H. C. CHANG

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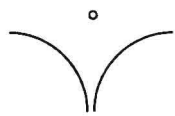
Foreword

This is a self-contained study and anthology of two related aspects of Chinese literature: fiction in the colloquial language, and the drama. Should the response to it prove favourable, it is hoped to make it the first of a series covering the most important areas of Chinese literary culture.

This book, and such a series, is addressed to the general reading public as well as students of Chinese. It does not offer an assortment of eloquent and moving passages from the whole range of Chinese literature; its aim is to give the Western reader a really close view of certain significant activities on the Chinese literary scene. Thus each volume will be confined to one or two types of writing, and will comprise fresh translations of works or portions of works chosen to illustrate one facet of literary history. A critical survey of its subject will be a feature of each volume.

Projected volumes are:
2. *Nature Poetry*;
3. *Poets and their Creeds*;
4. *Painting and Poetry*;
5. *Autobiography and the Essay*;
and 6. *Tales of the Supernatural.*



Preface

The purpose of this book is to introduce the English reader to two contiguous realms of Chinese literature, fiction in the colloquial language and the drama, ranging from the thirteenth century to the nineteenth or, in dynastic terms, from the Southern Sung and Yüan down to Ming and Ch'ing. It consists of a dozen interlocking pieces chosen to illustrate the various stages in the development of this literature, the key being supplied in a historical introduction. The picture puzzle that emerges may also be regarded as a panorama of Chinese life of the last seven or eight centuries, though mainly in its humbler aspects.

In my translations, I have sought above all to render fully the meaning I have found in the originals. With the verse, I have tried also to keep to the original lineation and to do justice to the imagery. Some attempt has been made in all cases to reproduce the tone of the original; thus clichés and bathos are rendered as such, and pointless allusions have often been suppressed. In the matter of the age of persons, I have not been consistent. In the translations and in some other instances, I have simply allowed people to be as old as they thought themselves, which—based on the number of calendar years—would usually be a year or so more than their actual age. Where, as in my biographical studies of authors, I have had to supply the age, a more precise reckoning is used.

I wish to thank my friends, Dr M. I. Scott, Professor E. G. Pulleyblank, Dr Joseph Needham, Professor D. Hawkes and Dr G. Dudbridge, and my cousin Mr Yü Ta-kang, for reading over portions of my manuscript and for their kind suggestions. Without the resources of Cambridge University Library and the expert and ungrudging assistance of its officers, especially Dr Scott, the task of preparing such a book would have been far more difficult and vexatious. I am indebted for information about articles in Chinese periodicals to Mr P. K.

Yü of Hong Kong University; and for the supply of photostats or microfilm material, to the officials of the British Museum, to Mrs Frances Wang of the Far Eastern Library, University of Washington, and to Mr C. C. Lan, Librarian of the Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica. Finally, in the preparation of the manuscript itself, I have been much aided by the efficient duplicating service provided by the Cambridge Philosophical Library.

For permission to quote from copyright material I am indebted to E. J. Brill, Leiden (Van Gulik, *T'ang-yin pi-shih*, 1956), Cambridge University Press (Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China*, vol. IV, part 3, 1971), and University of London Press (Tregear, *A Geography of China*, 1965).

Contents

General Introduction

The Setting

The stories and plays represented in this collection were originally intended for performance before an audience and depended for their full effect on the skill of story-tellers and actors; the longer narrative works, too, which we might call novels and which were meant to be read, continued to adhere to the conventions of story-telling. It would thus seem desirable to sketch the setting in which the earliest performances took place. The growth of cities that followed the expansion of trade, domestic and foreign, throughout the Sung dynasty (960–1279 A.D.) was accompanied by an unprecedented demand for popular entertainment. In the fair-grounds[1] which were a permanent fixture of the Sung capital Pien (i.e. Kaifeng, known as the Eastern Capital) in the eleventh and the first quarter of the twelfth century, story-telling went on the whole year round in booths and wooden sheds, flourishing side by side with comedians' acts; semi-dramatic performances known as 'Melodies in Mixed Modes' (*chu-kung-tiao*), part sung and part narrated; recitals by individual singers; puppet and marionette shows; shadow plays; and a rudimentary drama which included acrobatics. The largest of these sheds were theatres holding several thousand spectators. It was also in the fair-grounds that, during the seven or eight days preceding the Chung-yüan Festival in the seventh month, associated with the pious Mu-lien and his journey through hell in search of his mother, religious plays on the theme, probably relying heavily on spectacle, were staged.[2]

[1] *Tung-ching meng hua lu* (1147), Ku-tien edition, 1956, c. 5, pp. 29–30.
[2] *Ibid.*, c. 8, p. 49; for the story and its Buddhist origins, see Arthur Waley, *Ballads and Stories from Tun-huang*, 1960, chapter 11, 'Mu-lien rescues his mother'. See also Chao Ching-shen, *Yin-tzu chi*, 1946, pp. 149–76, 'On the Changing Forms of the Mu-lien Story'.

Festivals, however, were also held at temples with the attendant variety of entertainments.[1] And during the New Year celebrations, acrobats, conjurers, mountebanks, singers and dancers, and even one determined story-teller who recited the history of the Five Dynasties, gave performances on a high wooden structure erected before the palace gate-tower, watched by the crowds and, from behind yellow curtains, by those in the palace. The festivities culminated in the Lantern Festival, the first full moon of the year, when the streets were adorned with illuminated figures of dragons and gods, the fingers of some deities spouting jets of water at intervals.[2] But the busier parts of the city were lit up at night at all times. Whereas in the T'ang dynasty (618–906), inhabitants of the capital Ch'ang-an (i.e. Sian in Shensi Province) had been confined to their respective wards after sundown, there was no curfew in the Sung capital, only the city gates being locked at night and the bridges closed to river traffic. Food stalls and eating houses with their contingent of singing girls remained open all night, so that feasting and revelry often lasted until dawn. For the ordinary Chinese city-dweller, night-life began under the Sung. In retrospect, the twenty-five-year reign (1101–25) of the pleasure-loving emperor, the too accomplished Hui-tsung, which ended in one of the great disasters of Chinese history,[3] became the golden age of entertainment and patronage.

Thus it was no accident that the long narrative *Shui-hu chuan* —a monument to the story-teller's art—should begin with the rise to fortune of a down-and-out football player whose sidelong kick[4] won the admiration of that same Hui-tsung, then Prince Tuan.[5] Every incident in that glorious and ill-starred reign was stamped on the memory of those who fled south from the Tartar invaders; and when in 1138 Hangchow was fixed upon as the Southern Sung capital and re-named Lin-an (Temporary Refuge), the inhabitants of the city wasted no time in transforming it into another Kaifeng, meticulously comparing each detail in the present with 'what once prevailed

[1] *Tung-ching meng hua lu*, c. 8, pp. 47–8.
[2] *Tung-ching meng hua lu*, c. 6, pp. 34–5; the one story-teller, whose voice must have been stentorian, performed regularly in the fairgrounds (c. 5, p. 30).
[3] For the train of events, see Introduction to 'The Twin Mirrors' *infra*.
[4] The ball is kicked with the right foot strategically placed behind the left foot, thus resulting in an elegant posture.
[5] *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, chapter 2.

in *the* capital'.[1] Tea-houses, for instance, were regarded by those who clung to the old ways as something of a novelty and not quite respectable:

> The larger tea-houses [in Hangchow] have pictures and scrolls of calligraphy by famous artists hanging on the wall. In the capital, only restaurants had them, to keep their customers amused while the food was being cooked, but now the tea-houses have adopted the practice.[2]

To the unprejudiced, Hangchow, with its lake surrounded by hills providing an inexhaustible supply of fresh green tea of rare flavouring, its abundance of other produce (endless varieties of silk, of flowers, fruits, herbs, trees including eight types of bamboo, of birds, beasts and fish), and its more varied and elaborate festivals (which included a Flower Festival in the middle of the second month, a Wine Festival at the beginning of April just before the time-honoured Festival of Ch'ing-ming, and the annual exodus in the eighth month to the mouth of the river Che to watch the autumn tidal bores), may seem an altogether more delightful place, far more conducive to leisurely pursuits.[3] Certainly, in the latter half of the twelfth and in the thirteenth century, all the entertainments ever offered in Kaifeng were to be found in similar fair-grounds in Hangchow; only in greater profusion.[4] Story-telling, in particular, grew more specialised, and by the second half of the thirteenth century there was even a guild of writers, some of whose names are recorded,[5] though story-tellers' texts bear no marks of authorship, being often altered in the telling. With the passage of time, certainly by the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, under the Ming dynasty (1368–1643), the Hangchow story-tellers' pre-occupation with the vanished world of 'former days in the Eastern Capital' gave way to interest in their own city with its

[1] See Jacques Gernet, *Daily Life in China on the eve of the Mongol invasion 1250–1276*, translated H. M. Wright, 1962, chapter 1.
[2] *Tu-ch'eng chi sheng* (1235), in Ku-tien edition of *Tung-ching meng hua lu*, p. 94; the writer could not have been speaking from personal experience.
[3] For variety of produce, see *Meng liang lu* (about 1275), c. 18, in Ku-tien edition of *Tung-ching meng hua lu*, pp. 282–91; for the festivals here mentioned, see *Meng liang lu*, c. 1, p. 145; c. 2, p. 149; c. 4, pp. 162–3; for Hangchow life in the thirteenth century, see Gernet's book mentioned above; for Hangchow in the sixteenth century, see 'Madam White' *infra*.
[4] See *Tu-ch'eng chi sheng*, pp. 95–8; *Meng liang lu*, c. 18, p. 298; c. 20, pp. 308–13; *Wu-lin chiu-shih* (after 1280), in Ku-tien edition of *Tung-ching meng hua lu*, c. 6, pp. 440–1, pp. 453–66.
[5] *Wu-lin chiu-shih*, c. 6, p. 454.

beautiful environs and its clever and charming men and women.

Of the theatre proper, in which literary drama was performed in the thirteenth century in the north, under Tartar and Mongol rule, we possess a description in a poem entitled 'A farmer's visit to the theatre' by Tu Jen-chieh,[1] an older contemporary of the playwright Kuan Han-ch'ing, one of whose early plays was possibly being staged: The harvest had been good and the farmer, satisfied with his lot, entered the city to purchase incense and paper money as his thanksgiving offerings to the local deity. Passing a busy street, he noticed a large crowd gathered near a spot where notices on coloured paper were pasted all over:

'A man stood with his hands raised as if supporting the beam
that served as a doorway,
Shouting aloud: "Pray enter now! Pray enter now!
The place will be full! Late-comers must do without seats!"
He continued: "In the first half we present *The Mock Courtship*[2]
To be followed by *The Story of Liu Shua-ho*!"'[3]

For a fee of two hundred copper cash the farmer gained admittance, and he walked up some sloping boards to find himself on a huge wooden structure with row upon row of seats laid out in circular or semi-circular fashion. Way above, the roof seemed to him like a bell tower; looking down, he saw 'a whirlpool of men'. On a platform in the centre (i.e. the stage) several women were seated and the musicians had begun to play:

'Surely this is not the time of year for a religious procession!
Why, then, all that beating on drums and banging on gongs?'

More players entered, and the farmer watched with fascination their strange costumes and made-up faces, one of which was 'daubed with chalk with some black smudges'. They declaimed or sang, ever ready with their tongues and 'knowing such a lot of clever speeches'.

The farmer did not sit through the performance, and such

[1] The poem *Chuang-chia pu shih kou-lan* to the tune 'Shua hai-erh' is in Sui Shu-sen (ed.), *Ch'üan Yüan san ch'ü*, Chung-hua 1964, vol. 1, pp. 31–2. For Tu Jen-chieh and Kuan Han-ch'ing, see Introduction to 'A Dream of Butterflies' *infra*.

[2] *T'iao feng-yüeh*, specified as a *yüan-pen*, the earlier dramatic form that led to the four-act *tsa-chü* play of the second half of the thirteenth century; initially, however, the terms *yüan-pen* and *tsa-chü* were used rather loosely.

[3] See Hu Chi, *Sung Chin tsa-chü k'ao*, 1957, pp. 221–5, for a discussion of the title of the play and the significance of the line; also Feng Yüan-chün, *Ku-chü shuo-hui*, revised edition 1955, pp. 71–2.

snatches of the action (which he followed imperfectly) that occur in his account seem not to fit Kuan Han-ch'ing's play[1] *Cha ni-tzu t'iao feng-yüeh* ('The Dissembling Girl conducts a Mock Courtship'), the text of which, however, is not preserved in full. 'The Story of Liu Shua-ho' would almost certainly be the play of that name, *Fu-yen Liu Shua-ho*, by Kuan's younger colleague Kao Wen-hsiu,[2] which would date the poem to the 1260's.[3] The locality was Peking, which, as the capital (named Ta-hsing) of the Tartan Chin in 1153–1214[4] and (under the name of Ta-tu) of the Mongol Yüan dynasty (1260–1367), was the centre of dramatic activity in the thirteenth century.

The costumes would seem always to have been sumptuous and the stage itself bare, as may be seen from a coloured wall painting of the period in the Temple of the Dragon King outside Hung-tung (in Shansi Province) depicting a group in a theatrical show.[5] Ten figures in costume, male and female, are shown standing, arranged in three rows, on a tile stage, probably in a temple rather than a regular theatre: the figure in the front centre is a high official in a red robe and a hat with spreading horns, holding before him a memorandum tablet, his symbol of office; the others have in their hands such objects as a sword or fan or flute indicating their respective roles. The entire cast seems to be present, though a half-concealed figure may be seen lifting a corner of the back curtain on one side to peep at the goings-on. The story has not been identified with any certainty. The stage is unfurnished except for two decorative hangings over the back curtain, which, though a short distance apart, form a single picture: an angry dragon on the one appears ready to attack a swordsman taking his stance on the other. From its

[1] In *Kuan Han-ch'ing hsi-ch'ü chi*, pp. 689–703, only the songs and some stage directions being preserved; see Introduction to 'A Dream of Butterflies' *infra*.

[2] The play by Kao Wen-hsiu, now lost, was singled out for special mention by Chia Chung-ming in 1422, and also recorded by Chu Ch'üan in 1398; see *Lu kuei pu*, Ku-tien edition, p. 11; and *Lu-kuei-pu hsin chiao-chu*, pp. 33–4; *T'ai-ho cheng-yin p'u*, in *Lu kuei pu*, p. 140; also Introduction to 'A Dream of Butterflies' *infra*.

[3] As Kuan Han-ch'ing's younger colleague—'a lesser Han-ch'ing'—Kao could hardly have begun writing for the stage before 1260; the fact that the theatre was a comparative novelty also dates the poem to the 1260's; its author Tu Jen-Chieh survived into the 1270's. See Introduction to 'A Dream of Butterflies' *infra*.

[4] From 1215 Peking was under Mongol occupation.

[5] See Chou I-po, *Chung-kuo hsi-ch'ü lun-chi*, 1960, pp. 393–400: 'A Theatrical Performance in a Yüan Wall Painting'.

name, written large over the valance which overhung the back curtain, the company seems to have been a local one, probably one that had performed at the temple on a particular occasion. The costumed figures in the picture are a valuable source of information to those interested in theatrical tradition, but the picture as a whole suggests that, outwardly at least, the Yüan stage differed little from the Chinese stage of later times.

Story-telling

In the early twelfth century, the two main groups of story-tellers in Kaifeng[1] were: those who recited history, which meant a connected narrative woven round a number of colourful historical characters and presented in the form of a chronicle; and those who related self-contained and relatively short stories with no pretensions to historical accuracy or importance. In Hangchow, in the thirteenth century,[2] they were joined by a third group, those who expounded Buddhist sutras and elaborated religious tales. As their matter differed, so the styles of the three were at variance. To judge by surviving texts from 1321–3,[3] the reciters of history (*chiang shih*) declaimed in debased classical rather than a strictly colloquial language, probably pausing after each sentence to paraphrase and explain like a teacher; their dialogue was deliberately archaic so as to maintain a ponderously lofty tone, but their own claim to neat and elegant phrasing seems justified in many of the narrative passages. These characteristics survive also in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century versions of the long narrative *San-kuo yen-i* ('The Three Kingdoms'; final version in 120 chapters), much amplified from the story-tellers' early text printed in 1321–3.[4]

The sutra reciters (*shuo ching*) offered casuistry as well as all

[1] *Tung-ching meng hua lu*, c. 5, p. 30. After 1226, under Tartar rule, many of them doubtless continued to ply their trade in the same fairgrounds.
[2] *Tu-ch'eng chi sheng*, p. 98; *Hsi-hu lao-jen fan-sheng lu* (c. 1253), in Ku-tien edition of *Tung-ching meng hua lu*, p. 123; *Meng liang lu*, c. 20, pp. 312–13; *Wu-lin chiu-shih*, c. 6, pp. 454–6.
[3] Five texts dealing with (a) the rise of Chou (b) the Warring States (c) the rise and fall of Ch'in (d) the Former Han (e) the Three Kingdoms, dating from 1321–3, are reprinted by Ku-tien and Chung-hua (1955–9). I have based my observations on (a), i.e. *Wu-wang fa Chou p'ing-hua* and (d), i.e. *Ch'ien-Han-shu p'ing-hua*.
[4] *San-kuo-chih p'ing-hua*, being (c) in note 2 above. The 120-chapter 'Three Kingdoms' is available in a carefully edited text by Chou Ju-ch'ang, 1959, *San-kuo yen-i* (Jen-min).

the marvels of the Indian imagination. The casuistry conveyed itself in a series of symbolical and enigmatic verses, as surviving, for example, in the stories of the abbot Bright Moon and the girl Liu Ts'ui,[1] and of the two monks Ming-wu and Wu-chieh (in *Ku-chin hsiao-shuo*, c. 29 and c. 30), or in the story of *P'u-sa-man*.[2] The marvellous was represented in the stories grouped round Tripitaka's pilgrimage, surviving in a skeletal version in the thirteenth-century text *Ta-T'ang San-tsang fa-shih ch'ü ching chi*,[3] and in the greatly expanded sixteenth-century narrative *Hsi yu chi* in 100 chapters. But many Buddhist stories have been transmitted in the form of pious recitations (*pao-chüan*), part chant and part recitation, generally regarded as falling outside the story-telling tradition.

The stories pure and simple (*hsiao-shuo*) depended for their interest chiefly on the plot. It is recorded of the history reciters, who included self-styled graduates and higher graduates, that for all their erudition, they dreaded the competition of the tellers of such stories, who were in the habit of covering at a single sitting the events of a whole reign[4] (in other words, making a meal of fare which might have done for six months' rationing). Without the banner of learning or of doctrine, which each had its adherents, or the security of a lengthy, continuous text that could be counted on to draw its share of 'regulars', the tellers of imaginary stories relied on their wits to attract and hold a clientèle. Variety was at a premium with them; their repertory had constantly to be added to, and the very limitations of their medium they exploited to the full. Pauses in the narrative, contrived to coincide with moments of suspense, were filled by singing or the declaiming of verses, the song and verses serving, in turn, as description and illustration, commentary, and mere diversion, while a collection bowl was being handed around. And at the beginning of the performance, the place being not yet filled, the story-teller would come out with a 'preamble' (*ju-hua*), known also as a

[1] The Bright Moon and Liu Ts'ui story was being told in Hangchow in the first half of the sixteenth century; the actual story might not date from much earlier, but it undoubtedly continued the 'sutra recitation' tradition. See Introduction to 'Madam White' *infra*.

[2] In *Ching shih t'ung-yen*, c. 7, but I have taken the title from *Ching-pen t'ung-su hsiao-shuo*, c. 11, where the story is also found. See Introduction to 'The Birthday Gift Convoy' *infra*.

[3] See Introduction to 'The Women's Kingdom' *infra*.

[4] *Tu-ch'eng chi sheng*, p. 98; *Meng liang lu*, c. 20, p. 313.

'lucky preliminary offering' (*te sheng t'ou-hui*). This could be a discourse or a number of songs or a shorter preliminary story, which as a parallel instance of the same situation or predicament, or of the same wisdom or folly, often became wedded to the main story as, for example, in 'The Three Apparitions'.[1] In 'The Twin Mirrors'[2] the preliminary and the main story seem to have been planned by a single writer.

Such devices, available to all, were put to the best use by the tellers of stories pure and simple, who further enlisted the services of a musician, a flautist who accompanied the singing.[3] When the story-teller was a man, a woman singer probably sang the songs; but a female story-teller was expected both to sing and to tell her story. The Yüan man of letters Hu Chih-yü (1227–95), writing in praise of a story-teller of his acquaintance—a Miss Huang, of outstanding talents—who was about to publish a collection of verses, postulates the ideal qualities of an artiste in story-telling, seemingly embodied in that lady, as follows:[4] that she should be of dazzling beauty, elegant and refined in manner and deportment, and of surpassing intelligence with a corresponding insight into men and affairs; that she should possess clarity and fluency of speech, pronouncing each word and phrase distinctly and faultlessly; that her singing voice should be beautifully rounded like lustrous pearls descending in cascades; that she should employ gesture and expression to the full to guide the hearer and facilitate understanding; that her song and recitation should be at a measured pace with careful modulation of the volume and pitch—while knowing her text perfectly, she should never give the impression of monotonous chanting; that she should reveal the joys and sorrows and all other emotions of the protagonists and rehearse the very words and deeds of men of a former age, that they might live again for the hearer, of whose complete absorption in the story she could only then be assured; finally, that she should create new and original effects even in the reciting of old stories, in both plot and diction, so that those already familiar with them might constantly find cause for surprise.

[1] See 'The Clerk's Lady' *infra*.
[2] See 'The Twin Mirrors' *infra*.
[3] See Sun K'ai-ti, *Su-chiang shuo-hua yü pai-hua hsiao-shuo*, 1956, pp. 22–3, on 'yin-tzu-erh'.
[4] 'Preface to Poems by Miss Huang', as quoted in Sun K'ai-ti, pp. 10–11. For Hu Chih-yü, see Introduction to 'A Dream of Butterflies' *infra*.

Thus a star performer of the thirteenth century, a pretty and attractive woman, as seen through the eyes of an undoubted connoisseur who was very likely also a besotted, elderly admirer. (In the seventeenth century the amazing Liu Ching-t'ing, who was middle-aged and ugly and poorly educated, had the audience under his spell day after day while he recited history without sticking closely to any text.)[1] No mention is made of Miss Huang's repertory, which was probably a varied one, consisting of the choicest items from every group. As practised by those who enjoyed no special patronage[2] but earned their livelihood in Hangchow fair-grounds of the time, however, story-telling had diversified to such an extent that stories 'pure and simple' were divided into a number of (unavoidably overlapping) categories, with specialists in each.[3] According to one classification, these were: supernatural stories, involving evil spirits (*ling-kuai*); stories of amorous female ghosts (*yen-fen*); love stories (*ch'uan-ch'i*, i.e. romance); law court stories (*kung-an*); sword fights (*p'u-tao*); cudgel-play (*han-pang*); stories of immortals (*shen-hsien*); stories of magic and magicians (*yao-shu*). The categories 'sword fights' and 'cudgel-play' began as offshoots of, and remained subordinate to, 'law court stories'.

The classification, of the late thirteenth century, is that given in Lo Yeh's *Tsui-weng t'an-lu*,[4] a commonplace-book for story-tellers. It begins with a section entitled 'Industry of the Tongue' consisting of two discourses, one of them on the diversity of human types leading up to a justification of story-telling—'suitable for use as a Preamble in both history and sutra recitations', and the other on the story-teller's training and repertory. In the second discourse, a little over a hundred titles of stories are listed under the eight above-mentioned categories. Thus under 'sword fights' we find the title 'Green-faced Beast', i.e. Yang Chih, with his heirloom of a sword,

[1] See 'The Blood-stained Fan' *infra*.
[2] Many story-tellers, both men and women, were blind, but they were unlikely to have been the most popular or, for our purpose, significant; see Introductions to 'The Lute' and 'Madam White' *infra*.
[3] See *Tu-ch'eng chi sheng*, p. 98; *Meng liang lu*, c. 20, p. 312.
[4] Ku-tien reprint, the opening section being pp. 1–5; see T'an Cheng-pi, *Hua-pen yü ku-chii*, 1957, pp. 13–37, for an analysis of the titles listed by Lo Yeh; also the Catalogue of Works of Fiction by Sun K'ai-ti, *Chung-kuo t'ung-su hsiao-shuo shu-mu*, revised edition 1957, pp. 3–16.