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## **An incomplete inquiry : reading the filial piety stories through Lacan, or the other way around ...**

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## Chapter 5

### Perversion and the Father's Will to *Jouissance*

In the previous chapter, we have touched upon the fantasy of being the instrument of the Other's *jouissance*. This fantasy is more vividly staged in the following story which will be the focus of my discussion in this chapter.

Story 22—“*Rugu budai* 乳姑不怠” (Breastfeeding Her Mother-in-Law without Negligence)

Cui Shannan 崔山南 was from the Tang 唐 dynasty [618-907], [whose] great-grandmother [was known] as Madame Zhangsun 長孫夫人. She was of great age and thus no longer had any teeth. Each day, [Cui Shannan's] grandmother, Madame Tang 唐夫人, after combing [her hair] and washing [herself], came to the main hall to breastfeed her mother-in-law.<sup>1</sup> While the mother-in-law had not eaten one piece of rice for years, [she] stayed healthy. One day, she became seriously ill. When the old and the young [of the family] gathered together [in front of her], [she] announced that “[I] have nothing to repay [my] daughter-in-law for her kindness. I wish you—the wives of my grandsons—can be as filial and respectful as [my] daughter-in-law.”

The filial daughter-in-law of the family Cui,

Breastfed her mother-in-law, each morning [after having herself] washed up.

Having no way to repay her kindness,

[The mother-in-law] wished [she] will have sons and grandsons [as filial] as [herself]

A conventional reading of this story would construe it as a literal illustration of the filial principle of “feeding in return” (*fanbu* 反哺): children should feed their elderly parents in the

same way that the parents fed them, when they were young. One of the earliest well-known examples of this principle is the story of Xing Qu 邢渠. Resembling the mother-in-law in story 22, Xing Qu's father lost his teeth; the son masticated the food for him, just as the parent did when the son was an infant. As a result, the father became healthy.<sup>2</sup> It seems that the daughter-in-law in story 22 simply follows Xing Qu's example: because the mother breastfed her children, the children should repay her in kind; the daughter-in-law fulfils this duty on behalf of her husband. However, despite the unquestionable meaning conveyed by the narrative, we still need to ask: Why must the "feeding in return" be performed in such a literal way? If feeding the parent is the only issue, this goal can be achieved by many other means. Xing Qu's story is one example. Even if the human milk is necessary, it is still possible to collect the milk in a utensil, and then provide it for the old woman. Why is the act of breastfeeding highlighted here? Undeniably, there is something excessive in this practice, which cannot be explained solely by the moral principle of "feeding in return." Let us not overlook the obvious: breastfeeding involves not only "feeding" but also "breast."

Tian Lu puts forward another reading, arguing that "her [the daughter-in-law's] filiality ... consists solely of replacing one family member with a parent. In her case, she does for her mother-in-law what it is assumed mothers do for their children, so that the parent sucking at the daughter-in-law's breast quite literally supplants the grandchild" (164); she then concludes: "Filial piety is at its height—and yet unsustainable, as Guo Ju's case shows<sup>3</sup>—when parents fully usurp the grandchildren causing the family literally to erase itself, as the old woman drinks the milk meant for her descendants" (165). There are two problems in this seemingly correct reading. First, if it is true that filial piety of this sort is unsustainable because the family will erase itself, the question will be: Why is it that this story was promoted by the official discourse such as Zhu

Xi's *Xiao xue* and had enjoyed its long-lasting popularity in late-imperial China? That is, Tian Lu's conclusion should be supplemented by an explanation of its ideological function and its appealing effect on the social subjects.

Second, by saying that the grandmother usurps the grandchildren, Tian Lu seems to imply that the former actually takes the latter's position. If so, the grandmother's status in the family is actually degraded, which would run counter to the filial morality, because, according to the moral ideal, the grandchildren should always be placed at the lowest level of the family hierarchy. Hence, although the mother-in-law and her grandchild apparently pursue the same thing—sucking the breast, they may not be related to the breast in the same way; accordingly, they may actually occupy different positions with regard to the object. In other words, given the multiple economies—such as need, demand, desire, etc., the breast may have been different objects for the different consumers, depending on which economy the consumer is situated in. What is overlooked in Tian Lu's reading is the possible difference within the object itself. (It seems to me that Tian Lu has focused on the economy of need: by consuming the milk meant for her grandchild, the grandmother will cause the child to starve to death, hence eliminating the family line.) In what follows, I will provide an alternative reading, arguing that the relationship between the two female protagonists resembles the structure of perversion, which will explain the ideological function fulfilled by this story.

At the outset, I would like to provide a brief account of the Lacanian view on perversion. According to Fink, the early Freudian definition of perversion is that “any sexual activity engaged in for a purpose other than that of reproduction is perverse” (Perversion 39). However, many psychoanalysts (including Freud himself) have shown that, far from being an abnormal phenomenon, pleasure seeking beyond the need to reproduce is a common practice. For instance, Fink argues that “[p]erversion lies at the very core of human sexuality, as we all begin life

‘polymorphously perverse’ ... and continue throughout our lives to seek pleasure for its own sake in forms other than those required for the reproduction of the species” (Perversion 39); hence, “Lacanian psychoanalysts view the perverse nature of sexuality as a given, as something to be taken for granted—in other words, as ‘normal’” (Fink, Perversion 39). Hence, if perversion has any meaning, it cannot be defined or judged solely on the basis of sexual behaviour patterns. In Lacanian psychoanalysis, perversion is used as a structural category. Clinically, it designates a psychical structure which can be clearly distinguished from neurosis and psychosis: to put it briefly, perversion is defined by the mechanism of disavowal, while neurosis and psychosis are characterized by repression and foreclosure respectively.<sup>4</sup>

On the social level, perversion is construed by the Lacanians as a social structure which defines the subject’s relation with the Other. As Žižek points out, “for Lacan, there is no direct correlation between forms of sexual practice (gay, lesbian, straight) and the ‘pathological’ subjective symbolic economy (perverse, hysterical, psychotic)” (Ticklish Subject 249). That is, the same practice—such as homosexuality—can be sustained by different economies. Žižek argues:

There definitely is a perverse homosexuality (the masochist or sadist pretending to possess knowledge about what provides *jouissance* to the Other); but there is also a hysterical homosexuality (opting for it in order to confront the enigma of ‘What am I for the Other? What does the Other want (from me)?’, and so on. (Ticklish Subject 249)

Hence, it is not the gender of one’s sexual partner that determines if one is perverse or hysterical. Rather, what is at issue here is the subject’s relation with the Other’s *jouissance*. In a similar fashion, Copjec argues: “The difference between neurosis and perversion does not only concern one’s object-choice, or relation to a particular other, but also one’s relation to the big Other or the

various laws and institutions governing social existence” (Imagine 206-07). In my discussion, I will focus on the social level, considering perversion as a structural relation between the subject and the Other.

This Lacanian approach to perversion has at least one great advantage for our purpose. By regarding perversion as a structure, we will be able to apply this western term to the Chinese situation and, at the same time, to avoid some sort of Orientalist trap, because a structure describes the relationship between elements without considering their pre-given meanings or any “inherent” properties. That is to say, if the filial devotion as portrayed in the *Ershisi xiao* can be viewed as perverse, it is *not* due to its strangeness in comparison with the western and modern “norm.” Rather, the filial activities are to be assessed on the basis of its structural features which may (or may not) correspond to the structure of perversion. For the same reason, we should also bear in mind the possibility that, even though the way of serving one’s parents was regarded as normal and even desirable in imperial China, it does not mean that this pattern of behaviour was not structured like perversion. For perversion is a structural category, rather than a judgment on what is “abnormal” or bad. In what follows, I will start my reading with a narrative analysis, which is then to be followed by a discussion of the perverse structure and its possible manifestation in the *Ershisi xiao* story. Following Žižek’s discussion of perversion and its resemblance to the analyst’s discourse (or social link), I will, at the end of the chapter, examine the ideological function served by perversion, or more precisely, by the perverse fantasy in late imperial China.

## I

## A Female Body as a Fantasy Screen

One unique feature of this story is that it is the only story centring on a female exemplar in the *Ershisi xiao*. Although stories narrating filial women were never lacking, their stories were usually collected in a category separated from their male counterparts, and most often found in books under the title of “virtuous women.”<sup>5</sup> An earlier version of this story is recorded in the *Xintang shu* 新唐書 (*New History of the Tang Dynasty*) compiled by Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007-1072) and Song Qi 宋祁 (998-1061). In this text, this story is not specialized as a female example of filial piety. Similarly, when quoted in Zhu Xi’s *Xiao xue*, it is listed together with stories of filial sons.<sup>6</sup> It seems that, in these textual contexts, this particular story was not regarded as a female example. Does this mixture of female and male stories in one collection suggest the old convention that daughters (in-law) were generally regarded as surrogate sons?<sup>7</sup> If so, in what sense can this story be read as a narrative of sonly devotion to the parents? And, since we cannot deny the protagonist’s female gender, another question is: how can the sons (the male readers) engage in, rather than being alienated by, this story?

To answer these questions, we need to draw our attention to another unusual feature of the narrative text: unlike the other *Ershisi xiao* stories which begin with an introduction of the protagonist’s identity, story 22 starts with an introduction of a man—Cui Shannan—who is not directly related to the event narrated in the story. What is the function of this irrelevant character? My suggestion here is that this man serves in the narrative as a coordinate in the familial system: it is in accordance with his position in the family that Madame Zhangsun (the mother-in-law) is introduced as the great-grandmother, and Madame Tang (the daughter-in-law) as the grandmother. In other words, this story is framed by Cui Shannan’s point of view. However, due



to the relationships between these three characters, it seems very unlikely that Cui Shannan (who may not have been born at the time) had actually witnessed the breastfeeding scene. The questions are then: why is the story narrated from the perspective of someone who cannot actually see the event? Would it not be more persuasive, if this story is told from the viewpoint of a real witness?

My answer to this question is: the breastfeeding scene is staged here not as a real thing, but as a male fantasy which concerns not a woman's body but his relation with the mother. Based on a research of the Ming (1368-1644) sources, Katherine Carlitz seems to draw a similar conclusion: "Women's ordeals of loyalty and fidelity thus do not set them apart from men (quite the reverse is true), but the characteristics of the female body gave it unique possibilities as a theatre for the drama of virtue" (110). When she metaphorically describes women's body as a theatre, Carlitz is on the edge of declaring the phantasmatic nature of the female body. However, she stops too quickly at the metaphor. For Carlitz, the connection between the virtue men and their female counterparts lies mainly in the fact that they carried out the similar tasks. What is overlooked is the male participation *in* the female narrative itself. That is, she fails to take into consideration the possibility that men may have actually engaged in the theatre, not only as an audience, but also as an actor.

My suggestion is supported by the narrative structure which resembles a fantasy at its purest. Let us not forget the basic feature of a phantasmatic scene in the psychoanalytic sense: in a fantasy, the subject him/herself is usually situated as an onlooker who does not participate in the scene, but witnesses it from outside. However, this does not mean that the subject is not involved; rather, his/her participation is realized through identification. We can illustrate this point with recourse to the famous fantasy—"A Child is Being Beaten." In his analysis of this fantasy provided by his female patients, Freud identifies three phases. It is only in the

unconscious and thus psychoanalytically reconstructed phase—"I am being beaten by my father" (Freud, *A Child Is Being Beaten* 185)—that the patient is shown as located within the phantasmatic scene. In the two conscious phases—"My father is beating the child whom I hate" (Freud, *A Child Is Being Beaten* 185) and "Some boys are being beaten. [I am probably looking on.],"<sup>8</sup> the patient herself is not on the beating scene at all. However, as the unconscious phase shows, it is neither the child, nor the boys, but the patient herself who is fantasized as being beaten by her father, from which she derives her pleasure.<sup>9</sup> What is involved in the two conscious phases is the female patient's identification with the child/boys, through whom she enjoys. Freud states: "All of the many unspecified children, who are being beaten by the teacher [a substitute for the father] are, after all, nothing more than substitutes for the child itself" (*A Child Is Being Beaten* 191).

Another feature worthy of notice is that the transition from the unconscious to the conscious phases is accompanied by the change of gender: the boys in the conscious phase are the camouflage for the female subject. According to Freud, this camouflage is necessitated by the repression of the subject's incestuous love which is expressed only in the unconscious fantasy of being beaten/loved by the father.<sup>10</sup> Hence, the repressed, unconscious phase has never really existed as such: "It is never remembered, it has never succeeded in becoming conscious. It is a construction of analysis, but it is no less a necessity on that account" (Freud, *A Child Is Being Beaten* 185). Without this construction, the conscious phases of the fantasy cannot be explained.

In a way, Cui Shannan's position in the narrative can be compared to the position taken by the female patient who, as in the conscious phase, watches a phantasmatic event as an onlooker. By introducing the story through the perspective of a (great-)grandson who himself is not directly participating in the event, the narrative determines that this breastfeeding scene is meant to be viewed by an external gaze. The lack of an entire generation (the generation of Cui Shannan's

parents) in the story not only pushes the event into the remote past, but also inserts a distance between the point of view from which the event is narrated and the place where the event took place. Hence, the breastfeeding scene can be read as constitutive of the conscious phase of a male fantasy, where an external male gaze witnesses “a mother-in-law sucking her daughter-in-law,” or a “daughter-in-law being sucked.” The problem here is: How should we construct the unconscious phase of the fantasy? To answer this question, we need to know with whom the external gaze identifies.

Certainly, the daughter-in-law is not the only character which can be identified with. It is also possible for the external gaze to take the mother-in-law's place. However, the second possibility is certainly not the effect which the narrative was meant to achieve. At the end of the story, the mother-in-law asks her offspring to follow the example set by her daughter-in-law, which can be read as an instruction on identification: the future generations of the Cui family are encouraged or even demanded to identify with the filial woman, insofar as the child-parent(s) relation is concerned. Although, in the *Ershisi xiao*, those who are expected to follow the daughter-in-law's example are identified as “*sun fu*” 孫婦 (the wives of one's grandsons), this female identity is blurred in the verse, in which the term “*sun fu*” is replaced with the term “*zi sun*” 子孫 (son and grandson). When the term “*zi sun*” is used in an extended sense, it can cover both genders, referring simply to the offspring. However, its implied emphasis is undoubtedly on the male. In an earlier version of the story, it is more clearly indicated that those who should identify with the daughter-in-law are mainly male.<sup>11</sup> Hence, Cui Shannan (the external gaze) is definitely included in the addressees, to whom the mother-in-law announces her last wish. That is to say, the external gaze is required to place himself in the place of his grandmother (the daughter-in-

law). For this reason, we may construct the unconscious phase of the fantasy as: “I am sucked by my mother (in-law).”

What could be the effect that this story may have had on its readers? It is my contention that the intended readers were probably expected to undergo two levels of identification. First, by framing the story through Cui Shannan’s perspective, the narrative determines that the readers should view the event through an external male gaze. Narratologically speaking, Cui Shannan is situated here as a kind of focalizer, through whose perspective the readers perceive the narrated events.<sup>12</sup> In other words, the ideal readers would accept Cui Shannan’s vision and position themselves as the male gaze, witnessing a phantasmatic scene on which “a daughter-in-law is sucked by her mother-in-law” or “a mother-in-law sucks her daughter-in-law.” Second, through Cui Shannan’s (required) identification with the daughter-in-law, the readers were also expected to participate in the unconscious phase of the fantasy, that is, to place themselves in the position of the daughter-in-law who is “being sucked.” In this way, the male audience engaged in the theatre of the female body.

In short, the woman’s body is employed in the narrative as a fantasy screen which stages and, at the same time, conceals the male fundamental (i.e., repressed and unconscious) fantasy of “being sucked by the mother.” On one occasion, Lacan talks about similar fantasies, and states:

One speaks of phantasies of devouring, of *being gobbled up*. Indeed, everyone knows that this, verging on all the resonances of masochism, is the altrified term of the oral drive. ... Since we refer to the infant and the breast, and since suckling is sucking, let us say that the oral drive is getting sucked, it is the vampire. (Seminar XI 195, original italics)

Following Lacan, we may view the “sucking fantasy” as closely related to the oral drive. As mentioned briefly in chapter 3, on the oral level, the *objet petit a* (as the object of the drive) takes

the form of the lost breast. Does the daughter-in-law's breast in the filial piety story have anything to do with the *objet petit a*? What is the position which the mother-in-law takes in relation to the breast? If this story was intended to promote the virtue of filial piety, how was this virtue mingled with the sucking fantasy and with the breast? Lacan mentions perversion (masochism) in the above quoted passage, which provides us with an important clue. In what follows, I will attempt to answer these questions with recourse to Lacan's schema of the perverse fantasy, because this schema formulates the relation between the subject, the *objet petit a* and the Other.

## II

### The Structure of Perversion: $a \leftrightarrow \$$

In "Kant with Sade," Lacan provides the following schema (figure 5.1) which describes the Sadean fantasy. A similar schema is used in his tenth seminar to map the sadist's desire (Lacan, Seminar X 104). Although this schema is developed on the basis of a sadistic case, it can nevertheless be applied to masochism, because, as argued by Lacan in the above quoted statement, suckling and sucking are one and the same thing.

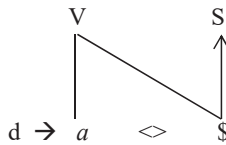


Figure 5.1<sup>13</sup>

The following is Lacan's explanation of this schema:

The lower line accounts for the order of fantasy insofar as it props up the utopia of desire.

The curvy line depicts the chain that allows for a calculus of the subject. It is oriented, and its orientation constitutes here an order in which the appearance of object *a* in the place of the cause is explained by the universality of its relationship to the category of causality....

Next there is the V which, occupying the place of honor here, seems to impose the will [*volonté*] that dominates the whole business, but its shape also evokes the union [*réunion*] of what it divides by holding it together with a *vel*—namely, by offering up to choice what will create the \$ of practical reason from S, the brute subject of pleasure (the “pathological” subject). (Écrits 653-54)

This schema should be read from the bottom line ( $d \rightarrow a < \S$ ), because the *a* marks the starting point of the curved arrow, and, according to Lacan, is “in the place of the cause.” It should be clear by now that the *objet petit a* refers here to the cause of desire. Desire—marked in the schema by the letter “d”—is propped up, that is, sustained by the “order of fantasy.” Hence, the bottom line in the schema articulates the relation between the *objet petit a*, fantasy and desire. It seems that Lacan regards the “ $a < \S$ ” as “the order of fantasy” which is, however, different from the structure of a normal fantasy. Unlike the latter which, as we have already seen, is written as “ $\$ < a$ ,” the former features the exchanged positions of the \$ (the barred subject) and the *a* (the object-cause of desire). What does it mean? This inverted structure of fantasy demonstrates the fundamental characteristic of perversion. In Seminar XI, Lacan states: “what I have called the structure of perversion ... is an inverted effect of the fantasy. It is the subject who determines himself as object, in his encounter with the division of subjectivity” (185). In other words, in perversion, the subject identifies him/herself with an object; yet, it is not any ordinary

objects, but the object occupying the place of the *objet petit a*. Hence, the *a* in the schema marks the location where the pervert subject locates him/herself; accordingly, the \$ refers not to the pervert directly, but to “the division of subjectivity” which can be located in another subject. The structure of perversion can thus be interpreted as: the pervert occupies the place of the *objet petit a* in his/her encounter with a divided subject.

In terms of the function of a fantasy which answers the question “*Che vuoi*,” situating the subject with respect to the Other’s desire, perversion as an inverted effect of fantasy can be viewed as another way of dealing with the same question: as Žižek states, “perversion itself (assuming the position of the object-instrument of the Other’s *jouissance*) can also be conceived of as the escape into self-objectivization which enables me to avoid the deadlock of the radical uncertainty of what I am as an object—the pervert, by definition, *knows* what, as an object, he is for the Other” (Ticklish Subject 291, original italics). In the schema, this Other is located at the place marked by the letter “V” on the upper level which refers to the Other’s will. The V, as Lacan says in the above quoted passage, dominates “the whole business” and unifies the elements which it divides. It does so with a *vel*. Let us recall our earlier discussion about the *vel* in chapter 2. Lacan uses the *vel* to designate the “forced choice” imposed on an individual who must choose meaning at the expense of his/her “natural” being. By relating the V with the *vel*, Lacan makes it clear that the V functions as a symbolic agency and is thus located in the domain of the big Other.

As a result of the *vel* or the “forced choice” between meaning and being, the barred subject (\$ ) is created from the “brute subject of pleasure” (S). We may understand the S as denoting the subject’s lost “natural” being. As explained by Jacques-Alain Miller, “S, the subject characterized as the ‘brute subject of pleasure,’ ... connotes the organism in the imaginary, from which the barred subject of the chain must be born” (Commentary on the Graphs 862). Hence, this “brute subject of pleasure” (S) should be understood as an imaginary subject who is unbarred or un-

castrated. Or, we may even view the S as the subject of *jouissance* whose wholeness is not yet depleted by the signifiers. My following analysis of story 22 will be based on this schema, by which I attempt to show how “the inverted effect of fantasy” is manifested in this story. My purpose is not merely to reveal the perverse structure underlying the filial piety narrative. More importantly, in so doing, I intend to reach a deeper understanding of the Confucian discourse on filial piety and its relation with *jouissance*.

### **The daughter-in-law & a self-objectified subject**

As suggested above, story 22 stages the fantasy of sucking and being sucked, which is closely related to the oral drive. In chapter 3, we have seen that, in contrast to desire which is characterized by a metonymic movement, the drive always moves around one particular object, whose aim is simply to return into the circuit. This circular movement is represented in the current story as sucking and being sucked, with the daughter-in-law's breast functioning as the object around which the drive closes its circle. (The drive's circular movement is split in the narrative, and enacted by two different characters: the mother-in-law sucks, while the daughter-in-law's breast is being sucked. Since Lacan argues that “suckling is sucking” [Seminar XI 195], we should understand each movement as already alluding to its reversal.) However, the daughter-in-law's breast is not the object of the oral drive, because, in the economy of the drive, the object is the *objet petit a*—the lost breast which, let us recall, “is in fact simply the presence of a hollow, a void, which can be occupied ... by any object” (Lacan, Seminar XI 180). Hence, the daughter-in-law's breast is just an ordinary object which finds itself occupying the void. This presence of a breast at the place of the lost objet gives body to the void and transforms a body part into a surplus object—an object which should not be there. The question is then: What is the relation between the subject (the daughter-in-law) and the surplus object (her breast)?



In Seminar XI, Lacan, in reference to masochism and sadism, puts forward the following statement: there are “several possibilities here for the function of the *objet a*.... It is either pre-subjective, or the foundation of an identification of the subject, or the foundation of an identification disavowed by the subject” (Seminar XI 185-86). In this statement, Lacan theorizes two possibilities for the function of the *objet petit a*, which, as I understand it, bear directly on the two sides of the *objet petit a* as either the lack or the surplus. For a neurotic (that is, a “normal” subject), the *objet petit a* is pre-subjective, since the formation of a subject depends on the sacrifice of this object. Hence, this object can only be perceived as something missing from the subject’s reality, or, as something existing only in his/her “pre-subjective” history. For the pervert, the *objet petit a* is the foundation of identification. As pointed out above, perversion features a reversed structure of fantasy, where the subject places him/herself on the side of the *objet petit a*. Take masochism and sadism for example. According to Lacan, the difference between these two forms of perversion lies in the fact that the masochist identifies with the *objet petit a*, while the sadist disavows this identification (Lacan, Seminar XI 185).<sup>14</sup> Hence, one could argue that, by identifying with the lost object, the pervert transforms him/herself into a surplus object, functioning to occupy and thus to fill in the lack.

I suggest that this identification with the *objet petit a* underlies the relation between the daughter-in-law and her breast *qua* a surplus object. First, the identity between the subject and the object is unmistakably indicated by the former’s possession of the latter, which suggests the oneness between the two. Second, more importantly, this identity is further intensified in the text through a reduction of the woman to her breast. As the focus of the narrative, the daughter-in-law’s breast becomes an enlarged body part which resembles the close-up shots in porno films. As Žižek argues, “[t]he effect of close-up shots and of the strangely twisted and contorted bodies of the actors is to deprive these bodies of their unity, somewhat like the body of a circus clown,

which the clown himself perceives as a composite of partial organs that he fails to coordinate completely, so that some parts of his body seem to lead their own particular lives” (Ambiguity 115). The result of close-up shots is thus the “change of the body into a desubjectivized multitude of partial objects” (Žižek, Ambiguity 115). When the rest of her body fades into the background, the daughter-in-law’s breast becomes such a disconnected and “desubjectivized” partial object which may not lead its own life, but certainly dominates the daughter-in-law’s life in the diegetic space. One could even say that she leads the life of the organ: she *is* the breast feeding her mother-in-law. In other words, the desubjectivized object simultaneously objectifies the subject.

Moreover, this body part also illustrates what the Lacanians have called an “organ without a body”—another Lacanian metaphor for the *objet petit a*. Again, according to Žižek, this organ “stand[s], like Lacan’s *lamella*, for that which the subject had to lose in order to subjectivize itself in the symbolic space of the sexual difference” (Ambiguity 113). For the neurotic, this “organ without a body” remains forever an unattainable object, while “[t]he ultimate perverse vision would have been that the entire human body, including the head, is nothing but a combination of such partial organs, where the head itself is reduced to just another partial organ of *jouissance*” (Žižek, Ambiguity 115). If the narrative depiction of the daughter-in-law reduces her to the breast, this reduction simultaneously transforms the subject into a “partial organ of *jouissance*.”

Hence, this partial organ portrayed in the filial piety story has two functions: first, it embodies the *objet petit a* as surplus enjoyment; second, it forms the foundation of identification, to which the filial protagonist is reduced. Hence, in accordance with Lacan’s schema of the perverse fantasy, we can locate the daughter-in-law at the place of “*a*” in the bottom-left corner. If, for Lacan, the pervert is the one who “determines himself as object” (Seminar XI 185), it

should be pointed out here that, in the filial piety story, it is not the protagonist who directly determines herself as an object; rather, she is primarily determined/portrayed as an object by the ideological discourse. The protagonist is employed here as the point of identification, through which the reader is incited to locate him/herself in a fantasy. As already discussed, this story was intended to encourage its audience—the children of each family and, by extension, the subjects of the society—to follow the daughter-in-law's example, that is, to identify with her. If the didactic function of the narrative was effective, the ideal readers would place themselves in the place of the object, by identifying with the daughter-in-law (or, rather, with her breast). Consequently, the process of reading would become a process of self-objectification: the readers determined themselves as an object—an organ of *jouissance*. The question is then: Whose *jouissance* is concerned here?

### **The mother-in-law: the short-circuit between the divided subject and the Other**

For the pervert to be able to identify with an object, he/she needs first to displace his/her divided subjectivity. Žižek points out that “the sadist executioner himself is conceived of as an object-instrument (of the Other's *jouissance*): he acquires this status of *objet a* by way of transposing his subjective splitting onto his victim, \$” (Tarrying 60). In the Chinese story, the best candidate for the daughter-in-law's other (the victim in the case of sadism) is the mother-in-law, since they are the only characters having direct contact with one another. For one thing, the mother-in-law shows more traces of subjectivity than the daughter-in-law does. This aspect is made clear by the fact that the mother-in-law is the only character portrayed in the story as a speaking being. The last sentences in the text are designed as the mother-in-law's direct speech. That is, the reader hears her voice/words. By the very token of being able to speak, she cannot but be a divided subject—a subject divided between *the subject of the enunciated* (such as the “I” as

the grammatical subject in her speech) and *the subject of the enunciation* (the subject who speaks). For this reason, we can probably locate the mother-in-law on the side of \$ in the matheme of “ $a < \triangleright \$$ .” The daughter-in-law’s relation with her can thus be formulated as an encounter between an objectified subject (*a*) and a divided subject (\$).

However, as I have repeatedly mentioned, the parents (-in-law) in a traditional Chinese family cannot be viewed simply as the other; due to the ideological instruction, they always stand in for the big Other in relation to their children. Actually, this point is confirmed at the end of the story: the mother-in-law declares her last wish which is addressed particularly to her offspring. Given the didactic nature of the story, we can probably consider the mother-in-law’s speech belonging to the genre of “*jia xun*” 家訓 (family instruction). “*Jia xun*” is a type of literature which was usually written by a patriarch and passed down for generations. As indicated by the word “*xun*” (instruction), the “*jia xun*” consists of a set of moral laws and family rules which were expected to be observed by the writer’s descendants.<sup>15</sup> If the mother-in-law’s last wish can be regarded as akin to the “*jia xun*”—a law to be followed by the family’s future generations, we should accordingly recognize that the mother-in-law actually occupies the position of a symbolic agent: she plays the role of a law-giver, reinforcing the filial morality and thus standing in for the missing Father.

The mother-in-law’s position as the big Other is also expressed through her structural position in the breastfeeding scene. The text in the *Xin tang shu* and the *Xiao xue* states that “each day, after combing her hair and fixing it with a hair pine, [the daughter-in-law] saluted at the end of the stair, and then came up to the hall to breastfeed her mother-in-law.”<sup>16</sup> The daughter-in-law’s gesture of paying a salutation to her mother-in-law is undoubtedly performed to show her respect for the latter’s superior position, by which the hierarchical relation between these two

characters is confirmed. That is, for the daughter-in-law, the mother-in-law is not treated as an other—an imaginary double with whom the subject identifies or competes, but as the Other.

Hence, what we have here is the double position occupied by the mother-in-law who is both the divided subject and the stand-in for the big Other; this double position allows us to see the mother-in-law as representing the divided Other (A).

Moreover, the big Other as a law-giver does not account for the full profile of the mother-in-law. If the daughter-in-law's breast can be viewed as what Žižek calls the "partial organ of *jouissance*" (Ambiguity 115), what is represented by the mother-in-law's sucking the breast is thus the big Other feeding itself directly on the *jouissance* produced by the filial protagonist. We witness here again the cannibalistic relation discussed in chapter 4: "the big Other itself, far from being an anonymous machine, needs the constant influx of *jouissance*" generated by human subjects (Žižek, *Enjoy Your Symptom* 262); this Lacanian thesis is unambiguously illustrated through the mother-in-law's relation with the breast.

Let us now return to Lacan's schema of the perverse fantasy. As pointed out above, the letter V denotes the Other's will which dominates the whole business in the fantasy. Later on, Lacan specifies the will as "will to *jouissance*," maintaining that "V, the will to *jouissance*, leaves no further doubt as to its nature, because it appears in the moral force implacably exercised by the President of Montreuil [Sade's mother-in-law] on the subject" (*Écrits* 657). Hence, the perverse fantasy is dominated by the "Other's will to *jouissance*" which is somehow charged with moral force. Is it not striking to note that the *jouissance* hinted at in the Chinese story is also expressed in the name of a "moral law"—the law of filial piety? In this way, *jouissance* and morality become mingled with one another. In story 22, the V can thus be located on the side of the mother-in-law—the stand-in for the missing Father who, resembling the "President of Montreuil," implacably exercises the moral force. The mother-in-law differs from her French counterpart

only in one respect: the former embodies both the Other (V) and the other (\$) (victims in sadism, or executioners in masochism). What is unique to the Chinese story (and the filial morality in general) is the short circuit between the (m)other and the Other. Hence, through satisfying the (m)other, the filial offspring fulfils his/her role as the instrument of the Other's *jouissance*.

### **The Brute Father of *Jouissance***

The only element in the schema which is not yet discussed is the letter S in the upper-right corner which, as mentioned above, refers to “the brute subject of pleasure,” an imaginary subject who is un-castrated. The “N” shaped arrow linking the four elements indicates that the S marks the final stage of the fantasy. In this sense, one could argue that the perverse fantasy stages the process of undoing the effect of symbolic castration, which aims at transforming the \$ into the S. Although Lacan himself does not spell out this point, it can nevertheless be deduced from the direction of the arrow which demonstrates unmistakably an inverted effect of the *vel* (the forced choice). Rather than creating the \$ out of the S, the sequence of the two elements on the arrow seems to indicate a reversed movement; it, in my view, can be read as: the S is created out of the \$. (At this point, one is tempted to regard this inverted effect of the *vel* as another way of defining perversion.)

Accordingly, we may read story 22 as articulating the wish to transform the mother-in-law into the “brute subject of pleasure”(S). As argued above, the mother-in-law represents a divided subject (\$); however, she is not only divided but also marked by a lack which is especially highlighted by her toothless mouth. To repair the mother's lack (of teeth) is precisely the task that the daughter-in-law performs: she fills up the hole in the mother-in-law with a surplus object—her breast. Consequently, the mother-in-law is no longer the subject constituted by a lack, but the “brute subject of pleasure” who lacks nothing. Is not the mother-in-law's long and healthy life

indicative of her lack of deficiency? Moreover, due to her double identity—as a divided subject and the stand-in for the missing Father, the toothless mother signifies at the same time a barred / castrated Other (A). Hence, by transforming the mother-in-law into a “brute subject of the pleasure,” the filial daughter-in-law simultaneously de-castrates the Other. It is probably not farfetched to argue that the end result of the sucking fantasy is the creation of “the brute Father of *jouissance*,”—a Father resembling the uncastrated, primordial father in Freud’s *Totem and Taboo*.<sup>17</sup> However, unlike the patricidal sons of the primal horde, the filial offspring in the traditional Chinese universe was the one who strived to resurrect the dead/castrated Father, at least in his fantasy.

On the level of social reality, the structure of perversion may explain the curious practice of “*gegu liaoqin*” 割股疗親 which was often rewarded by the state as an extraordinary act of filial devotion.<sup>18</sup> This practice involved a son or a daughter (-in-law) offering his/her ill parent (-in-law) a piece of flesh sliced from his/her thigh (or other parts of the body), in the hope that the parent (-in-law) would recover from the illness after consuming this piece of flesh. The similarity between this real practice and the filial piety story is evident; the former can be seen as an enactment of the fantasy in reality: like the daughter-in-law’s breast in story 22 (and all other magical foods in the filial piety stories), the piece of flesh cut off from one’s thigh was just another incarnation of the “organ without a body” (that is, the *objet petit a* as the surplus object), whose function was not only to cure the parents but also to complete them, to overcome their inherent deficiency. The expected product of this practice was the de-castrated parent/Other who would recover from the fatal illness and thus overcome his/her own lack/impotence.

This practice demonstrates not only the fact that fantasy underlies reality, but also the discordance between social practice and the orthodox teaching. If we follow the Confucian

doctrine strictly, the practice of “*gegu liaoqin*” cannot but be regarded as a violation of filial piety, since, at the beginning of the *Xiao jing*, the Master states that filial piety starts with not bringing any damages to one’s own body. What is then the relation between the orthodox discourse and the perverse fantasy which was probably at the root of the unorthodox practice? In what follows, I intend to answer this question with recourse to Lacan’s mathemes of the master’s and the analyst’s discourses (or social links) which will allow us to formulate respectively the orthodox discourse on filial piety and the “perverse discourse/social link.”

### III

#### Perversion as a Discursive-Social Link

To see the similarity between perversion and the analyst’s discourse, we only need to make a 180° turn of Lacan’s schema (figure 5.1) along the horizontal axis, which will be shown as:

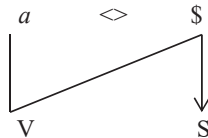


Figure 5.2

The renewed schema keeps all the features that the original one has, but, immediately demonstrates its affinity with the “analyst’s discourse”—one of the four discourses (or social links) formulated by Lacan—which is written as:

$$\begin{array}{ccc} a & \longrightarrow & \$ \\ \hline S_2 & & S_1 \end{array}$$



It is more than obvious that the upper levels of the two structures resemble each other. This similarity between the analyst's discourse and perversion has been noted by theorists such as Žižek whose discussion on this issue will be the main reference point of my following analysis.

To begin with, each discourse is constituted by four elements:

$S_1$  = master-signifier

$S_2$  = knowledge

$\$$  = subject

$a$  = surplus-pleasure<sup>19</sup>

The four corners in the matheme refer to four fixed places:

agent	→	other
truth		product

Thus, the four elements ( $a$ ,  $\$$ ,  $S_1$  and  $S_2$ ) assume their functions in accordance with the places where they are located. In total, Lacan formulates four discourses/social links—namely, the master's discourse, the university discourse, the hysteric's discourse and the analyst's discourse. According to Ian Parker, “[t]he four discourses ... consist of a relationship between the speaker as ‘agent’ and the kind of ‘other’ that is addressed by them. The agent is underpinned by a form of ‘truth’, and in each discourse there is a certain kind of ‘product’ of the relationship between agent and other” (44). To answer the question posed above as to the relation between the official orthodox discourse and the perverse fantasy, I will focus on the master's discourse and the analyst's discourse.

The master's discourse is written as:

$S_1 \rightarrow S_2$
$\$ \quad a$

The following is Žižek's reading of this matheme:

[T]he discourse of the Master provides the basic matrix: a subject is represented by the signifier for another signifier (for the chain or the field of "ordinary" signifiers); the remainder... that resists this symbolic representation, emerges (is "reproduced") as *objet petit a*, and the subject endeavors to "normalize" his relationship toward this excess via fantasmatic formations (which is why the lower level of the formula of the Master's discourse renders the matheme of fantasy  $\$ \diamond a$ ). (Four Discourses 75-76)

On the most basic level, the master's discourse can be read in line with Lacan's definition of the signifier: "a signifier is what represents the subject to another signifier" (Lacan, *Écrits* 694);<sup>20</sup>  $S_1$  (the Master-Signer) functions here to represent a subject (\$) for the chain of other signifiers ( $S_2$ ). For example, the signifier "I" ( $S_1$ ) represents me in a statement ( $S_2$ ); consequently, I—as a speaking subject of flesh and blood—am divided (\$) and repressed under the bar, non-existing on the symbolic surface. Because this signifying chain does not and cannot represent everything, something always escapes from the symbolic grasp, which generates a remainder. This unsymbolizable element is marked in the matheme by the letter *a*—the *objet petit a* as the surplus enjoyment. Hence, the upper level of the matheme can be read as a formulation of the symbolized reality, while the lower level as depicting the repressed, unconscious domain; the symbolic surface consisting of the conscious statements and representations ( $S_1 \rightarrow S_2$ ) is always sustained by the unconscious fantasy ( $\$ \diamond a$ ).

Žižek also stresses the function of the Master-Signifier as the "quilting point": in a chaotic situation, "the Master is the one who invents a new signifier, the famous 'quilting point,' which again stabilizes the situation and makes it readable.... The Master adds no new positive content—he merely adds a *signifier*, which all of a sudden turns disorder into order..." (Four Discourses 77-78, original italics).<sup>21</sup> In other words, the Master-Signifier can be understood as a pure

symbolic position: although having no definite meanings, this signifier nevertheless organizes the symbolic system by rendering the signifying chain meaningful; hence, it is only when situated in a relation to  $S_1$  that  $S_2$  can be stabilized and requires its meaning. In the context the Confucian discourse, we can locate the notion of “*xiao*” at the place of the  $S_1$ . As argued in chapter 1, the empty notion of “*xiao*” (filial piety) functioned as the Master-Signifier: although itself possessing no positive or fixed meanings, the signifier “*xiao*” nevertheless served as the cardinal principle sustaining the entire moral system; that is to say, the empty signifier “*xiao*” functioned as the agent, by which the other discursive-social elements ( $S_2$ ) were addressed, organized, distinguished and valued. What was represented and repressed by the “*xiao*” is the divided/castrated Father—usually personified by the parents. As discussed in chapter 3, because the Father is also marked by a lack, he cannot but be a desiring Father who does not know what he wants. The signifier “*xiao*” represents the desiring Father, answering the question of “*Che vuoi?*”: the Father desires the child’s filial piety. However, by answering the Father’s desire, the signifier also repressed it. Hence, in the official discourses (such as the Confucian classics), this divided, desiring Father is invisible, hidden beneath the bar; what we can observe on the symbolic surface is merely his representative—the signifier “*xiao*.”

As I have tried to demonstrate so far, this symbolic system anchoring upon the signifier “*xiao*” necessarily generates its own excrement ( $a$ )—the surplus which the Master-Signifier has failed to address or to contain. This excremental object constitutes the Father’s fantasy ( $\$ \diamond a$ ) which was denied and repressed by the Master’s speech. As mentioned earlier, the Master (personified by the figure of Confucius) never talked about the abnormal things.<sup>22</sup> This indicates that something which cannot be properly integrated into the normal state of things must be unsaid and repressed under the bar of the symbolic. The master’s discourse can thus be understood as an accurate structural description of the Master’s (“Confucius’s”) speech which generates its

own unspeakable, unsymbolizable remainder. However, what is repressed returns; in the Chinese case, it returned in the *Ershisi xiao* stories as the inverted effect of (the Mater's) fantasy. In a way, the analyst's discourse formulates the effect of this inversion: the leftover of symbolization ( $a$ ) becomes the agent in the analyst's discourse, addressing the divided subject (and the divided Other), by which the repressed fantasy ( $\$ \diamond a$ ) returns to the surface in an inverted form ( $a \diamond \$$ ). (However, as we will see, the analyst's discourse, by staging the fantasy, traverses it, which is the opposite of perversion.)

In the analyst's discourse, the agent—the analyst ( $a$ )—is underpinned by knowledge ( $S_2$ ) which is taken as a form of truth; the place of the other is occupied by the divided/castrated subject ( $\$$ ). The product of the discourse is the Master-Signifier ( $S_1$ ). In “*Objet a* in Social Links,” Žižek gives this structure a “perverse” interpretation, stating that

the fact that the upper level of Lacan's formula of the analyst's discourse is the same as his formula of perversion ( $a-\$$ ) opens up a possibility of reading the entire formula of the analyst's discourse also as a formula of the perverse social link: its agent, the masochist pervert (the pervert par excellence), occupies the position of the object instrument of the other's desire, and, in this way, through serving his (feminine) victim, he posits her as the hystericized/divided subject who “doesn't know what she wants.” Rather, the pervert knows it for her, that is, he pretends to speak from the position of knowledge (about the other's desire) that enables him to serve the other; and, finally, the product of this social link is the master signifier, that is, the hysterical subject elevated into the role of the master (dominatrix) whom the pervert masochist serves. (115)

Here, Žižek provides us with a useful framework, in accordance with which the *Ershisi xiao* stories can be further analysed. The daughter-in-law in story 22 represents the pervert who

“occupies the position of the object instrument (*a*) of the other’s desire.” The other in the story is the mother-in-law, who is, as mentioned above, a speaking being, and thus a divided subject (\$). Her toothless mouth suggests castration, and thus indicates a lack/desire.

In the *Ershisi xiao* stories, the sons and the daughters-in-law are usually positioned as the agents of knowledge (*S*<sub>2</sub>) who know what the other/Other (the parent) really wants, answering for the other/Other the question “*Che vuoi?*” Let us recall story 11 in which a son strives to provide his mother with carps. As already argued, the son has no doubt about the answer to the question as to “what the mother/Other really wants.” Similarly, in story 12 (“Carving the Wood, Serving His Parents”), the filial son Ding Lan can interpret the “mind” of two wooden sculptures carved in the images of his deceased parents.<sup>23</sup> Is it not a miracle that the son can perform this task? The only rational explanation is that “he knows it for” them; “he pretends to speak from the point of knowledge (about the other’s desire) that enables him to serve the other.” In an implicit fashion, the daughter-in-law in story 22 is also portrayed as the one who knows. She knows that the mother-in-law wants not only her milk as food, but also her breast. If the filial subjects as the agency of “knowledge” still remain implicit in these stories, it becomes strikingly evident in a supposedly real event.

Carlitz records one famous case from the Ming sources: a daughter-in-law, surnamed Liu, cut off her finger in order to save her dying mother-in-law. It is said that

[i]n her final illness, the mother-in-law nibbled Liu’s little finger as a signal that she wanted to make her eternal farewell—but Liu, misunderstanding, made a porridge the next morning of her own blood and the little finger. The mother-in-law ate the porridge, revived, and lived on for more than a month. (111)

Apparently, woman Liu cut off her little finger because she has misread the mother-in-law’s gesture. It seems that the woman is a neurotic subject, who does not know either what the other

really wants. However, what does the last piece of information mean, in which we are told that the mother-in-law's life is actually prolonged, due to woman Liu's misunderstanding? With little doubt, we can notice that this misunderstanding is not treated as a mistake at all. The underlying message of the story is: woman Liu knows exactly what her mother-in-law wants; she not only knows it for her but also *knows it even better than the mother-in-law herself*. More than story 22, the case of woman Liu stresses the divided subjectivity of the mother-in-law who does not know what she really wants. It requires her daughter-in-law to provide her with an answer—a piece of flesh.

The product of this familial-social link is the elevation of the other (the parent[s]) “into the role of the master (dominatrix) whom the pervert masochist serves.” In the filial piety stories, this overlap between the other and the master (the Other) is directly evident, due to the Confucian equation between the parents and the Other. As indicated in all stories that we have discussed, the parents occupy the position of authority, to whom the filial sons and daughters-in-law offer their homage and services. What needs to be stressed here is the obvious fact that the parents' dominant position—a product of the perverse discourse/social-familial link—is already predetermined by the patriarchal symbolic system centring on the notion of “*xiao*.” In other words, the Master-Signifier produced by the perverse discourse is the same as the Master-Signifier in the master's discourse; this coincidence allows us to read these two discourses as intricately related: the perverse discourse not only realizes the Master's fantasy in an inverted form, but also functions as a kind of mechanism which reproduces the Master-Signifier—the “*xiao*” as the cardinal principle of the Confucian orthodoxy.

We are now in a better position to understand the longevity enjoyed by the Confucian patriarchal system. Rather than being simply illustrations of the Confucian classics, the filial piety stories helped to construct a perverse social link and thereby to regenerate the Master-

Signifier. Hence, despite their apparent discordance with the orthodox discourse, these stories should nevertheless be treated as essential to the Confucian symbolic order; they were the phantasmatic core of the Confucian ideology—the thing in Confucianism more than itself, so to speak. My point here is that the Confucian ideological fantasy not only underlay the social reality but also sustained and reproduced the Master's discourse itself. It is through the fantasy that the patriarchal system and its moral rules entered the endless circle of “birth and rebirth.”

## Conclusion

We can conclude our discussion in this chapter by looking at the difference between the analyst's discourse/social link and that of the pervert's. Despite the fact that perversion and the analyst's discourse share a similar structure, there is, according to Žižek, “a certain invisible limit” that separates the analyst from the pervert (Tarrying 72). He continues: “the pervert confirms the subject's fantasy, whereas the analyst induces him or her to ‘traverse’ it, to gain a minimal distance toward it, by way of rendering visible the void (the lack in the Other) covered up by the fantasy-scenario” (Tarrying 72). This difference hinges on the “radical ambiguity of *objet petit a*” which, in the Lacanian sense, “stands simultaneously for the imaginary fantasmatic lure/screen and for that which this lure is obfuscating, for the Void behind the lure. Consequently, when we pass from perversion to the analytic social link, the agent (analyst) reduces himself to the Void which provokes the subject into confronting the truth of his desire” (Žižek, *Parallax View* 304). In this sense, we can understand the analyst and the pervert as situating themselves respectively on the two sides of the *objet petit a*: while the analyst identifies him/herself with the *objet petit a* as the lack, functioning as the agent who keeps the void/desire of the subject and the Other wide open, and thereby confronts the subject with the nothingness behind the (ideological) fantasy, the

pervert assumes the role of the *objet petit a* as a surplus object—an imaginary object striving to fill up the hole in the Other, determining him/herself as the object-instrument of the Other's *jouissance*.

The difference between these two discourses/ social links lies also in their products: while the pervert (re)produces the social-symbolic Master, the analyst's discourse creates a new signifier which cannot be re-absorbed into the symbolic order. As Žižek points out, "what the discourse of the analyst 'produces' is the Master-Signifier ... The Master-Signifier is the unconscious *sinthome*, the cipher of enjoyment, to which the subject was unknowingly subjected" (Žižek, Parallax View 304). And, according to Luke Thurston, "the *sinthome* ... designates a signifying formulation beyond analysis, a kernel of enjoyment immune to the efficacy of the symbolic" (191); it is created to replace the Name-of-the-Father, to "invent a new way of using language to organize enjoyment" (192). Hence, the minimal difference between the analyst's discourse and perversion has significant implications for the social order: while the former creates something new, something as "the invasion of the symbolic order by the subject's private *jouissance*" (Thurston 192), the latter can be employed as a means of maintaining the existing social order. As Žižek argues, despite its transgressive appearance, "perversion is always a socially constructive attitude" (Ticklish Subject 247). This insight is unambiguously illustrated by the filial piety stories which, as I have tried to demonstrate, constituted the obverse of Confucian orthodoxy and functioned to (re)produce the existing Master-Signifier—"xiao." In this way, the patriarchal system was brought into an unending circle of "birth and rebirth."

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<sup>1</sup> The *Ershisi xiao* text states only that Madame Tang fed her mother-in-law her own milk (*ru qi gu* 乳其姑); it remains unclear how the milk was provided. Did she collect the milk in a utensil and then give it to her mother-in-



law? Or, did she perform breastfeeding? Judging from the illustrating pictures of this story, the scene of feeding the mother-in-law is universally pictured as breastfeeding, in which the daughter-in-law's naked breast is on display.

Since these pictures demonstrate how this story was or should be understood in their times, I will follow the pictorial interpretation and read the daughter-in-law's act as direct breastfeeding. Most scholars also tend to read this story as the daughter-in-law's breastfeeding her mother-in-law. See, for example, Carlitz 11; T. Lu 164-65.

<sup>2</sup> For the notion of "feeding in return," and a reading of the story of Xing Qu, see Knapp 128-32.

<sup>3</sup> The story of Gu Ju is also collected in the *Ershisi xiao*, see story 13. Because his family was poor, the filial son (Guo Ju) planned to bury his own son, in order to stop him from sharing his grandmother's food. His intention to kill his own son was legitimized by his expectation to have more sons.

<sup>4</sup> Due to the limited space, I am not able to explore the distinction between disavowal, repression and foreclosure. For Fink's discussion on this issue, see Fink, *A Clinical Introduction* 76-77.

<sup>5</sup> For example, another version of the same story is found in the 16-chapter edition of *Lie nü zhuan* 列女傳 (*The Biographies of Virtuous Women*) published by Zhi bu zu zhai 知不足齋 and illustrated by the famous Ming painter Qiu Ying 仇英 (1494-1552). See *Lie nü zhuan*, *juan* 8, 16A-B. For studies on women's filial devotion in pre-modern China, see Tan, "Filial Daughters-In-Law"; Knapp 165-86.

<sup>6</sup> See Ouyang Xiu and Song Qi, *Tang shu*, *juan* 163, 26B; and Zhu Xi, *Xiao xue*, *juan* 6, 10A.

<sup>7</sup> This point is made by Knapp in the *Selfless Offspring*, see note 7 in chapter 3 above.

<sup>8</sup> I borrow the formulation of the last phrase from Silverman. See Silverman, *Male Subjectivity* 201. Freud himself does not provide a complete formulation of the third phase, but states: "Most frequently it is boys who are being beaten (in girl's phantasies), but none of them is personally known to the subject" (*A Child Is Being Beaten* 186); "[h]ere the child who produces the phantasy appears almost as a spectator, while the father persists in the shape of a teacher or some other person in authority (*A Child Is Being Beaten* 190).

<sup>9</sup> Commenting on the last phase of the beating-phantasy, Freud states: "The phantasy, which now resembles that of the first phase, seems to have become sadistic once more....But only the *form* of this phantasy is sadistic; the satisfaction which is derived from it is masochistic" (*A Child Is Being Beaten* 190-91, original italics).

<sup>10</sup> See Freud, "A Child Is Being Beaten" 189-90. Freud also points out that, besides the incestuous love, a sense of guilt is also expressed in the unconscious phase: "the phantasy of the second phase, that of being beaten by her father,

is a direct expression of the girl's sense of guilt, to which her love for her father has now succumbed" (A Child Is Being Beaten 189).

<sup>11</sup> According to the *Xin tangshu* and the *Xiao xue*, the mother-in-law announces in front of other family members the following words: "Having nothing to repay my new daughter-in-law, [I] only hope for her to have sons and grandsons who all can be as filial as herself. (無以報新婦恩。願新婦有子有孫，皆得如新婦孝敬)" (Zhu Xi, *Xiao xue, juan* 6, 10A); or "Having nothing to repay my daughter-in-law, [I] hope that the sons and grandsons can be as filial as her. (無以報吾婦。冀子孫皆得如婦孝)" (Ouyang Xiu and Song Qi, *Tang shu, juan* 163, 26B).

<sup>12</sup> The focalizer will be discussed briefly in chapter 6.

<sup>13</sup> This schema is found in Lacan's *Écrits* 653.

<sup>14</sup> "[T]he subject assuming this role of the object is precisely what sustains the reality of the situation of what is called the sado-masochistic drive, and which is only a single point, in the masochistic situation itself.... [T]he sadist himself occupies the place of the object, but without knowing it, to the benefit of another, for whose *jouissance* he exercises his action as sadistic pervert" (Lacan, Seminar XI 185).

<sup>15</sup> For a study of "*jia xun*", see Furth.

<sup>16</sup> The Chinese texts read: "每旦，櫛縱筭，拜階下。升堂乳姑" (Ouyang Xiu and Song Qi, *Tang shu, juan* 163, 26B); "每旦，櫛縱筭，拜於階下。即升堂乳其姑" (Zhu Xi, *Xiao xue, juan* 6, 10A).

<sup>17</sup> I will discuss the primordial father in the following chapter.

<sup>18</sup> Occasionally, the practice of *gegu liaoqin* was banned for short periods. For a short study of "*gegu liaoqin*", see T'ien 149-61.

<sup>19</sup> See Žižek, "Four Discourses" 75; Clemens and Grigg 3. For a brief introduction to Lacan's four discourses, see Clemens and Grigg.

<sup>20</sup> For a comprehensive and insightful reading of this thesis, see Žižek, *For They Know* 21-27.

<sup>21</sup> See also Žižek, *Parallax View* 37.

<sup>22</sup> See note 9 in chapter 4.

<sup>23</sup> This episode is not explicitly narrated in the *Ershisi xiao*, but can be found in nearly all other versions of the story. For a survey of the historical variants of story 12, see Knapp 191-94.