

# Satiric Elements in Chinese *Xiaoshuo*, Drama, and Oral Literature and Performance

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## ABSTRACT

This paper considers the satiric mode in the *xiaoshuo*, a multigeneric category, as well as performance literature such as drama. I argue that satire commonly appears in *xiaoshuo*, although it may not seem obvious from the types of writings traditionally assigned to the category. In comparison with classical poetry and prose, *xiaoshuo* and drama frequently feature witty repartee and ludicrous jokes. Within the category of *xiaoshuo*, *chuanqi* tales tend to contain more subtle satire. Farces and jokebooks include simple, straightforward satire that highlights various inconsistencies in human behavior and life in general. In comparison, some forms of oral literature and performance, such as jesting, stress the witty and ludicrous types of satire even more. In these genres, the satiric mode helps to criticize shortcomings in society or express dissatisfaction about the times, thereby serving as a sort of safety valve that alleviates social tensions somewhat.

## KEY WORDS

*xiaoshuo* 小說

*zhiren* 志人

*biji* 筆記

censure and admonishment

Feng Menglong 馮夢龍

*chake dahun* 插科打諢

burlesque

Li Yu 李漁

*zhiguai* 志怪

*chuanqi* 傳奇

Hu Yinglin 胡應麟

*zhengui* ("moral admonitions") 箴規

puns

*su* 俗

Xu Wei 徐謂



This paper is a study of the satiric mode in a number of genres. Taking a literary historical perspective, I have elsewhere analyzed the satiric mode in classical Chinese poetry and prose. I here consider only the *wenyan* 文言 or classical-language *xiaoshuo* 小說 (literally, “petty talk”), a multi-generic category, as well as performance literature such as drama. *Xiaoshuo* is a protean term that includes various types of writing that would not necessarily be considered fiction in the West, such as “jottings” (*biji* 筆記) and “miscellanea” (*zalu* 雜錄).

## I. *Xiaoshuo*

I argue that satire commonly appears in *xiaoshuo*, although it may not seem obvious from the types of writings traditionally assigned to the category. This literary category’s derivation from sundry “talk” is reflected in an emphasis on wit, conversational art, and non-serious satire for entertainment. At the same time, philosophical thought and discussion appear in *xiaoshuo*, displaying its early association with philosophical discourse. Its key function of praising virtue and censuring evil, the major purpose it shares with history, marks its close association with history and biography. Moral admonition and “family instructions” were included in *xiaoshuo* by premodern Chinese bibliographers and critics.

A clarification of the various ambiguities connected with *xiaoshuo* is in order. A term used in modern Chinese to designate fiction in general, *xiaoshuo* originally referred to a very different and amorphous literary category which encompassed a wide variety of works.

Kenneth J. DeWoskin indicated that *xiaoshuo* included several subgenres, each of which contained great variety, and the recognized subgenres were “consistently revitalized in subsequent times” (1986, 424-25).<sup>1</sup> It should be noted, however, that in the bibliographical sections in official histories, the category of *xiaoshuo* rarely included vernacular fiction; for traditional bibliographers, *xiaoshuo* referred primarily to brief anecdotes and tales written in classical Chinese, rather than stories and novels in the vernacular language, even after vernacular fiction became popular in the sixteenth century. As Laura Hua Wu has observed, the bibliographers’ definition long remained the standard, even during the sixteenth-century when litterateurs had already begun to use *xiaoshuo* to designate vernacular fiction (367, 369).

### Attempts to Define *Xiaoshuo*

From its beginnings, *xiaoshuo* was a marginalized type of literature fraught with ambiguity in terms of its definition and value. Included in “philosophical discourses” (*zi* 子), one of the four branches of literature,<sup>2</sup> it was originally categorized as one of the nine schools in philosophy. It referred to a group of miscellaneous sayings, anecdotes, and brief tales. On the one hand, the works of *xiaoshuo* were excluded from canonic philosophical literature in the Confucian school, because they often portrayed “anomalies, force, chaos, and spirits” (*guai li luan shen* 怪力亂神), all of which Confucius famously refused to discuss (*Lunyu* VII.21; Lau, trans., 88). On the other hand, because this literary category was not clearly defined at first, it included some works that were strictly philosophical in nature and espoused Taoistic principles. Therefore, *xiaoshuo* overlapped with various philosophical discourses.

Notable works of *xiaoshuo* such as “The Tale of Emperor Wu of the Han” (“Han Wudi gushi” 漢武帝故事, Lu 39-40)—a work containing satire on Emperor Wu’s obsessive but futile pursuit for longevity—did not appear until the Han. During the Han, when the *Classic of Poetry* already had a legitimate and high status, *xiaoshuo* was

yet to be recognized. Confucian scholars invariably looked askance at this literary category, yet at the same time often found it fascinating and thus made attempts to justify its value and use. Huan Tan 桓譚 (23 B.C.?-56 A.D.?) assigned *xiaoshuo* practical functions on the personal and familial levels: "The writers of *xiaoshuo* put together fragmentary sayings, using parables to compose short tales which had considerable use for cultivating oneself and managing one's household" (Lu 15).

Scholars' ambivalent attitude toward *xiaoshuo* was especially clear in the statement regarding the origin of *xiaoshuo* made by Ban Gu 班固 (32-92), author of *The History of the Former Han*. He claims that the *xiaoshuo* school evolved from "the office of petty officials" which collected "the talk and discussion in streets and alleyways" because these might contain something useful (Lu 17). Ban Gu's explanation of *xiaoshuo*'s origin justifies its existence somewhat and elevates its status by drawing parallels to the *Classic of Poetry*. He implies that, like the *Airs*, *xiaoshuo* had folk origins, were collected from various regions by officials, and presumably were presented to the rulers for their information, thereby serving some political and moralistic functions on the national level.

However, Ban Gu's guarded judgment of this literary category is equally obvious. He quotes a dictum from *The Analects*: "Even petty paths [i.e., minor arts or skills] have something worthwhile in them. But there is the fear that one might get stuck when pursuing them further [in order to obtain profound knowledge]. That is why a noble-minded person would not want to take them up."<sup>3</sup> While regarding *xiaoshuo* as a "petty path," Ban Gu hastens to add that the noble-minded person would not discard it, either. He explains that as "petty knowledge," *xiaoshuo* were collected and not forgotten because they sometimes contained useful phrases. Yet he concludes that *xiaoshuo* (or the usefulness of *xiaoshuo*) was but "the discussion of rustic and eccentric people."

Thus, we see Ban Gu trying to keep a balance between contempt and fascination. Affirming that the petty discourse has some use, Ban Gu warned the noble-minded persons not to pursue it too far, but he

did not want to abandon it altogether. Ban Gu's quoting the dictum reveals his recognition of *xiaoshuo*'s attraction as well as his fear that its readers (and recorders) might become so fascinated they would be distracted from studying canonical works.

Later historians followed primarily Ban Gu's definition and categorization of *xiaoshuo* in their bibliographical sections. Reiterating that *xiaoshuo* referred to the talk of the streets, Wei Zheng 魏徵 (580-643), author of *The History of the Sui* (*Sui shu* 隋書), reaffirms *xiaoshuo*'s political and moralistic uses and emphasizes that these discourses were collected during the ancient reigns of the sages: it was only during such peaceful and orderly times that historians wrote records, artisans recited admonitions, ministers offered advice, officials understood local customs from folk songs and corrected mistakes if they found any, and recorders wrote down all the talk of the streets (Lu 18). Wei Zheng not only stressed *xiaoshuo*'s political and instructive function, but also associated it with rule by the sages. Wei Zheng's *xiaoshuo* list corresponded to Ban Gu's definition by including "primarily discursive or aphoristic" works, such as the *Forest of Laughs* (*Xiao lin* 笑林), and "highly didactic and moralistic" narratives (DeWoskin 1977, 46).

In its earliest meaning, the term *xiaoshuo* was understood as "brief and fragmentary prose in form, spurious and expository discourse in nature, marginal yet of some value in pragmatic terms" (Laura Hua Wu 340). According to Confucian historians' idealized explanation, *xiaoshuo* functioned in ways similar to literature in the *Classic of Poetry*, enhancing moral self-cultivation, household management, and even statecraft and government. During the rule of the sages, officials were appointed to collect, record, and present *xiaoshuo* to the rulers; after reading these records, rulers could gain a better understanding of local customs and people's feelings, and thereby rectify various mistakes in governance. Yet though Confucian scholars may have expected *xiaoshuo* to serve moral and political purposes on a grand scale, in reality it probably served mostly practical functions on a much smaller scale.

*Xiaoshuo* became popular during the Six Dynasties (220-589),

partly because of the disintegration of the Han empire in the second century and the ensuing political unrest and social disorder. Two types of *xiaoshuo* were most prevalent: the “records of anomalies” (*zhiguai* 志怪, also translated as “tales of the supernatural”) and the “records of notable people” (*zhiren* 志人). Lu Xun attributed the popularity of *zhiguai* to the widespread shamanism in ancient China, the indigenous beliefs in spirits, and the importation of Buddhism (47). During that time, Confucian ideology “fell into disrepute,” and many intellectuals turned to relatively escapist modes of thought, such as Neo-Taoism, “metaphysical learning” (*xuanxue* 玄學), and speculations about the supernatural (Gjertson 2-3). Robert Ford Compton suggested that *zhiguai* tales, or strange reports from the periphery, were collected by the capital and urban elites as a way of controlling the world (1-17). I would argue that the fantastic motifs and alluring strangeness in *zhiguai* tales also provided readers with an escape from gritty everyday realities.

Moreover, the Neo-Taoist movement expressed itself in “pure conversation” (*qingtan* 清談), which involved younger intellectuals who wanted to “free the spirit” and “display a lofty ideal and a philosophical wit”; they “acted in a most unconventional and carefree manner” (Chan 315). The “pure conversation” movement started with the skeptical philosopher Wang Chong’s 王充 (27-100?) natural philosophy, and many intellectuals turned to discussions of philosophy and metaphysics amidst growing distaste for potentially dangerous political entanglements (Sun Daosheng 19-23). *Lun heng* 論衡, Wang Chong’s embodiment of this philosophy, became famous for its often outspoken skepticism of established ideologies and popular beliefs. While the interest in crafting personalities, conversational art, and wit stimulated the *zhiren* writing, the skeptical spirit was conducive to the development of satire. At the same time, befitting the escapist mentality of the times, both *zhiguai* and *zhiren* tales served the function of entertainment, allowing their readers to escape the narrow confines of ordinary life and imagine entering a realm of fantasy or the life of a fascinating personage.

During the Tang, *xiaoshuo* expanded to incorporate *chuanqi*

(“tales of the remarkable”) as well as *biji* (literally, “jottings,” including *zalu*, “miscellanea”), such as Duan Chengshi’s 段成式 (c. 803-863) *Youyang Miscellany* (*Youyang zazu* 酉陽雜俎).<sup>4</sup> *Xiaoshuo*’s inclusion of these two types expanded its functions. *Biji* recorded newsworthy anecdotes and anomalies. While containing brief but useful historical and geographical information such as the customs of different locales, some *biji* also served as how-to books, containing information on home economics (or what is nowadays called “family resources”) such as recipes for cooking and wine-brewing, suggestions for improving one’s health; and pharmaceutical prescriptions. In addition to providing practical knowledge, *biji* included quotable remarks and admonitory maxims for the readers’ moral self-cultivation, as well as short tales for amusement.

*Xiaoshuo* thus encompasses a wide variety of subjects—gossip, hearsay, anecdotes, legends, and tales—and has served various pragmatic functions in both private and public spheres. As suggested by its other meaning, “small joy,”<sup>5</sup> *xiaoshuo* has aesthetic appeal and functions as entertainment. The Qing scholar Liang Shaoren 梁紹壬 claimed that *xiaoshuo* originated during the peaceful times of Emperor Renzong of the Song (r. 1023-1063): each day a strange tale was presented to the emperor for his amusement; and the tale was referred to as *xiaoshuo*.<sup>6</sup> Yet at least since the Han, *xiaoshuo* had obviously provided pleasure for people during leisure hours. Even in more chaotic times like the Six Dynasties, varieties of *xiaoshuo* such as *zhiguai* and *zhiren* tales provided readers with relaxation and diversion. To some extent, Tang *chuanqi* tales also functioned as entertainment.

*Xiaoshuo* evolved into a confusing category for various writings that did not fit into other well-defined categories, as can be seen in the different types of books listed under it in the bibliographical sections of the dynastic histories (Lu 18-21; Laura Hua Wu 341-342). Though deploring the lack of in-depth *xiaoshuo* “genre” study by traditional critics, the modern scholar Chen Pingyuan 陳平原 noted that such literati as Liu Zhiji 劉知幾 (661-721), Hu Yinglin 胡應麟 (1551-1602), and Ji Yun 紀昀 (1724-1805) tried to better define and categorize this “genre,” using a formalistic standard and imitating genre

studies in classical poetry and prose (Chen 168-173).

The historian Liu Zhiji distinguished three types of writing in *xiaoshuo*—"lost tales" (*yishi* 逸事), "trivial talk" (*suoyan* 瑣言), and "miscellaneous accounts" (*zaji* 雜記)—noting that they functioned to aid scholars in broadening knowledge. Chen Pingyuan has suggested that these three types approximate what modern scholars call "the historical novel," "fiction about the lives of notable people" (*zhiren xiaoshuo*), and "fiction about anomalies" (*zhiguai xiaoshuo*) (Chen 169). However, because Liu Zhiji adopts a Confucian historian's perspective and applies historiographical standards to fiction, he looks upon fictional works with disfavor. As DeWoskin indicates, Liu Zhiji discusses neither *xiaoshuo* nor *zhiguai* as a genre, but regards such works as "bad history, written by authors who pandered to the interests of a gullible audience" (1977, 49). Also contemptuous of "records of notable people" (*zhiren*), Liu Zhiji ridicules even Liu Yiqing's 劉義慶 *New Account of Tales of the World* (*Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語)—a work that Hu Yinglin and Ji Yun come to defend later (Chen 171).

Despite Liu Zhiji's desire to exclude *xiaoshuo* from history, *xiaoshuo* survived in official histories and demonstrated a close relationship with the writing of histories and especially biographies. The early twentieth-century critic Lin Zhijun 林志鈞, for example, regards both *xiaoshuo* and *biji* as "tributaries of historical narrative." According to Lin, since ancient histories were written by officials, and *xiaoshuo* were the books of petty officials, *xiaoshuo* can very well be called "petty history" (*xiaoshi* 小史). As primarily records of events, *biji* are also close to history. Thus both *xiaoshuo* and *biji* serve to "supplement history."<sup>7</sup>

Indeed, the more serious works of *xiaoshuo* are credited with the serious purpose of history. In his preface to the multi-volume collection of *xiaoshuo* and *biji*, Jiang Yujing claims that he excludes the ones that are too absurd and incredible, selecting only those that demonstrate "advising and cautioning" (*quanjie*) and exhibit other pragmatic purposes (Jiang Yujing, vol. 1, p. 1). Lin Zhijun cites what Liu Zhiji believes to be the purposes of histories—for example, "praise

and blame" (*baobian* 褒貶), "[providing] cautionary examples" (*jianjie* 鑒戒), and "satire" (*fengci* 諷刺)—and argues that instead of merely serving entertainment purposes, *xiaoshuo* and *biji* are intended to "advise and reprimand" (*quancheng* 勸懲), thereby sharing a similar principle with history. Lin believes that the select works among *xiaoshuo* and *biji* can be so useful they can serve as "remonstrating officials" and as "able assistants to histories."<sup>8</sup>

Among premodern bibliographers, Hu Yinglin's attempt in defining *xiaoshuo* as a literary category is the most impressive because he surpasses his predecessors in several areas. He affirms, unequivocally, the value of *xiaoshuo*, assigning to it a "satirical" function: "censure and admonishment." Adopting and modifying Ban Gu's nine-fold division of the "philosophical schools," Hu observes: "The *Xiaoshuo* School contains mainly works aiming for censure and admonishment; and extravagantly bizarre and spurious accounts are in appendices. . . . The *Xiaoshuo* School evolves from the office of petty officials, and its writings are extravagant, fantastic, and spurious. However, they are occasionally helpful for broadening one's experience and knowledge, and thus they contain some value."<sup>9</sup>

Moreover, Hu Yinglin brings order to the category of *xiaoshuo*, identifying six types: "records of anomalies" (*zhiguai*), "tales of the remarkable" (*chuanqi*), "miscellaneous accounts of anecdotes" (*zalu* 雜錄, or "miscellanea"), "miscellaneous notes" (*congtan* 叢談), "evidential research" (*bianding* 辯訂), and "moral admonitions" (*zhengui* 箴規) (Lu 19; Laura Hua Wu 352-53). He enlarges the scope of *xiaoshuo* to include the "tales of the remarkable" (*chuanqi*), which did not come into existence until the Tang. Furthermore, he approves of writings about what Confucius refused to talk about (i.e., "anomalies, force, chaos, and spirits"), perceives *xiaoshuo* as a respectable category, and gives it "both an intellectual purpose and an entertainment function" (Laura Hua Wu 352).

Obviously finding Hu Yinglin's types too numerous, Ji Yun, the prominent Qing literatus famous for his compilation of the *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書 (*Complete Library in Four Branches of Literature*), simplifies Hu's types to three: "miscellaneous accounts" (*zashi*

雜事), “tales of the strange” (*yiwen* 異聞), and “trivial conversation” (*suoyu* 瑣語). It should be noted that the “trivial conversation” overlaps a little with the other two types; it contains collections of records of anomalies and oddities, anecdotes, parables, and jokes. Ji Yun claims he chose only those which are well-written and far from absurd or obscene. He further emphasizes that his criteria for selection and inclusion are that the works “would imply admonition, broaden knowledge, and aid in evidential learning” (Ji Yun, vol. 2, 1182-1236, esp., 1182).

While traditional bibliographers such as Hu Yinglin and Ji Yun stress the admonitory aspect of *xiaoshuo* in their classification, some modern scholars disagree with them. Lu Xun deletes from *xiaoshuo* the last three of Hu’s six types—“miscellaneous notes,” “evidential research,” and “moral admonitions.” Lu distinguishes three types of *xiaoshuo*, subsuming Ji Yun’s three types into two: “records of anomalies” (*zhiguai*) and “records of notable people” (*zhiren*). Finally, “tales of the remarkable” (*chuanqi*), a type retrieved from one of Hu Yinglin’s, is also added by Lu Xun. Following Lu Xun, Chen Pingyuan deletes Hu’s last three types entirely because he thinks they lack literary value, though he acknowledges these stories were regarded as types of *xiaoshuo* in Hu’s time (Chen 170, 173).

I would suggest, however, that some works in the “moral admonitions” type should be retained because of their inherent significance as well as their contribution to fiction. For example, the practical advice on personal moral cultivation and household management in Yan Zhitui’s 顏之推 *Family Instructions for the Yan Clan* (*Yanshi jiaxun* 顏氏家訓), a work listed by Hu Yinglin under “moral admonitions,” influenced writers of later satiric novels. Furthermore, Yan’s *Family Instructions* actually contains anecdotes and tales of divine retribution and reincarnation (Yan 400-405). These tales are no different from those included in the *zhiguai*, “records of anomalies,” a legitimate genre in the category of *xiaoshuo* according to both Lu Xun and Chen Pingyuan. Such works of moral admonition as Yan’s have literary potential in addition to their ethical value.

In sum, traditional bibliographers’ categorization distinguish

four genres of *xiaoshou*: “records of notable people” (*zhiren*), “records of anomalies” (*zhiguai*), “tales of the remarkable” (*chuanqi*), and the “miscellanies” which include “miscellaneous notes” (*biji*), jokebooks, and works such as Yan Zhitui’s *Family Instructions*. These genres are closely related and sometimes overlap. For example, *biji* covers both *zhiguai* and *zhiren*.

### ***Zhiren and Zhiguai***

Satire may be found in all four genres. The *zhiren* genre follows the indigenous Chinese tradition of biography, anecdote, and tale writing, and is influenced by the recording of philosophical discourse such as *The Analects* and *Lie Zi*. Liu Yiqing’s *New Account of Tales of the World* (as well as its many followers) produces serious satire by contrasting virtuous behavior with reprehensible conduct, while also including witty satire and repartee. The Ming writer He Liangjun’s 何良俊 *Mr. He’s Forest of Remarks* (*He shi yu lin* 何氏語林) borrows the title of Pei Qi’s 裴啟 *Forest of Remarks* (*Yu lin* 語林) and follows the *New Account* in grouping the anecdotes into various subject categories.

The *zhiguai* genre is similarly influenced by the indigenous historical and biographical traditions. In discussing the development of Chinese fiction, DeWoskin discerns a line of “structural continuity” from the nonfictional biographies (e.g., biographies in the *Records of the Grand Historian* and the *History of the Former Han* as well as exemplary biographies in such didactic works as *Biographical Accounts of Notable Women* [Lienu zhuan 列女傳]) to the “fictionalized biographies” in such “records of anomalies” as *Records of Spirits* (*Soushen ji* 搜神記, c. 340), and then to the Tang *chuanqi*. DeWoskin suggests that because *zhiguai* adapts the form of biography, it becomes a useful format for Buddhist miracle writing (DeWoskin 1977, 50). As a result of its ties with exemplary biographies, the *zhiguai* sometimes contains moral admonition.

Victor H. Mair has argued forcefully that “before the introduction of Buddhism, there was no tradition of consciously created fic-

tional or dramatic narrative in China, the two being opposite sides of one coin because of their common origin in Buddhist performing arts" (Mair 23). Taking strong issue with Mair's thesis, DeWoskin points out that fiction and history were not regarded as diametrically opposed genres in pre-Tang China, and that theatrical entertainment, the supernatural, and the issues of perception and reality vs. illusion actually played significant roles in Chinese life prior to the introduction of Buddhism there (DeWoskin 1983, 35). However, there is no doubt that Buddhism contributed a great deal to the beginning and the development of Chinese literature, in addition to indigenous Chinese historical, philosophical, and theatrical traditions.

The Buddhist influence on *zhiguai* results in a number of collections of Buddhist moral tales in which moral teachings are especially obvious. According to Donald E. Gjerston, Chinese Buddhist miracle tales (the earliest known collection was written sometime before 399) were greatly influenced by Indian Buddhist tale literature (mostly didactic by nature) (Gjerston 2, 11, 13). These tales record supernatural events as admonitions or warnings to people.

Moral admonition through the illustration of popular Buddhist beliefs in karmic retribution and reincarnation plays a particularly important role in these tales. Scholars have identified karma, understood as the "doctrine of the retribution of actions," as one of the central concepts of the Indian Buddhism successfully introduced into China.<sup>10</sup> According to Tang Lin 唐臨 (600-c. 659), the author of *Records of Miraculous Retribution* (*Mingbao ji* 冥報記, 653-655), Buddhist doctrine was "nothing other than cause and effect. Because there is this action therefore there is this retribution. There is no dharma that is not cause, and there is no cause that is not repaid" (Gjerston 121-122). Depending upon one's action, one can be reborn into any one of the five paths: "denizen of hell, hungry ghost, animal, human, or inhabitant of heaven." The *Records of Miraculous Retribution*, as Gjerston points out, contains many "examples which illustrate all five of the paths, and the karmic process that operates to bring about reward, punishment, and rebirth is revealed as being administered by a rather complex bureaucracy hard at work in the nether

world,” including accounts of “journeys to the nether world” as well as “dreams, trances, and encounters with ghosts or other-worldly messengers” (Gjertson 135). The author used these accounts to explain and illustrate the working of karmic retribution, thereby cautioning the reader of its inevitability and infallibility.

Satire also appears in “secular” tales derived from Buddhist stories. For example, the tale “Scholar of Yangxian” (“Yangxian shusheng” 陽羨書生) in Wu Jun’s 吳均 (469-520) *Xu Qixie ji* 續齊諧記 is based on an episode of an Indian story in the collection of Buddhist tales, *Jiu za piyu jing* 舊雜譬喻經.<sup>11</sup> The Indian episode is about an heir apparent witnessing his mother’s flirtatiousness as well as another woman’s “treachery”: a brahman performs magic, spits out this woman, and enjoys a tryst with her; when the brahman falls asleep, the woman spits out another man and enjoys a tryst with him. This episode ends with the Master’s statement: “Of all under heaven, women are the most untrustworthy” (translated in Gjertson 11-12). By comparison, the “Scholar of Yangxian” is a much more complicated tale built upon the same motif of people hiding their lovers inside themselves and bringing them forth whenever they wish. Although the tale does not end with an explicit moral, it clearly satirizes the promiscuity, faithlessness, and hypocrisy to which both men and women are prone.

### **Chuanqi**

The Six Dynasties *zhiguai* tales are based on hearsay and reports. According to Hu Yinglin and Lu Xun, they are not entirely imaginary, and thus are distinguished from the Tang *chuanqi* tales, which are “conscious” literary creations. Lu Xun also concludes that *chuanqi* tales are superior to the many *zhiguai* tales: while *chuanqi* tales occasionally either utilize parables (*fengyu* 諷喻) to vent personal grievances or talk about divine retribution in order to caution and advise (*cheng quan* 懲勸), on the whole they focus more on rhetorical style and display more complex conceptualization and plotting (Lu 76).

Although *chuanqi* tales may appear less admonitory than the Six

Dynasties moral tales, I would suggest that the former's satire is actually presented in more subtle ways. In fact, satire often figures prominently in *chuanqi* tales, and is an essential component in tales by those *chuanqi* writers who are most self-conscious about the craft of writing. As Karl S.Y. Kao has indicated, unlike the Six Dynasties *zhiguai*, the Tang *zhiguai* (i.e., part of the Tang *chuanqi*) emphasize the art of presentation. According to Kao, the Six Dynasties attitude towards the *zhiguai* was to accept the phenomena recorded as real and to assume that "the natural world (including the supernatural) was governed by the same set of laws as that of the human world"; and the writers "presented their materials as *given* or *found*." By contrast, though the "sense of unity with supernatural realities" persists in most Tang *zhiguai*, the writers consciously transform the supernatural into "the products of a 'civilized' world," and care very much about the "[a]esthetic of presentation" (Kao 21-22).

The Tang *chuanqi* contain satire on the literati, society, and government. In his history of Chinese literature, Liu Dajie designates some of the Tang *chuanqi* as "satiric fiction" (*fengci xiaoshuo*); for example, Shen Jiji's 沈既濟 "The World Inside a Pillow" ("Zhenzhong ji" 枕中記, Wang Pijiang 37-42) and Li Gongzuo's 李公佐 "The Governor of the Southern Branch" ("Nanke taishou zhuan" 南柯太守傳, Wang Pijiang 85-92) satirize the Tang literati who zealously pursue worldly successes, and Shen Jiji's "Madame Ren" ("Renshi zhuan" 任氏傳, Wang Pijiang 43-48) ridicules the women of the Tang who were not even as virtuous as Madame Ren, the fox fairy (Liu, vol. 2, 23-25). Both Shen Jiji's "The World Inside a Pillow" and Li Gongzuo's "The Governor of the Southern Branch" use a dream as an allegory for the impermanence and emptiness of rank, wealth, and fame. In attempting to enlighten readers with parables conveying this Taoist message, these two tales are satiric allegories. Shen Jiji's "Madame Ren" contains "remarks that satirize the generation" (Wang Pijiang 48). At the end of the tale, Shen Jiji praises Madame Ren's virtue, remarking that even women of his day "could not measure up to this." Shen laments that the hero merely enjoyed Ren's beauty, but failed to have appreciated her character.<sup>12</sup> Since Shen Jiji was demot-

ed at one point in his life, he might very well have intended to satirize the contemporary government—many officials lacked virtue, while the ruler lacked discernment and appreciation of men of virtue.

Many other Tang and Song *chuanqi* tales are satiric in various ways, targeting aristocrats, officials, and the ruling class. One example is “The Tale of the White Gibbon” (“Bu Jiangzong baiyuan zhuan” 補江總白猿傳, Wang Pijiang 15-17), in which a Tang general’s wife is abducted and impregnated by a gibbon, and later gives birth to Ouyang Xun 歐陽詢 (557-641). This story was typically read as a lampoon of the prominent writer Ouyang Xun, who reputedly had an ape-like appearance (Wang Pijiang 17-18). In “Li Shijun” 李使君 (Zhang 202-203), Kang Pian 康駢 satirizes some arrogant, pampered sons of the aristocracy who are extremely choosy about food and its preparation, describing with relish how they have no other choice but to deign to eat coarse food when fleeing from a rebellion. Zhang Du’s 張讀 “Lüqiu Zi” 閻丘子 (Zhang 187-189) satirizes aristocrats who despise those who hail from non-aristocratic origins; the story draws upon the Buddhist motif of reincarnation to illustrate how one such haughty aristocrat fails to discover the Taoist way to immortality because he shows disdain for the wise Liu Zi, who dies and is reborn twice while attempting to befriend and enlighten him.

According to critics, Huangfu Mei’s 皇甫枚 (fl. 873) *Brief Records from Sanshui* (*Sanshui xiaodu* 三水小牘) implies “the purport of handing down warnings” (Wang Pijiang 288). Huangfu Mei’s “Governor Wen” (“Wen Jingzhao” 溫京兆, Zhang 184-186) ridicules a greedy and tyrannical governor who comes to realize that he has inadvertently offended a Taoist immortal and is in danger of dying prematurely; he finally grovels before the immortal, begging for mercy. Another well-constructed tale by Huangfu Mei, “Wang Zhigu” 王知古 (Wang Pijiang 289-292) is a satire and a parody on Zhang Zhifang, a ne’er-do-well who inherited the title of Regional Commandant. Zhang “acted like a feudal lord in control of an enormous territory, and never paid any attention to the welfare of the people”; he “indulged in drinking in his chambers and went hunting in the outer suburbs all day” (translated by Simon Schuchat in Kao 371).

Embedded in the historical episode about Zhang Zhifang is a fantastic sub-episode about a poor scholar named Wang Zhigu. The episode recounting Wang Zhigu's nocturnal encounter with the fox fairies is framed by the major story of Zhang Zhifang's addiction to overzealous hunting (Kao 45-46). Implicitly a cautionary tale about cruelty to animals, the story can also be interpreted as a political allegory. For example, Zhang Youhe reads it as reflecting the local government's ruthless oppression of people (167). Furthermore, Wang Zhigu is gently satirized. The tale exhibits a playful intermingling of fact and fiction, and illustrates a "parodic use" of such old motifs as the "necromantic union" and the "marriage with a Taoist maiden," using ornate language in the match-making scene to mock Wang Zhigu's "status as a failed scholar" (Kao 379).

In addition to ambitions for high rank and emolument, other human follies and weaknesses are also satirized. Huangfu Shi's 皇甫氏 (late Tang?) "Painting the Lute" ("Hua pipa" 畫琵琶, Zhang 197-198) and "A Scholar of the Capital" ("Jingdu rushi" 京都儒士, Zhang 195-196) ridicule irrational, superstitious beliefs. "A Scholar of the Capital" also satirizes a scholar who boasts of his fearlessness but turns out to be cowardly.

### *Biji*

Moving to the "miscellanea" genre, we find both serious and non-serious satires in *biji*, which quote extensively from a variety of collections including *zhiren*, *zhiguai*, family instructions, and joke-books. In the elegantly written *Jade Dewes in Crane Grove* (*Helin yulu* 鶴林玉露), Luo Dajing 羅大經 (fl. 1226) comments on the importance of the pedagogical function of literature: "Of many ancient poems, Confucius chose only three hundred to compile into the *Classic of Poetry*. It was because they alone offered advice and warnings (*quanjie* 勸戒). The poems we compose should also intend to advise and caution so that they are not written in vain" (Luo 434).

*Biji* works such as Zheng Xuan's 鄭瑄 (Ming dynasty) *Daily Compilation of Past Errors* (*Zuofei an rizuan* 昨非庵日纂) follow

the intent and even the format of “family instructions,” emphasize moral admonition, and are intended for moral education. *Daily Compilation* groups anecdotes under such categories as “Incorrupt Integrity” (*bingcao* 冰操), “Planting Virtue” (*zhong de* 種德), and “Cherishing Good Fortune” (*xi fu* 惜福) (Zheng 316, 323, 356). It advocates practical, ethical virtues, frequently quoting from Yan Zhitui’s *Family Instructions* and citing positive examples from history and anecdotes for the reader to emulate.

Serving its role as “petty history” that supplements official history, *biji* provides a good vehicle for commenting on histories and historians, appraising historical figures, and even satirizing the satirist. In his *Miscellany of a Rustic* (*Yeke congshu* 野客叢書), Wang Mao 王綸 (Song dynasty) notes that during the reign of the Emperor Hui of the Jin (r. 290-306) when there was political corruption, Wang Chen 王沈 composed “A Disquisition Explaining About the Times” (“Shishi lun” 釋時論) and Lu Bao 魯褒 wrote “A Disquisition on the Money God” (“Qianshen lun” 錢神論). Wang Chen was frustrated and suppressed by those in power, while Lu Bao was impoverished. Wang Mao observed, “Had Lu Bao been wealthy and Wang Chen successful and powerful, they might not have composed these disquisitions.” According to Wang Mao, the historian of the *History of the Jin* was aware of this situation, and so he first recorded that these essays were composed while the authors were in distress. The historian then went on to relate the following episode:

When Emperor Hui of the Jin heard the sound of the toads in the Hualin Garden, he asked his attendants: “Are they croaking for official (*guan* 官) or personal (*si* 私) reasons?”

This episode about an inept emperor is interpreted by Wang Mao as implicitly ridiculing satirists such as Wang Chen and Lu Bao. Wang Mao sees in this a parallel to the quarreling members of different political cliques in the Han and Tang and asks whether they argued “for official or personal reasons” (352-353).

Non-serious satire is most pronounced in the collections devoted to “witty” remarks. Li Shangyin’s 李商隱 *Yishan zazuan* 義山雜纂 and Su Shi’s 蘇軾 (1037-1101) *Zazuan erxu* 雜纂二續, for example, contain ridicule on human foibles as well as witty maxims that include some useful advice. Even in collections that are not dedicated exclusively to witty satire, this element is present. Su Shi’s *Forest of Records* (*Zhi lin* 志林) records and comments on anecdotes and notables’ remarks, and is full of witty satire. *Jade Dew in Crane Grove*, a collection of a relatively serious nature, also includes witty satires such as the following: Dongfang Shuo secretly drinks the “immortal wine” (which supposedly could confer immortality upon the drinker) that had been acquired by Emperor Wu of the Han. As a result, Dongfang incurs the emperor’s wrath. Yet when the emperor flies into a rage and yearns to kill him, Dongfang Shuo saves himself by proclaiming a witty paradox: “Even if Your Majesty kills me, I will not die. If I die, then the wine is not efficacious.” Dongfang Shuo’s claim can easily be interpreted as a satire on Emperor Wu’s pursuit of immortality (Luo 422).

The late Ming, a period characterized by “liberalism,” “individualism,” “humanitarianism,” and “pragmatism” (de Bary 145-247), witnessed a blossoming of the satiric spirit. The emergence of literary clubs produced an atmosphere conducive to the development of conversational art and satire, similar to that in the Six Dynasties which produced “pure conversation.” A strong interest in witty satire and an attempt to refine its categorization can be found in Cao Chen’s 曹臣 (Ming dynasty) *Records of Tongue Blossoms* (*Shehua lu* 舌華錄, published 1615) and Feng Menglong’s 馮夢龍 (1574-1646) *Survey of Talk* (*Gujin tangai* 古今譚概). Influenced by Liu Yiqing’s *New Account* and He Liangjun’s *Mr. He’s Forest of Remarks*, which grouped “notable people” into different categories, both Cao’s and Feng’s works gathered anecdotes from various collections and categorized them. *Records of Tongue Blossoms* focuses on classifying “remarks.” Four among the eighteen categories are directly related to satire: “humorous remarks” (*xieyu* 諧語) are pleasantries which are not hurtful, while “ridiculing remarks” (*nüeyu* 謔語) make fun of

people at their expense; “satiric remarks” (*fengyu* 諷刺) are subtle and nuanced, while “sarcastic remarks” (*jiyu* 譏語) unreservedly taunt and deride a person (Cao Chen 52, 67, 108, 116). The *Records of Tongue Blossoms* thus offers a simple but useful anatomy of witty satire.

By comparison, Feng Menglong’s *Survey of Talk* is far more comprehensive. It distinguishes thirty-six categories which include “remarks” (especially in the section “Teasing Rejoinders,” or “Chouchao bu” 酬嘲部) as well as anecdotes of people and anomalies. In his preface, Feng Menglong argues for the positive benefits of laughing, claiming that taking things too seriously can be destructive (*Gujin tangai* 1200-1201). A member of the “Literary Club” (*Yunshe* 韻社) which Feng Menglong chaired mentioned how the club supported Feng’s decision to record and compile what they chatted and joked about in the club gatherings into a volume entitled *Survey of Talk* (*Gujin tangai* 1198-1199). Feng Menglong satirizes impractical sticklers for etiquette and convention in such sections as “Pedantry” (“*Yufu bu*” 迂腐部), and ridiculous and eccentric behavior in “Addictions” (“*Pishi bu*” 癖嗜部). As Patrick Hanan perceptively indicates, the satire in Feng’s *Survey of Talk* is “directed against Confucian dogma and obscurantism,” targeting both the obsessive and the absurd (1981, 84).

The *Survey of Talk* primarily contains witty satire, which is found in both the anecdotes and the attached commentary. The volume also includes ludicrous satire in such sections as “Follies” (“*Chijue bu*” 癡絕部) and “Blunders” (“*Miuwu bu*” 謬誤部). In fact, as Li Yu (1610/11-1680) pointed out, Feng Menglong initially could hardly sell any copies of *Survey of Talk*. After Feng changed the title to *Laughs Old and New* (*Gujin xiao* 古今笑), thereby disguising it as a jokebook and emphasizing its ludicrous aspects, the book began to enjoy brisk sales (“*Xu Gu xiao shi*” 1202-1203).

Jokebooks and collections of humorous anecdotes have been published and have pleased readers since the third century. Lu Xun suggests that jokebooks written after the *Forest of Laughs* followed its mocking of human weaknesses and displayed few original ideas;

but he claims that one work is exceptional because it has a more serious purpose and contains satires on worldly scenes and social ills—the *Miscellany of Ai Zi* (*Ai Zi zashuo* 艾子雜說), attributed to Su Shi (Lu 72-73). However, the *Forest of Laughs* in fact does not merely mock human weaknesses, but also contains elements of witty satire. Written in imitation of the *Forest of Laughs*, many later jokebooks include both the “witty” and “ludicrous” satires. It is true that the jokes they contain primarily employ ridicule and are designed solely for amusement. However, the jokebooks also often include witty anecdotes and repartee, thereby overlapping with such *zhiren* works as Liu Yiqing’s *New Account*, which includes humorous anecdotes of human weaknesses—e.g., miserliness, extravagance, and impatience. For example, the Tang writer Zhu Kuei’s 朱揆 *Records of Banter and Guffaw* (*Xiejue lu* 諧噓錄) is primarily a record of the witty banter of notable historical figures, though it also ridicules ill-educated persons and stutterers.

Feng Menglong’s *Treasury of Jokes* (*Xiaofu* 笑府), a classic Chinese jokebook, is a great contribution to humorous literature. Hanan indicated that although Feng’s jokes are primarily the staple ones on social types, his choice is “distinguished by irreverence, bawdiness, and simplicity of language.” Unlike those of his predecessors, many of Feng’s jokes were written in the vernacular (Hanan 1981, 90).

## II. Drama

The modern drama critic Zhou Yibai 周贻白 has argued, “Ever since Chinese drama began to take its form as an independent art, it has always utilized ridicule, castigation, and satire to suggest discontent with the contemporary political establishment or to openly express what the people of a given era thought but dared not say in public” (360). Although we do not have to accept Zhou’s view entirely, it is true that Chinese drama contains both serious and non-serious satire to a great extent. Drama expresses the ludic, satiric spirit more frequently than classical poetry and prose. It often treats human foi-

bles as well as inconsistencies in human behavior and life in a farcical manner.

Etymologically, *xiju*, the compound for “drama,” connotes “play and mock fight.” *Xi* refers to playfulness, and one of the earliest occurrences for *xi* is *xinüe* 戲謔 (“to mock, to play tricks on”) in the poem “Qi ao” 淇奥 in the *Classic of Poetry*. Moreover, the character *xi* contains the weapon radical and can mean “military banners” (Lin Yin, vol. 4, 367); it is associated with fighting and playing with weapons. *Ju* has a sword radical and originally meant “swift” (Lin Yin, vol. 1, 1765). The compound *jutan* 劇談 (“rapid talk”) refers to quick banter, implying a playful verbal battle. Both “playfulness” and “mock fighting,” essential in the process of human evolution and development, are important ingredients in drama.

As DeWoskin has noted, judging from references in the classics as well as graphic evidence from the neolithic period to the Han, the theatrical tradition originated early in Chinese history. Dancers and possibly actors performed in various rites and entertainments, and impersonation was an important aspect in Zhou and Han funerary and sacrificial practices (DeWoskin 1986, 39-41). According to Wang Guowei 王國維, Chinese drama has its origin in shamanistic song and dance rituals dating back to before the Zhou dynasty (1027-256 B.C.) (Zhou 1-2; Shih 3). Another origin is court jesters and entertainers of the Spring and Autumn period (770-481 B.C.) who would combine skills in joking, singing, dancing, and acting. They made satirical remarks, told stories, and impersonated historical and contemporary figures (Shih 3).

While both “ritualistic performance” and “entertainment” have contributed to the formation of Chinese drama, it is the “entertainment” origin that has breathed the satiric spirit into drama. Some of the court jesters (*guji* 滑稽) were actors or comedians (*you* 優 or *paiyou* 俳優), and many of them were dwarfs with special skills in mimicry, impersonation, and joke-telling (Hu 2-8). The comedians embodied playfulness in various aspects, employing comic dialogue or repartee, along with verbal and mock battle in jesting and acting.

Satiric elements abound in China’s theatrical tradition. Among

the "Hundred Entertainments" (*baixi* 百戲) in the Han dynasty, "Old Man Huang of the Eastern Sea" (*Donghai Huanggong* 東海黃公) was a dramatic skit which features wrestling between a man and a tiger. It relates the story of a youth quite adept at using magic to tame fierce tigers and poisonous snakes. However, Huang loses his power in old age because of debilitation and overdrinking, and is eventually devoured by a tiger. Zhou Yibai argues that this skit satirized the magicians of that time by exposing their fraudulent pretensions, and indirectly criticized rulers who entrusted the magicians with power, thereby allowing them to harm others (Zhou 10-14, esp., 12). Yet the skit can also be interpreted as a caution against overdrinking and overconfidence, enlightening the audience about the impermanence of power and glory.

Satire is evident in "The Stomping and Swaying Wife" (*Tayao niang* 踏搖娘) of the sixth century and became central to "The Military Counselor" (*Canjun* 參軍) popular during the Tang dynasty. "The Stomping and Swaying Wife" is a dramatic performance combining singing and dancing with the story of an abusive husband, a complaining wife, and their quarrel; it includes much teasing and jesting. "The Military Counselor" originated from a story of an official who is demoted to the low social status of an actor when his corruption is exposed. Then the story was developed into a drama with a plot and dialogue, taking the form of a farce or a political satire.<sup>13</sup> This type of theatrical act focuses on comic dialogues, jests, comic actions, mimicry, and impersonations of historical and contemporary figures. In addition to satirizing contemporary events, it ridicules the saints of the three central religions—Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism (Aoki 5-6; Zhou 36-52, esp., 47-48, 52).

The above-mentioned theatrical arts contributed much to the dramatic tradition, though they seem more like popular oral performances and skits than full-length drama. They also focus more on character satire than on plot development. It was not until the Song dynasty (960-1279) that *bona fide* drama appeared. The "Variety Plays" (*zaju* 雜劇) of the Song in northern China developed from "The Military Counselor" into full-fledged dramas with plot and dia-

logue (Aoki 6; Zhou 82, 110). Although we know about pre-Yuan drama only through second- or third-hand accounts instead of primary sources, it seems that satire remained dominant in Song drama. A “Variety Play” had “a prologue that was usually low comedy” (Shih 7-8). As explained in Naideweng’s 耐得翁 (pseud., fl. mid-thirteenth century) *Ducheng jisheng* 都城紀勝, the prologue episodes are often farces based on worldly affairs; they are intended to offer “cautionary advice through examples” (*jianjie* 鑒戒) and sometimes suggest “reproof and remonstrance” (*jianzheng* 諫諍) (Yang 46).

The Song “Variety Plays” usually are topical. Actors would improvise stories and dress up as historical or contemporary figures in order to achieve their satirical goals. Their targets of satire include such controversial statesmen as Wang Anshi 王安石 (1021-1086), as well as various Song Confucians and other pedants (Zhou 70, 75-76, 83-84). The “Yuanben” 院本—the “Variety Plays” of the Jin dynasty—similarly retain satire and jesting as staples (Aoki 28-30; Shih 8).

Satire is evident even in other forms of popular, theatrical art like the shadow play. According to Naideweng, in the shadow show, “the righteous and the loyal have a proper appearance, while the treacherous and the evil appear ugly. This is done in order to praise the virtuous and censure the wicked.”<sup>14</sup>

It is in “Southern Drama” (*nanxi* 南戲 or *xiwen* 戲文) of the Song in southern China that satire ceases to be central and begins to be subordinated to plot (Zhou 134). Zhou Yibai notes that in the Yuan dynasty, drama shifts from topicality to historicity, with most plots of plays taken from history or the classical tales and miscellaneous jottings of the Tang and the Song. Zhou argues that this shift was due to the socio-political background of the Yuan: forbidden to satirize contemporary Mongolian rulers and their officials, Han Chinese playwrights would turn to history and folk legends for plot materials, which could sometimes allegorize present-day concerns (Zhou 182).

However, it would be an oversimplification to say that government censorship is the only reason for the role of history to loom large in Yuan drama. Satire, mimicry, and topicality have, after all, their

limits in entertainment. Viewed from an evolutionary literary perspective, the audience of bustling amusement centers naturally would develop and demand more variety in subject matter. Moreover, since bibliographers of narrative works had for several centuries “made no formal distinction between history and fiction” (DeWoskin 1986, 35), it would be natural for Yuan dramatists to turn to history when looking for plot materials. Many factors other than censorship contributed to changes in drama during the Yuan.<sup>15</sup> For example, the suspension of the civil service examinations for seventy-eight years (1237-1314) forced many scholars to earn a living by practical means such as writing plays. Bringing with them a strong background in history, these scholar-dramatists thus transformed the Yuan drama into an art form far more sophisticated than the “Variety Plays” of the Song. Yuan drama is also influenced by storytelling and other public performances, with which it competed in the amusement centers of cities like Beijing, then known as Khanbalik. For example, historical tales figured prominently in both storytelling and the shadow play (Shih 10, 14).

The shift from topicality to historicity does not imply the disappearance of satire from drama. While the “Variety Plays” of the Song are explicitly satirical because they directly lampoon contemporary figures, some of the plays from the Yuan and later times satirize contemporary times indirectly and implicitly by featuring historical figures in the past.

Satire in the form of jesting and buffoonery was still indispensable to the Yuan drama even after its “demotion” to an incidental role. The Yuan drama (*Yuan zaju* 元雜劇) shares with the Song “Variety Plays” (*zaju*) a common referent, the same four-act division, and an identical use of a role system. In terms of structure, the comic-satiric element is essential, providing comic relief and alternating with the serious scenes, thus preventing the play from becoming monotonous (Aoki 63). Yuan drama’s treatment of the serious theme of justice can also be “lightened by touches of coarse humor” (Shih 104).

As regards to style, because prose is a better medium for con-

veying a comic tone than verse, most humorous interludes in Yuan plays are in prose (Shih 170). Many Tang and Song theatrical skits are based on puns (Shih 174). The Yuan dramatists frequently utilize a play on words, generating puns to create and enhance humor. As Chung-wen Shih argues, "Play on words that sound alike but have different meanings are sometimes purposely adopted as a veiled means of communication, and their intent can be serious" (172). Such a use of language enables the writers (and actors) to mock authorities as well as human weaknesses and inconsistencies in a playful and non-confrontational manner.

The comic aspect is expected of actors in the four main roles—leading male (*mo* 末), leading female (*dan* 旦), villain (*jing* 淨), and clown (*chou* 丑)—and of a number of minor roles as well. In a typical "Southern Drama," for example, the *jing* and the *chou* tease one another, while the *mo* scoffs at them, appearing to be superior to them in wit (Zhou 133). The *chou* role represents primarily a harmless figure whose utterances are humorous and whose motions and movements are ridiculous. The actor playing the *fujing* 副淨, a role in Song and Jin plays, makes silly remarks and movements, and then is taunted and knocked about by the *fumo* 副末 (Zhou 21-22, 80), thereby providing the fun of slapstick antics for the audience. In Yuan drama, the *jing* role (which combines humorous and villainous behavior), the painted female role (*chadan* 搽旦), and the *chou*, are all comic roles. As Chung-wen Shih indicates, "Coarse humor, slapstick comedy, extravagant fantasies, and villainy are their trademarks." They speak primarily in prose, interspersed with doggerel verse (Shih 171).

Satire in drama can also be detected in the stage directions. The term *qiao* 喬 is used to indicate exaggerated burlesque in acting for fun-provoking purposes. The term *kehun* 科譚, short for *chake* 插科 (making impromptu comic gestures and expressions) and *dahun* 打譚 (making comic remarks) (Zhou 25, 33), is especially important in the expression of satire in drama.

Satire is significant in some of the Ming and Qing *zaju* drama. In comparing Yuan and Ming *zaju* drama, Zeng Yongyi points out

that in the Ming, there were far more *zaju* plays about the literati than in the Yuan; Ming dramatists often used plays to vent their frustrations or lampoon their enemies (110). Scholars who failed the civil service examinations tended to project themselves onto characters such as talented but unappreciated literati or women. Grouping the *zaju* drama of the Qing by subjects into seven categories, Zeng Yongyi indicates that the plays based on "historical stories" often imply satire of the world (*fengshi* 諷世), while the plays about "ghosts, spirits, Buddhism, and Taoism" either satirize or dispense advice to the world (*quanshi* 勸世) (120-121). In both Ming and Qing, plays about the literati sometimes also express the authors' grievances and criticism of their times.

Because of its brevity and structural unity, *zaju* drama is particularly suitable as a focused expression of the satiric spirit. Satire, possibly in the form of personal lampoon, can be found in such drama as Wang Jiushi's 王九思 (1468-1551) *Du Fu on a Spring Outing* (*Du Zimei gujiu youchun* 杜子美沽酒遊春) and his friend Kang Hai's 康海 (1475-1540) *Mr. Dongguo Inadvertently Rescued the Wolf of Zhongshan* (*Dongguo xiansheng wujiu Zhongshan lang* 東郭先生誤救中山狼). In his play, Wang Jiushi used Du Fu's criticism of the prime minister in order to express his own resentment and anger for the powerful minister who had caused his demotion. Kang Hai's play was supposedly written to lampoon Li Mengyang 李夢陽 (1472-1529), who failed to help Kang Hai—the very man who had once saved his life—and even caused Kang to lose his position (Aoki 156-157). While it is not certain whether these topical references were intended by the playwright or not, this play expresses indignation about ingratitude and cautions the audience against treacherous opportunists (Zhou 258-260).

Xu Wei 徐渭 (1521-93), one of the best satirists of sixteenth-century China, wrote a collection of four *zaju* plays entitled *Four Cries of a Gibbon* (*Sisheng yuan* 四聲猿) to vent his frustration over the foibles of his society. The play *Yuyang nong* 漁陽弄 re-enacts the historical episode of the low-ranking but courageous Mi Heng 禰衡 castigating the powerful but wicked Cao Cao 曹操, thereby al-

lowing Xu Wei to denounce the contemporary ruling strata through Mi Heng. *The Girl Mulan Joins the Army in Place of Her Father* (*Ci Mulan tifu congjun* 雌木蘭替父從軍) and *The Lady Who Becomes a Top Palace Graduate* (*Nü zhuangyuan ci huang de feng* 女狀元辭凰得鳳) depict two women who break through the social constraints placed on their gender and enjoy successful careers in the martial or the civilian arena by disguising themselves as men. In depicting exceptional heroines such as these, Xu Wei satirizes some of the male elite as well as society's unfair treatment of women (Yenna Wu 1997, 74-75). Even though Xu Wei did not go very far in subverting the patriarchal system, and generally portrayed a heroine who would finally return to the family to play the role of a submissive wife, his satire still cannot be ignored. Xu Wei's play *Singing Instead of Whistling* (*Ge dai xiao* 歌代嘯) satirizes corruption in government through the case of a henpecked magistrate.<sup>16</sup> Through droll dramatization, Xu Wei mercilessly points out the inconsistencies in the society: the magistrate's jealous and angry wife sets fire to the residence, yet she gets off scot-free; by contrast, the local commoners who come with lamps to help fight the fire are blamed by the magistrate, who forbids them to light lamps in the future.

Xu Fuzuo's 徐復祚 *One Copper Cash* (*Yiwen qian* 一文錢) and Wang Heng's 王衡 *Yu lun pao* 鬱輪袍 are two "satirical plays" (Liu, vol. 3, 169-170). *One Copper Cash*, which exaggerates the parsimoniousness and greed of a miser, is a work intended to "satirize the world" (*fengshi*). *Yu lun pao* mocks the examination system and the literati's obsession with officialdom, high rank, and emoluments. Both *zaju* plays end with a monk who appears in order to enlighten the deluded characters. Although Liu Dajie calls the ending a "flaw" expressing "passive sentiments" (vol. 3, 170), this type of conclusion reflects the increasing influence of Buddhism in Chinese drama and provides a structural expedient for arriving at an admonitory denouement. The motif of a monk's enlightening characters is also often adopted by later vernacular novelists.

It is not easy for the *chuanqi* plays (derived from *nanxi* and popular in Ming and Qing) to muster sustained satire, since they are

much lengthier and more loosely structured than *zaju* drama. Still, serious satire is found in Wang Shizhen's (1526-90) 王世貞 topical play *The Crying Phoenix* (*Mingfeng ji* 鳴鳳記), which condemns the powerful and corrupt prime minister Yan Song 嚴嵩. Li Kaixian's 李開先 (1502-1568) *The Precious Sword* (*Baojian ji* 寶劍記) criticizes contemporary government by castigating some wicked Southern Song court ministers' oppression of Lin Chong, an upright hero in the famous *Shuihu* story cycle (Liu, vol. 3, 153-154, 159-160).

Moral exhortation is important even in the less serious satirical plays and farces. Sun Renru's 孫仁孺 (fl. 1573) *Dongguo ji* 東郭記, a satiric work that weaves together several stories from *Mencius*, is intended to be admonitory. It is praised as an excellent, well-written play which, "though farcical, did not sink to the level of hurtful ridicule" (Aoki 195-196). Wang Tingna's 汪廷納 (fl. 1596) play *The Lioness Roars* (*Shihou ji* 獅吼記) warns about female jealousy and ends with Buddhist enlightenment. It is, in Aoki Masaru's evaluation, the most outstanding of all the Ming-Qing farces (254). Wu Bing's 吳炳 (1595-1648) *Antidote for Jealousy* (*Liaodu geng* 療妒羹), while ridiculing the jealous wife and her intimidated husband, implicitly satirizes the political scene. This play reenacts the familiar pattern of a worthy official suffering his ruler's mistreatment because of an envious and wicked official's slander: a talented and virtuous concubine is mistreated because of an angry wife's domination of her husband (Yenna Wu 1995, 132-133; 1997, 85-86).

### Drama Criticism

Moving from drama to a consideration of its criticism, we find that readings of drama, as those of poetry, can be controversial. Following the tradition of "reading between the lines," Chen Jiru 陳繼儒 (1558-1639) made unusual comments on Gao Ming's 高明 (ca. 1301-ca. 1371) *The Lute* (*Pipa ji* 琵琶記). Chen argues that the play is entirely a "manual of derision" or "mockery" (*chaoma pu* 嘲罵譜) because it scoffs at the hero in various ways (Zhou 309). By contrast, Zhou Yibai asserted a more common interpretation, claiming that the

playwright Gao Ming in fact wrote *The Lute* to justify the hero's virtue, rather than to jeer at him. To explain why such literati as Chen Jiru would receive such a negative impression of the hero, Zhou suggests that precisely because the heroine's filial piety is presented as so striking and positive, the hero appears lacking in virtue by way of contrast (Zhou 309-310).

Drama criticism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries emphasizes the *su* 俗 (uncouth) and the satiric elements in plays. An opposite to *ya* 雅 (elegance), *su* also means being "conventional, vulgar, unrefined, boorish," and "popular," in the sense of being common to the great mass of people and thus easy to understand. Drama, it is argued, should represent the lives of ordinary people, use common vernacular, and be comprehensible to an audience of widely varying educational levels. The great seventeenth-century writer Li Yu believes that the rhetorical flourish (*cicai* 詞采) of drama should be the opposite of that in classical prose and poetry:

The rhetorical flourish of classical prose and poetry favors canonic elegance and despises boorishness, prefers refinement and profundity and shuns explicitness, but drama is different. Drama should base its subject matter on the talk and discussion in streets and alleyways, and be straightforward and explicit in its presentation.<sup>17</sup>

The purpose of drama is seen as teaching moral lessons through entertainment. In terms of diction, Li Yu emphasizes "pivot" (*ji* 機) and "piquancy" (*qu* 趣), which are crucial in enlivening the play. The "pivot," or key link, allows the "blood vessels" of the play to be connected and insures that there are no broken traces, while "piquancy" allows the play to avoid a dull and pedantic atmosphere. Pedantry should be eliminated not only from romantic passages but also from those dealing with virtues and grievances.<sup>18</sup>

Satire and burlesque are important for amusement and sometimes enlightenment to moral truths. But critics noticed that the boorish and burlesque could also contribute to aesthetic pleasure. The

famous drama critic Wang Jide 王驥德 (?-1623) obviously realized that great writers are able to make the boorish aesthetically appealing. According to Wang, burlesque songs should be able to “take the uncouth as the elegant” and impress the audience with their perfection. Wang praises Xu Wei as one capable of composing many comic-satirical ditties. However, Wang notes that good burlesque (*paixie* 俳諧) songs in drama are very difficult to compose unless the author possesses outstanding talent and extremely fluid wit and can produce the finest writing (148-149). Wang also stresses the importance of *chake dahun* (making impromptu comic gestures and remarks), which if skillfully done and perfectly timed are like “a good jester who is able to make everybody convulse with laughter without saying anything or moving around.” While valuing a playwright’s ability to insert some good comic relief into serious scenes and let the audience’s tension dissolve in laughter, Wang warns that if the comic relief seems forced, then it is better to do without it (165-166).

By the same token, Li Yu stresses that *kehun* is crucial in playwriting and should be handled with care so that it will suit both refined and popular tastes. It serves an important practical function maintaining the audience’s alertness, which might falter during lengthy *chuanqi* plays. According to Li Yu, *kehun* should avoid obscenities; be somewhat uncouth (*su*) and yet not excessively boorish; and be spontaneous and natural, rather than bizarre, absurd, and irrelevant. In fact, Li Yu regards *kehun* as essential not just for the clowns, but for all the actors. Thus, *kehun* should be lively, balancing refinement and uncouthness. Li Yu believes that when *kehun* is handled well, it can manifest virtues such as loyalty, filial piety, chastity, and fidelity, serving as a means of enlightenment that awakens people to the truth of Tao (Li Yu, *Xianqing ouji*, 55-59).

Despite his ideal of *kehun*, Li Yu realizes that for popular taste and consumption, *kehun* often leans toward the vulgar, thereby failing to strike a balance between elegance and boorishness. When watching a play and finding the *kehun* in a particular episode repulsively boorish, Li Yu was surprised to find that the other viewers showed no disgust or boredom. This reaction led Li Yu to lament that literary

boorishness might appeal to the entire audience, while refinement might be summarily abandoned (Li Yu, *Xianqing ouji*, 58-59). Still, the ideal of aesthetically transforming the uncouth and balancing between elegance and boorishness was adhered to by great satirists such as Xi Zhou Sheng 西周生 (17th century) and Wu Jingzi 吳敬梓 (1701-54).

While no writer disputes the principle that satire should serve public functions, in practice satire is often used (or is thought to be used) for personal ends. Yan Zhitui's advice against lampooning is taken seriously by Li Yu. In "Warning Against Satire" ("Jie fengci" 戒諷刺), an essay placed near the beginning of the drama chapters in his collection of essays, *Casual Expressions of Idle Feeling* (*Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記, pub. 1671), Li Yu emphasizes that the pen of a writer can kill in a more rapid and fierce manner than the sword of a warrior. According to Li Yu, writers in the past composed plays with the intention of encouraging the common folk to do good and warning them against evil, and thus their plays were "prescriptions that cure people's illnesses and lengthen their lives" and "instruments to save people from suffering and dispel their disasters." But in later times, acrimonious (*kebo* 刻薄) writers used their plays to vent their anger and avenge themselves by casting their enemies in the roles of the wicked. Deploring these acts which "commit evil that will bring retribution" (*zao nie* 造孽), Li Yu urges playwrights to be sincere, kind, and tolerant (*zhonghou* 忠厚) instead of cruel and ruthless: "You may use your play to repay other people's kindness to you, but not to take revenge; to encourage good deeds and punish and reprimand the wicked (*quan shan cheng e* 勸善懲惡), but not to abuse the good and commit evil" (Li Yu, *Xianqing ouji*, 5-8, esp., 5-6). It is clear that what Li Yu objects to is not so much topicality itself, but rather the lampooning of one's enemies.

Arguing against writers' using lampoon in drama, Li Yu also reproaches readers who enjoy "reading [lampoons] into" the plays. Li Yu's warning is partly a reaction to the *suoyin* 索隱 ("searching for the hidden") type of readers who, constantly hunting for possible references to historical persons and events in plays, often misread the

plays and misconstrued the playwrights' intentions. For example, they wrongly accused Gao Ming of lampooning one of his enemies in his masterpiece *The Lute*. Li Yu also suffered because of the gossip of such "allegorists," or "busybodies" (*haoshi zhijia* 好事之家), as he calls them: "Each time they watch a play, they would inquire whom [the playwright intends the fictional characters] to allude to." In defense of his personal integrity, Li Yu contends that he never intended to lampoon anybody in his plays and took a solemn vow long ago not to do such a cruel thing. The clownish or wicked characters in his plays are purely fictional and are intended to provide comic relief and enliven a given scene (Li Yu, *Xianqing ouji*, 5-6).

It may sound uncharacteristic of Li Yu—the "paradoxical farceur," as Patrick Hanan aptly calls him (1988, 76)—to warn against satire in such a solemn manner. Nor is it completely credible that Li Yu never lampooned his personal enemies in his works. However, what matters here is the strongly stated belief that an author should not intentionally lampoon his enemies and that satirical elements should be fictional and aim for the purpose of entertainment. Li Yu states in his "General Guidelines" ("*Fanli*" 凡例) to his *Casual Expressions of Idle Feeling* that he intentionally proceeds from essays discussing interesting and refined topics to those containing instruction and warning so that readers will not be put off or intimidated from the start (*Xianqing ouji*, 2). In Li's view, the element of entertainment serves as a crucial lure to the final instruction of the readers. Thus, in defending himself against accusations of attacking personal enemies and in advocating comedy as a means to achieve the ultimate goal of instructing the reader, Li too endorses the ideals expressed in the moralistic tradition.

While agreeing with Li Yu's suggestion that playwrights should not use drama as mere lampoon for venting personal grievances, Zhou Yibai takes issue with Li Yu's argument that drama functions to "encourage good deeds and reprimand the wicked." Arguing in a Marxist or Maoist vein, Zhou claims that this pedagogical function benefits only the "feudalist" ruling strata, because the so-called "good" and "evil" were viewed exclusively from the ruling strata's perspective

(360-361). However, Zhou's argument is somewhat anachronistic. According to the moralistic tradition, satire expressing people's grievances was legitimate; rulers were supposed to learn about their mistakes through satire, and then to correct them. At the same time, there was fear that satire might become so slanderous as to instigate rebellion. But, as we have seen so far, satire in traditional China had always been expected to "encourage good deeds and reprimand the wicked," and its educational effects were supposed to extend to both superiors and inferiors. The "good" and the "wicked" were often viewed in the same way by *both* the sensible rulers and the people: the "good" were usually those who would benefit all of society, while the "wicked" were those who threatened the welfare of both the ruler and the people.

### III. Oral Literature and Performance

This section will sketch the importance of satire in songs, jokes, related entertainments, and especially storytelling. Satire appears to be closely connected with everyday life and is an important component in popular culture. There has always been a close, transformative, and interactive relationship between elite and popular culture in China. Folk songs were the primary sources for the *Classic of Poetry* and the "Music Bureau Poems," which inspired later poets to write in imitation. Folk materials were constantly gathered, processed, distilled, and transformed into elite literature. At the same time, some types of elite literature, such as histories and classics, were popularized and transformed into vernacular materials for the consumption of the spottily educated through drama and storytelling.

At least two conjectures about the origins of folk songs connect these to political satire. One is that of *yinghuo* 熒惑, which refers to "the planet Mars" and also means "to delude or mislead." According to the "Record of Astronomy" in the *History of the Jin*, the spirit of Mars could descend to earth in the incarnation of a child singing rhymes for fun, and depending on the lyrics, these rhymes could bode ill or well for the dynasty (Zhu Ziqing 22). As recorded in histories,

some children's rhymes served as omens that foretold the dynasty's fate. Because of the popular belief in the rhymes' power of divination, potential rebels sometimes fabricated rhymes and taught children to sing them in order to spread rumors and delude the common folk (Zhu Ziqing 57-58).

The other possible origin which relates folk songs to satire is *yuanbang* 怨謗 ("grievance and slander"). The "Record of Five Phases" in the *History of the Former Han* mentions *shiyao* 詩妖 ("evil spirit or heresy in poetry" or "weird poems/songs"), which refers to the manifestation of the spirit of grievance in songs when the ruler's policy goes against people's wishes (Zhu Ziqing 22-23). The term *shiyao* also appears in the chapter "On Poison" in Wang Chong's *Lun heng* as something that occasionally occurs. According to Wang, fire is related to speech, and speech to petty and wicked people. Wicked people commit evil or do weird things (*yao* 妖) because of their mouths and tongues (Wang Chong 224). Thus, while recalling the function of poetry in expressing grievances, the songs grouped as *yuanbang* have a negative connotation. Instead of "showing grievances without being rebellious," these songs defame the ruler and incite a rebellion. From the perspective of historians who support the ruling house, such songs are heretical and subversive.

In terms of the subject matter, songs have been used politically or socially to praise or blame. Songs may lampoon, condemn, and even curse political figures. For example, a song in the *Records of the Grand Historian* satirizes Wei Zifu 衛子夫, the consort of Emperor Wu: "No need for joy when you bear a boy, no need for anger when you bear a girl. Don't you see how Wei Zifu lords it over the country!" (Zhu Ziqing 121).

Some folksongs and Buddhist songs are intended for admonition (Zhu Ziqing 163). Many folksongs are farcical, ridiculing physical defects, certain vocations, and domestic problems such as laziness in a wife (Zhu Ziqing 157-158). Ludicrous satire abounds especially in children's songs, possibly because a barbed jibe can be better tolerated when in the guise of children's banter. These songs mercilessly jeer at such targets of satire as dwarfs and impoverished relatives

(Zhu Ziqing 147).

Similar to songs, jokes had a humble origin. It is true that some of the court jesters acquired a legendary status through anecdotes in "literary" histories. Famous for his skill and wit in both pleasing and admonishing Emperor Wu of the Han, Dongfang Shuo appeared in many accounts and even was reputed to have authored a number of works about distant lands (Lu 36-43). Notable jesters such as Dongfang Shuo and Chunyu Kun were frequently alluded to as representative originators of China's humorous literature. It should be remembered, however, that all the court jesters in fact hailed from commoners' backgrounds and earned their living through "oral" skills. Though serving as critics at court and remonstrating with the ruling strata, the court jesters functioned primarily as entertainers.

Other professional jesters also shared the same humble backgrounds and entertaining function with the court jesters, though they addressed a different audience. Professional jesters were popular in the entertainment quarters during the Tang and Song times. Meng Yuanlao's 孟元老 (fl. 1103-1127) *Dongjing menghua lu* 東京夢華錄 and Zhou Mi's 周密 (1232-1298) *Wulin jiushi* 武林舊事 mentioned entertainers who specialized in telling jokes (*shuo huanhua* 說諢話), while Tao Zongyi's 陶宗儀 (fl. 1360) *Chuogeng lu* 輟耕錄 mentioned the singing of jokes during the Song (Hu 119).

Some jesters even played the role of social critics, satirizing both the government and the people. Originally a jester from Shandong, Zhang Shou 張壽 (fl. 1068-1103) was noted for his talent in satire and in composing poems. Hong Mai 洪邁 (1123-1202) described Zhang Shou as follows in his famous *Yijian zhi* 夷堅志:

Although his diction was unrefined, his poems were clever and outstanding, often containing satire. Wherever he went, people were so afraid of his mouth that they vied with one another to give him wine, food, money, and silk (Hu 59).

This anecdote recalls both Yan Zhitui's caution about how satire can hurt more than a weapon and Mencius' claim about how wicked

ministers and usurpers were frightened when Confucius completed his *Spring and Autumn Annals*. Just as the ministers were afraid of Confucius's satirical pen, so the people were afraid of Zhang Shou's taunting tongue. They would pay just to "shut him up."

Court jesters may have contributed to the origins of a number of popular jesting entertainments. A form of popular entertainment related to jokes is *xiangsheng* 相聲 (commonly translated as "comic dialogues"), which began as early as the Tang and has continued into modern times. Originally meaning "to mimic sounds, voices, and speeches," *xiangsheng* later referred to primarily comic dialogues on social trivia (Yang 125-126). The dialogue typically takes place between a somewhat naive "straight man" who helps set up a joke and a worldly-wise wit who applies the *coup de grace* and elicits most of the laughter from the audience. *Xiangsheng* was possibly influenced by the oral and dialogic form of *fu* 賦 ("exposition"). It was certainly related to *kehun* (comic gestures and remarks) in drama, especially the taunting between the *fujing* and the *fumo*.

Two types of popular entertainment in the Song that belonged to the arts of teasing and satire were *hesheng* 合生 and *shangmi* 商謎. As explained by Hong Mai, *hesheng* involved extemporaneously reciting poems or singing lyrics on a designated object, while *qiao hesheng* 喬合生 referred to a type of *hesheng* that was funny and satirical in nature (Hu 124). *Shangmi* involved the making and guessing of satirical riddles about objects or people, requiring a quick wit and considerable verbal skill as in *hesheng* (Hu 127-129).

Court jesters provided origins also for the storytelling tradition. The modern scholar Hu Shiyang argues that storytelling originated in these dwarf-comedians who entertained the ruling class with jokes and funny tales, in addition to singing, dancing, and acting (2-8). The records of the comedians' questions and answers are among the earliest form of *fu* ("exposition") which became prevalent in the Han; following this folk tradition, *fu* sometimes adopted the form of a comic dialogue. Hu contends that while many *fu* eulogize the rulers' achievement and elaborate their enjoyment, some of the *fu* are intended to "satirize and admonish" (*feng jian* 諷諫) (Hu 9-10).

Jesting, humor, and satire had developed into an important part of life between the third and the sixth centuries. Historical records mentioned many figures who were ludicrous (*guji*) and witty, enjoyed teasing and playing tricks (*xinüe*), quick banter (*jutan* 劇談), and telling jokes (*tan xinong* 談戲弄) (Hu 12). Comedians were called upon to entertain at banquets, sometimes having to improvise comic dialogues (Hu 13-14). In addition to the lower-class entertainers, a number of officials, royal guests, and even members of the ruling strata enjoyed telling comic tales. For example, *The Chronicle of the Three Kingdoms* (*Sanguo zhi* 三國志) mentioned that Cao Zhi 曹植 (192-232) once recited a “comedians’ petty talk” (*paiyou xiaoshuo* 俳優小說) of several thousand words in length.<sup>19</sup>

An important public entertainment in the Tang was professional storytelling, in which the telling of jokes and the ridiculing of historical figures continued. According to Hu Shiying, the debate on the three doctrines in the royal court began to include teasing and satire, and actors in the Tang and Song used the three doctrines as a means for satire and admonition (Hu 20-21).

The chantefable “transformation texts” (*bianwen* 變文) of Dunhuang, one of the earliest vernacular narratives, resulted from storytelling in the Tang. Primarily used for popularization of Buddhist scripture, *bianwen* also included secular stories. The most famous *bianwen* story is “The Great Maudgalyayana Rescues His Mother From Hell” (“*Damuqianlian mingjian jiumu bianwen*” 大目乾連冥間救母變文).<sup>20</sup> This tale extols the virtue of the filial and selfless Maudgalyayana, who descends into hell to save his mother as well as other condemned souls. The story also satirizes his mother’s greed and stinginess, showing how she falls into the realm of the “hungry ghosts” because of her sins, and how she betrays her unrepentance by refusing to share food with others. One of the secular Dunhuang stories in ballad form, the “Book of the Quarrelsome Bride” (“*Yake shu*” 齣齣書), deftly satirizes both an unruly bride and her helpless in-laws (Yenna Wu 1995, 166-167).

Storytelling competed with the “Variety Plays” in the entertainment quarters in the Northern and Southern Song capitals. According

to Naideweng, each professional storyteller specialized in one of the following four categories: (1) *xiaoshuo*—stories dealing with love, spirits and demons, marvels, law suits, sword fights, and contests with cudgels; (2) *shuo tiejir* 說鐵騎兒—about larger battles; (3) *shuo jing* 說經, elucidation of Buddhist scripture, and *shuo canqing* 說參請, stories of Zen Buddhist dialogues for enlightenment; and (4) *jiang shishu* 講史書—historical recitations.<sup>21</sup>

Of the four categories, *shuo canqing* had the most direct relationship to satire. According to Hu Shiyong, this type of storyteller related playful stories and dialogues that supposedly took place in Zen Buddhist halls, including witty verbal battles as well as foolish, ridiculous matters. Such recounting of teasing and bantering materials probably functioned as a comic introduction, arousing the audience's interest, before turning to the more serious elucidation of Buddhist scripture. Alternatively, it may have served as comic relief or an interlude in the elucidation (Hu 116-117). Satire could also be found in the telling of vulgarized Buddhist stories (*shuo hunjing* 說禪經) mentioned in Wu Zimu's 吳自牧 (fl. 1274) *Mengliang lu* 夢梁錄 and Zhou Mi's *Wulin jiushi*. The use of *hun* ("jests, obscene jokes") indicates that the telling of Buddhist stories might have become secularized and included ridicule and jokes (Hu 103, 118).

Satire, it should be recognized, is an important element in storytelling in general. The skills of successful storytellers include their abilities to pass moral judgment on people, make their stories serve as a moral example or warning, and improvise brief jesting and satirical remarks (*shi qi* 使砌) (Hu 84, 87-89). A certain storyteller named Zhang Ben was famous for his skills in reciting satiric poems and joking about contemporary affairs (Hu 60-61).

In the context of storytelling, *xiaoshuo* refers to the vernacular story; nevertheless, it has been very much influenced by the traditional bibliographers' *xiaoshuo* categories— anecdotes about notable people, records of anomalies, tales of marvels, and miscellaneous notes. The influence can be seen in the thirteenth-century writer Luo Ye's 羅燁 classification of *xiaoshuo* (the telling of short stories in the vernacular) in his *Notes of an Old Tippler* (*Zuiweng tanlu* 醉翁談錄):

spirits and demons, love, marvels, law suits, sword fights, contests with cudgels, immortals, and sorcery (Hu 109). All the eight types also appear in classical-language *xiaoshuo*.

## Conclusion

To summarize, we can see the distribution of satire in the spectrum of genres ranging from elite to popular literature. While the type of satire found in such elite literature as classical poetry and prose is often serious, witty and ludicrous satires figure prominently in the various types of relatively popular literature examined in this article. To be sure, classical-language *xiaoshuo* and drama borrow a great deal from classical poetry and prose, and continue to offer admonition as their stated purpose. Yet in comparison with classical poetry and prose, *xiaoshuo* and drama frequently feature witty repartee and ludicrous jokes. Within the category of *xiaoshuo*, *chuanqi* tales tend to contain more subtle satire. Farces as well as jokebooks (which fall under the *biji* genre) include simple, straightforward satire that highlights various inconsistencies in human behavior and life in general. In comparison, oral literature and performance, especially jesting, stress the witty and ludicrous types of satire even more. In these genres, the satiric mode helps to criticize shortcomings in society or express dissatisfaction about the times, thereby serving as a sort of safety valve that alleviates social tensions somewhat.

A multitude of genres in elite and popular literature contributed to the formation of vernacular fiction in its complex development. Having originated directly from storytelling, the vernacular story (*xiaoshuo* or *huaben* 話本) was influenced by literary *xiaoshuo* and drama, as well as by classical poetry and prose. It expanded beyond Luo Ye's eight categories, absorbing such materials as history and biography, tales of warning and moral admonition, "family instructions," and jokes and burlesques from oral performance traditions. In terms of the satiric mode, vernacular fiction obviously shares much more affinity with popular literature than with elite literature. How satire developed in vernacular stories and novels must await another study.

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> In this paper, I do not follow most critics in referring to *xiaoshuo* as a “genre.” Instead, I refer to *xiaoshuo* as a “literary category,” and I refer to *zhiren*, *chuanqi*, and the like, as “genres,” rather than “sub-genres.”

<sup>2</sup> The four branches of literature are *jing* 經 (classics), *shi* 史 (history), *zi* (philosophical writings), and *ji* 集 (collection/anthology).

<sup>3</sup> This remark was made by *Zixia* 子夏, one of Confucius’ disciples. *Lun yu*, XIX. 4.

<sup>4</sup> Note, however, that some scholars claimed that *biji* did not begin until the Northern Song. See *Jianming Zhongguo gudian wenxue cidian*, 295.

<sup>5</sup> The *shuo* in *xiaoshuo* is cognate to *yue* 說 (“joy”). See Lin Yin and Gao Ming, eds., vol. 3, 710.

<sup>6</sup> From Liang Shaoren’s *Liangban qiuyu’an suibi* 兩段秋雨齋隨筆, quoted in Lin Yin and Gao Ming, eds., vol. 3, 710.

<sup>7</sup> See Lin Zhijun’s preface in Jiang Yujing, comp., vol. 1, 1-2.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, 2.

<sup>9</sup> Quoted and translated in Laura Hua Wu 350. I have modified the translation.

<sup>10</sup> Edward J. Thoman, *The History of Buddhist Thought*. Cited in Gjertson 119.

<sup>11</sup> Lu 55-56. See “Yangxian shusheng” in Duan Chengshi, *Youyang zazu*, in Jiang Yujing, comp., “Tang” section, 68-69.

<sup>12</sup> “Ah, the principles of man can be found in the emotions of supernatural beings! To be accosted and not lose one’s purity, to follow one man until death—even among the women of today there are those who could not measure up to this. Unfortunately, Cheng was not a very sensitive man. He only enjoyed Jen’s beauty, and never

fathomed her character." See "Miss Jen," translated by William H. Nienhauser, Jr., in Y. W. Ma and Joseph S. M. Lau, eds., 339-345, esp., 345.

<sup>13</sup> Wang Guowei, *Song Yuan xiqu kao* 宋元戲曲考, quoted in Yang Yinshen 44-45; Liu Wu-chi 160.

<sup>14</sup> Quoted and translated in Chung-wen Shih, 10. I have modified the translation.

<sup>15</sup> For a discussion of puppet and shadow shows, the oral narrative tradition, and the social milieu, see Shih 9-19.

<sup>16</sup> Xu Wei, *Ge dai xiao* in Xu Wei, *Sisheng yuan*. The "whistling" in the title comes closer to "whooping" and is a means to vent one's own indignation.

<sup>17</sup> Li Yu, *Xianqing ouji*, 17. I borrow Stephen Owen's translation of the term *cai* as "rhetorical flourish." See his *Readings*, 592.

<sup>18</sup> In Li Yu, *Xianqing ouji*, 20. See a discussion and bibliography on the translation of the important term *qu* in Williams 203, n. 28.

<sup>19</sup> Hu 11-13. Hu Shiyong conjectured that this might well have been recited in the *fu* style. See p. 9.

<sup>20</sup> In Wang Zhongmin. See also Eugene Eoyang's translation, "The Great Maudgalyayana Rescues His Mother From Hell," in Y. W. Ma and Joseph S. M. Lau, eds., 443-455.

<sup>21</sup> See Naideweng, *Ducheng jisheng*, and Wu Zimu, *Mengliang lu*, quoted in Hu 102-103. For the great controversy on the four categories, see Hu 100-109. I followed Hu's division of the categories on p. 107.

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