *Caomu yanyi* does not feature any explicit prescriptions, as do the medicine plays, and very few characters receive medical treatment.⁹⁶ Since the novel warranted so many editions and at least one imitation, it must have been the delight in uncovering these drug names that made the conceit worthy of preservation.⁹⁷

Why, in light of so much Western medicine being transmitted to China, and of the decline of traditional literati novels, was *Caomu yanyi* reprinted so many times in the first decades of the twentieth century?⁹⁸ The preface to a 1923 edition recommends the novel despite its many demons and spirits, and its violence. It claims that the novel is worth notice for its “amusing” (*huaji*) use of medicines, and is nonetheless helpful and interesting (*zhuqi*). The modern preface places the value of the *Caomu yanyi* on its timely reminder of the threat of foreigners and its notable military strategies. Du Ji, the author of the modern preface, writes,

Thus, this book, the *Caomu chunqiu*, although it uses strange names, and features spirits and mad demons, yet its principles and results are deep indeed. Precisely because it is a book that startles [the reader] and reveals the fearful and unreasonable that it will enlighten the reader. For instance, take the simple narration and detailed language of the book. Its worth is deepened because it alleviates the melancholy of even those who peruse it.⁹⁹

It may seem odd to deemphasize the medicine in a novel that is so conspicuously titled (in this edition) *Searching for Hidden Pharmaceuticals: Annals of Grasses and Trees* (Yaowu suoyin caomu chunqiu, 1923), clearly indicating its function as a teaching text or medical word-search.¹⁰⁰ Yet, the value in reading the *Caomu yanyi*, at least to some, lay in the ability of its method to shock the reader into enlightenment—or at least alleviate his melancholy.¹⁰¹

NOVELS AS RECIPE BOOKS

In premodern novels, when characters discuss diseases or when a doctor makes a pronouncement, often included is the name of a prescription (without details on the recipe for it) or a discussion of the primary drugs to be used to cure the patient. But some popular and well-esteemed works of narrative fiction did transmit practical medical prescriptions. Two early novels (possibly the earliest) to include full medical prescriptions in their texts, complete with weights of ingredients and preparations, were *Sequel to Plum in the Golden Vase* and *Marriage Destinies to Awaken the World*. Both of these two novels seem to have had a didactic intent. The authors defend their use of the vernacular, saying that they were following the precedent of the great Ming novels,¹⁰² or that they used “plain” (*fuqian*) and “unrefined” (*li*)

language so that peasants and women would be able to understand.¹⁰³ Although these claims were not uncommon apologies for writing in the vernacular, the degree to which these novels borrow from daily-use encyclopedias and similar helpful sources is extensive.¹⁰⁴ The impulse to bring knowledge to readers may have been inspired by *Plum in the Golden Vase*, to which both novels are heavily indebted.

In chapter 49 of *Marriage Destinies*, the Chao family celebrates the birth of Chao Liang's son with a banquet, at which a Daoist guest thanks the Chao family with a prescription for smallpox (*douzhen*). His prescription gives the exact amount of each ingredient and the steps for making the medicine. In chapter 57, Madame Jiang sends a servant to fetch a pill (*lanji wan*) from her father, and the narration inserts a detailed formula for the prescription, ostensibly because it is a "marvelous prescription" (*shenfang*). Unlike the prescription in chapter 49, this one is set off from the text, as if it were a poem or some other quoted text. It likely was drawn from another source, since there are many pills with this name in contemporary medical literature.¹⁰⁵ It is also consistent with the impulse to propagate good prescriptions for merit, but why bury one in the text and make another so pronounced?

Marriage Destinies presents two other prescriptions that are set off from the rest of the narrative, both aphrodisiacs.¹⁰⁶ Prescriptions, it might be needless to say, are a jarring break from the narrative in the same way that novels written as vehicles for poetry often do not transition well between prose and verse. Like publishing poetry, transmitting these prescriptions was important, though perhaps not important enough to justify writing an entire novel. There are not many prescriptions in these two novels: *Sequel to Plum in the Golden Vase* gives two prescriptions in full, for stomachache and for cold (*hanzheng*), quoted in chapter 17.¹⁰⁷ Many other prescriptions are named but not detailed. In chapter two of *Marriage Destinies*, for instance, Grand Physician Yang is described as "a notorious charlatan. He was the type of doctor who would prescribe the 'Decoction of Four Ingredients' [*siwutang*, a medicine for blood disorders] for toothache and the 'Powder of Three Yellows' [*sanhuangsan*, a laxative] for diarrhea." Yang usually prescribes "the ten [ingredient] completely and greatly supplementing decoction [*shiquan dabutang*],"¹⁰⁸ a common recipe in early modern China, regardless of the ailment, sometimes with healing effects, other times with fatal results. Clearly, readers were expected to be familiar with these prescriptions, since the comedy would be lost if they were not. But it seems just as clear that the



Figure 3.9. Wukong and Bajie prepare medicine for the king in *Journey to the West* (chapter 69). Cornell University Library.

prescriptions that are detailed in these novels, while they account for a tiny portion of those texts, must have been there because the author assumed his readers were not familiar with them and should be.

It is difficult to say if any of these medical recipes were original. Some were available in daily-use encyclopedias such as *Seeking No Help from Others for Myriad Things* (Jianqin Chongwenge huizuan shimin wanyong zhengzong bu qiu ren quanbian), which is even mentioned in chapter 2 of *Marriage Destinies* as a book that Chao Yuan's

household owns. The prescription for stomachache in *Sequel to Plum in the Golden Vase*, “decoction for reversed cold of limbs” (*sini tang*), is reprinted in many daily-use encyclopedias of the time and likely borrowed from such a source.¹⁰⁹ Aphrodisiacs are often included in late-Ming daily-use encyclopedias, in which sexual cultivation (*fengyue*) was an essential category.¹¹⁰ Almost all such books also discuss the prevention and treatment of smallpox and related illnesses, and many devote a chapter to it. It is possible that these novelists were trying to enter into dialogue with encyclopedias and to correct or supplement what they found there. The inclusion of these particular prescriptions in the novel text suggests that the author had firsthand experience with them and knew them to be particularly useful, efficacious, and in need of propagation.

The Qing dynasty saw an increased interest in local charity work of all kinds, and some harnessed the charitable impulse to justify becoming a professional physician.¹¹¹ Some notable literary men pushed the well-documented defense of medicine as a charitable (or humane, benevolent, or *ren*) practice further.¹¹² Chen Hongmou (1696–1771), a well-known Qing scholar-official, wrote that even more than practicing medicine, “if kind-hearted gentlemen could share what they know [about efficacious herbal formulas] and post it wherever people gather together, then they will have accumulated more merit than giving away herbal medicines.”¹¹³ Printing effective prescriptions in novels may have been the penance authors needed to pay for writing them in the first place.

Some of the medical manuscripts in the Berlin collection include passages from novels copied by doctors who seem to have copied them simply for their own enjoyment.¹¹⁴ Other medical practitioners, though, read novels differently—making careful notes on the prescriptions they copied from novels such as *Flowers in the Mirror*, *Biography of Jigong* (*Jigong zhuan*, 1744), and *Record of Wiping Out Bandits* (*Dangkou zhi*, 1831).¹¹⁵ *Wiping Out Bandits* by Yu Wanchun was published shortly after *Flowers in the Mirror*, with at least twenty-two Qing editions, most of them in the Tongzhi (1861–1875) and Guangxu periods.¹¹⁶ *Flowers in the Mirror* was similarly popular in those periods, when nineteen of at least thirty-five Qing editions were published.¹¹⁷ Although *Biography of Jigong* was published in 1744, there were at least twenty editions in the late Qing and Republican period in Shanghai alone, with particular interest in the Guangxu period.¹¹⁸ All three manuscripts that copy the medical

information from these novels attest to their popularity, though none of them shows any interest in the novels themselves.

The practical prescriptions contained in novels do not bear any relationship to the narrative either.¹¹⁹ They are dropped into the novel, seemingly without any literary value other than heightening the realism of a quotidian scene. Setting prescriptions off from the narrative would have made practical bits of information easier to find and use. A variety of records attest to various people using the prescriptions from *Flowers in the Mirror*.¹²⁰ There was plentiful and real medical information in that novel, according to readers.¹²¹ A late Qing account remarks, “[*Flowers in the Mirror*] is filled with medical prescriptions, and they have never failed to have effect for those who employ them. Mr. Shen of Zhejiang has collected them in a book called *Tried and True Prescriptions* [Jingyan fang].”¹²² The recipe for a salve to treat burns taken from chapter 26 of *Flowers in the Mirror* differs slightly from the prescription found in *Systematic Materia Medica* (which in turn quotes *The Materia Medica of Food* [Shiwu bencao]). The *Systematic Materia Medica* recommends grinding okra (*kuicai*) and applying it directly to burns or scalds. The prescription in the novel says to mix fresh flowers from the okra known as *qiukui* or *jizhuakui* with sesame oil, and if they are not in bloom, to substitute rhubarb (*dahuang*).¹²³ The Wu Taichong preface to a Shunzhi (1644–1662) edition of the *Systematic Materia Medica* (originally published in 1596) laments that it “has already been in circulation for a long time, and yet most doctors do not use it for guidance, let alone the rest of the population.”¹²⁴ Presumably the *Systematic Materia Medica* and some other medical works were simply too large or expensive or contained too much information to sift through if someone was looking for prescriptions for particular problems. Or, if it had fallen out of use, it was perhaps because there were more people who had taken the practice of medicine into their own hands, and found the *Systematic Materia Medica* too difficult to use because of its organizational scheme, which starts with medicinal drugs and then explains what they are good for, rather than starting, as novels did, with symptom sets, then naming the illness and listing prescriptions to cure it.

Different materia medica books were written for different reasons, but their main use was to deepen practitioners’ understanding of drugs and their usefulness. The *Systematic Materia Medica* is enormous, comprised of over two million characters, and the length alone must have been daunting for anyone seeking to look up specific

information. Moreover, the *Systematic Materia Medica* was just one of roughly ten thousand extant medical books written before 1911, a quantity of literature that would have been overwhelming to a filial son who wanted to find a good prescription for an ailing parent, or for a local doctor who did not have extensive education. These were likely the people who found prescriptions in novels. In any case, whoever these users of novels were, it was partly because novels shared their content and, to some extent, format with daily-use encyclopedias and guidebooks to daily life that they could be so construed. The pharmaceutical knowledge they contained was more like the practical, middlebrow, and vernacular medical texts that collected good prescriptions, more like formularies that listed diseases and recipes, than they were like elite medical texts that discussed whole-body imbalances and debated warm or cold pathogenic influences.

The belief in the practical applicability of *Flowers in the Mirror* was widely held throughout the Republican period, with some even referring to it as a “scientific novel” on the basis of the prescriptions given out by the protagonist, Tang Ao.¹²⁵ Yet, despite the fact that Tang Ao is presented in the novel as being interested in the collection of a variety of kinds of knowledge and specimens, among which materia medica figures prominently, much of his materia medica knowledge does not seem to be exactly canonical. In one scene, he eats “walk-on-air plant” (*niekong cao*) that allows him to jump to superhuman heights, and during that leap, he finds and eats “jade paste” (*yujiang*), which turns him into an immortal.¹²⁶ But this did not seem to confuse readers about which prescriptions were useful, or about the fundamental utility or purpose of the novel. In chapter 27, Tang Ao’s sidekick, Duojiu Gong, uses “man and horse, safe and sound powder” (*renma pingan san*) to cure Tang Ao’s dysentery (*lijii*). Xu Xiangling’s marginal commentary says, “This prescription is truly effective, not simply idle theorizing.”¹²⁷ He claims that this is a tried-and-true prescription from the mid-Qing, saying that the earliest reference to it is Xu Dachun’s *Standard Criteria of the Orchid Dais* (Lantai guifan, 1764), and that it is also called “elixir worth a thousand gold” (*qianjin dan*).¹²⁸ Xu Dachun does indeed discuss this recipe, and clearly indicates that it is a “secret prescription” (*mifang*).¹²⁹ Xu Xiangling, familiar with this passage, must have believed that Li Ruzhen, like Li Shizhen, was popularizing secret prescriptions for charity and to combat quacks.¹³⁰ But Xu’s comment about the prescription being effective (*youxiao*) and

not just idle theorizing (*zhishang tanbing*) is also interesting because he does not consider that the prescription might be fictional, only that such medical recipes may be based on theory and not experience. The majority of prescriptions in *Flowers in the Mirror* do not seem to exist in previous printed literature, leading many to believe that they were the invention of Li Ruzhen himself—drawn from his experience (*yanfang mifang*).¹³¹ This is at least the case for those prescriptions that were put into practice. Whether or not Li Ruzhen authored the prescriptions in his novel, it was their perceived originality that made them important. That they were thought to be secret prescriptions (and therefore potent) made available through the widest possible method of dissemination, the novel, seems to have been proof enough that they were helpful. These may have been folk prescriptions, but, unlike many culled from that tradition, the prescriptions found in *Flowers in the Mirror* were deemed trustworthy because they had modest claims and treated everyday ailments.

Just as some in the mid- and late Qing claimed that novels such as *Warning Lights at the Crossroads* (Qilu deng, mid-eighteenth century) were fictionalized household instruction manuals (*jiaxun*), so they also believed certain novels to be instructive compendia of medical knowledge.¹³² *Flowers in the Mirror* explicitly claimed this role. Tang Ao expresses his goal of making effective medical prescriptions available to wide audiences. Duo Jiugong helps to heal Tang Ao's dysentery, and Tang Ao says to him, "Since [your prescription] is so efficacious, why don't you publish it and make it accessible to the public? In that way, everyone would be able to avoid this malady and they can extend their lives. Isn't that a great benefit?" Jiugong refused at first: "Our family depends for its livelihood on secret medical prescriptions. If I publish them, everyone will have the access to the prescriptions. In that case, who will still buy medicine from me? I know that it is meritorious to make secret prescriptions known to the public, but aren't I just adding to our troubles if I do that?"¹³³ In the conversation that follows, Tang Ao elucidates the benefits of making all hereditary secret prescriptions known to the public and eventually manages to persuade Duo Jiugong to publish his prescriptions. Duo says, "I will surely publish all of the secret prescriptions I've inherited from my ancestors, and give them out. In this way I will benefit the world *yiwei jishi zhi dao*."¹³⁴ This is the very prescription the medical manuscript (likely written in the early Republican period) copies into its margins.¹³⁵

Xu Xiangling said about the three prescriptions in chapter 29—“protecting pregnancy no worries powder” (*baochan wuyou san*) “iron fan powder” (*tieshan san*), and “seven *li* powder” (*qili san*)—“these three prescriptions were all hand-picked by [Li Ruzhen], and put out into the world for the public. It was his desire that this book would transmit them, echoing and validating the claim of the chapter title ‘transmitting wonderful prescriptions / an old man helps the world.’”¹³⁶ Xu Xiangling mentions only three prescriptions in chapter 27, but there are five. The other two are very simple prescriptions, juice from onions, wine, malt, shrimp, and urine, so perhaps they were not remarkable for that reason. But this omission suggests that Xu does not particularly agree with Tang Ao, who says, “The world is filled with wondrous prescriptions, but from antiquity these are rarely transmitted, and become lost. Perhaps it is because the ingredients are not particularly precious that people ignore them, and so many become buried. Now, knowing medicines that are of little value, [I] am able to cure disease . . . if you take the value of the drug in order to determine its worth, that is truly harming the common people in the extreme!”¹³⁷ In chapter 55, Tang Ao laments, “People nowadays have forsaken the old ways and esteem only luxury. Among the transmitted prescriptions that contain expensive and precious drugs, the common people see them regardless of their efficacy, and there are none that do not look like silver bullets [gods]. If the transmitted prescription does not contain valuable and precious drugs, even if it is effective, people look at it and ignore it, saying that buying it is of no use.”¹³⁸ Yet some readers thought these prescriptions of particular use, and *Flowers in the Mirror* intentionally charitable because its prescriptions were comprised of widely available and cheap medicines.¹³⁹ If readers of *Flowers in the Mirror* trusted these prescriptions, they were at odds with the Qing dynasty doctor Zhao Xuemin in *Listing the Elegant Practice* (*Chuanya*), who claimed that mendicant doctors always use terms like “honest,” “cheap,” and “ordinary” (*lian*, *jian*, and *bian*) to describe their prescriptions.¹⁴⁰ Since many mendicant doctors were recorded by the likes of Xu Dachun as being quacks, readers could just have easily associated cheap medicines with medical charlatans.¹⁴¹ Li Ruzhen must have been responding to this ambivalence when he cast characters as humane mendicants and proponents of simple, inexpensive (and unprofitable) drugs.

Some of the medical manuscripts in the Berlin collection similarly encourage readers to distribute one or another medical recipe to gain

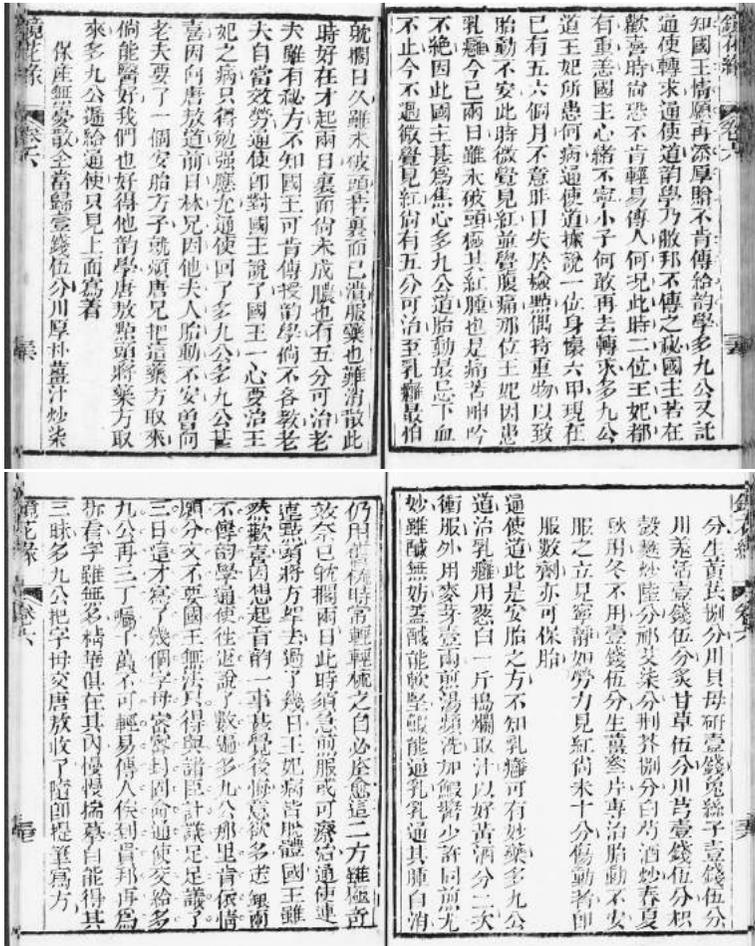


Figure 3.10. Prescriptions in *Flowers in the Mirror* for easy childbirth (top, indented) and for abscessed breast (bottom, within the text). From chapter 29 of the 1832 edition, Waseda University Library, Japan.

merit. In some cases, a message is attached to these “retributive recipes” informing users that they “must not be kept secret” (just as in others there are directions to keep it secret).¹⁴² Once a person has obtained such a prescription, he is obliged to pass it on and make it known to as many other people as possible. Disseminating such a retributive recipe results in reward, and keeping the formula for one’s own use invites disaster. In manuscripts that contain lists of

鏡花緣方
 治痢疾初起
 蒼朮 苦杏仁
 羌活 生熟軍
 川烏 甘草
 研末加兜茶服
 朮 杏 羌活
 二軍 烏草
 加兜茶

白附子 姜 蠶 全蠍 等分為末 每服二錢 酒下
 培中瀉木法 治伏氣 瘧泄 洞泄 及風痢
 白朮^{土炒} 白芍^{土炒} 廣皮 防風 茯苓 甘草 炮姜 吳芋 荷葉
 朮 芍 陳 防 苓 草 姜 芋 加荷葉
 補火生土法 治飧泄 洞泄 命門無火 久瀉虛痢
 附片^桂 肉桂^桂 羌 熟 故 紙 吳 芋 智 仁 芡 實 蓮 子
 桂 附 吳 芋 羌 熟 故 紙 智 仁 芡 實 石 蓮 子
 煖培卑監 治脾土虛寒 泄瀉 及冷痢 水穀痢
 党 參 茯 苓 潛 朮 吳 草 炮 姜 茅 朮 智 仁 葛 根
 米 礮

Figure 3.II. Medical manuscript quoting *Flowers in the Mirror* prescription for dysentery (*lijì*). Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin—Preußischer Kulturbesitz, East Asia Department Slg. Unschuld 8315

prescriptions, authors frequently identify one as needing printing and distribution. Some manuscripts also contain a “secret merit text” (*yingongshu*), which discloses single-ingredient prescriptions recommended for treating often-seen ailments. Retributive recipes banked credit that would later be spent by asking a spirit for help with another medical cause, such as an illness or a birth. Some manuscripts record prescriptions that were given out by a pharmacy.¹⁴³ Tang Ao’s predilection for simple, cheap medicines led some of his readers to think of his novel as just such a book of merit.

Some readers wanted to see the authors doing this work themselves, and so cast them as characters in a similar plot to disseminate medical knowledge to the masses. For instance, there are some stories (*chuanqi*) that feature the miraculous healing powers of *The Story of the Stone*’s author, Cao Xueqin.¹⁴⁴ In one story, “A Tried and True Prescription Saves the Villagers” (Minjian yanfang qiu xianglin), the reader is told that Cao “understood the ways of medicine, he knew efficacious prescriptions, and every day he gathered effective prescriptions from among the people in order to propagate them and thereby cure commoners of illnesses. Stories concerning his medical prowess spread far and wide.” Cao cures three cases of “yellow sickness” (jaundice, *huangbing*) by getting patients to eat live mudfish (loach). The first, a young scholar named Liu Xianglian, courageously perseveres in coming every day for three months and swallowing whole, large mudfish to cure his illness—this after Cao saved him from his attempt to drown himself in the lake. The narrative tells us that his faithfulness in following Cao’s prescription and their subsequent mutual respect led Cao to cast Liu in *Story of the Stone*. Cao modifies his prescription in elaborate ways for an old woman and a pregnant woman, demonstrating that he has real medical knowledge, and effects cures in all three cases.

Similarly, Cao cures patients with simple medicines after many preceding doctors have failed to do so. Specifically, he often employs Chinese celery, the *qin* (*yeqin*, *shuiqin*) of his name. In one story he cures a poor, elderly man of liver disease with it, and in another, cures a young woman of consumption (*lao*).¹⁴⁵ These stories, like the tale of eating loaches, emphasize the local origins, simplicity, and cheapness of the drugs, but also the ingenuity of Cao in thinking to use them, both tailoring the medicine to the disease and to the person who cannot otherwise afford medicine. Cao, like the typical good doctor in literati fiction, always turns down payment: “All of the medicine I

use I have collected with my own hands. I don't need a penny. I see patients and practice medicine in order to help the sick and relieve suffering, not so I can profit. It is proper for village and farm [i.e., ordinary] doctors to have this medical virtue."¹⁴⁶

Cao finds celery so effective for his poor patients that he buys a small tract of land and cultivates the celery that grew wild in the Western Hills.¹⁴⁷ He calls this plot Celery Garden (*qinpu*). That Cao had cured the young woman's consumption spread throughout the white banner, and many came from far and wide seeking his treatment.¹⁴⁸ These people did not call Cao by his given name, Zhan, nor did they use his courtesy name, Mengruan; they called him only Master Celery Garden (Qinpu Xiansheng), which pleased him. Thereupon he took Qinpu as his nickname. Another story similarly remarks that this is why he is known today as Cao Xueqin.¹⁴⁹ Cao, like Tang Ao, is made into a charitable doctor, though, according to the novels that feature them, both are poor. It is somewhat curious that Cao is chosen for this role, since the medicines in his novel are either very complex or clearly fictional, as in the case of Xue Baochai's "cold fragrance pills."¹⁵⁰

Authors, commentators, and critics of the late Ming through Qing periods continually emphasized the didactic value of traditional fiction. *Marriage Destinies to Awaken the World* and *Sequel to Plum in the Golden Vase* both focus on retribution; so it seems sensible that prescriptions might be included as an example of the sort of merit characters and readers need to accrue.¹⁵¹ If there is a relationship between the story and the prescriptions that they transmit, it might have to do with charity, and with helping others even if they seem foreign or alien. The mundane medicines Li Ruzhen and Cao Xueqin supposedly employed reflected the practical sensibility of literati medical practitioners who also read novels. To apply these fictional prescriptions and propagate them as effective cures, acts of merit, and ultimately evidence that *Flowers in the Mirror* was a "scientific" novel was to be completely unfazed by the fact that the story in which the prescriptions are found is brazen fantasy, even if that fantasy is satire. The authors of *caomu* literature took advantage of literary devices and formulaic plots to convey relationships between drugs, but the authors of novels such as *Marriage Destinies* and *Flowers in the Mirror*, at least to those who used their prescriptions, seem to have believed that they used narrative as a delivery mechanism for medicine, like a sweet coating or delectable adjuvant. For

them, reading fiction was reading everything but fiction. If becoming obsessed with fiction caused depletion and harm, ignoring the fictionality of fiction altogether and blithely appropriating bits and pieces of it for real, practical use was cost-effective, meritorious, and healing.

CHINESE CHARACTER GLOSSARY

ai er bu shang le er bu yin 哀而不傷樂而不淫
aiye 艾葉
an 暗
aza zheng 醃臍症

Badou Dahuang 巴豆大黃
Bai Shiying 白石英
baibiandou 白扁豆
baibing zhuzhi yao 百病主治藥
baicao shuang 百草霜
baidingxiang 白丁香
baihuashe 白花蛇
bangzi qiang 梆子腔
bao 報
baojuan 寶卷
baomen 飽悶
Baopu zi 抱樸子
baoying 報應
baoying chuang 報應瘡
Beijing chuanlai 北京傳來
bencao 本草
Bencao beiyao 本草備要
Bencao bieshuo 本草別說
Bencao chunqiu 本草春秋
Bencao gangmu shiyi 本草綱目拾遺
Bencao ji 本草記

Bencao jiyao 本草妓要
bian 便
Bian du 便毒
Bian du deng zheng 便毒等証
bianwen 變文
bianyi 辨疑
bie 鰲
biji 筆記
bingzhu 病注
bixie 辟邪
bixie meiwu e 辟邪魅忤惡
boming 薄命
busicao 不死草
buyang 補養

cai 財
caibu zhi zhan 採補之戰
Caizhu de ernümen 財主的兒女們
cansha 蠶沙
Caomu chunqiu lingyi zhudiao
草木春秋 鈴醫諸調
Caomu zhuan 草木傳
caowu 草烏
caoze yi 草澤醫
chang sixiang 長思想
changchuan chuanlai 娼船傳來
Changsheng dian 長生殿

- Chao Yuanfang 巢元方
 chen 臣
 Chen Cheng 陳承
 Chen Qi 陳綺
 Chen Qirong 陳起榮
 Chen Tong 陳同
 Cheng An 誠庵
 chengfu 承負
 chijiao daxian yubiao zhongzi
 wanfang 赤腳大仙魚鰾種子
 丸方
 chinüzi 癡女子
 chiren shuomeng 癡人說夢
 Chishui xuanzhu 赤水玄珠
 Chisongzi zhangli 赤松子章曆
 chixiaodou 赤小豆
 chong 蟲
 Chongxiu zhiyao 崇修指要
 chongyao 蟲咬
 chongzhu 蟲疰
 chouchang 丑唱
 choufeng chumai 仇風出賣
 Chu Renhuo 褚人獲
 chu xiesui 除邪祟
 chuan 傳
 chuanhoupu 川厚樸
 chuanqi yeshi 傳奇野史
 chuanran 傳染
 chuanran buyi 傳染不已
 chuanshi 傳屍
 chuanshi lao 傳屍癆
 chuanshizhu 傳屍疰
 chuanshi zhugu lao 傳屍注骨癆
 Chuanya 串雅
 chuanyan 傳言
 chufa 初發
 chungqian bing 春前病
 Chunxiao mixi tu 春宵秘戲圖
 chunyao 春藥
 chunyi yao 春意藥
 Ci Gu 慈姑
 cihu 刺虎
 Da Ji 大戟
 da laoer wan 打老兒丸
 dafeng xuanchuang 大風癬瘡
 dafengzi 大風子
 Dai Baoyuan 戴葆元
 daixia 帶下
 daiyi 待醫
 damafeng 大麻風
 danbai 旦白
 danfang 单方
 danggui 當歸
 Dangkou zhi 蕩寇志
 daotiejin 倒貼金
 Daquan tongshu 大全通書
 diaobai 吊白
 diaojiaosha 吊腳痧
 diding 地丁
 dingchuang 疔瘡
 dingxiang 丁香
 Disi bingshi 第四病室
 donger buxie 動而不瀉
 doubaicao 鬥百草
 doucao 鬥草
 douchi 豆豉
 Doupeng xian hua 豆棚閒話
 douzhen 痘疹
 Du Ji 杜稷
 Du Shifu 杜世福
 duanyu wan 斷欲丸
 duoqing duobing 多情多病
 duoqing zhen boming 多情真薄
 命
 e zhi yu cheng chuang 惡指欲成
 瘡
 e'chong 惡蟲
 e'chuang 惡瘡

- e'jiao 阿膠
 e'qi 惡氣
Erke paian jingqi 二刻拍案驚奇

 fabing 法病
 faming 發明
 Fan Bie zaofan 番驚造反
 Fan Biezi 番驚子
 fanglao tuxue 房勞吐血
 fangshi 方士
 fangshu 方書
 fangzhongshu 房中術
 fanmen 煩悶
 fanzei 反賊
 feijie he 肺結核
Feilong zhuan 飛龍傳
 feishi 飛屍
 feng 風
 fenglai 風癩
 fengren 風人
 fengyue 風月
Fengyue baojian 風月寶鑑
 fenzhongchong 糞中蟲
 fu 賦
 fufang 附方
 fugui bing 富貴病
 fuqian 膚淺
 Furen daquan liangfang 婦人大
 全良方

 Gan Cao 甘草
 Gan Cao heguo 甘草和國
 Gan Sui 甘遂
 ganchuang 疔瘡
 Ganfu touqin 甘府投親
 ganhuo 肝火
 ganran 感染
 ganzheng 疔症
 gewu 格物
 Gong Juzhong 龔居中

 Gong Xin 龔信
 gong'an 公案
 gongli 攻利
 gu 蠱
 Gua Zhi'er 掛枝兒
Guaizheng qifang 怪症奇方
 Guangdong chuang 廣東瘡
 Guangnan 廣南
 guantong qimai 貫通氣脈
 Guanyin jiuku fang 觀音救苦方
 Guanyin liu 觀音柳
 Guanyin puji fang 觀音普濟方
 gui 鬼
 guiji 鬼疾 / 鬼擊
 guijiao 鬼交
 guijing 鬼精
 guimei 鬼魅
 guiqi 鬼氣
 guisui 鬼祟
 guitai 鬼胎
 guizhu 鬼注 / 鬼疰
 gujing 古鏡
 gumo wan 古墨丸
 guobao 果報
 guofeng 過瘋
 guolai 過癩
 guolao 國老
 guzheng 骨蒸
 guzheng zhi ji 骨蒸之疾
 guzhenglao 骨蒸勞

 Hai Zao 海藻
 haijinsha 海金沙
 hailin de 害淋的
 haipiaoxiao 海螵蛸
 haishi 海石
 hao wanming 好丸名
 heiqi 黑氣
 heishen wan 黑神丸
 heishu 黑書

- heixianmao 黑仙茅
 Heshouwu zhuan 何首烏傳
 honglian 紅蓮
Honglou huanmeng 紅樓幻夢
Honglou meng tu yong 紅樓夢
 圖詠
 Hongniang 紅娘
 Hongniang mai yao 紅娘賣藥
 hongniangzi 紅娘子
Hou Shuibu 後水滸
 houpu 厚樸
 hu 胡
 hu feng 護封
 huaji 滑稽
 huaming liulu 花明柳綠
 huang 黃
 Huang Dan 黃丹
 Huang Lian 黃連
 Huang Qi 黃芪
 Huang Qin 黃芩
 huangbai 黃柏
 huangbing 黃病
Huanhun ji 還魂記
 huaxie bu jin 滑泄不禁
 huimin yaoju 惠民藥局
 Huizhou 徽州
 Hujiao 胡椒
 hun 魂
 hundun 混沌
 hundun bian wei wenming 混沌
 變為文明
 hushen 護身
 huxiang chuanran 互相傳染
 huyou 護幼
 huzhang 虎杖

 jian 賤
 Jiang Shiquan 蔣士銓
 jianghu yi 江湖醫
 jiao 角

 jiaohun 叫魂
 jiaoqi 腳氣
 jiaoshu 校書
 jiase shanghan 夾色傷寒
 jiaxun 家訓
 jie 竭
 jie fanxiaoyu 解煩消鬱
 Jie Shuihu zhuan 結水滸傳
 Jiehun shinian 結婚十年
 jiexuan 疥癬
 jiezhu wen 解注文
 jifabei 及發背
 Jigong zhuan 濟公傳
 jijie 集解
 Jin Lingzi 金鈴子
 Jin Shengtān 金聖歎
 Jin Shihu 金石斛
 Jin Yingzi 金櫻子
 Jin Yinhua 金銀花
 Jin yu yuan 金玉緣
 jinbuhuan 金不換
 Jinchai yihuo 金釵遺禍
 jing 精
 jing er chu 精而出
Jingbao 京報
Jinghong ji 驚鴻記
 jingqi manxie 精氣滿泄
 jingxu 精虛
Jingyan fang 經驗方
 jingyan liangfang 經驗良方
 jingzhong hanre tong 莖中寒熱
 痛
 jinqiang budao 金槍不倒
 jinshen 謹身
 jinyao 禁藥
 Jisheng bacui fang 濟生拔粹方
 jiuling 酒令
 jizhuakui 雞爪葵
 Ju Hua 菊花
 Jue Mingzi 決明子

- juhong 橘紅
 jun 君
 kesou lao Zheng 咳嗽勞症
 kewu 客忤
 keyi shuixing keyi yubing 可以睡
 醒可以愈病
 kongqing 空青
 kouchuang 口瘡
 kufan 枯礬
 kuicai 葵菜
 kuxiao shuo 苦孝說
 laimai 來脈
 lanji wan 爛積丸
 Lantai guifan 蘭台軌範
 lao 勞 (depletion)
 lao 癆 (depletion disorder)
 lao sunxue zhi bing 勞損削之病
 laobing 勞病
 laobing gui 癆病鬼
 laochong 癆蟲
 laoji 勞祭
 laoqie zhi zheng 勞怯之症
 laozhai 勞瘵 / 癆瘵
 laozhai huanzhe zhi huishengshu
 癆瘵患者之回生術
 laozheng 勞癥
 leishu 類書
 li 俚
 Li Guochang 李國昌
 Li Lou 李樓
 Li Ruding 李如鼎
 Li Shangyin 李商隱
 Li Ting 李廷
 Li Zhuowu 李卓吾
 lian 棟
 liancai 憐才
 Liang Qichao 梁啟超
 liangtoujian 兩頭尖
 lianrui 蓮蕊
 liao yuanji 療冤疾
 Liaodu geng 療妒羹
 liaozhu 療疰
 liji 痢疾
 Liming 黎明
 Lin Daiyu 林黛玉
 Linchuan meng 臨川夢
 Lingxian pingkou 靈仙平寇
 lingyi 鈴醫
 Lingyuan fangquan 靈苑方泉
 Linlan xiang 林蘭香
 Linzheng zhinan yi'an 臨證指南
 醫案
 lipu 曆譜
 liqi 離奇
 liqu 俚曲
 lishu 曆書
 liu 留 (leaves behind)
 liu 溜 (dribbling)
 Liu Chun 劉純
 Liu Jinu 劉寄奴
 Liu Yu 劉裕
 liuyu qiqing 六慾七情
 liyang chuanran 癘瘍傳染
 longgu 龍骨
 Lu Dahuang 路大荒
 Lu ji 鹿記
 Luo Guanzhong 羅貫中
 Luohan song 羅漢松
 Lüye xianzong 綠野仙蹤
 Luzhen 魯珍
 mafeng 麻風
 Mai Mendong 麥門冬
 maibing 賣病
 maijue 脈訣
 mailuo 脈絡
 mailuo guantong 脈絡貫通
 majing 馬經

- Mao Xihe 毛西訶
 Mao'er Xi 貓兒戲
 Meichuang milu 黴瘡秘錄
 meng jienei 夢接內
 meng yu guijiao 夢與鬼交
 mi jue bu ke qing chuan yu ren
 秘訣不可輕傳於人
 Miaoyu 妙玉
 Mituo seng 密(彌)陀僧
 miemen 滅門
 mifang 秘方
 mimenghua 密蒙花
 ming 明
 Mingyi lun 明醫論
 Minjia zachao 民家雜鈔
 minjian yanfang qiu xianglin 民
 間驗方救鄉鄰
 mituoseng 密陀僧
 mo 墨
 Mu Tong 木通
 muse er wang 慕色而亡
- Nan Shi 南史
 Nanshan jing 南山經
 naosha 礪砂
 neiyi 內醫
 nian huanong liulin 拈花弄柳淋
 niangao qisheng jiuwu seyu 年高
 氣盛久無色欲
 nianming 年命
 niekong cao 躡空草
 niniao qulai 溺尿去來
 niuma 牛馬
 nü'er lao 女兒癆
 nüeji 瘡疾
 Nüxian waishi 女仙外史
- Pan Jinlian 潘金蓮
 Pang Chunmei 龐春梅
 pengsha 礪砂
- pi 癖 (hobby/habit/mania)
 pi 癖 (hardness/stone)
 Pinhua baojian 品花寶鑑
 Pinghe 平和
 pipa 枇杷
 Pipa ji 琵琶記
 po 魄
 Puji fang 普濟方
- Qi Dezhi 齊德之
 Qian bencao 錢本草
 qiangyin yi jingsui 強陰益精髓
 qianjin dan 千金丹
 qianli fumai 千里伏脈
 qiema 切脈
 qili san 七厘散
 Qilu deng 歧路燈
 Qin Shi 秦氏
 qing 情
 qing duo yuzhi 情多鬱滯
 qingchi 情癡
 qingfen 輕粉
 qinghao 青蒿
 qingji zhiyang 情寄之瘍
 qingtian niehai 情天孽海
 Qingwen 晴雯
 qingzhi 情志
 qinpu 芹圃
 Qinpu xiansheng 芹圃先生
 Qinpu Xiansheng de yide 芹圃先
 生的医德
 qishang 七傷
 qisiren bu changming 氣死人不
 償命
 Qiu Changchun 丘長春
 Qiu Haitang 秋海棠
 Qiu Liyu 邱麗玉
 qiukui 秋葵
 qiuyi zhibing 求醫治病
 qiwei 氣味

- qixu 氣虛
 qizheng qizhifa 奇症奇治法
 quanying 全嬰
 qubing 祛病

 ran 染
 ranbing 染病
 rancheng 染成
 ranyi 染易
 rechuang 熱瘡
 relao 熱勞
 ren 仁
 rendong 忍冬
 rengui 人傀
 renma pingan san 人馬平安散
 renshen 人參
 Renzhai zhi zhi 仁齋直指
 renzhang 人瘴
 renzhongbai 人中白
 renzhonghuang 人中黃
 rishu 日書
 riyong leishu 日用類書
 ruxiang 乳香
 ruyi 儒醫
 Ruyijun zhuan 如意君傳

 Sang ji sheng zhuan 桑寄生傳
 sangshi 喪屍
 sangzhu 喪注
 sanhuangsan 三黃散
 sanqi 三七
 sanshi bao 三世報
 Sanshi zhongjing 三屍中經
 se yaofang huanle 色藥方歡樂
 sebing 色病
 selao zhi si 色癆之死
 seyu liangfang 色欲良方
 sha 煞
 Shan Bao 單豹
 shanbao 善報

 Shangbao 商報
 shanghan 傷寒
 Shen Fan 沈璠
 Shenbao 申報
 shenfang 神方
 shengji 生籍
 shengjin dan 勝金丹
 shenmiao zhi fang 神妙之方
 Shennong bencao jing 神農本草
 經
 shi 士
 shiba fan 十八反
 Shibao 時報
 shibing chuanshi 世病傳屍
 shibo 世薄
 shichong 屍蟲
 shichuan 食傳
 Shidao Gu 石道姑
 Shi'er lou 十二樓
 Shihu xiangyao 石斛降妖
 shijia buxi liuxue 嗜痂不惜流血
 shijing 失精
 shijiu wei 十九畏
 shijunzi 使君子
 shiming 釋名
 shinü 石女 (stone maiden)
 shinü 實女 (solid maiden)
 shiqi 屍氣
 shiquan dabutang 十全大補湯
 shiru 師儒
 Shiwu bencao 食物本草
 shixue lao 失血癆
 shiyi 市醫 (city doctor)
 shiyi 世醫 (generational doctor)
 shizhu 屍疰 (注)
 shouhun 收魂
 Shu bencao 書本草
 shufu 書符
 Shuibu zhuan 水滸傳
 shuiqin 水芹

Shuowen jiezi 說文解字
Shuoyue quanzhuan 說嶽全傳
 si nanzi bu de 思男子不得
 si seyu busui 思色欲不遂
 sida jingang 四大金剛
 sifu 思婦
Siku quanshu 四庫全書
 sini tang 四逆湯
 sixiang 思想
 Siyan maijue 四言脈訣
 songyan dan 松煙丹
 suibi wenxue 隨筆文學
Suitang yanyi 隋唐演義
 Sun Derun 孫德潤
 Sun Yikui 孫一奎
 suosha 縮砂

 taichan 胎產
 Taichan xinshu 胎產新書
 Taiping jing 太平經
 taiyi 太醫
 Tan Ze 談則
 tanghuo shaodang 湯火燒蕩
 tian bao chuang 天報瘡
 tian pao chuang 天炮瘡
 Tian Xianzi 天仙子
 Tiandi 天帝
 tianluo 天羅
 tiansigua 天絲瓜
 tianwang buxin dan 天王補心丹
 Tianzhu Huang 天竺黃
 Tiesha Shen Luzhen xiansheng
 yi'an 鐵沙沈魯珍先生醫案
 tieshan san 鐵扇散
 tonglü 銅綠
 tongqing 銅青
 tongshen jinjie 通身筋節
 tongsheng 通勝
 tongshu 通書
 tongyou 桐油

tongzibian 童子便
 Tu Long 屠隆
 tufuling 土茯苓
 Tuoseng xi gu 陀僧戲姑

 Waike Jingyi 外科精義
 Waike xinfa yaojue 外科心法要
 訣
 waishi 外史
 Waitai miyao 外臺秘要
 waiyi 外夷
 Wang Ang 汪昂
 Wang Boliang 王伯良
 Wang Kentang 王肯堂
 Wang Linheng 王臨亨
 Wang Mengying 王孟英
 Wang Ren'an 汪訥庵
 Wang Shizhen 王世貞
 Wang Tao 王燾
 wang wei ru 枉為儒
 Wang Weilu 汪為露
 Wang Xiangxu 汪象旭
 Wang Xifeng 王熙鳳
 Wang Yongjian 王永健
 wangyuesha 望月砂
 Wanbua lou 萬花樓
 Wanli 萬曆
 wanshengjiao 萬聲嬌
 Wanshou tang 萬壽堂
 Wanshou xianshu 萬壽仙書
 Wei Lingxian 威靈仙
 wei'e 畏惡
 weisheng 衛生
 Weixian chuanlai 濰縣傳來
 weizhan 帷站
 wenbu 溫補
 Woxian Caotang 臥閑草堂
 wu 巫
 Wu Bian 無邊
 Wu Wushan 吳吳山

- wuchuan 屋傳
 Wudang quan 武當拳
 wugu 無辜
 wuhuang san 五黃散
 wujia bao 無價寶
 wujia baozhen wan 無價保真丸
 wujia wan 無價丸
 wujin san 烏金散
 wujin wan 烏金丸
 wujin zhi 烏金紙
 wulao qishang 五勞七傷
 wulingzhi 五靈脂
 wushaoshe 烏梢蛇
 wuxing 五行
 wuyang wan 烏羊丸
 wuzang xu 五臟虛
- xiagan 下疳
 xiaji yile yi tanjing 下己遺了一灘精
 xiangchuan 相傳
 xiangran 相染
 xiangru'er 香薷兒
 xiangyan 香艷
 xianren zi tuoyi 仙人自脫衣
 xiao chou po men 消愁破悶
 Xiao Guanlan 蕭觀瀾
 Xiaoqing 小青
 xiaoshuo 小說
 Xiaoyou 孝友
 Xiaren 俠人
 Xibao 錫報
 xiebai 薙白
 xie'e qi 邪惡氣
 xieqi 邪氣
 xieqi jiaogan 邪氣交感
 xiesi wangdong zhi zheng 邪思妄動之症
 xiesui 邪祟
 Xihu Diaoshi 西湖釣史
- Ximen Qing 西門慶
 Ximen Qing tanyu de bing 西門慶貪慾得病
 Xin Xiaoshuo 新小說
 xinbing 心病
 xinfu xieqi 心腹邪氣
 xingming shi 星名詩
 xinguang tipang 心廣體胖
 xinqi xu er sheng huo 心氣虛而生火
 Xinxinzi 欣欣子
 xinxue haojin 心血耗盡
 Xiong Damu 熊大木
 Xiong Zongli 熊宗立
 xionghuang 雄黃
 xiuzhi 修制
 xixin 細辛
 xu 虛
 Xu Chunfu 徐春甫
 xu er duomeng 虛而多夢
 Xu Mingyi lei'an 續名醫類案
 Xu Shifan 徐士範
 Xu Zeng 許增
 Xuanze tongshu guang yuxia ji 選擇通書廣玉匣記
 Xue Lizhai 薛立齋
 xueji 血疾
 xueji dafa 血疾大發
 xuemai jingluo 血脈經絡
 xuexu 血虛
 xuhan 虛寒
 xulao 虛勞
 xulao fare 虛勞發熱
 xulao jingjie 虛勞精竭
 xulao mengxie 虛勞夢泄
 xure 虛熱
 xushi 虛實
 xusun 虛損
- yagan 牙疳

- Yan Shifan 嚴世蕃
 Yan Song 嚴嵩
 yanfang mifang 驗方秘方
 Yang Lai'er 楊萊兒
 Yang Xiuwan 楊琇頑
 Yangchong yaoyin 樣蟲藥引
 yangmei 楊梅
 yangmei chaung 楊梅瘡
 yangmei du chuang 楊梅毒瘡
 yangmei feng 楊梅風
 yangmei gan xie 楊梅疳瀉
 yangmei jiedu 楊梅結毒
 yangmei lixiao xiang 楊梅立消香
 yanguo 驗過
 yangsheng 養生
 yanyu 讖語
 Yao wang 藥王
 yao yinzi 藥引子
 Yaochaji 藥茶記
 Yaohui tukao 藥會圖考
 Yaohuitu 藥會圖
 Yaohuituqupu 藥會圖曲譜
 yaoming shi 藥名詩
 Yaoshe chuxian 妖蛇出現
 Yaowu suoyin caomu chunqiu 藥
 物索隱草木春秋
 yaoxing bangzhiqiang 藥性榔子腔
 yaoxing ge 藥性歌
 yaoxing xi 藥性戲
 yaoying 搖影
 Ye Tianshi 葉天士
 yemingsha 夜明砂
 yeqin 野芹
 yeshi 野史
 yezhang 業障
 yi 醫, 醫
 yi nai renshu 醫乃仁術
 Yi Zhizi 益智子
 yi'an 醫案
 Yibuquanlu 醫部全錄
 yichuan 衣傳
 yige chuan yige 一個傳一個
 yijing lao 遺精癆
 yijing lun 遺精論
 yijing mengxie 遺精夢泄
 yilin 醫林
 yin 淫 (sexual desire)
 yin 銀 (silver)
 yincang yaoming 隱藏藥名
 Yinglie zhuan 英烈傳
 yingongshu 陰功書
 yinguo 因果
 yingyan liangfang 應驗良方
 yinhan 陰寒
 yinqi 陰器
 yinsang 淫喪
 yinshui siyuan 飲水思源
 yinxie zhi ren 淫邪之人
 yinxu 陰虛
 yinyang 陰癢
 yinyang shui 陰陽水
 yinyang yi 陰陽易
 yinyi 淫醫
 yiseng suochuan 異僧所傳
 Yisheng tang 義盛堂
 Yishu zachao 醫書雜抄
 Yixue juyu 醫學舉隅
 yiwei jishi zhi dao 以為濟世之道
 yixue 醫學
 yiyin 意淫
 yizhi 益智
 yong yi 庸醫
 yongju 癰疽
 Yongxi yaofu 雍熙藥府
 yongxin guodu 用心過度
 you shi wei zheng 有詩為證
 youchou silu 憂愁思慮
 Youxi bao 遊戲報
 youxiao 有效
 youyu 憂鬱

- yu 欲
 Yu Bo 虞博
 Yu Chu xinzhi 虞初新志
 Yu niang 俞娘
 yu nanzi er bu ke de 欲男子而不可得
 yu taiguo 欲太過
 Yu Wanchun 俞萬春
 yu yi cheng bing 鬱抑成病
 Yu Zhizi 預知子
 Yuan Hongdao 袁宏道
 Yuan Hua 芫花
 yuanji 冤疾
 yuanjia 冤家
 yuannie 冤孽
 yuannie zhi zheng 冤孽之症
 yuanqi 元氣
 yuanye 冤業
 yuanye zhi zheng 冤業之症
 yuanzhi 遠志
 yuhuo 慾火
 Yuji weiyi 玉機微義
 yujiang 玉漿
 yujie 鬱結
 yujie buzhi bing 鬱結不足之病
 yujie yu zhong er busui 鬱結於中而不遂
 yukou 魚口
 yunu 鬱怒
 yuyi 禦醫
 yuzheng 郁症

 zao 燥
 zao hundun er po tianhuang 鑿混沌而破天荒
 zaokai hundun 鑿開混沌
 zaomen 燥悶
 zhai 瘵
 zhan 沾

 zhang 瘴
 Zhang Chao 張潮
 Zhang Lu 張潞
 Zhang shi 蟑史
 Zhang Shushen 張書紳
 Zhang Xinzhi 張新之
 Zhang Zhupo 張竹坡
 zhangbu 帳簿
 zhangchuang 杖瘡
 zhangqi 瘴氣
 Zhangui zhuan 斬鬼傳
 zhanran 沾染
 Zhao Boyun 趙柏雲
 Zhao Xuemin 趙學敏
 zhaohun 招魂
 Zheng En 鄭恩
 zheng ren 正人
 zhenbian 針砭
 Zhengdao 證道
 zhenguai 鎮怪
 zhengjia 癥瘕
 zhengwu 正誤
 zhengyin haobo 徵引浩博
 Zhengzhi zhunsheng 證治準繩
 zhi humei fang 治狐媚方
 zhi huofu 知禍福
 zhi yebing fang 治噎病方
 zhibing douxiao 治病都效
 zhiguai 志怪
 zhimu 知母
 zhishang tanbing 紙上談兵
 zhizhu 蜘蛛
 Zhizi 梔子
 Zhizi douzui 梔子鬥嘴
 zhong'e 中惡
 Zhongguo yaoxue dacidian 中國藥學大詞典
 Zhou Yi 周義
 Zhou Zhigan 周之幹
 zhongzi 種子

zhongzi fangfa 種子方法

zhu 疰 or 注

Zhu Xi 朱熹

zhuangyang dan 壯陽丹

Zhubing yuanhou lun 諸病源候
論

zhulan gen 珠蘭根

Zhulin Yeshi 株林野史

zhuqi 助趣

zhusha 朱砂

zhuti 豬蹄

zhuyi 諸夷

zhuzhi 主治

zi 子

Zi Shiying 紫石英

zidi 子弟

zisuye 紫蘇葉

Zongjilu 總記錄

zou moru huo 走魔入火

zoufang yi 走方醫

Zu Taizhi zhiguai 祖台之志怪

Zuixing shi 醉醒石

zuoshi 佐使

3. VERNACULAR CURIOSITIES

1. Zhang Jun, *Qingdai xiaoshuo shi*, 131. Columbia University, Harvard University, and the National Library of China have editions that they date to this period on the basis of its Kangxi-era (1661–1722) publisher, Zuile Tang. Sun Dianqi also records that it is a work of the Kangxi period, as does Wang Qingyuan. Zhao Chunhui claims the author was Wang Jia (zi, Jieren; 1610–1684) (“zuoze chutan,” 83).

2. Tian Zhiwen, *Caomu chunqiu yanyi*, 25; Ōtsuka, *Zōho chūgoku tsūzoku shōsetsu*, 155–56.

3. Zhu Yixuan, *Zhongguo gudai xiaoshuo*, 621; this volume is recorded in *Zhongguo tongshu xiaoshuo zongmu tiyao*, 570.

4. Wang Qingyuan et al., *Xiaoshuo shufang lu*, 87. See also Ōtsuka Hidetaka, *Zōho chūgoku tsūzoku shōsetsu*, 155–56.

5. There are two editions that Wang Qingyuan is unable to date, one that employed woodblock printing, and one that was printed lithographically, a technology introduced into China in the late nineteenth century. The latter may also date to this late Qing era, when popular fiction from the Ming and Qing was published en masse in Shanghai. See Pan Jianguo, “Metal Typography,” 562–70.

6. Among the medical texts that predate the *Caomu chunqiu yanyi* and have similar titles are Ji Han’s *Observations of Herbs and Woods in the South* (Ji Han nanfang caomuzhuang), Taiqing’s *Herbal Prescriptions* (Taiqing caomu fang), Lu Ji’s *Book of Herbs* (Caomu shu), and Ye Ziqi’s *Herbs* (Caomu zi).

7. *Caomu chunqiu yanyi*, “zixu,” 1a–b.

8. *Ibid.*, 1a.

9. Bartholomew, “One Hundred Children,” 71.

10. *Story of the Stone*, chapter 62, 211.

11. See Shang Wei, “*Jinping mei*,” 194.

12. West and Idema, *Orphan of Zhao*, 219–20.

13. Li, *Bencao gangmu*, 14.01. Li Shizhen also quotes Chen Cheng (fl. 1086–1094), *Materia Medica with Additional Comments* (Bencao bieshuo) as saying, “When both blood and vital energy are displaced, *danggui* can lead them back and bring peace to the overall condition. So the name *danggui*, ‘should come back,’ can be explained as blood and vital energy ‘should go back to their original places.’”

14. Li, *Bencao gangmu*, 12.10. Although *Story of the Western Wing* predates *Systematic Materia Medica*, I use it for the sake of consistency and because it quotes many texts prior to the Yuan, when the play was written.

15. Li, *Bencao gangmu*, 40.4.

16. *Ibid.*, 12.03.

17. I follow the translation of West and Idema, *Story of the Western Wing*, 220, with minor changes.

18. Wang Shifu, *Jiping jiaozhu xixiang ji*, 137.

19. *Ibid.*, 137.

20. According to *Story of the Western Wing* commentators, many *sanqu* “conceal the names of medicines” (*yincang yaoming*), and all with didactic intent. *Ibid.*, 138.

21. At first glance, the *Story of Mr. Sangji* by the Ming author Xiao Guanlan (early sixteenth century?) appears to be a person's biography. However, almost every phrase employs the name of a drug. The first few sentences read, "Mr. Sangji [tree fungus], a man of Changshan [*Radix dichroae febrifugae*], was kind and straightforward [*houpu*; *magnolia officinalis*] toward others. When young, he had far-reaching ambition [*yuanzhi*; milkwort], he attended school and read several hundred books [*baibu*; *stemona*], as he got older, he became extraordinarily intelligent [*yizhi*; *Alpinia oxyphylla*, a type of ginger]."

22. Li Zhuowu *pingben Xiyou ji*, 28.4b.

23. *Plum in the Golden Vase*, chapters 33 and 61 (2:269–70 and 4:38–39).

24. Chen Jingji sings one such poem in *Plum in the Golden Vase*, 2.271.

25. Tian Zhiwen, *Caomu chunqiu yanyi*, 25.

26. The Berlin Medical Manuscript collection has a copy, in the back of which is written information about real estate in the area, including how much land was occupied by a school, and how much it paid in fees for journals and newspapers in 1931 and 1932. Unschuld and Zheng, *Chinese Traditional Healing*, 912–20. The China Academy for Traditional Chinese Medicine has a copy of the drama *Illustration of Numerous Pharmaceutical Drugs* (Yaohui tu), dated 1935.

27. Rhythmic-block melodies (*bangzi qiang*) was a form of local opera found in Shangxi, Henan, Hebei, Shandong, and so on. I generally use the words "drama," "play," and "opera" interchangeably because I focus on content, audience, and the written text without regard for literary merit or generic distinctions.

28. Seven of the 881 medical manuscripts in the Berlin collection copy these plays, though some are missing one or two scenes.

29. Unschuld and Zheng (*Chinese Traditional Healing*, 175) call them this.

30. *Ibid.*, 921.

31. Disseminating medical information was a widely recognized form of philanthropy that allowed one to demonstrate personal virtue and concern for humanity. See Wu, *Reproducing Women*, 75–81.

32. Shang zhijun et al., *Lidai zhongyao*, 470, 504.

33. Unschuld and Zheng, *Chinese Traditional Healing*, 1312.

34. The earliest edition of a medical play that I have been able to find is a Yaohui tu edition dated 1840, unless it is for some reason spurious. Lu Dahuang included a version of *Caomu zhuan* in his edition of *Pu Songling's Works* (Pu Songling ji, 1962), though no copy exists from that period. See Jia Zhizhong, "Questioning the authorship of *Caomu zhuan*," 26–27.

35. Unschuld and Zheng, *Chinese Traditional Healing*, 2647.

36. The *Yixue juyu*, "Medical learning, Comprehension by analogy," has a different plot but the characters and the style is similar to those of the *Caomu chunqiu*. The *Yaoxing xi*, has essentially the same plot but recasts some of the characters (Gancao falls ill after his encounter with four robbers, etc.).

37. The surname Jin is likely from a vernacular name for the plant identified by Li Shizhen, *jinchai shihu* ("Shihu in the shape of a hairpin"). Li, *Bencao gangmu*, 20.01.

38. By which I mean a body of a politic nature as well as a politic of a bodily nature.

39. Unschuld and Zheng, *Chinese Traditional Healing*, 177.

40. The name Guolao for Gancao was first recorded in the *Additional Records of Famous Physicians* (Mingyi bielu), according to *Systematic Materia Medica*. Li Shizhen quotes Tao Hongjing, “Gancao is a principal drug among all the drugs. . . . It is also called Guolao or ‘the imperial instructor.’ Gancao is similar to the imperial instructor, who is not the monarch, but the monarch follows his instructions. Hence the name Guolao.” Li, *Bencao gangmu*, 12.01.

41. The *shiba fan* also circulated in poetic form to aid memory, such as “the 18 [substances whose effects are known to] oppose each other, in rhyme” (*shiba fan ge*), recorded in the medical manuscripts.

42. Li Liangsong, *Zhongguo chuantong wenhua*, 330–31.

43. In Chinese medicine, all drugs are toxic to a certain extent, and originally toxicity was a measure of efficacy or power (Cullen and Lo, *Medieval Chinese Medicine*, 327. “Toxic” refers to undesirable or unpleasant side-effects, or simply to the powerful effects of the drug.

44. The distinction between 密陀僧 and 彌陀僧 is lost in some manuscripts, and in the novel version of *Caomu chunqiu*, suggesting that later editors and copyists were less concerned with linguistic play than were the author(s).

45. Unschuld and Zheng, *Chinese Traditional Healing*, 177–78.

46. *Caomu chunqiu*, act 1. Unschuld and Zheng, *Chinese Traditional Healing*, 178.

47. Unschuld and Zheng, *Chinese Traditional Healing*, 179.

48. *Ibid.*

49. Quoted in Leung, “Medical Instruction,” 145.

50. The “white in man” refers to the white sediment in human urine, good for treating (in various versions of the play) mouth sores. *Systematic Materia Medica* also records that it is a cure for consumptive corpse transmission (*chuanshilao*). Li, *Bencao gangmu*, 52.11. Different versions of the play recommend somewhat different drugs, but all of them are in keeping with the form of the particular aria (in this case some form of excrement).

51. Unschuld and Zheng, *Chinese Traditional Healing*, 182 (with small modifications).

52. One play has “stomach” instead of “heart,” which must have been a change made by a copyist with a knowledge of medicine.

53. Unschuld and Zheng, *Chinese Traditional Healing*, 181 (with small changes).

54. *Ibid.*, 182. Dragon bones were usually fossilized animal bones, perhaps from elephants (mammoth), rhinoceros, hipparion (ancient three-toed horses), gazelles, or cows.

55. Jia and Yang argue that the language of the plays was so simple and clear that they must have been meant for performance. If not, they were clearly meant to be read by the broadest possible readership. *Qingdai yaoxing ju*, 458, 492.

56. *Caomu chunqiu*, act 10.

57. Unschuld and Zheng, *Chinese Traditional Healing*, 181.

58. Unschuld, *History of Pharmaceutics*, 230–32. The “Story of Flowery Knotweed” (Heshouwu zhuan) of the Tang dynasty is a political allegory composed around a person bearing the name of a an innocuous plant that has risen to become a much-cherished pharmaceutical substance in Chinese traditional medicine; readers in later times failed to see the original purpose of the author, Li Ao, when he selected a plant without pharmaceutical effects to convey his political message.

59. Wudang, a small mountain range in the northwestern part of Hubei Province, is known historically for its many Daoist monasteries. Wudang is also known as the home of a number of Chinese martial arts (*Wudang quan*). In the modern period, Chinese martial arts have generally been categorized as belonging to Shaolin or Wudang.

60. Presumably the author chose Hujiao (pepper) as the name for the foreign country because *hujiao* was produced in countries to the west of China. *Hu* also is a general marker for things foreign. Li Shizhen says *hujiao* is produced in countries in the Nanfan area, as well as southern Yunnan, and he quotes Tang Shenwei as saying that it comes from Mojiatuo (Madhyadesha; northern India) to the west.

61. Li, *Bencao gangmu*, 28.10.

62. In the *Systematic Materia Medica*, Jin Yinhua is found as an alternate name for *rendong*, and Jin Lingzi is known as *lian*.

63. Li, *Bencao gangmu*, 8.14.

64. Described in chapter 14.

65. Somewhat paradoxically, it also evokes the doctor Sun Simiao, who according to legend rode a tiger.

66. Li Gao quoted in Li, *Bencao gangmu*, 17.01.

67. Wang Kentang, *Zhengzhi zhunsheng* (Guidelines for treating illness) 29b–30b. Wang quotes the doctor Liu Zonghou (Liu Chun) in retelling this story. The citation comes from his *Subtle Meanings of the Precious Machine* (*Yuji weiyi*), 50 *juan*, completed in 1396. For Liu’s original quotation, see Liu Chun, *Yuji weiyi* (Siku Quanshu edition), *juan* 43:3b–4b. Wang argues that these drugs are appropriate only for stagnations of blood, not for loss of blood or qi. Thanks to Yi-Li Wu for providing this reference.

68. By “popular,” I mean that they are employed hundreds of times in prescriptions listed in *Systematic Materia Medica*; “infrequently” means that they occur fewer than twenty-five times. In Li, *Bencao gangmu*, Shihu is known as Jinchai.

69. Wu Cheng’en, *Xiyou ji* (Renmin Wenxue edition), 831.

70. Monkey is not necessarily a quack, but he does represent an antiestablishment attitude toward medicine (consistent with his carnivalesque character). He says of the medical officials that they are all idiots (Wu, *Xiyou ji*, Renmin Wenxue edition, 831).

71. *Xiyou zhengdao shu*, 69.7b.

72. Zhang Shushen, *Xinshuo xiyouji* commentary, 69.8a.

73. *Wujin san* is a prescription for prenatal and postnatal illness mentioned by Li Shizhen from the “generally helpful prescriptions (*puji fang*) that refers to soot as “hundred grass frost.” It also calls for the urine of a boy.

74. Urine from a white horse (*baimani*) is recorded in Li, *Bencao gangmu*, as being good for treating a number of diseases, including abdominal hard masses (caused by overeating), as well as those in the breast.

75. Li *Zhuowu pingben Xiyou ji*, 14a–b. The prefatory material in this commentary edition stresses the large number of “joking” comments in it, but this particular statement seems accusatory, if also funny.

76. Wu, *Journey to the West*, 276.

77. Li, *Bencao gangmu*, 5.15. Sourceless water was particularly good for treating hot diarrhea. Sourceless water is one of forty-three different kinds of water discussed in the *Systematic Materia Medica*. The medical official says that sourceless water is taken from a well, which is also what Li Shizhen says, but Monkey contradicts him, saying that sourceless water is rainwater that has never touched the ground, perhaps parodying the adage “When you drink water, think of the source.” *Bencao gangmu*, under “sourceless water,” also mentions that the *Strategies of the Warring States* (Zhanguo ce) records that Doctor Changsang Jun fed his student Bian Que “water from the upper pond” (*shangchishui*), and after that Bian Que could see clearly the Five Viscera (Liver, Heart, Spleen, Lungs, and Kidneys) and the Six Bowels (Gall Bladder, Stomach, Large Intestine, Small Intestine, Urinary Bladder, and Sanjiao [Triple Burner]) of his patients. Monkey also recalls another diagnostic master, Sun Simiao, the “medicine king,” who used the technique of “dangling the thread” to read the pulses of the king while sitting in another room.

78. Unschuld and Zheng, *Chinese Traditional Healing*, 1497.

79. *Ibid.*, 930.

80. *Ibid.*, 950.

81. *Ibid.*, 930. *Mo*, or *wujin*, good for stopping treating bloody feces, urine, coughing blood, nose bleeds, seminal emission, *kewu* (“visitor’s hostility) and *zhong’e* (“struck by the malign”), postpartum blood loss, and melancholy. Black ink *mo* was made using soot from burning pine, which perhaps explains the alternate name “pine smoke” for “black gold.”

82. Goldschmidt, *Evolution of Chinese Medicine*, 173–98.

83. Li Yu, *Wusheng xi*, 93–106.

84. *Ibid.*, 333. This is effectively the opposite of the treatment for the “stone virgin”; see chapter 4 of this volume.

85. Jue Mingzi is also compared to Chen Ping (and Zhuge Liang) in *Caomu chunqiu yanyi*.

86. It seems that the commentators on *Xiyou ji* were not among the group of readers who were familiar with medicine. They repeatedly mention that the author “must have read *Nanjing* and *Maijue* every day in order to know how to take the pulses so well” and that “this medicine reflects a thorough knowledge of *bencao* literature.”

87. I am not alone in my belief that *Caomu chunqiu yanyi* is far inferior to the *caomu* plays in terms of the depth of pharmaceutical content. Zhijun, Qianlian, and Jinsheng, *Lidai zhongyao wenxian jinghua*, 504. It may be that the novel was written first, with the plays developing what they found in the novel into more entertaining and sophisticated literature, and therefore a

more useful medical information delivery system. It may also have been that the proliferation of the plays in the late Qing caused a revival of interest in the novel.

88. Li, *Bencao gangmu*, 15.21.

89. *Ibid.*, 35.47.

90. *Ibid.*, 17.01.

91. Some might say that Li Shizhen was actually classifying the important natural world, since he includes a discussion of some objects, such as crickets, which were not used as medicines but were, Li explains, relevant, since people kept them for fighting or singing. Nappi, *Monkey and Inkpot*, 53.

92. Metailie, “*Bencao gangmu* of Li Shizhen,” 223–24.

93. Liu Dabai, *Du He Dian*, 211–18. Originally published in the newspaper the *Dawn* (Liming).

94. Idema and Haft, *Guide to Chinese Literature*, 228.

95. Mentioned by Lu Xun in volume 12 of collected works, *Lu Xun quanji*, 12.229. Mao Dun called it a symbolic novel in the style of *Flowers in the Mirror*.

96. The only medicines that are used to treat ailing characters are fantastical, such as “Immortal grass” (*busicao*), which cures all ailments, but even this seems to have had no special significance. *Busicao* revives the Han soldiers from all sorts of illnesses, but is also an alternate name for Mai Mendong, a drug cast in this novel as one of the evil, invading generals—another example of the chaos this novel brings on itself.

97. One reader began underlining all of the characters’ names in red ink but gave up before finishing the first chapter. Jiang Hong, *Caomu chungiu yanyi* edition in the Columbia University Library.

98. One obvious reason is that because there was money to be made reprinting all kinds of texts (as a result of lithography and new mass market), many previously obscure texts got reprinted.

99. Du Ji, *Caomu chungiu yanyi*, 1.

100. “Seeking out the hidden” appears in commentaries from quite early on and became particularly prominent in the late Qing and early Republic in allegorical or roman à clef commentaries of novels. Rolston, *Traditional Chinese Fiction*, 78.

101. Cf. chapter 2, this volume, for traditional novels that also claimed to alleviate melancholy and engender enlightenment.

102. Ding Yaokang, *Xu Jinping mei*, “Fanli,” 8.

103. Xizhou sheng, *Xingshi yinyuan zhuan*, “Fanli,” 7, 8.

104. See Yang Yu-Chun, “Re-orienting *Jinping mei*,” 205–12.

105. And it is still available today.

106. Many modern editions excise them and put in their place the phrase “two first-rate and wonderful aphrodisiacs,” as in the 1981 Renmin Wenxue edition. *Xingshi yinyuan zhuan*, 881.

107. Reprinted in chapter 36 of *Flower Shadows behind the Screen* (Gelian huaying). Soon after *Sequel to Plum in the Golden Vase* was banned in 1665, a revised version of it was published, titled *Flower Shadows behind the Screen* (Gelian huaying, late seventeenth century), which strategically

deletes all the passages with political associations, such as those concerning the Jurchen invasion. The narrator's discussions of karmic retribution are also omitted, removing many of the concepts fundamental to Ding Yao-kang's original version.

108. See, e.g., Gong Tingxian, *Wanbing huichun*, 438.

109. E.g., Xu Qilong, *Xinke quanbu*, 20:135; Xu Sanyou, *Wuche bajin*, 18:87, 109; Yu Xiangdou *bu qiu ren*, 26:503.

110. Wu Huifang indicates that all Wanli-era encyclopedias include one volume named "Fengue." However, by the Chongzhen period, only one encyclopedia includes a "fengyue" chapter. It then disappeared, and is not found in Qing encyclopedias ("Minjian Riyong leishu," 111).

111. Handlin-Smith, *Art of Doing Good*, chapter 4; Wu Yi-Li, "Qing Period," 161–208; Scheid, *Currents of Tradition*, chapter 2.

112. Unschuld, *Medical Ethics*, 62–114.

113. Chen Hongmou, *Xunsu yigui*, 26a.

114. BSS Slg. Unschuld 8288, "Miscellaneous Hand-copied Notes from People's Homes" (Minjia zachao), for instance, contains many long passages copied from the novel *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (Sanguo zhi yanyi).

115. SBB Slg. Unschuld, 8503. "A Guide to Medications for Treating the Foreign Bug" collects all references to medical and pharmaceutical knowledge in this novel *Record of Wiping Out Bandits* (Dangkou zhi), which was also known as *Supplement to the Shuihu [zhuan]* (Hou Shuihu), and also as *Conclusion of the Shuihu zhuan* (Jie Shuihu zhuan).

116. Widmer, "Modernization without Mechanization," 65–68.

117. Wang Qingyuan et al., *Xiaoshuo shufang lu*, 18–162.

118. Shahar, *Crazy Ji*, 268n1. These dates are all from Wang Qingyuan, *Xiaoshuo shufang lu*, 1–184.

119. Just as prescriptions with figurative aspects do not seem to be practical, ala Baochai's "cold fragrance pills" in *Story of the Stone*.

120. Lu Yitian, *Lenglu yihua*, 223.

121. Medical cures are discussed in Li Ruzhen, *Jinghua yuan*, 26.3b–4a, 27.1a, 27.3b–4a, 29.1b–3b, 30.1a–2a, and 95.1b–2b.

122. *Colloquies on the Novel* (Xiaoshuo Conghua), published in *New Fiction* (Xin xiaoshuo) between 1903 and 1905. Quoted in Hsia, "Scholar-Novelist," 463n26. Ying, *Wanqing wenxue congchao*, 211.

123. Li, *Bencao gangmu*, 16.10.

124. Quoted in Wang Qiongling, *Sida caizi*, 420.

125. Wrote Xiaren, who contributed a series of notes on fiction to Liang Qichao's (1873–1929) journal, *New Fiction*. Quoted in Hsia, "Scholar-Novelist," 463.

126. Li Ruzhen, *Jinghua yuan*, chapter 9.

127. Sun Jiaxun, *Jinghua yuan gongan bianyi*, 98.

128. Mid-Jiaqing period medical works *Jiji danfang* and *Heshi jisheng lun* also record this prescription, changing its name to "Ping'an san."

129. Xu Dachun, *Xu Lingtai yixue quanshu*, 401.

130. The medical manuscripts have many examples of the type "secret instructions, must not be given to others indiscriminately" (*mijue buke qing*

chuan yu ren). Some private lists of recipes have a seal printed at the end of each formula stating, “Keep secret [*bu feng*]!” The relationship of the names Li Ruzhen and Li Shizhen is unclear but could not have been lost on the author of *Flowers in the Mirror*, or on those of his readers who were interested in his medical prescriptions.

131. Chen Yiting, “Kan Li Ruzhen de yiyao yangsheng guan,” 165–69. The prescription for “five yellow power” (*wuhuang san*) of chapter 91 does stem from recipe books. The Ming dynasty work *Formulas for Universal Benefit* lists it, as does *Selected Materials for the Preservation of Health* (Jisheng bacui fang, 1315). The prescription was comprised of *huangdan*, *huanglian*, *huangqin*, *dahuang*, *huangbai* (Chinese cork tree), and *ruxiang* (frankincense), for “curing wounds inflicted by a stick *zhangchuang* decreasing swelling, drawing out pus, and reducing swelling.” The prescription in *Flowers in the Mirror* is the same, but with the addition of *xionghuang* (realgar), perhaps in yet another attempt by novelists to outdo their predecessors by adding more. To include this prescription with the major ingredients all containing the word “*huang*” also ties it to *caomu* literature, word games, and the literary logic employed in them to entertain and delight.

132. See Huang, “*Xiaoshuo* as ‘Family Instructions,’” 67–91.

133. Li Ruzhen, *Jinghua yuan* (Renmin Wenxue edition, 27. 124–25).

134. *Ibid.*, 126.

135. The manuscript of “On Seasonal Diseases. All [Therapy] Patterns Prepared for Use” ([Shibing lun. Beiyong zhufa], SBB Slg. Unschuld 8315) does not copy the complete prescription, though. Perhaps the copyist did not read the novel, and got the prescription from some intermediary source, or perhaps he was remarking to himself the uniqueness of the prescription by copying only the ways in which it differed from what he already knew. Unschuld and Zheng (*Chinese Traditional Healing*, 1489) date the manuscript to 1882.

136. Li Ruzhen, *Jinghua yuan*. Shu An’s comment (Waseda University Library edition, 29.38a). See also Sun Jiaxun, *Jinghua yuan gongan bianyi*, 98.

137. Li Ruzhen, *Jinghua yuan*, 26.120.

138. *Ibid.*, 55.257–58.

139. Chen Yiting, “Li Ruzhen de yiyao yangsheng guan,” 165–69.

140. Zhao Xuemin, *Chuanya quanshu*, 11.

141. The case of quacks in premodern China was probably similar to that described by Roy Porter in seventeenth through nineteenth century England, where the term applied to doctors who hawked nostrums in public, i.e., “quacking in the market.” Porter shows that those doctors disparaged as “quacks” in fact had the same university medical training and beliefs as their detractors, and that their medical therapies were also the same. Accusations of quackery thus cannot be taken literally as accurate assessment of what a practitioner did or was. Instead, this was a rhetorical device used by one set of practitioners to disparage another. Xu Dachun’s claims similarly conveyed accusations about a self-promoter’s lack of propriety, with the implication being that someone as crass as to promote himself would also not be above selling fraudulent cures. Porter, *Quacks*.

142. Unschuld, “Chinese Retributive Recipes,” 328–40.

143. Unschuld and Zheng, *Chinese Traditional Healing*, 843, 1747, 1855.

144. “Cao Xueqin diagnoses illness” (Cao Xueqin kanbing). The dating of these stories is uncertain, but some are as late as the 1960s, like those in Zhang Jiading, *Tales and Legends of Cao Xueqin* (Cao Xueqin chuanshuo gushi).

145. *Systematic Materia Medica* lists *qin* as sweet, cold, and nontoxic. It is used in a variety of cures, topically for various bites and toxins, and for curing cases of pathogenic humidity and heat.

146. “Medical Virtue of Mr. Celery” (Qinpu Xiansheng de yide) in Dong Xiaoping, *Honglou meng de chuanshuo*, 56–57.

147. This likely refers to the area west of Beijing where Cao is supposed to have lived.

148. All Manchu households were placed into one of eight administrative or military divisions known as “banners.”

149. “The Origins of Cao Xueqin.” in Dong Xiaoping, *Honglou meng de chuanshuo*, 8.

150. When Cao Xueqin names prescriptions, there is inevitably a comment in the margins—“well-named pill” (*hao wanming*)—suggesting that the prescription’s value was primarily literary and not practical. E.g., the comment on Bao-chai’s “cold fragrance pill.” Feng Qiyong, Qixin Chen, and Xueqin Cao *Bajia pingpi*, 159.

151. Chu Renhuo, author of the *The Romance of the Sui and Tang Dynasties* (Sui Tang yanyi, 1695), saw his own novel as a kind of moral “account book” (*zhangbu*). Chu, Renhuo, *Xiuxiang Sui Tang yanyi*, preface.

4. DISEASES OF SEX

1. *Jinping mei cihua*, 79.17b. *Plum in the Golden Vase*, 639.

2. One of the most prominent physicians of the Jin-Yuan period, Zhu Zhenheng, who is often cited in *Plum in the Golden Vase* and other novels, wrote a preface to his “Views on Extending Medical Knowledge” (Gezhi yulun, ca. 1347) explicitly warning against the dangers of these excesses, and devoted the first two chapters to “admonitions on food and drink” and “admonitions on sexual desire.”

3. For instance, the corrupt official Cai Jing’s name puns on money (*cai*) and semen (*jing*); Ximen Qing leaves behind a few pieces of loose silver after an assignation with Pan Jinlian, with “leaves behind” (*liu*) punning with “dribbling” (*liu*), equating silver and semen; and there is a similar equation between excessive sexual desire (*yin*) and silver (*yin*) throughout the text, reinforcing the equation between sex and money. See Satyendra, “Metaphors of the Body”; Roy, *Plum in the Golden Vase*, vol. 1, introduction.

4. The commentator Zhang Zhupo uses the terms “retribution” (*bao* and *baoying*) to describe the author’s rendering of Ximen Qing and other characters “*dufa*.” See Rolston, “How to Read *Jinping mei*,” 210, 214, 232, 240.

5. *Yinhan*, for instance, which can be translated as “genital coldness,” is discussed in a variety of medical texts as a cause of female and male infertility.

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