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

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Appendix 1: Translation of the *Ershisi xiao* Stories

The following translations are mine. Chinese texts are cited from the *Ershisi xiao tu* 二十四孝圖, published by *Zhongguo shudian*.

Story 1—“*Xiaogan dongtian* 孝感動天” (“The Feeling of Filial Piety Moved Heaven”)

Shun 舜 of the Yu 虞 dynasty was surnamed Yao 姚 and named Chonghua 重華. [He was] a son of Gu Sou’s 瞽瞍, and had a disposition to be extremely filial. His father was ignorant, his mother was stupid,¹ and his younger brother Xiang 象 was arrogant. Shun farmed the land on the Mountain Li (*li shan* 歷山). Elephants helped him to plough; birds helped him to weed. His feeling of filial piety was great to such a degree [that it moved the animals]. He made pottery on a river bank; these wares were not of poor quality; he fished in the Lake of Lei (*lei ze* 雷澤) and would not be lost in the fierce winds and thunderstorms. Although he devoted his entire energy and became totally exhausted, Shun felt no resentment. Having heard about Shun’s deeds, Yao 堯² appointed him the leader of officials, sent nine of his sons to serve him and married two of his daughters off to him. After Shun had assisted Yao for twenty-eight years, the emperor abdicated the throne in favour of Shun.

虞舜姓姚，名重華。瞽瞍之子，性至孝。父頑，母嚚，弟象傲。舜耕於歷山，象爲之耕，鳥爲之耘。其孝感如此。陶於河濱，器不苦窳。漁於雷澤，烈風雷雨弗迷。雖竭力盡瘁，而無怨懟之心。堯聞之，使總百揆，事以九男，妻以二女。相堯二十有八載。帝遂讓以位焉。

Herds of ploughing elephants;
 Flocks of weeding birds;
 The heir of Yao succeeded to the throne;
 The feeling of filial piety moves the heat of Heaven.
 隊隊耕田象，紛紛耘草禽。嗣堯登寶位，孝感動天心。

Story 2—“*Qinchang tangyao* 親嘗湯藥” (Tasting the Medical Soup Personally)

Emperor Wen 文帝 of the Early Han 前漢 dynasty [206 BC-9AD] was named Heng 恒, [who] was the third son of Emperor Gaozu 高祖. He was initially given the title of King Dai 代王. His biological mother was Empress Dowager Bo 薄太后. Emperor [Wen] served and supported [his mother] without negligence. [His mother] had been ill for three years. To serve her, Emperor [Wen] never took a rest.³ [His mother's] medical soup had to be tasted by himself before being served [to her]. [Emperor Wen's] benevolence and filial piety had been known throughout the land under Heaven.

前漢文帝名恒，高祖第三子。初封代王。生母薄太后，帝奉養無怠。母病三年，帝爲之目不交睫，衣布解帶。湯藥非口親嘗弗進。仁孝聞於天下。

[His] benevolence and filial piety was present throughout the land under Heaven,
 [He] towered above hundreds of kings.

The emperor of the Han dynasty served his virtuous mother,

[Her] medical soup had to be tasted by him personally.

仁孝臨天下，巍巍冠百王。漢庭事賢母，湯藥必親嘗。

Story 3—“*Yaozhi tongxin* 嚙指痛心” (Biting Her Finger, Paining His Heart)

Zeng Can 曾參 of the [Eastern] Zhou 周 dynasty [771-256 BC], whose style name⁴ was Zi Yu 子與, was a disciple of Confucius. [He] served his mother with extreme filial piety. Can often collected firewood in the mountains. [One day,] a guest arrived, [but Can was not home]. His mother was at a loss. Expecting that Can would not return soon, she then bit her finger. Having felt a sudden pain in his heart, Can carried the firewood and returned home. [When he arrived home,] he kneeled down, asking [his mother] what the matter was in hand. His mother said: “an urgent visitor has arrived. I bit my finger to inform you.”

周，曾參，字子與，孔子弟子。事母至孝。參嘗採薪山中。家有客至。母無措。望參不還，乃嚙其指。參忽心痛，負薪以歸，跪問其故。母曰：“有急客至。吾嚙指以悟汝爾。”

The mother's finger was just bit,

The son's heart was pained unbearably.

Carrying firewood, he returned in time.

The extreme feeling between bones and flesh was so deep.

母指纔方嚙，兒心痛不禁。負薪歸未晚，骨肉至情深。

Story 4—“*danyi shunmu* 单衣顺母” (Wearing Thin Clothes, Obeying His Mother)

Min Sun 閔損 of the [Eastern] Zhou 周 dynasty, whose style name was Zi Qian 子騫, was a disciple of Confucius's. [He] lost his mother in his early years. His father married again. His stepmother gave birth to two sons and dressed them in clothes filled with cotton. [She] was jealous about Sun, and dressed him in clothes filled with (dry) reed catkins. His father ordered Sun to harness the cart. Because his body was cold, he dropped the reins. His father became aware of [the situation], and hence intended to divorce the stepmother. Sun said: “If mother stays, only one son suffers from the cold. If mother leaves, three sons are to be dressed in thin clothes.” When the stepmother heard [Sun's statements], she repented.

周閔損字子騫，孔子弟子。早喪母，父娶後母。生二子，衣以棉絮。妒損，衣以蘆花。父令損御車。體寒失鞿。父察知，故欲出後母。損曰：“母在一子寒，母去三子單。母聞改悔。

The family Min had a virtuous son,

Has he ever resented his stepmother?

In front of his father, he urged this mother to stay,

So that three sons can avoid the wind and frost.

閔氏有賢郎，何曾怨晚孃。父前留母在，三子免風霜。

Story 5—“*Weiqin fumi* 爲親負米” (Shouldering Rice for His Parents)

Zhong You 仲由 of the [Eastern] Zhou 周 dynasty, whose style name was Zi Lu 子路, was a disciple of Confucius. His family was poor; they ate coarse food made from

weed and beans. For [his] parents, [he] carried rice [from a place which was] one hundred *li* away.⁵ After his parents died, he travelled south to the region of Chun 楚, [where he became an official]. He was followed by one hundred chariots and had ten thousand *zhong* 钟 of millet in storage.⁶ He sat upon layers of cloth and ate in front of rows of tripods. However, he sighed, “although [I] long to eat the food made from weed and beans, it is no longer possible to carry rice for my parents.”

周仲由，字子路，孔子弟子。家貧，食藜藿之食。爲親負米百里外。親沒。南游於楚。從車百乘，積粟萬鍾。累牀而坐，列鼎而食。乃歎曰：“雖欲食藜藿之食，爲親負米不可得也。”

He carried rice to provide nice food [for his parents],

Neglecting the distance of one hundred *li*.

When he became prosperous, his parents were already dead.

He still thought about the past hardship [undergone by his parents].

負米供甘旨，甯忘百里遙。身榮親已沒，猶念舊劬勞。

Story 6—“*Xicai yuqin* 戲綵娛親” (Playing and Dressing in Colourful Clothes, He Entertains His Parents)

Lao Lai Zi 老萊子 of the [Eastern] Zhou 周 dynasty was a native of the state of Chu 楚. He was extremely filial, providing his parents with the most sweet and crispy food. At the age of seventy, he had never regarded himself as old. Dressing himself in colourful clothes, he played and danced like an infant beside his parents. Or, when he carried

water to the hall, he would pretend to fall and lie on the floor to play like a little child.

[In so doing,] he intended to entertain his parents.

周老菜子，楚人，至孝。奉二親，極其甘脆，年七十，言不稱老。著五綵斑斕之衣，為嬰兒戲舞於親側。又取水上堂，詐跌，臥地，作小兒戲，以娛親喜。

Playing and dancing, he pretended to be childish and ignorant.

The spring wind moved his colourful clothes.

Both parents laughed with their mouths open,

The household is full of the atmosphere of happiness.

戲舞學嬌癡，春風動綵衣。雙親開口笑，喜氣滿庭闈。

Story 7—“*Luru fengqin* 鹿乳奉親” (Serving the Parents with Deer Milk)

Tan Zi 郗子 of the [Eastern] Zhou 周 dynasty had the disposition to be extremely filial. [His] father and mother were old; they both suffered from an eye disease, longing to “eat”⁷ deer milk. Tan Zi complied with his parents’ will. [He] then dressed in a deerskin, and went into the deep mountains, where [he sneaked] into a herd of deer to obtain the milk, in order to please his parents. Hunters saw him [disguised in the deerskin], and were about to shoot him. Tan Zi told them the whole situation, and avoided [being shot].

周郗子，性至孝。父母年老，俱患雙眼，思食鹿乳。郗子順承親意，乃衣鹿皮，去深山，入鹿羣中，取鹿乳，以娛親。獵者見而欲射之。剡子具以情告，乃免。

The aged parents longed for deer milk,
 [The son] dressed in the clothes made of the fur of a deer.
 If [he] did not speak loudly,
 [He] would return from the mountains carrying arrows.
 老親思鹿乳，身掛鹿毛衣。若不高聲語，山中帶箭歸。

Story 8—“*Maishen zangfu* 賣身葬父” (Hiring Himself Out, Burying His Father)

Dong Yong 董永 of the Han 漢 dynasty [202_{BC}-220] was from a poor family. When his father died, he hired himself out in order to borrow some money to bury his father. He then went to work to redeem his debt. On his way, he met a woman who asked to become Yong's wife. They both arrived at the creditor's house. The creditor ordered them to weave three hundred bolts of silk, before they could leave. [Yong's wife] finished this work within one month. On their way home, they came to the place Huai Yin 槐陰 where they had met; [Yong's] wife said good-bye [to Yong] and left.

漢董永家貧。父死，賣身貸錢而葬。及去償工。路遇一婦，求為永妻。俱至主家。令織縑三百匹，乃回。一月完成。歸至槐陰會所，遂辭而去。

In order to bury his father, he hired himself out;
 A fairy Lady met him on the road.
 [She] wove silks to repay the creditor;
 The feeling of filial piety moved Heaven.
 葬父將身賣，仙姬陌上迎。織縑償債主，孝感動天庭

Story 9—“*Xingyong gongmu* 行傭供母” (Hiring Himself Out, Supporting His Mother)

Jiang Ge 江革 of the Later Han 後漢 dynasty [25-220], whose style name was Ci Weng 次翁, lost his father in his early years. [He] lived with his mother. Suffering from social chaos, he carried his mother on his shoulder and fled from disasters. For several times, they encountered bandits who wanted to kidnap [Jiang Ge]. Ge often cried and told [the bandits] that he had an aged mother with him. [The bandits] thus cannot bear the idea of killing him. [Jiang Ge and his mother] settled down at Xia Pei 下阨. He was so poor that he had no clothes and [walked with] naked feet. He hired himself out in order to support his mother. Everything that his mother needed was provided.

後漢江革，字次翁。少失父，獨與母居。遭亂，負母逃難。數遇賊，欲劫去。革輒泣告，有老母在。賊不忍殺。轉客下阨。貧窮裸跣，行傭以供母。母便身之物，莫不畢給。

Carrying his mother on his shoulder, they fled from disasters.

In difficult circumstances, [they] frequently had trouble with bandits.

He pleaded and was spared [by the bandits];

He hired himself out to support his parent.

負母逃危難，窮途犯賊頻。哀求俱獲免，傭力以供親。

Story 10—“*Shanzhen wenqin* 扇枕溫衾” (Fanning the Pillow, Warming the Quilt)

Huang Xiang 黃香 of the Later Han 後漢 Dynasty, whose style name was Wen Jiang 文疆, was at the age of nine. He had lost his mother, and missed her terribly. People living in his county all praised his filial piety. Carrying out diligent and hard work on himself, he served his father with extreme filial piety. In the hot summer, he fanned [his father's] pillow and bamboo mat to cool them down. In the cold winter, he used his body to warm [his father's] quilt and cushion. The Prefect Liu Hu 劉護 commended him.

後漢黃香，字文疆，年九歲。失母，思慕惟切。鄉人皆稱其孝。躬執勤苦，事父盡孝。夏天暑熱，扇涼其枕簟；冬天寒冷，以身溫其被席。太守劉護表而異之。

In the winter month, [he] warmed [his father's] quilt,

In the hot days, [he] fanned [his father's] pillow to cool it down.

The child knew the sonly duty;

There is only one Huang Xiang in a thousand years.

冬月溫衾煖，炎天扇枕涼。兒童知子職，千古一黃香。

Story 11—*Yongquan yueli* 湧泉躍鯉 (Carps Leaping out of a Surging Spring)

Jiang Shi 姜詩 of the [later] Han 漢 dynasty [25—220] served his mother with extreme filial piety. His wife, surnamed Pang 龐氏, attended her mother-in-law even more cautiously. The mother was disposed to drink water from a certain river; the

wife thus often went out to fetch the water and offered it to her mother-in-law. The mother also liked [to eat] sliced fish; the couple thus often prepared the fish and brought it to the mother. They even invited the neighbour's mother to share it. Suddenly, a spring emerged beside their house; the water tasted like that from the river. Every day, out of the spring leapt two carps which Shi would catch and provide to his mother.

漢姜詩，事母至孝；妻龐氏，奉姑尤謹。母性好飲江水，妻汲而奉之。母更嗜魚膾，夫婦作而進之。召鄰母與食。舍側忽有涌泉，味如江水，日躍雙鯉，詩取以供母。

Besides the house emerged a sweat spring;

Every day appeared two carps.

The son was conscious of serving his mother;

The daughter-in-law was more filial towards her mother-in-law.

舍側甘泉出，一朝雙鯉魚。子能知事母，婦更孝於姑。

Story -12: “*Kemu shiqin* 刻木事親” (Carving Wooden Sculptures, Serving His Parents)

Ding Lan 丁蘭 of the Han 漢 dynasty, who lost his father and mother in his youth, was unable to serve and support them. Having grown up, [Ding Lan] thought about their kindness in bringing him up with painstaking efforts. He [thus] carved wooden sculptures in the likeness [of his parents],⁸ and served them as if they were alive. Over time, Ding Lan's wife became less respectful [towards the sculptures]. [She] playfully pierced with a needle the finger[s] of the sculpture[s], [from which] blood

flowed. [When] the wooden sculpture[s] “saw” Ding Lan, tears were in its/their eyes.⁹ Therefore, [he] inquired about the situation, and abandoned his wife.

漢丁蘭，幼喪父母，未得奉養。長而念劬勞之恩。刻木爲像，事之如生。其妻久而不敬，以鍼戲刺其指。血出。木像見蘭，眼中垂淚。因詢得其情，即將妻棄之。

[He] carved wooden parents,
Depicting their appearances as they were in life.
[It] sends a message to every son and nephew:

Serve one's parents before it is too late.

刻木爲父母，形容在日身。寄言諸子姪，及早孝其親。

Story 13—“*Weimu maier* 爲母埋 / 賣兒” (Serving His Mother, Selling/Burying His Son)¹⁰

Guo Ju 郭巨 of the Han 漢 dynasty, whose style name was Wen Ju 文舉, was from a poor family. He had a three-year-old son. His mother reduced the amount of her food, in order to give it to her grandson. Ju told his wife, saying that “[we] are so poor that [we] cannot support Mother. Our son is sharing Mother's food. Why not sell/bury this son? While we can have another son, we cannot have another mother.” His wife did not dare to disobey [her husband]. One day, when Ju dug a pit more than three *chi* 尺¹¹ deep, [he] suddenly saw gold [buried under the ground]. There were characters written on the jar [containing the gold], which says: “Heaven gives the gold to the filial son Guo Ju. The officials must not seize it; the commoners must not take it.”

漢郭巨，字文舉，家貧。有子三歲，母減食與之。巨謂妻曰：“貧乏不能供母，子又分母之食，盍賣/埋此子？子可再有，母不可復得。”妻不敢違。一日，巨掘坑三尺餘，忽見黃金。釜上有字，云：“天賜黃金，郭巨孝子，官不得奪，民不得取。”

Guo Ju thought about supporting [his mother];

[Planning to] sell/bury his son, he wished his mother could stay alive.

The gold was given by Heaven,

Whose brilliance glorified the poor family.

郭巨思供養，賣兒願母存。黃金天所賜，光彩耀寒門。

Story 14—*E'hu jiufu* 搯虎救父 (Strangling a Tiger, Saving His Father)

Yang Xiang 楊香 of the Jin 晉 dynasty [265–420] was fourteen years old. He accompanied his father Feng 豐 to the field to harvest millet. When his father was dragged away by a tiger, Xiang did not have one inch of iron in his hands.¹² Knowing only the existence of his father, without knowing the existence of himself, [Yang Xiang] jumped toward the tiger and gripped its neck. The tiger ground its teeth and withdrew. The father was thus able to avoid being harmed.

晉楊香，年十四歲，隨父豐往田獲傑粟。父為虎拽去，時香手無寸鐵。惟知有父，而不知有身，踴躍向前，搯持虎頸。虎磨牙而逝。父因得免於害。

Encountering a tiger in the deep mountains,

[Yang Xiang] strived to struggle with the wind filled with the smell of blood.

The father and the son are both safe,

Escaping from the greedy mouth.

深山逢白額，努力搏腥風。父子俱無恙，脫離饞口中。

Story 15—“*Shishen yiqi* 拾椹供親” (Gathering Mulberries, Distinguishing between Utensils)

Cai Shun 蔡順 of the Han 漢 dynasty, whose style name was Jun Zhong 君仲, was fatherless since his youth. He served his mother with extreme filial piety. [They] endured the social chaos caused by Wang Mang 王莽. In the year when the land was in ruin, there was not enough food supply. [Shun] gathered mulberries and collected them in different utensils. The bandits of Chi Mei 赤眉 saw him [gathering mulberries] and asked: “what is the difference [between the fruits in the two utensils]?” Shun answered: “The black fruits are to be served to my mother. The red ones are for myself.” The bandits took pity on Shun’s filial piety, and gave him three *sheng* 升¹³ of white rice, and one ox leg.

漢蔡順，字君仲。少孤，事母至孝。遭王莽亂，歲荒不給。拾桑椹以異器盛之。赤眉賊見而聞曰：“何異乎？”順曰：“黑者奉母，赤者自食。賊憫其孝，以白米三升，牛蹏一隻贈之。

Black mulberries were to be provided to [his] mother;

Crying because of hunger, he shed tears all over his clothes.

The Chi Mei was aware of his filial piety,

Letting him bring home ox [leg] and rice.

黑椹奉萱幃，啼饑淚滿衣。赤眉知孝順，牛米贈君歸。

Story 16—“*Huajiu weiqin* 懷橘遺親” (Hiding Oranges, Providing Them to His Parent)

Lu Ji 陸績 of the Later Han 後漢 dynasty, whose style name was Gong Ji 公紀, was at the age of six. [He] visited Yuan Shu 袁術 in Jiu Jiang 九江. When Shu presented oranges to entertain Ji, [Ji] hid two of them [under his clothes]. When he was about to return home, Ji bowed and bid farewell to [Yuan Shu]. The two oranges fell out on the ground. Shu said: “Yong man Lu, are you coming here as a guest to hide oranges?” Ji kneeled down, answering: “[Oranges] are my mother’s favourite [food]. I want to bring them home to give [them] to my mother.” Shu was greatly amazed [by Jin’s filial piety].

後漢陸績，字公紀，年六歲。於九江見袁術。術出橘是待績。懷橘二枚。及歸拜辭，橘墜地。術曰：“陸郎作賓客而懷橘乎？”績跪答曰：“吾母性之所愛。欲歸以遺母。”術大奇之。

Filial piety and fraternal love are all the inborn natures;

Among human beings, [there was] a six-year-old child.

In his sleeve hid [He] the green oranges,

[In order to] give [them to] his mother, which is really amazing.

孝弟皆天性，¹⁴ 人間六歲兒。袖中懷綠橘，遺母事堪奇。

Story 17—“*Wenlei qimu* 聞雷泣墓” (Hearing Thunder and Crying at the Tomb)

Wang Pou 王裒 of the state of Wei 魏 [266-316], whose style name was Wei Yuan 偉元, served his parents with extreme filial piety. When his mother was still alive, [she] was, by nature, afraid of thunder. After [she] died, [she] was buried in a mountain wood. Whenever [he] encountered wind and rain and heard thunder, [Wang Pou] would run to the place of [his mother's] tomb. He [then] bowed [to the tomb] and cried, telling that “Pou is here. Mother, do not be afraid.” He led a life in solitude and seclusion, and taught [others how to] read the *Shi [jing]*.¹⁵ When [he] came across [the verse—] “Alas my father and mother; [they] gave me life with painstaking efforts,” [he] would repeat it three times, with tears and snivel streaming down. Thereafter, his pupils arrived, and the “*Lu e*” 蓼莪 was abolished.¹⁶

魏王裒，字偉元，事親至孝。母存日，性畏雷。既卒，葬於山林。每遇風雨，聞雷即奔墓所。拜泣告曰：“裒在此。母勿懼。”隱居，教授讀詩。至“哀哀父母，生我劬勞，”遂三復流涕。後門人至，廢蓼莪之篇。

[His] kind mother was afraid of hearing thunder,

A frozen soul sleeps beneath the tomb.

When thunder is roaring,

He comes to the tomb, walking around it a thousand times.

慈母怕聞雷，冰魂宿夜臺。阿香時一震，到墓遶千回。

Story 18—“*Kuzhu shangsun* 哭竹生筍” (Crying to a Bamboo, Bringing out Bamboo Shoots)

Meng Zong 孟宗 of the State of Wu 吳 [229-280], whose style name is Gong Wu 恭武, lost his father in his youth. His aged mother was very sick. In the “winter month 冬月,” she longed to eat the thick soup made with bamboo shoots. Zong had no idea of how to obtain [the ingredient]; he then went to a bamboo wood, where he held a bamboo stalk and cried. His sense of filial piety moved Heaven and Earth. Instantly, the earth cracked open, from which emerged a few shoots. He brought them home and prepared the soup for his mother. Having finished the soup, the mother’s illness was cured.

吳孟宗，字恭武。少喪父。母老，病篤。冬月思筍煮羹食。宗無計可得，乃往竹林，抱竹而哭。孝感天地。須臾，地裂，出筍數莖。持歸作羹奉母。食畢，疾癒。

Shedding tears in the northern cold wind,

Miserable are the few stalks of bamboo.

Instantly emerged the winter shoot,

[It is] Heaven’s intention to forecast [the mother will be] safe and sound.

淚滴朔風寒，蕭蕭竹數竿。須臾冬筍出，天意報平安。

Story 19—“*Wobing qiuli* 卧冰求鯉” (Lying on the Ice in Search for Carps)

Wang Xiang 王祥 of the Jin 晉 dynasty [265-420], with the style name of Xiu Zheng 休徵, lost his mother at an early age. His stepmother, surnamed Zhu 朱氏, had no

affection towards him. She often brought to his father false accusations against him. As a result, [Wang Xiang] lost his father's love. The [step]mother had a desire to eat raw fish. It was at the time when the ice was freezing. Xiang undressed himself and lay down on the ice in search of fish. The ice suddenly cracked automatically, from which two carps leaped out. [Wang Xiang] brought the fish home to provide [them] to the mother.

晉王祥，字休徵。早喪母。繼母朱氏不慈。於父前數譖之，由是失愛于父。母欲食生魚，時值寒冰凍，祥解衣臥冰求之。冰忽自裂，雙鯉躍出。持歸供母。

There are stepmothers in the human world,

There is no another Wang Xiang under Heaven.

Until today, on the surface of the river,

An impression [can be found of Wang Xiang's] lying on the ice.

繼母人間有，王祥天下無。至今河水上，一片卧病模。

Story 20—"Ziwen baoxue 恣蚊飽血" (Letting the Mosquitos Feed on His Blood)

Wu Meng 吳猛 of the Jin 晉 dynasty, at the age of eight, had a disposition of being extremely filial. His family was poor; their beds were not furnished with draperies. Every night in summer, [Wu Meng] let the mosquitos gather on his skin, and feed on his flesh and blood. Although [mosquitos gathering on his skin] were many, [Wu Meng] did not drive them away. [He] was afraid that, were they driven away [from his own body], they would bite his parents. His feeling of filial affection had already reached the greatest level.

晉吳猛，年八歲，性至孝。家貧，榻無幃帳。每夏夜，任蚊攢膚，恣渠膏血之飽。雖多，不驅。恐去己而噬親也。愛親之心至矣。

On summer nights, [they] had no draperies;
 Mosquitos were many; [but he] didn't dare to wave them off.
 [He] let them feed on [his] flesh and blood,
 Lest they enter [his] parents' draperies.
 夏夜無幃帳，蚊多不敢揮。恣渠膏血飽，免使入親幃。

Story 21—“*Changfen youxin* 嘗糞憂心” (Tasting the Feces and Having Worries in His Heart)

Yu Qianlou 庾黔婁 of the Southern Qi 南齊 dynasty [479-502] was the magistrate of the county Chanling 孱陵. [Yu's] stay on his post lasted less than ten days, before he suddenly trembled with fear and perspired. [He] immediately quit his job and returned [home]. [When he arrived home,] his father had just fallen ill for two days. The doctor said: “if [you] want to know whether his illness is to be cured or become serious, you only need to taste his excrement. The bitter taste is good.” Yu Qianlou tasted [his father's] excrement; it tasted sweet. [Hence,] his heart was full of extreme worries. In the evening, he bowed deeply to the North Star, asking to replace his father's death with his own.

南齊庾黔婁，爲孱陵令。到任未旬日，忽心驚汗流，即棄官歸。時父病始二日。醫云：“欲知瘥劇，但嘗糞。苦則佳。黔婁嘗之，甜，心憂甚至。夕稽顙北辰，求身代父死。

[He] stayed in the county less than ten days,

When his father met with a serious illness.

Hoping to replace his father's death with his own,

He looked at the North [Star] with worries aroused in his heart.

到縣未旬日，椿庭遭疾深。願將身代死，北望起憂心。

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. 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.”

唐崔山南，曾祖母長孫夫人，年高無齒。祖母唐夫人，每日櫛洗升堂，乳其姑。姑不粒食數年而康。一日，病篤，少長集。曰：無以報新婦恩，願汝孫婦亦如新婦之孝敬。

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].
孝敬崔家婦，乳姑晨盥梳。此恩無以報，願得子孫如。

Story 23—“*Diqin niqi* 滌親溺器” (Washing up His Parent’s Chamber Pot)

Huang Tingjian 黃庭堅 of the Song 宋 dynasty, whose style name was Lu Zhi 魯直, was [also known by his] art name Shan Gu 山谷. In the middle of the Yuan You 元祐 period [1086-1094], he took the office of Grand Scribe [*tai shi* 太史]. He had the nature of being extremely filial. Although he himself was of a noble and prominent status, [he] served his mother with extreme sincerity. Every evening, [he] washed his parent’s chamber pot. Not for one minute did he not fulfill his sonly duty.
宋黃庭堅，字魯直，號山谷。元祐中爲太史。性至孝。身雖貴顯，奉母盡誠。每夕，爲親滌溺器。無一刻不供子職。

[His] nobility and prominence was known by all under heaven;
He served his parent filially in his life.

[He] washed [his mother's] chamber pot personally;

With maids and concubines, how can he have no other people to do it?

貴顯聞天下，平生孝事親。親身滌溺器，婢妾豈無人。

Story 24 — “*Qiguan xunmu* 棄官尋母” (Abandoning His Official Post, Searching for His Mother)

When Zhu Shouchang 朱壽昌 of the Song 宋 dynasty was seven years old, his biological mother [*sheng mu* 生母] surnamed Liu 劉 was envied by his official mother [*di mu* 嫡母];¹⁷ she was driven out of the family and married [another man]. The [biological] mother and the son had not seen each other for fifty years. During the reign of Shen Zong 神宗 [1067-1085], [Zhu Shouchang] gave up his official position and went to the region of Qin 秦. He bid farewell to his family, vowing that he would not return until he found his mother. When he arrived in Tong Zhou 同洲, he found her who, at that time, was in her seventies.

宋朱壽昌，年七歲，生母劉氏，為嫡母所妒，出嫁。母子不相見者五十年。神宗朝，棄官入秦，與家人決，誓不見母不復還。行次於同州，得之。時母年七十餘。

Separated from his mother at the age of seven,

[He] had been apart [from her] for fifty years.

Once they met each other,

The aura of happiness moved Heaven.

七歲生離母，參商五十年。一朝相見面，喜氣動皇天。

¹ In the *Ershisi xiao*, the identity of the mother is unclear. According to other sources of this story, she is Shun's stepmother.

² Yao is one of the legendary sage kings ruled China in the pre-historical times, who was followed by Shun and then by Yu 禹.

³ The Chinese words used here are “*mubu jiaojie* 目不交睫” and “*yibu jiedai* 衣不解帶”, which literally mean “Eyelids do not touch each other” and “the belt of one's clothes is not loosened.”

⁴ Besides the family name and the given name, a person in traditional China was also given another name (*zi*, 字), when he/she reached his/her adulthood. This additional name is known in English as the “style name” or “courtesy name”.

⁵ One *li* is about 0.5 kilometer.

⁶ “*zhong*” was used in early China as the largest unit for measuring the volume of grains.

⁷ The character used here is “*shi*” 食 which literally means “to eat.” It is a Chinese tradition that “eating” covers a wider range of activities than it does in the West, referring to both “eating” and “drinking.”

⁸ It is actually unclear how many sculptures are made. Judging from the illustrating pictures, there are two sculptures representing respectively the father and the mother. However, in earlier versions of the story, there is usually one sculpture made to represent either the father or the mother.

⁹ It is not clear if the nouns (“finger” and “sculpture”) should be translated in the plural, since the Chinese language makes no distinction between the singular and plural nouns. The text itself is inexplicit about whether both sculptures are involved here.

¹⁰ There seem to be two versions of the story. In the most common version, Guo Ju's son is to be buried. In the late Qing version which my translation is based on, the son is to be sold. It is my opinion that the second version was an alteration of the original story, since there is no clear connection between Gu Ju's intention to sell his son and his subsequent action of digging a hole on the ground. When the story is narrated vocally, this difference can be minimal, since the Chinese character for “bury” (*mai* 埋) and that for “sell” (*mai* 賣) have very similar pronunciations.

¹¹ One *chi* is about 0.37 meters.

¹² The Chinese phrase of “not having one inch of iron in one’s hands” (*shou wu cun tie* 手無寸鐵) means that the person in question is not equipped with any weapons.

¹³ One *sheng* is about one liter.

¹⁴ The character *di* 弟 seems to be a mistake, which should be *ti* 悌。

¹⁵ The *Shi jing* 詩經(*Book of Songs*) is an anthology of ancient songs (or poems), which had constituted an essential part of the Confucian teachings.

¹⁶ “*Lu e*” 蓼莪 is the song containing the verse. The word “*lu e*” describes an aquatic plant which is growing big.

¹⁷ The “official mother” refers to the father’s wife. Implicitly, Zhou Shouchang was born by his father’s concubine.

Appendix 2: Translation of Chinese Book Titles

This list includes only the Chinese books appearing in the main text.

Ershisi xiao 二十四孝 (*Twenty-Four Exemplars of Filial Piety*)

Guo yu 國語 (*Discourses of the States*)

Hou han shu 後漢書 (*History of the Later Han Dynasty*)

Kang Xi zidian 康熙字典 (*Dictionary of Kang Xi*)

Kongzi jiayu 孔子家語 (*Family Sayings of Confucius*)

Li ji 禮記 (*Book of Rites*)

Lun yu 論語 (*Analects*)

Lüshi chunqiu 呂氏春秋 (*Lü's Spring and Autumn Annals*)

Rulin waishi 儒林外史 (*Unofficial History of the Confucians*)

Shang shu 尚書 (*Classics of Documents*)

Shi ji 史記 (*The Grand Scribe's Records*)

Song shi 宋史 (*History of the Song Dynasty*)

Xiao jing 孝經 (*Classic of Filial Piety*)

Xiao xue 小學 (*Elementary Learning*)

Xin tang shu 新唐書 (*New History of the Tang Dynasty*)

Zuo zhuan 左傳 (*The Chronicle of Zuo*)