

Wen and Wu in T'ang Fiction

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ABSTRACT

An important polarity in the Chinese mind and world is that of *wen* 文 and *wu* 武. *Wen* suggests pattern, culture, the literary, the civil; *wu* suggests vigor, action, the martial. Although in principle there is a recognition of the need for the balance and harmony of these qualities, in actuality the Chinese tradition is one in which *wen* has dominated, with a distinct tension between the two forces. This paper will review various attitudes and approaches towards *wen* and *wu* as depicted in T'ang fiction. The genre of T'ang fiction is a particularly revealing and fascinating forum because of its personal and informal nature. While at the political level the opposition of *wen* and *wu* may involve foreign policy decisions, in fiction it may express concern with the question of who wins the girl, a man of *wen* or a man of *wu*. In fiction one will find a number of attitudes towards *wu* expressed by the *wen-jen* 文人, the authors of these tales. In addition to the expected dominance of *wen* over *wu*, there is also a defense and celebration of, retreat to and even a longing for *wu*, as well as attempts to work out a sort of order and balance. This study focuses particularly upon stories in which there occurs a triangle: a *wen-jen*, a *wu*-figure and a heroine. The pattern can be employed in several ways, but in general the appearance of the *wu*-figure acts as a counter-balance to the *wen*-figure. These T'ang stories express fundamental insights into the nature and place of *wen* and *wu* in society, as well as an awareness of their relative strengths and weaknesses.

KEY WORDS

Wen 文
ch'uan-ch'i 傳奇
hsiao-shuo 小說

wu 武
T'ang fiction



1. Introduction

The Chinese have long conceived of the world in terms of balanced polarities, and one can identify a long list of pairs and poles in the Chinese mind. In food there is salty and sweet (*hsien* 鹹, *t'ien* 甜), in medicine hot and cool (*je* 熱, *liang* 涼), in literature (and elsewhere) pattern or refinement and substance (*wen* 文, *chih* 質), and of course there is the most fundamental and encompassing duality of all, *yin* 陰 and *yang* 陽.¹ Another important duality is the pair *wen* 文 and *wu* 武, *wen* suggesting pattern, culture, the literary, the civil and *wu* suggesting vigor, action, the martial. Although in principle there is recognition of the need for the balance and harmony of qualities, in reality one side often takes precedence and is dominant. Thus while the Chinese have often championed a balance of *wen* and *wu*, recognizing the need for both these elements, in actuality the Chinese tradition is one in which *wen* has dominated. Students of Chinese literature, for example, have often noted the lack of an epic in the literary tradition and the general absence of the heroic and martial as a theme. Writing on the evidence of Western Chou (1122-771 BC) literature, Herrlee G. Creel notes:

The literature as a whole produces two impressions: war was common, and those who fought it seem on the whole to have derived very little pleasure from it. In all of the Western Chou literature there seems to be scarcely anything that could be called a battle scene, in the sense of a description of a battle in which the exploits of individual warriors are recounted in detail.²

This imbalance was not limited to literature, but rather reflected basic realities throughout society:

The triumph of civil over military (*wen* over *wu*, literate culture over brute force) was not a mere fiction implanted in the record by the civilian chroniclers who monopolized it. On the contrary, it was still another Chinese achievement in the ordering of society.³

The roots of the preference for *wen* over *wu* go back to an early period in history. We see it in the appearance of and veneration for such figures as Confucius, that great lover of *wen*, and the poet as hero, Ch'ü Yüan 屈原, who became a sort of patron-saint for later literati-bureaucrats. And one can speak of a growing dominance of *wen* over *wu* as the ideal of the scholar-official or *wen-jen* 文人 gained a greater hold over society. The tendencies seen early in Chinese history continued with the establishment of the Han Dynasty and the rise of Confucianism as the state ideology.⁴ *Wen* became ever stronger as the examination and bureaucratic systems with their stress on scholarship and literary talent became fixed during the T'ang and Sung dynasties. Power and prestige lay in the hands of the *wen-jen*, and for the vast majority of the upper classes, *wen* models and aspirations were the ideal. The warrior and military ideals seen in so many other cultural traditions, both primitive and advanced, were muted in China and some scholars have even spoken of a pacifist bias.⁵

Nevertheless, *wu* as a principle was never forgotten. There was, of course, political reality—brute force and the military were parts of life. There were borders to defend or expand, and at times of crisis, especially during the life and death struggles at the beginnings and ends of dynasties, *wu* became more important, but then inevitably came the return of *wen*. As an official reminded the founder of the Han dynasty:

In his audiences with the emperor, Master Lu (Lu Chia 陸賈 [228-ca. 140 BC]) on numerous occasions expounded and

praised the *Book of Odes* and the *Book of Documents*, until one day Kao-tsu began to rail at him. "All I possess I have won on horseback!" said the emperor. "Why should I both-er with the Odes and Documents?"

"Your Majesty may have won it on horseback, but can you rule on horseback?" asked Master Lu. "Kings T'ang and Wu in ancient times won possession of the empire through the principle of revolt, but it was by the principle of obedience that they assured the continuance of their dynasties. To pay due attention to both civil and military affairs (*wen wu ping yung* 文武並用) is the way for a dynasty to achieve long life. In the past King Fu-ch'a of Wu and Chih Po, minister of Chin, both perished because they paid too much attention to military affairs.⁶

Lu Chia champions *wen* in the above passage, yet still acknowledges the ideal of a balance of *wen* and *wu*. This theoretical ideal would continue through the tradition along with a distinct tension between the two. The issue of *wen* vs. *wu* long remained a part of political ideology and discussion. Foreign policy was couched in terms of *wen* and *wu* (e.g. diplomacy/appeasement vs. military force) and the relationship between the two was a topic seen in the civil service exams.⁷ The bureaucracy was organized into spheres of *wen* and *wu*; great Emperors were those who combined both qualities; officials also dreamed of great deeds in each sphere. In the famous T'ang story "Chen chung chi" 枕中記 ("The Magic Pillow") a frustrated failure's dream of an ideal career is telling: "When a man is born into this world, he ought to accomplish great deeds and establish a name; outside the court he should be a general, within, a minister" (*ch'u Chiang ju hsiang* 出將入相).⁸ In another T'ang story, "Li Ching" 李靖, the hero, Li Ching (571-649), after completing a task for a god, is rewarded with two maid servants. He can choose either one or both. One, from the east, is pleasant looking and good natured; the other, from the west, is fiery tempered and defiant. Li thinks, "I am a hunter . . . I spend my time fighting against wild animals. If I take only one of these maids, and the

pleasant one at that, they will think I am afraid." He chooses the angry one. Later in his career he becomes a successful general, instrumental in establishing the T'ang, yet the story then concludes:

His fame spread over the whole empire, but he never did reach the office of Prime Minister. Surely this was because of the choice he made between the two slave girls. It is said that Prime Ministers come from east of the pass, while generals come from west of the pass. Is this not what the girls coming from east and west meant? These two slaves symbolized public servants. If he had taken both of them, he would have been both general and Prime Minister.⁹

Despite the ideal of balance, it was difficult to deny the reality of the supremacy of *wen* over *wu*, even in this last story there is the suggestion that Li Ching failed to reach the pinnacle because of his choice of *wu* over *wen*. As we have seen, this simply reflects the values and nature of Chinese society. A clear expression of this is seen in a Six Dynasties story from Kan Pao's 干寶 (fl. 320) *Sou-shen chi* 搜神記. In this entry a man tells of falling into a coma and being taken to Heaven. He is led into a secret chamber where there are some shelves, the highest of which contain official seals with the lower shelf holding some swords. He is asked to choose. Being rather short he can only reach the swords and so they are his choice. The officer in charge comments, "It is a pity you did not take a seal, for that would have put you in charge of all the gods. As it is, the sword will only give you control of local genii."¹⁰

A study of *wen* and *wu* can be approached in various ways. It can be a study of the bureaucracy and politics, of foreign policy, of military strategy. In this essay I focus on the tension and play between *wen* and *wu* as seen in literature, in particular, T'ang *hsiao-shuo* or fiction. The opposition between the two is particularly fascinating and complex because one ideal triumphed, though not completely, over the other. In addition, we always see the issue through the eyes of the scholar-officials or literati (*wen-jen*) who dominated society, men who while

embodying and championing *wen*, also recognized the place and need for *wu*. In *hsiao-shuo* we see the tension at a more intimate, individual level. The interactions become more complex as *wen-jen* authors try to identify the place of *wu* in society but also in their own personal lives. At times there is the expected dominance of *wen* over *wu*, yet there is also defense, celebration, retreat to, and even a longing for *wu*, as well as attempts to work out a sort of order and balance.

In early poetry the treatment of *wu* is significant and revealing, but limited. By the T'ang dynasty, however, *hsiao-shuo* ("fiction") in the form of the *ch'uan-ch'i* 傳奇 genre (literally: "transmitting the strange") had evolved to a point where it provided a forum for a wide variety of themes and content difficult to treat in earlier genres. In broad terms we can speak of *ch'uan-ch'i* as dealing with encounters with the "other"—marginal aspects of life often ignored in proper, official literature. Common topics were ghosts, eccentric Taoists, love, and *femme fatales*; *wu* figures (especially in the form of *yu-hsia* 遊俠 or knight-errants) also had their place in these realms. The *ch'uan-ch'i* genre can also be thought of as a medium through which the literati could express their fascination with figures that did not belong to the upper-class, male, *wen-jen* tradition. In the case of figures such as playboys, eccentric Taoists, and knight-errants, *wen-jen* authors were often personifying their alter-egos. This is not to say that the tension between *wen* and *wu* was a major theme or focus in T'ang fiction, in fact in most cases it is only indirectly reflected. Nevertheless, a number of stories contain revealing pictures of *wen-jen* attempting to define and fix the place of *wu* in personal life and society. At the state level the tension between *wen* and *wu* may involve decisions of foreign policy; in *hsiao-shuo* it may express concern with the question of who wins the girl.

One of the most basic attitudes towards *wu* in *wen-jen* literature was to fantasize and see it as a retreat from and alternative to the life of a *wen-jen*. When a man was frustrated with his career, disappointed with the realities of politics, yet still wanted to serve and do great deeds, we often see the dream of becoming a warrior and general, of turning to *wu* and the sword. Of course there was a reality behind this dream,

especially earlier in history when the divisions between being a general and a literatus were not so strict. An early example of this was the Han general, Pan Ch'ao 班超 (31-101), the brother of the great historian, Pan Ku 班固 (32-92). Early in his life when he was struggling as a copyist he threw down his pen and declared, "A true man should have no other ambition than this—he should model himself after men such as Fu Chieh-tzu 傅介子 (a diplomat-assassin) and Chang Ch'ien 張騫 (a famous general), to do great deeds in foreign lands, and thereby become enfeoffed. Why should one spend time amongst ink-stone and brush?"¹¹ The actions of Pan Ch'ao would long inspire the literati even in days when there was less likelihood of them actually taking up the sword and becoming generals. In the first of his "Eight Poems on History" ("Yung shih pa shou" 詠史八首), Tso Ssu 左思 (250?-305?) speaks of being a scholar and boasts of his learning, but then declares that in these troubled times he dreams of presenting a grand strategy so that with "A glance to the left the region Chiang and Hsiang will be cleansed. A look to the right and the Chiang barbarians are pacified." In the same series however he also writes in praise of the hermit scholar and philosopher Yang Hsiung 揚雄 (53 BC-18 AD).¹² In Tso Ssu's poems we see the wish to achieve in the areas of both *wen* and *wu*. But in these poems there is also a strong sense of fantasy and escape. Tso Ssu was a frustrated literati, disappointed with the politics and society of his day, and so we see him retreating to two ideals. They appear very different but are united in expressing his disenchantment with the status quo. Thus, in a sense, the longing for *wu* could be akin to other forms of reaction, such as eremitism, to the frustrations of the real world of the *wen-jen*. The image of taking up the sword as an expression of frustration occurs in numerous poems:

I touch my sword and gaze to the Southwest,
I long to return to T'ai-shan, the Mountain of Fate.

Ts'ao Chih 曹植 (192-232), "Tsa shih no. 6" 雜詩
("Miscellaneous Poem")¹³

Ts'ao Chih is a classic example of a *wen-jen* attracted to *wu* ideals. This

is explained in part by his character, in part by his situation. His political frustrations often led him to *wu* fantasies and an attraction to men of action.¹⁴

I face the table but cannot eat,
Drawing my sword I slash the pillar and sigh.

Pao Chao 鮑照 (ca. 414-466), "Ni Hsing lu nan" no. 6
擬行路難 ("In the Style of 'Hardships of the Road'")¹⁵

I stop drinking, toss my chopsticks, cannot eat,
Drawing my sword I gaze around my mind in a haze.

Li Po 李白 (701-762), "Hsing lu nan" no. 1 行路難
("Hardships of the Road")¹⁶

All these literati used the image of the sword to express their frustration with the realities of life, their longing for deeds and action.

2. T'ang Stories

There is a variety of approaches to *wen* and *wu* in T'ang *ch'uan-ch'i*. In this section I will review examples of these approaches as well as the forces that lay behind the portrayals. There are stories that express the classic fantasy of balanced accomplishments in *wen* and *wu*; stories that depict a fascination with *wu* and even champion *wu* or at least defend it in the face of the dominant forces of *wen*; and stories that reaffirm the supremacy of *wen*. The following section will focus on one particular motif, the love story involving a heroine, a *wen-jen*, and a knight-errant figure. This motif, in striking and telling ways, embodies the realities of *wen* and *wu* in society and private life and depicts a sort of hierarchical order and equilibrium, at least as seen through the eyes of the *wen-jen*.

We have seen how in "Chen chung chi" when the hero dreams of an ideal career he fulfills his wish of "outside the court a general, within a minister." This ideal is a common one in T'ang fiction. After all, one of the fundamental motives behind T'ang *ch'uan-ch'i* is the

expression of *wen-jen* fantasy. A classic example of this is Shen Ya-chih's 沈亞之 (779?-832?) "Ch'in meng chi" 秦夢記 ("Record of a Dream Journey to Ch'in").¹⁷ In this story, narrated in the first person, Shen has a dream in which he finds himself in the ancient kingdom of Ch'in. Once there he is recommended to the Duke and advises him on foreign policy. He is given command of an army which he leads to conquer five cities and for his deeds is rewarded with the daughter of the Duke, a legendary beauty of the past, Nung-yü 弄玉.¹⁸ Later when his princess wife dies he is given ample opportunity to display his literary gifts when he is asked to compose a mourning song, a memorial inscription, and several other poems, all of which are quoted in this relatively brief story. Finally Shen wakes up and tells a friend of his dream. It turns out that the tomb of Duke Mu of Ch'in is nearby. In this story we see the fulfillment of the range of classic *wen-jen* desires. Shen Ya-chih becomes both an official and a general, marries into royalty, has a historical beauty for a wife, and amply displays his literary gifts. He fulfills ambitions of both *wen* and *wu* and he wins the princess (who he at first properly refuses). A curious incident in another story also acknowledges the model of a balance of *wen* and *wu*. In Cheng Ch'üan's 鄭權 (?-824) "San nü hsing ching" 三女星精 ("The Three Star Princesses") three young men are offered the daughters of a goddess for marriage, they protest they are not worthy and so the goddess then summons Confucius and the Duke of Chou to teach them the qualities of both *wen* and *wu*. The father and uncle of the three young men become suspicious and so the goddess departs with her daughters. Later they approach another more receptive family who then have ministers and generals for the next three generations.¹⁹

The *wen-jen* enthusiasm for *wu* takes various forms during the T'ang. Above are examples of *wu* in its standard form of military deeds and rank. More significant was the rise of the knight-errant or *yu-hsia* 遊俠 stories that became an important sub-genre in T'ang *ch'uan-ch'i* and initiated a body of literature that continues to this day.²⁰ That this development reflected contemporary trends in society is seen in the story, "Chang Hu" 張祜.²¹ In this piece two friends who have failed at the civil-service exams wander south calling themselves

hao-hsia 豪俠 (“bold fellows”) and criticizing their non-*hao-hsia* peers. They gain a bit of a reputation when finally a mysterious *hsia* figure playing on their image of themselves tricks them. He first rushes in with a bloody head in a bag saying he has just taken revenge. Addressing them as fellow *hsia* he then asks for some money to help in accomplishing one last act of revenge. Chang is excited and delighted to be a part of all this and lends him the money. Of course it turns out to be a scam. The bloody head is that of a pig and the mysterious figure disappears with the cash. The eagerness of the two friends for *hao-hsia* is quickly extinguished. This story suggests the enthusiasm to be a *hao-hsia* was faddish enough to be made fun of and played upon in real life. Remember that of the two greatest T'ang poets, Li Po actually had a bit of a career as a *hao-hsia* in his youth and is known to have run his sword through several people.²² Even Tu Fu, while not a *hao-hsia*, was fond of recalling his more *wu*-like accomplishments and the *hao*-like features of his character. In several poems he mentions his skill at hunting and horseback riding, as well as his love of drinking and sense of justice:

On a Tartar horse I clasped an ornamented bow;
 My humming string was not loosed in vain.
 My long shaft sped after the cunning hare;
 Its swift feathers fitted to the bow's full moon.
 Mournful, the Song of the White-headed;
 Deserted now, the haunts of the gallants (*yu-hsia* 遊俠).²³

In understanding such enthusiasms we must recall some basic features of the T'ang. All dynasties began on a martial note, but the T'ang exceptionally so. Heir to the North-South division of the Six Dynasties, it (together with short-lived Sui dynasty that preceded it) represented the triumph of the North over the South, with the North a more vigorous, martial culture strongly influenced by foreign cultural traditions, the South a “softer” more literary tradition. This was the age when women rode horseback and played polo. Arthur F. Wright has described the culture of the North during the 6th century just before the

T'ang triumph:

Its tone was distinctly martial, and the esteem for military prowess, the cult of the hunt, of fine horses, hunting dogs and falcons was shared by Chinese and 'barbarian' alike. It had been and continued to be far more open to central and west Asiatic influences than was the south²⁴

There are not a few instances when Tu Fu's poems echo this tradition. Yet inevitably the forces of *wen* would ascend. It was during the T'ang dynasty, for example, that the civil-service exam system was firmly fixed and became the foundation of the bureaucracy. This was an important landmark in the long process of the rise of the scholar-official class and *wen* ideals and the consequent decline in *wu* values:

The almost universal acclaim for the examination system as a major stimulus to the growth of T'ang literature should not becloud the fact that this growth came at the expense of those martial qualities that had been so important to the early T'ang spirit. There was throughout the course of the dynasty a steady shift in emphasis among officials of the central government from martial (*wu*) to literary (*wen*) values.²⁵

The result was a tension between these two forces, and the appearance of figures, such as Li Po and Tu Fu, who represent *wen-jen* and *wen-jen* ideals at their highest, yet also were quick to exhibit and proclaim their *wu* qualities.

At moments there appears to be a balance of these forces, yet the underlying tension was still fundamental. In the *wen-jen* mind, *wu* was usually still a force in opposition to *wen* and even when championed was usually seen as an "other," as an "alternative" to *wen*. Li Po composed a number of poems on *hsia* in which he praised the life of the *hsia* and belittled *wen* and well-known *wen-jen* figures:

It is better to be a knight-errant than a scholar;

What good is teaching the Classics till your hair grows old? ²⁶

Such sentiments continue feelings seen in earlier poets such as Pao Chao and Tso Ssu in which *wu* was an alternative to or escape from *wen* and an expression of frustration with the status quo. By the T'ang, however, there were additional forces that intensified the polarity and tension between the two. One suspects that, in part, the sentiments seen in figures such as Li Po and Tu Fu are reactions to the rise of *wen*, that they represent attempts to reassert the place of *wu* and masculinity in the face of the ascending *wen*. In other spheres there were clear reactions to the increasing influence of *wen*. For example, some officials warned against the focus on literary composition in the civil service exams.²⁷ The emergence of the *yu-hsia* stories in T'ang fiction may, in part, be another expression of this tension. Admittedly, the reasons for the rise of this sub-genre are complex and the motif can be used for various themes. A measure of this complexity is seen in the development of both male and female *yu-hsia* figures (here we are concerned only with the male versions). In various ways the *hsia* figure can be seen as a sort of "middle" figure. While the *hsia* is a *wu* figure he is not a pure *wu* figure, not a warrior or general, but someone a *wen-jen* could more easily aspire to or dream of (cf. "Chang Hu"; the example of Li Po). In some stories *hsia* figures serve to mediate or intervene between *wen* and *wu* figures. At times the appearance of such a figure seems to represent the recognition of the failings of *wen* in certain aspects of life, and the figure of the *yu-hsia* can also be seen as one of the *wen-jen* alter egos that appear in T'ang fiction. *Ch'uan-ch'i* are full of fascination for and admiration of figures who were their opposites, all the things *wen-jen* ordinarily were not. In the case of *hsia* characters we see men who were martial, unrestrained, brave, unconventional, manly men of action. The literatus was refined, a man of books, a bureaucrat who had to play by the rules, and was strictly governed by hierarchies and conventional standards of etiquette. Perhaps in some ways the rise of the *hsia* figure was akin to the rise of the cowboy as a hero figure in America as the nation became increasingly sedentary and civilized.

Significant, however, is that the *hsia* figure rarely appears alone as the central figure of a story (unless it is a female *hsia*). Ordinarily there is a *wen-jen* present, and often the *hsia* figure is at the service of the *wen-jen* figure in some capacity. Thus while one may suggest it was *wen* developments such as the civil-service exam system and the rise of the literati ideal that helped to trigger the emergence of the *yu-hsia* story, the *hsia* figure was usually still kept in his place secondary to *wen-jen* and on the margins of respectability.

There were other factors that increased the tension and complexity of the balance of *wen* and *wu* during the T'ang. The series of crises that began in 755 with the An Lu-shan rebellion and almost toppled the dynasty called into question the emphasis on *wen* (cf. Hartman, n. 27 above). In addition, the weakening of the central government and bureaucracy and the rise of regional military governors who were often the equivalent of warlords further polarized the tension between *wen* and *wu*. By the end of the An Lu-shan rebellion there were important shifts in state and society:

Militarization had occurred on a large scale. Military officers wielded enormous power, dominating local government and occupying all the chief strategic places For the next half a century and to a lesser degree for the rest of the dynasty the military remained a major force in the life of the empire.²⁸

In this complex situation in which *wen* and *wu* were increasingly polarized, representatives of both sides felt threatened and unfairly treated by the other. At the political level the scholar officials were afraid and resentful of the rise of military men and there were calls to rein in the military. Military men felt unrecognized, mistreated by the bureaucratic establishment. Towards the end of the T'ang, not a few military officers and governors refused to come to the aid of the dynasty because of what they perceived as mistreatment:

Complaints about the dynasty's callous treatment of its

military officers were common enough as we have already seen, and other governors had deliberately avoided confrontations with the rebel forces.²⁹

A revealing example of this tension at a more mundane level is seen in a series of poems by Li Ho 李賀 (790-816) entitled, "Bachelor Hsieh Had a Concubine by the Name of Kao-lien Who Deserted Him for Another Man. Hsieh Tried to Make Her Stay with Him, But Was Unsuccessful. Later She Grew Sentimental about Him. Those of Our Party Wrote Poems Satirizing and Vilifying Her. Later I Added Four Poems of My Own" 謝秀才有一妾縞練, 改從於人, 秀才引留之不得, 後生感憶, 座人製詩嘲謔, 賀復繼四首.³⁰ The gist of these poems can be seen from the title. But it is important to add that Hsieh's concubine left him for a military man, and apparently this is the reason that Li Ho and his friends were so stirred up. For another example of the *wen-jen's* disdain of *wu* figures there is the story of "Kao Ch'ung-wen" 高崇文. In this brief anecdote the narrator tells how in ancient days the city walls of Ch'eng-tu were erected with the supernatural aid of a tortoise. The shell of this tortoise was still preserved during the T'ang until the *chieh-tu-shih* 節度使 (military commissioner), Kao Ch'ung-wen, ordered artisans to split it up and make it into ornaments. The narrator then comments, "The tortoise shell still existed, then that military official (*wu-ch'en* 武臣) destroyed it; what a pity."³¹

In the long run *wen* triumphed. By the Sung its victory was fundamentally complete—at least at the upper levels of society (at the popular level one continues to see strong recognition of and fascination with *wu*; witness its treatment in popular genres such as drama and fiction). This is not to say that *wu* ideals and longings disappeared, but that by the Sung there does appear to be a fundamental shift in the balance towards *wen*, a shift that would mark the remainder of the tradition. In the *hsiao-shuo* of the T'ang however we still see ample evidence of a deep fascination for *wu* and its interplay with *wen* and there appears a variety of approaches and counter-approaches which reflect the complex tensions discussed above.

In T'ang *ch'uan-ch'i*, as is the case in most other literary genres,

pure *wu* figures in the guise of generals or soldiers rarely take center stage. Again, *ch'uan-ch'i* were composed by *wen-jen* and usually focus on *wen-jen* protagonists and their encounters with the other. For the most part there was little reason or occasion to give full voice to their natural rivals and their values. More often the portrayal of *wu* takes the form of *yu-hsia* stories. In pre-Sung classical literature *wu* is embodied in two main types of figures, the *hsia* (ranging from classic knight-errants to *shao-nien* 少年 type figures) and the pure military figure, though admittedly there is not always a clear distinction between the two. The former type is by far the more common and poems on *hsia* and *shao-nien* form a sub-genre with a long tradition. It is difficult to think of many poems that directly focus upon military figures, battle, and victories (one of the greatest and earliest exceptions to this generalization is the "Kuo shang" 國殤 ["Lament for the Fallen"] found in the *Ch'u-tz'u* 楚辭). There may be praise and commemoration of an Emperor's might and victories, but rarely celebration of the purely military per se. It is true, however, that during the T'ang an important sub-genre of poetry known as *p'ien-sai* 邊塞 poetry (border verse) emerged. Although this sub-genre had roots in earlier traditions, it reached its fullest development during the T'ang. In various approaches and contexts such poetry touches upon conflicts and war with foreign forces at the border regions. The emergence of such poetry during the T'ang reflects the historical conditions of a rich and powerful dynasty that both expanded its borders and offered a tempting prize for invaders. It also speaks to the vigor and *wu* elements of the T'ang. In no other period or group of *wen-jen* poems do we see war and conflict described so often and so directly. Yet this poetry also testifies to the limits of *wu*. Although one does see some description of battle and calls for bravery and victory, there is little pure celebration of the martial or joy in battle. The poems are almost always tempered by the realities that war brings: suffering, death, loneliness, and separation. Below are the concluding lines from an example by Li Po:

From times of old this has been a place of battle,
A land from which none comes back;

A soldier gazes at the border town,
 He longs to return, his face etched with sorrow;
 And high in a tower she faces the night,
 Surely sighing without end.

“Kuan shan yüeh” 關山月³²

In *hsiao-shuo*, itself a marginal medium, we do occasionally find portrayals of pure *wu* figures and when they do occur they often are positive and admirable. An example of this is a short piece on the T'ang general, Ko-shu Han 哥舒翰 (d. 756).³³ It tells of his youth clearly with the idea of portraying certain aspects of his character that would explain his later greatness. We learn that that as a young man he had *chih-ch'i* 志氣 (resolve, ambition, will), that he roamed Chang'an as a *hao-hsia* 豪俠, and had a beautiful concubine. When she falls ill and dies, he is heart broken. During the funeral, because there is no other room, he ends up sleeping next to her funeral bier. At first he is hesitant, but then declares, “We loved each other in life, how can life and death come between us.” That night a *yaksha* and some ghosts come to feed on her corpse and he is able to drive them away. The story ends by commenting that it was several years after this incident that he achieved his fame and success.

Ko-shu Han in character and deed is decidedly *un-wen-jen* like. Especially worth noting is his romance with a beautiful concubine, his declaration of love, and his devotion to her even after death. *Wen-jen* generally were portrayed as rather weak, timid lovers. Also striking is the very fact that he has a beautiful woman, as we will see later in *wen-jen* and *hao-hsia* love stories, it is the *wen-jen* who ends up with the girl. In this case the pairing of Ko-shu Han and a beautiful lover goes back to the early motif of the tragic heroic figure and lover as seen in the story of Hsiang Chi 項籍 (232-202 BC) and his lover, Yü 虞, but also in the tragic accounts of various Han royalty and their lovers that surround a number of Ch'u songs from the Han dynasty. Ordinarily such figures and stories were not a part of the *ch'uan-ch'i* genre. This story apparently is included because of its supernatural elements.³⁴ Another similar example of this pattern in which a *wu* figure's charac-

ter is demonstrated by an encounter with the supernatural is "Tung Han-hsün" 董漢勛. One day, Tung Han-hsün, a divisional sub-altern (*pu-chiang* 部將) described as good at riding, shooting, fighting and possessing the strength of several men, asks his wife to prepare a feast for a number of friends. The day of the party Tung greets and converses with a number of invisible guests. When his wife asks what is going on, he replies they are his former war comrades who died at the border. There then follows an account of his bravery during the Wang Hsien-chih's 王仙芝 rebellion (875-878) when he dies trying to defend the city. Even the rebel commanders are awestruck. The relatively detailed description of his heroic fighting is rare in early literature.³⁵

A moving example of a *wen-jen* voice speaking on behalf of *wu* is found in the story of "Chao Ho" 趙合.³⁶ Chao Ho, a *chin-shih* described as a man of great refinement and integrity, is traveling through the area of Wu-yüan 五原 (modern day Inner Mongolia). In the desert he encounters the ghost of a beautiful young girl who tells how she was robbed and killed and left in the wilds. She begs him to bring her bones back to her home. He gathers her bones and then meets a man named Li Wen-yüeh 李文悅 or rather his spirit or ghost. Li, an actual historical figure, says he was in command of Wu-yüan in the thirteenth year of Yüan-ho period (818) when barbarians (literally "dog-like Jung" 犬戎) laid siege to the city.³⁷ He gives a long, elaborate description of his defense of Wu-yüan:

We were surrounded by an army of barbarians, 300,000 of them. All around the city moats they ringed their troops for over ten *li*. Their arrows fell continuously like rain; their siege ladders reached the clouds. They breached the walls and emptied the moats; day and night they attacked. Those searching for water shielded their backs with door panels and came back full of arrows looking like hedgehogs. There were only 3000 defending troops and so the civilians were stirred, even the women, the young, and old, and they worked too, loading dirt, ignoring their cold and hunger. To the north of the city the barbarians built a soaring spy tower

from which they could observe everything within the city. I thought of a plan and we destroyed it. The barbarian leader was startled and thought there was a divine force at work (*shen kung* 神功)

It is an extraordinary account (the passage cited is just the opening), another detailed description of battle so rare in the literary tradition. Li concludes by proclaiming how it was his deeds that saved the city, yet he was not recognized by the citizens or higher authorities. He requests that Chao Ho ask the present day citizens and prefect of Wuyuan to erect a memorial for him. But when Chao Ho asks they think he has encountered some sort of ominous apparition (*yao* 妖) and ignore him, and Chao leaves disappointed. Li appears before him once more and tells how Wuyuan will meet with a disaster, and that because of their actions he will not try to save its people. Chao departs and buries the bones of the young girl. She reappears to thank him and gives him some Taoist texts. He gives up all thought of a Confucian career to pursue Taoist studies in the mountains. In this story a Confucian figure encounters two "marginal figures" in Chinese society: a woman who was robbed and murdered and a military man unfairly treated by the bureaucracy. The fact that they are placed in parallel is revealing and suggests their equivalent status in the *wen-jen* mind. The hero does what he can to help both, but his encounter with these "other" figures and their experiences in the public world moves him to abandon the Confucian path and turn to Taoism and the hills.

In the above story a voice speaks on behalf of *wu*, more common, however, was to portray the contrast and rivalry between *wen* and *wu*. When the two are matched *wen* usually proves dominant. In a number of stories we are shown how a *wen-jen*'s inner virtue can withstand and overcome more powerful, physical *wu* forces. In the famous story "Liu I" 柳毅, the hero, Liu I, aids the princess-goddess heroine by delivering news of her plight (she is being mistreated by her husband) to her father the dragon-ruler of Lake Tung-t'ing. Her uncle, the dragon of the Ch'ien-t'ang River, a violent, tempestuous figure, carries out the actual rescue and punishes the husband by eating him. When Liu I first meets

Ch'ien-t'ang he is intimidated by this dragon who is surrounded by thunder and lightening. Liu I falls prostrate; shaken, he wants to leave. He appears a classic example of the timid scholar. Later, however, after the rescue at a banquet Ch'ien-t'ang becomes a bit drunk and haughty and presses Liu I to marry the princess. Liu I, feeling offended, gives a long and eloquent speech which shames Ch'ien-t'ang. Ch'ien-t'ang apologizes after which they become good friends. With his words, his moral discourse (*cheng lun* 正論), Liu I is able to win over the well-intended but brutish dragon god.³⁸

In "Kuo Tai-kung" 郭代公 (Duke Kuo of Tai) *wen* and *wu* are portrayed in more direct conflict.³⁹ Kuo, after failing the exams, wanders into a mansion where a young girl is weeping. She tells him that she is waiting to be married and sacrificed to a local god, a General Wu 烏將軍.⁴⁰ She begs him to help her and he consents, swearing he would willingly sacrifice his life for her. He waits and the general arrives with his retinue. Kuo is described by the general's men as a Prime Minister (*hsiang-kung* 相公; establishing the contrast between a *wen* minister and *wu* general). Kuo of course is pleased and takes it as a sign of his future. He then tricks the general saying that he is here to help him celebrate the marriage. He tries to assassinate the General and ends up cutting off one of his hands; the general flees, leaving a trail of blood. The hand then transforms into the hoof of a boar. The girl is grateful, but the locals are upset, the general is after all their god, and they want to kill Kuo to appease it. Kuo then gives a long speech asking how such a beast could be a god. Using the analogy of government, he argues such a cruel beast could not have the mandate. The villagers are convinced and Kuo leads them to finish off the boar. The girl begs to become his concubine, and Kuo tries to dissuade her, but she insists. Later she bears him several children and he goes on to have an illustrious career.

Kuo is a classic Confucian hero who exhibits a balance of *wu* and *wen* at their best. He is brave and confronts the beast; he exhibits the rhetorical gifts of a man of *wen*. He is also a gentleman who rescues the girl, yet makes no play for her. He finally takes her only when she insists. General Wu is *wu* at its worst; he is brutish, violent, cruel. This

story is a clear case of a negative *wu* bested by positive *wen*. This is not to say that the author necessarily had as his intention a conscious comparison of these two principles in the abstract, but I do think that he conceived of the characters with these two poles in the back of his mind. I also suspect that this story reflects a problem and tension prevalent in the middle and later T'ang: the weakening of the central government and the rise of local strongmen and military governors that was noted above. There was a different approach to this problem in the story of "Chao Ho." There we saw a *wu* figure ignored and mistreated by the civil bureaucracy. This story appears to warn of the dangers of local military men (cf. Kuo's speech in which he brings in the analogy of government and the idea of the mandate) and argues for the triumph of the central government, the bureaucracy, and the civil ideal.

3. The *Wen-jen, Hao-hsia, Heroine Pattern*

In the Yüan dynasty drama, *Hsi-hsiang chi* 西廂記 (*Story of the West Chamber*), the beautiful heroine, Ts'ui Ying-ying, is threatened by a rebel leader who has surrounded the temple where she and her mother have taken refuge. She volunteers to marry whoever may rescue them, hoping that Chang, the hero, will prove worthy and through this path they may be united. And Chang, a student and classic *wen-jen* figure, does come up with a plan: he composes a letter to a general he knows requesting that he bring his troops to rescue them. Then there is the problem of getting the letter through rebel lines. For this task a brave *hsia*-like monk volunteers. The mission is successful and with further help from the general, Chang is rewarded, and hero and heroine finally are married. To Western eyes something is askew. Chang has a connection and writes a letter. It is the general who carries out the actual rescue and the monk who volunteers for the deed of crossing through enemy lines. Yet there hardly seems a hint of irony or question in the final result. All the characters assume that Chang receives his proper due. And, in fact, there was an underlying rationale behind what seem such assumptions. The reality was that having connections and the ability to compose were keys to success in an upper-class society

dominated by bureaucratic ideals.

This pattern of a *wen-jen* hero winning the heroine with the help of a *wu* character has a long history and is a common motif in T'ang stories.⁴¹ Ordinarily, when there is a love story and a girl to be won, a *wen-jen* is the automatic winner, even when he seems to have little to recommend him. This can be disconcerting to Western readers used to traditions of chivalry in which heroes are expected to perform deeds and demonstrate their worthiness:

Of all the characteristics of Chinese fiction which are foreign to European ideas none is more striking than the inadequacy of the hero of love stories. The normal hero is generally a quite unheroic person who, on finding a maiden in distress, sinks into a kind of physical and mental decline under the strain of trying to evolve a plan of rescue. From this predicament he is himself rescued by a person with supernatural powers disguised as a servant in his household, or perhaps by an officer in the army with training in strategy, who alone plans and carries out the rescue.⁴²

Despite such appearances there are fundamental reasons for the *wen-jen's* usual triumph. It was *wen-jen* after all who were writing these stories. We are seeing their views, assumptions, and fantasies. These were men secure in their position in society as the upper and dominant class. The *ts'ai-tzu chia-jen* 才子佳人 ideal, the match of a man of talent (i.e. literary talents) and a beautiful girl, had a long history. And it was only becoming further reinforced in this age of the expansion of the civil-service exam system and the growing prestige of the scholar-official. By the Sung dynasty these developments were complete:

One consequence of the growing importance of the civil service examination system in the Sung was a change in how the politically ideal spouse was conceived. During the T'ang dynasty, leading families emphasized finding daughters of eminent pedigree for their sons. In the Sung,

the symbolically most desirable catch was a talented young man for one's daughter. The best possible son-in-law, all agreed, was a man who would place well in the civil service examinations and rise to hold an important government office.⁴³

In many T'ang stories it seems as if *wen-jen* were so confident of their position they hardly had to justify or prove themselves. It is striking how unabashedly *wen-jen* portrayed themselves as weak and helpless yet at the same time the object of the heroine's dreams. As will be seen it is due to a mixture of reasons. It could be a gesture of supreme self confidence; of objective self knowledge of their basic nature, of their strengths and weaknesses; and it was a way of defining themselves in contrast to more manly *wu* figures.⁴⁴ But it is clear there was some *wen-jen* self doubt about their abilities, position, and image *vis-à-vis* more *wu*-like figures. In *ch'uan-ch'i* it was often portrayed in relations with women. We have already seen the chagrin that Li Ho and his friends felt when a woman chose a military man over a *wen-jen*. In the T'ang story, "Jan Sui" 冉遂, the son of a local official (*i-tsai* 邑宰 "fief steward") is rather ignorant, has no prospects, and has to take up farming.⁴⁵ He has a beautiful wife who is rather loose in her behavior. One day in the woods she sees a man dressed in brocade riding a white horse followed by a large retinue with swords and lances drawn. She declares, "If I could have this man I would die without regret." After a tryst with him in the woods, the man then tells her she will bear a child, a god, and that she should protect him. She gives birth to a hairy red-headed child with a green complexion who later turns out to be a god with the title of General of the East in Charge of Capturing Evil Doers. In this story Jan Sui is not a proper *wen-jen* and although his wife is beautiful she is not a classic *chia-jen*. Nevertheless, we do see an example of a woman who has a passion for a military man. Perhaps in the *wen-jen* mind the fact that the woman is beautiful but "wild" fits with her attraction to such a figure. Later her giving birth to a monster-god, *wu* figure testifies that this was an exceptional and illicit passion, yet one with its own rationale.

In a Sung anecdote recorded by Hung Mai 洪邁 (1123-1202) there is a frank and realistic example of a woman choosing *wu* over *wen*. An intelligent and educated woman with a strong personality is married to a weak, timid scholar. Unhappy and frustrated, she dominates and orders him around like a servant. After her husband dies she shows no signs of grief. In fact she begins to enjoy life and recovers from an illness that had been plaguing her. Later when her father tries to marry her to another *wen-jen*, she declares, "I've already been troubled once in my life by a literary official (*wen-kuan* 文官) and have no desire to repeat the experience. I'd be satisfied with a military officer (*wu-pien* 武弁)." ⁴⁶ The *wen-jen's* timidness and weakness that appears in T'ang fiction without any consequence, in real life could give rise to problems. But as is usual, the *wen-jen* has the last word. In this story the former husband, so timid while alive, comes back as a ghost and haunts his wife. Such stories, aside from showing that at least some women may have preferred a military man, may also be seen as an expression of *wen-jen* anxieties and insecurity. Although *wen-jen*, in power and prestige who occupied the foremost position in society, were the "alpha" males, so to speak, in other more obvious ways a military man was more "masculine," a man of strength and action.

In "Huo Hsiao-yü chuan" 霍小玉傳 ("The Story of Huo Hsiao-yü") there is a classic portrait of the weak, timid scholar and lover. ⁴⁷ In this story of a *wen-jen* who abandons his courtesan lover in the face of the pressures of reality (most notably his mother who has planned a proper match) the author hints at the weakness of his character and future actions at the beginning of the story. When the poet, Li I 李益 (ca. 748-ca. 829), first enters the residence of the courtesan, Huo Hsiao-yü, a parrot cries out and this is enough to startle Li I and cause him to draw back. "By nature he was refined and quiet, and with his thoughts already hesitant and fearful, the sudden cry of the parrot startled him and he dared not go forward." This is a harbinger of his later behavior when he quickly abandons Huo Hsiao-yü under pressure from his mother. He leaves her with a promise to come back but never has the strength of character to return and at least explain his disappearance. Huo Hsiao-yü falls ill and her story becomes known. Then one day a

mysterious knight-errant figure (*hao-shih* 豪士) appears. He is very handsome, dressed in yellow satin, and is holding a bow. He literally drags Li I to the girl and lets her confront him. Only now with the appearance of this knight-errant can the story be resolved.

The appearance of the *wu* figure of the *hao-hsia* is crucial and significant. In a number of stories there occurs a triangle of *wen-jen*, *wu* figure, and heroine. The pattern can be employed in several ways, but in general the appearance of the *wu* figure acts as a counter-balance to the *wen* figure and expresses fundamental insights into the nature and place of *wen* and *wu* in society and the *wen-jen* awareness of their strengths and weaknesses. In the classic pattern we see a *wen-jen* hoping for or separated from a girl, but who limited by his fundamental weaknesses is helpless and can only win the girl with the help of a *wu* type figure.

A number of well-known T'ang *ch'uan-ch'i* use this pattern. In "K'un-lun nu" 崑崙奴 ("The K'un-lun Slave"), a young man surnamed Ts'ui is attracted to a beautiful singing girl owned by a high official.⁴⁸ She admires him also and conveys a message through hand signals which he is unable to decipher. He returns home, pines, and composes a poem (a typical *wen-jen* reflex). A Malay slave in his home asks what is wrong, and it is he who proceeds to solve the riddle of the signals, kill the guard dog guarding the women's quarters, and unite the lovers. Later they are discovered and Ts'ui quickly confesses, putting the blame on the slave and getting to keep the girl. Ts'ui's behavior to our eyes appears ignoble, yet again there is no hint of irony, as if the fact that the slave does all the deeds and then is betrayed while Ts'ui ends up with the girl is a fitting and natural conclusion. In "Wu-shuang chuan" 無雙傳 ("The Story of Wu-shuang") the *hao-hsia* "middleman" figure is given more due and fits into the more traditional image of the *hsia-k'o* 俠客. The hero, separated from his love by the events of the An Lu-shan rebellion, finally learns that she has been taken into the palace as a servant. He is helpless and must cultivate a friendship with a mysterious figure who then plots the rescue of the girl. After rescuing the girl he then commits suicide to keep news of the plot from ever leaking out. The hero and girl eventually have many children and live

happily ever after. We again see a somewhat helpless *wen-jen* who gets the girl while the man who would seem to be the real hero is sacrificed.⁴⁹ Others involved in the plot also die for the benefit of this couple.⁵⁰

Perhaps the most remarkable of such stories is "Liu-shih chuan" 柳氏傳 ("The Story of Miss Liu").⁵¹ The hero, Han I 韓翊, is given the favorite concubine, Liu, of his rich friend.⁵² They are a classic *ts'ai-tzu chia-jen* couple; he admires her beauty, she his talent. They live happily for a while, but then Liu urges him to proceed with his career saying she will wait for him. Then comes the An Lu-shan rebellion and they lose contact. Liu to protect herself cuts her hair and takes refuge in a Buddhist temple. Han I sends someone to find her, but before they can be reunited a foreign general takes her for his own. By chance they are able to meet very briefly and say their good-bye. Han I, feeling depressed and helpless, passes by a group of generals having a party and is requested to attend. One of the staff, Hsü Chün, is a *hao-hsia* type figure, proud of his strength (*i ts'ai li tzu fu* 以材力自負). He notices that Han I is troubled, learns his story, and promises to help. Hsü Chün rides into the foreign general's compound, steals Liu away and reunites the couple. Everyone realizes, however, the danger of the situation, so Han I's superior is told and he composes a report to the Emperor who then approves of the actions but also gives monetary compensation to the foreign general. At the conclusion we are told that Han I went on to have a successful career. There then follows a fascinating evaluation of Liu and Hsü Chün. Liu is described as having the will to guard her honor but as being overwhelmed by her circumstance; the author suggests that if she had been selected into the imperial harem she would have been an exemplary Imperial Concubine. As for Hsü Chün, he is described as a man stirred to action, but not wise. If given the opportunity and circumstances he could have been a great hero. The author laments that both were compromised and limited in some way by their circumstances and thus could not tread the proper path (*pu ju yü cheng* 不入於正). But then he reconsiders and comments, "But wasn't theirs the proper path in the circumstances? Probably it was what they encountered that made them so."⁵³

Again we see the interesting play between *wu* and *wen* figures. Han I, a historical figure known as a poet, fits the classic *ts'ai-tzu* mold. It is a general who actually steals Liu away, and a foreign one at that.⁵⁴ Han I is helpless against him and it is only when a *hao-hsia* figure offers to help that he is reunited with Liu. As usual, it is this figure that does the actual deed. But the author is careful to consider a final point. The rescue was a reckless and illegal act; it has to be sanctioned by law, and so we have Han I's superior submitting a report (quoted in full) to the Emperor in which he justifies the actions of Han I and Hsü Chün and attacks the foreign general thus legitimizing the deed. The Emperor then resolves the case in their favor. Significantly, the story is concluded by an act of *wen*.

As one would expect, the hero, Han I, goes on to succeed in his career. Again his winning of the girl and his success are automatic and unquestioned. But then the author turns his attention to the more problematic Liu and Hsü Chün. Again we see two traditionally marginal "other" figures, a concubine-courtesan and a *hao-hsia* male paired together. It is apparent that the author feels some of the traditional *wen-jen* ambiguity towards them and their actions. They are not "proper" (*cheng*). The contrast to Han I and the way they are paired together are a fitting expression of their "otherness." They are not the ideal; they cannot be as easily disposed of as Han I whose success is given. They break the typical models of what is good and proper, but in the end the author cannot help but recognize their deeds and praise them.

4. Conclusion

During the T'ang Dynasty historical conditions sharpened the traditional polarity of *wen* and *wu*. The origins of the dynasty in a Northern, martial culture, the flourishing of *wen* values with the rise of the civil-service exams and the scholar-official ideal, and then the conflicts brought on by the decline of the dynasty when the central government weakened and military men gained in strength all served to intensify the natural tension. These forces and tensions were often

reflected in the personal lives and attitudes of the *wen-jen*. At times there were calls for balance and the ideal of achievement in both *wen* and *wu*. Yet clearly there was conflict and at times even hostility between the two forces. But though the forces of *wen* would remain dominant and in the long run triumph, *wen-jen* with the ideal of a balance before them and an awareness of their own weaknesses and the realities of life themselves recognized the need for *wu*. Some of the most revealing and fascinating expressions of the complexity of feelings are to be found in T'ang *ch'uan-ch'i*, a medium that arose to express unorthodox *wen-jen's* feelings about unofficial, otherly realms that were usually excluded in other genres. In this medium though the overall impression is of *wen-jen's* confidence in themselves, their status, and their values, we also find self-doubt as well as defense and championing of *wu*. The motif of the *wen-jen*, heroine, and *hao-hsia* triangle is particularly revealing in the way it examines the tensions between *wen* and *wu* and attempts to establish a hierarchical balance and harmony.

On the one hand, the *wen-jen* wins the girl. This is practically automatic even though he often does little to prove his worth. Ordinarily it was difficult for them to even conceive of a woman choosing a man of *wu* over a *wen-jen* (though we have seen moments of doubt). This pattern is in strong contrast to the Western tradition of chivalry in which the Western knight rescues *and* wins the heroine who is the focus of his love, devotion, and deeds. In the T'ang tradition the knight-errant serves as a sort of "go-between" for the *wen-jen*.⁵⁵ Yet the *wen-jen* authors and audience also acknowledge their shortcomings with this pattern. They can be timid and weak; they are often helpless when it comes to confronting a situation in which action and force are required. In some stories all they can do is lament and compose poetry. This is not to say that poetry does not have its place and function. Poetry was, in a sense, the *wen-jen's* "weapon," the means with which they could win the girl (and, for that matter, succeed in the "battlefield" of the exams). With poetry they could flirt and seduce; demonstrate their sincerity; and at times of mourning lament and offer sacrifice or libation. But there are crucial moments when it is inadequate. Ac-

knowledging their weakness, *hao-hsia* figures are brought in to do the deeds and unite *wen-jen* with heroine. Of course the calling in of a *hao-hsia* hero is also a sign of frustration, of helplessness in a society in which the powerful often abused those below them. The appearance of such figures was a kind of fantasy akin to superheroes in American comic books. In the latter however, the superhero is the true hero, the central figure of the story, whereas in most T'ang stories the *hao-hsia*, while the actual hero, is still a side figure, a "go-between" who enables the *wen-jen* hero and heroine to unite.

The peril of being without power and strength, of lacking *wu*, is illustrated by stories which avoid the *deus ex machina* of a rescuing *hsia*. In "Wu Yen-ssu" 武延嗣 Ch'iao Chih-chih has a beautiful and talented servant, Yao-niang, whom he is in love with.⁵⁶ He even avoids marrying because of her. Wu Yen-ssu, the Prince of Wei, and powerful eldest nephew of Empress Wu (r. 684-704) asks to see her, and then simply takes her. Ch'iao Chih-chih is helpless and falls ill; all he can do is compose a poem. In this brief anecdote poetry is central. It is all Ch'iao Chih-chih can turn to in his despair, but it also leads to tragedy. After composing a poem he has it secretly delivered to Yao-niang. She is moved to suicide by his verse in which he alludes to Shih Ch'ung 石崇 (249-300) and his beautiful concubine Lü-chu 綠珠. In their story the great profligate Shih Ch'ung is killed because of a grudge evoked by an argument with another man over this girl. Lü-chu then kills herself. When Wu Yen-ssu finds out about the poem he slanders Ch'iao, has him jailed, and destroys his family. Ch'iao dies shortly afterwards. In a story that employed the *wen-jen*, girl, *hao-hsia* triangle motif, a *hao-hsia* would have been fantasy solution. In this more realistic piece we see that a *wen-jen* without *wu* is helpless. There are other similar stories that remind us of E. D. Edwards' sentiments about inadequate T'ang story heroes. In "Li Feng-chi" 李逢吉 the singing girl of the well-known poet, Liu Yü-hsi 劉禹錫 (772-842), is stolen away by the powerful minister, Li Feng-chi. Liu dares not confront him, and the story simply ends with him composing poetry, "Liu sighed and left. There was nothing he could do. In his frustration and anger he composed four poems . . ."⁵⁷ There is one story, however, in which poetry

does have a more felicitous effect. In "Jung Yü" 戎昱 the hero is in love with a beautiful and talented singing girl. A man hearing of her talent and hoping to curry favor tells the governor about her and she is summoned by him. Jung Yü dares not try to keep her, but before she leaves he teaches her a song and instructs her to sing it at her first performance. When she sings before the governor he realizes that she has a relationship with Jung Yü and releases her. He then has the man who recommended her beaten.⁵⁸

The story of "Jung Yü" is exceptional however, and in its own way as unlikely as a rescuing *hao-hsia*. But in either case we see the feelings of helplessness that *wen-jen* could feel in the face of those more powerful. With *yu-hsia* stories, *wen-jen* imagine fighting force with force. They recognized the need for *wu* in some form and their own inadequacies. In a sense the rise of the knight-errant during the T'ang went hand in hand with the evolution of the literati hero, filling a vacuum left by what would become rather one-sided figures. In love stories the *hao-hsia* figure is sometimes too quickly and ignobly disposed of once he has served his purpose (e.g. "K'un-lun nu"); but in other cases the authors use this opportunity to celebrate these *wu* figures though they are careful to keep their praise within limits. *Wu* is treated like other subjects of *hsiao-shuo* that are regarded as "other," be they Taoist themes, love, or women, and they are subject to similar rules and approaches. There is fascination, retreat to, defense, and even celebration of these "others," attempts to right the imbalanced treatment in the more official spheres. Yet there is also an awareness of going too far, and as we saw in "Liu-shih chuan," praise was guarded. In the end traditional, public, *wen-jen* ideals continued to prove central; and *wen-jen* reasserted their dominance in the triangle of *wen-jen*, *hsia*, and heroine, by rewarding themselves with the girl. A reward that reflects both fantasy and the reality in traditional China.

Notes

¹ For discussions of *yin* and *yang* and "dualism" or bipolarity in Chinese thought, see Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilization in*

China, Volume 2: History of Scientific Thought (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1958) 273-78; Andrew H. Plaks, *Archetype and Allegory in the Dream of the Red Chamber* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1976) 43-53.

² See *The Origins of Statecraft in China: Volume 1 The Western Chou Empire* (Chicago: The U of Chicago P, 1970) 254. For comments on the depiction of violence and the military, and the lack of the epic in the *Shih-ching* 詩經, see Stephen Owen's "Forward" to Arthur Waley, trans., *The Book of Songs* (rpt. New York: Grove, 1987) xvi-xix. Depictions of war and the martial varied during different periods and in individual works and genres, but in general Creel's observations hold true throughout the tradition. Exceptions would include historical works such as the *Tso chuan* 左傳 and some later genres of popular literature such as drama.

³ John K. Fairbank, "Introduction: Varieties of the Chinese Military Experience," in Frank A. Kierman, Jr. and John K. Fairbank, eds., *Chinese Ways in Warfare* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1974) 4. See pp. 2-11 for a general discussion of *wen* and *wu* in the Chinese social order.

⁴ "Warfare was disesteemed in this imperial orthodoxy of the Han bureaucrats, and the disesteem was given an ethical basis that has colored Chinese thinking ever since" (Fairbank 6).

⁵ Fairbank 7. Creel also stresses the low position of the military and military values in the Chinese tradition when compared to the West (242-52).

⁶ Translation from Burton Watson, trans., *Records of the Grand Historian of China*, 2 vols. (New York: Columbia UP, 1971) 1: 277-78. For Chinese text, see Ssu-ma Ch'ien 司馬遷 (ca. 145-ca. 87 BC), *Shih-chi* 史記 (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1959) 97.2699. This pattern of first *wu* then *wen* was repeated throughout Chinese history. For an account of the reemergence of *wen* over *wu* during the early Sung as exemplified by the rise of the *shi* 士 class over military men, see Peter Bol, *"This Culture of Ours": Intellectual Transitions in T'ang and Sung China* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1992) 48-58.

⁷ On *wen* vs. *wu* approaches to foreign policy, see Christopher Rand, "Li Ch'uan and Chinese Military Thought" *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 39.1 (1979): 107-10; R. James Ferguson, "Inclusive

Strategies for Restraining Aggression—Lessons from Classical Chinese Culture” *Asian Philosophy* 8.1 (1998): 38-41. Bol notes several instances during the T’ang and Sung when exam questions addressed the civil-military dichotomy. For example, the topic for the essay theme of the palace examination of 980 was “Wen or wu, which is primary?” See Bol 151, 392, n. 4.

⁸ By Shen Chi-chi 沈既濟 (ca. 740-ca. 800). In Li Fang 李昉 (925-996), et al., comps., *T’ai-p’ing kuang-chi* 太平廣記 (Peking: Jen-min ch’u-pan-she, 1959) 82.527 (under the title “Lü weng” 呂翁).

⁹ Translation from Karl S. Y. Kao, ed., *Classical Chinese Tales of the Supernatural and Fantastic* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1985) 279. For the original Chinese text, see *T’ai-p’ing kuang-chi* 太平廣記 418.3409. The source given is Li Fu-yen 李復言 (*chin-shih* 800), *Hsü hsüan-kuai lu* 續玄怪錄. For an annotated version, see Chiang Yün 姜雲 and Sung P’ing 宋平, eds., *Hsüan-kuai lu; Hsü hsüan-kuai lu* 玄怪錄; 續玄怪錄 (Shanghai: Shanghai ku-chi, 1985) 204-07.

¹⁰ Translation from Kenneth J. DeWoskin and J. I. Crump, Jr., trans., *In Search of the Supernatural: The Written Record* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1996) 176. For the original text, see Wang Shao-ying 汪紹楹, ed., *Sou-shen chi* (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1979) 15.182-183 (no. 364).

¹¹ Fan Ye 范曄 (398-445), comp., *Hou Han shu* 後漢書 (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1965) 47.1571.

¹² See “Eight Poems on History” nos. 1 and 4 respectively. Lu Ch’in-li 遼欽立, comp., *Hsien Ch’in Han Wei Chin Nan-pei-ch’ao shih* 先秦漢魏晉南北朝詩, 3 vols. (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1983) 1: 732-34.

¹³ Lu Ch’in-li 1: 457.

¹⁴ See, for example, his “Pai-ma p’ien” 白馬篇; Lu Ch’in-li 1: 432-33.

¹⁵ Lu Ch’in-li 2: 1275.

¹⁶ Wang Ch’i 王琦, ed., *Li T’ai-po ch’üan chi* 李太白全集 (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1977) 3.189.

¹⁷ *T’ai-p’ing kuang-chi* 282.2248-50, under the title “Shen Ya-chih.”

¹⁸ The fantasy of meeting and romancing a historical or legendary beauty is a common motif in T’ang *hsiao-shuo*. On the popularity of

Nung-yü (known for her legendary romance with Hsiao Shih 蕭史), see Li Chien-kuo 李劍國, *T'ang, Wu-tai, chih-kuai, ch'uan-ch'i hsü-lu* 唐五代志怪傳奇敘錄, 2 vols. (Tientsin: Nan-k'ai ta-hsüeh ch'u-pan-she) 1: 444.

¹⁹ *T'ai-p'ing kuang-chi* 65.402-04 under the title "Yao-shih san tzu" 姚氏三子. The source given is the *Shen hsien kan-yü chuan* 神仙感遇傳.

²⁰ For a general introduction to the knight-errant in the Chinese tradition, see James J. Y. Liu, *The Chinese Knight-Errant* (Chicago: U of Chicago, 1967).

²¹ *T'ai-p'ing kuang-chi* 238.1834-1835. Source given is Yen Tzu-hsiu 嚴子休 (late-T'ang), *Kui yüan ts'ung t'an* 桂苑叢談.

²² See the preface Li Po's friend, Wei Hao 魏顥, wrote for his collection ("Li Han-lin chi hsü" 李翰林集序); in Ch'ü T'ui-yüan 瞿蛻園 and Chu Chin-ch'eng 朱金城, eds., *Li Po chi chiao-chu* 李白集校注, 4 vols. (Shanghai: Shanghai ku-chi, 1980) 4: 1790. For a brief account of Li Po's knight-errant career, see James J. Y. Liu 46-47.

²³ From "On the Third Day of the Seventh Month the Heat Abated in the Afternoon and There Was Some Evening Cool Nice For Sleeping and I Composed a Poem Recalling the Delights of My Prime Years Which I Playfully Present to Yuan The Twelfth, Bureau Director" 七月三日亭午已後校熱退晚加小涼穩睡有詩因論壯年樂事戲呈元十二曹長. Translation from A. R. Davis, *Tu Fu* (New York: Twayne, 1971) 21. For original Chinese text, see Hung Yeh 洪業, et al, eds., *Tu shih yin-te* 杜詩引得, 2 vols. (rpt. Shanghai: Shanghai ku-chi, 1985) 12.167. Davis, citing similar passages from other poems, discusses how "physical achievement" was important to Tu Fu and how he liked to think of himself as a "man of action" (16-22).

²⁴ Denis Twitchett, ed., *The Cambridge History of China: Volume 3, Sui and T'ang China, 589-906, Part I* (rpt. Taipei: Caves, 1989) 53.

²⁵ Charles Hartman, *Han Yü and the T'ang Search for Unity* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1986) 122.

²⁶ Translation from James J. Y. Liu 65. As James Liu points out, the last line of the couplet refers to the Confucian scholar, Yang Hsiung. For Chinese text, see "*Hsing hsing chieh yu lieh p'ien*" 行行且遊獵篇

in Wang Ch'i, ed., *Li T'ai-po ch'üan-chi* 3.181-82. James Liu (pp. 64-67) quotes and discusses a number of Li Po's poems on knight-errants and *shao-nien* 少年. As one might guess, these figures appear often in his verse.

²⁷ Hartman 121-22.

²⁸ Twitchett, ed., *Cambridge History of China* 485.

²⁹ Twitchett, ed., *Cambridge History of China* 741. Bol notes the reemergence of the civil/military dichotomy that followed attempts to restore civil order and ideology after the An Lu-shan rebellion (108-110).

³⁰ English title from J. D. Frodsham's translation in *The Poems of Li Ho* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1970) 126-29; for original text, see Yeh Ts'ung-ch'i 葉蔥奇, comm., *Li Ho shih chi* 李賀詩集 (Peking: Jen-min wen-hsüeh ch'u-pan-she, 1984) 170-74.

³¹ See *T'ai-p'ing kuang-chi* 472.3890. The source given is Wei Hsüan 韋絢 (796-866?), *Jung-mu hsien t'an* 戎幕閑談.

³² Wang Ch'i, ed., *Li T'ai-po ch'üan-chi* 4.219.

³³ "Ko-shu Han"; in *T'ai-p'ing kuang-chi* 356.2817. The source given is Ch'en Shao 陳劭 (mid-T'ang), *T'ung yu lu* 通幽錄.

³⁴ For another story that makes use of the motif of the heroic figure and beautiful lover, see P'ei Hsing's 裴綱 (late T'ang) "Ch'iu jan k'o" 虬髯客; *T'ai-p'ing kuang-chi* 193.1445-48. For a translation, see Cyril Birch, comp., *Anthology of Chinese Literature: From Earliest Times to the Fourteenth Century* (New York: Grove Press, 1965) 314-22. One interesting feature of this motif is that there is often a tragic aura around such couples or at least the hero fails to reach the highest levels of success. Hsiang Chi was of course defeated by the founding Emperor of the Han; even Ko-shu Han's career would eventually end in disaster (the crucial defeat at T'ung-kuan Pass that led to the fall of Ch'ang-an during the An Lu-shan rebellion). In "Ch'iu jan k'o" the masculine, *wu* hero gives up his ambitions of ruling China when he encounters the destined second emperor of the T'ang, Li Shih-min 李世民. He leaves with his beautiful wife to found a minor kingdom on the outskirts of the empire. Complete success and happiness seems to elude *wu* figures.

³⁵ *T'ai-p'ing kuang-chi* 351.2783. Source given is Huang-fu Mei 皇甫枚 (late T'ang), *San-shui hsiao tu* 三水小牘.

³⁶ *T'ai-p'ing kuang-chi* 347.2749. The source given is P'ei Hsing 裴鏞 (825-880), *Ch'uan ch'i* 傳奇. For an annotated version, see Chou Leng-ch'ieh 周楞伽, *P'ei Hsing ch'uan-ch'i* 裴鏞傳奇 (Shanghai: Shanghai ku-chi, 1980) 74-77.

³⁷ In the story Li calls himself a *shang-shu* 尚書 (minister). This is problematic; according to the historical records he was a *chieh-tu-shih* 節度使 (military commissioner), that is to say the sort of military official or governor who were so instrumental in the border regions during the mid and late T'ang. Li lived during the mid-T'ang and was an acquaintance of Han Yü 韓愈. Li Chien-kuo discusses this piece and gathers biographical sources for Li Wen-yüeh 2: 864-65. See also Chou, ed., *P'ei Hsing ch'uan-ch'i* 76.

³⁸ Li Ch'ao-wei 李朝威 (N.D.) "Liu I"; *T'ai-p'ing kuang-chi* 419.3410-17. The source given is Ch'en Han 陳翰 (fl. 874), ed., *I wen chi* 異聞集. For an English translation, see Y. W. Ma and Joseph S. M. Lau, eds., *Traditional Chinese Stories: Themes and Variations* (1978; rpt. Boston: Cheng and Tsui Co., 1986) 346-54.

³⁹ Included in Niu Seng-ju 牛僧孺 (779-847), *Hsüan-kuai lu* 玄怪錄; see Chiang Yün 姜雲 and Sung P'ing 宋平, eds., *Hsüan-kuai lu; Hsü hsüan-kuai lu* 玄怪錄; 續玄怪錄 (Shanghai: Shanghai ku-chi, 1985) 23-26. For an English translation, see Kao, ed., *Classical Chinese Tales* 258-60. The Duke of Tai was an actual historical figure—Kuo Chen 郭震 (fl. early 8th century).

⁴⁰ It is difficult to determine if there a pun on *wu* 烏=black, raven and *wu* 武=martial? In Ancient Chinese these two words are not homophonous, though they do appear to have similar finals (but differ in tone). Chou Fa-kao's Ancient Chinese reconstructions are *miuo* (*shang-sheng*) and *uo* (*ping-sheng*) for "martial" and "crow" respectively. See Chou Fa-kao, ed., *A Pronouncing Dictionary of Chinese Characters* (Hong Kong: Chinese UP, 1974) 158, 184. One suspects even if there was no pun involved there was a deliberate choice of surname, possibly for the less than positive connotations of the meaning of *wu* (i.e. *Wu chiang-chün* =General Black, General Crow). An

additional possibility is that "black" hints at his identity as a boar.

⁴¹ In fact it appears largely to be a T'ang invention; possibly explained as a mixing of two sub-genres that reached new heights in T'ang *hsiao-shuo*: the love story and the knight-errant story.

⁴² E. D. Edwards, *Chinese Prose Literature of the T'ang Period, Volume II* (London: Arthur Probsthain, 1938) 22. For comments on the nature of the hero in T'ang stories, the contempt of the *wen-jen* class for military figures and prowess, and the use of the "secondary hero" to aid the hero and heroine (25-28).

⁴³ Patricia Buckley Ebrey, *The Inner Quarters: Marriage and the Lives of Chinese Women in the Sung Period* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993) 72.

⁴⁴ When considering the "inadequacy" of the *wen-jen* lover, one must also keep in mind that it was somewhat un-Confucian to strive for the girl. Even in the story of "Kuo Tai-kung" with its more masculine *wen-jen* hero, we see the hero behaving in an extremely gentlemanly way, only accepting the girl's proposal after she repeatedly insists.

⁴⁵ "Jan Sui"; *T'ai-p'ing kuang-chi* 306.2423-25. The source given is Li Yin 李隱 (late T'ang) *Ch'i shih chi* 奇事記.

⁴⁶ Translation by Ebrey 161; for Chinese text see "Chang Wu-ku" 張五姑 in Hung Mai, *I-chien chih* 夷堅志 (Shanghai: Shang-wu yin-shu-kuan, 1937) "Ping" 丙 14.105.

⁴⁷ Chiang Fang 蔣防 (fl. early 9th) "Huo Hsiao-yü chuan" 霍小玉傳, in *T'ai-p'ing kuang-chi* 487.4006-11. For an English translation, see Stephen Owen, ed. and trans., *An Anthology of Chinese Literature: Beginnings to 1911* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1996) 531-40. For an annotated version, see Chang Yu-ho 友鶴 comp., *T'ang Sung ch'uan-ch'i hsüan* 唐宋傳奇選 (Peking: Jen-min wen-hsüeh, 1982) 45-54.

⁴⁸ "K'un-lun nu," in *T'ai-p'ing kuang-chi* 194.1452-54. The source given is P'ei Hsing 裴鏞, *Ch'uan ch'i* 傳奇. For an English translation, see Karl S. Y. Kao 351-56. For an annotated version, see Chang Yu-ho 151-54.

⁴⁹ Of course the tradition of a *hsia-k'o* sacrificing himself and even committing suicide for his patron has a long history. For a review of knight-errant ideals and a survey of early figures, see James J. Y. Liu

5-52.

⁵⁰ Hsüeh Tiao 薛調 (830-872), "Wu-shuang chuan," in *T'ai-p'ing kuang-chi* 486.4001-05. For an annotated text, see Chang Yu-ho 117-23. For an English translation, see Ma and Lau 52-57.

⁵¹ Hsü Yao-tso 許堯佐 (fl. early 9th), "Liu-shih chuan," in *T'ai-p'ing kuang-chi* 485.3995-97. For an annotated text, see Chang Yu-ho 16-22. For an English translation and discussion of this story, see Shirley Chang, "The Stories of the 'Others'—The Presentation of Unconventional Characters in T'ang (618-907) *Ch'uan-ch'i*" (Ph.D. diss., U of Wisconsin-Madison, 1993) 193-210.

⁵² Han I should refer to the T'ang poet, Han Hung 韓翃 (*chin-shih* 754). How or why the *T'ai-p'ing kuang-chi* version of this story gives I for Hung is not clear. The *Pen-shih shih* version gives Hung. See Meng Ch'i 孟繁 (fl. 841-886), *Pen-shih shih* 本事詩, in Li Hsüeh-ying 李學穎, ed., *Pen-shih shih; Hsü Pen-shih shih, Pen-shih tz'u* 本事詩; 續本事詩; 本事詞 (Shanghai: Shanghai ku-chi, 1991) 1.10-12.

⁵³ Translation from Shirley Chang 200.

⁵⁴ Hartman discusses how literary and military values become linked to Hua 華 (Chinese) and Hu 胡 ("barbarians") respectively. The latter made up much of the T'ang military (122-23).

⁵⁵ Perhaps we can think of these knight-errants as male equivalents of the match-making maids who became instrumental characters in many Chinese love stories (e.g. Hung-niang 紅娘 in "Ying-ying chuan" 鶯鶯傳). For comparisons of approaches to romance in Chinese and Western chivalric tales, see James J. Y. Liu 204-05; E. D. Edwards 21-28.

⁵⁶ *Pen-shih shih* 1.7. See also *T'ai-p'ing kuang-chi* 274.2158-59 where the title given is "Wu Yen-ssu" 武延嗣.

⁵⁷ *T'ai-p'ing kuang-chi* 273.2153. The source given is *Pen-shih shih*.

⁵⁸ *Pen-shih shih* 1.9.

