

# Induced Dreams, Reading, and the Rhetoric of "Chen-chung chi"

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## ABSTRACT

Of particular interest, and the focus of this study is Shen Chi-chi's "Chen chung chi." The earliest of the well known T'ang dream stories, it is distinguished by its unique style in which the dream, framed within more conventional storytelling, is narrated in a strikingly flat, prosaic manner directly modeled upon the biographical *vita* convention of the dynastic histories. Although scholars have occasionally touched on its style, there has been little explanation of why Shen Chi-chi chose to compose in the manner that he did. This study will suggest that Shen Chi-chi's style of narration was a deliberate device, a rhetoric designed to induce in his readers an experience parallel to that of the dream experienced by the hero of his story, a dream that eventually led to understanding of and retreat from the world. This approach to storytelling and writing should be understood in the context of a long tradition, culminating in *Hung-lou meng*, that recognized the "magic" of words, the potentially deep effects of reading, and the responsibilities of literature.

## KEY WORDS

*hsiao-shuo*

historical narrative

Shen Chi-chi

"Tu Tzu-ch'un"

*Hung lou meng*

rhetoric

T'ang *ch'uan-ch'i*

"Chen chung chi"

Ts'ao Hsüeh-ch'in

induced dream

## Introduction

An awareness of literature's potential to affect its audience is a constant thread in the Chinese literary tradition. Consequently, the avowed purpose of much of Chinese literature is, at least in part, didactic. In the moralistic conclusions of the *Han fu* (賦) and the spirit of reform found in the *ku-wen* (古文) prose movement, the moral intent is overt. In cases in which there was no such intent it was often manufactured, for example, the folk songs in the *Shih-ching* (詩經) and the anonymous lyrics of the "Nineteen Old Poems" ("Ku shih shih-ciu shou" 古詩十九首) to which later traditions of commentary attached topical and allegorical interpretations. However there was also recognition of the limits of didacticism in its more obvious forms, an awareness that words could work in more subtle and effective ways. Perhaps the climax of this tradition is the great novel, *Hung-lou meng* (紅樓夢). In its opening chapter, the author, Ts'ao Hsieh-ch'in (曹雪芹 1715-1763), in the guise of the Stone, explains the nature of his book. He concludes with the hope that readers may use it as entertainment to while away the time, but also that they may heed its lessons. What are these lessons and how may the book work upon its audience? We are given a hint in the example of its first reader, the Taoist, Vanitas (K'ung-k'ung Tao-jen 空空道人), who after listening to the Stone's apology decides to give it a second, closer reading and consequently "awakes to the Void." With this episode Ts'ao Hsieh-ch'in suggests the intent of his writing. It is also testimony to his belief in the power of words and the effects of reading. Two-hundred years later another reader, Yüan-hsiang (圓香), the author of *Hung-lou Meng and Ch'an Buddhism*, would describe the flash of truth that he experienced on his ninth reading. (2-3)

What is it about words and reading that give them such power? I think Ts'ao Hsüeh-ch'in recognized that reading could be a mode of experience almost equivalent to the experience of life. In *Hung-lou meng* Vanitas finds enlightenment because as he carefully rereads the novel he in some sense relives the story of the Stone. As he reads he experiences the rise and fall of a great family, the pain and failure of love; he lives a life time in a book. In this study I will explore some of the origins of this idea that words and reading can serve as a mode of experience and thus as a way of teaching and learning. Beginnings are to be found as early as the "summons" poems in the *Ch'u-tz'u* (楚辭). A crucial step in the development of this concept, however, is the appearance of certain T'ang *ch'uan-ch'i* (傳奇). Dream stories such as "Nan-k'o T'ai-shou chuan" (南柯太守傳 "The Governor of the Southern Branch"), "Chen chung chi" (枕中記 "Tale of the Pillow"), and "Ying-t'ao ch'ing-i" (櫻桃青衣 "The Cherry Maid") explored the idea of experiencing the world and becoming enlightened through induced dreams. This motif may have provided a model for the art and intent of fiction: words and reading could also be seen as a kind of illusion and induced experience that could lead to knowledge and understanding.

Of particular interest, and the focus of this study is Shen Chi-chi's (沈既濟 ca. 740-ca. 800) "Chen chung chi." The earliest of the well known T'ang dream stories, it is distinguished by its unique style in which the dream, framed within more conventional *hsiao-shuo* (小說) storytelling, is narrated in a strikingly flat, prosaic manner directly modeled upon the biographical *vita* convention of the dynastic histories. Although scholars have occasionally touched on its style, there has been little explanation of why Shen Chi-chi chose to compose in the manner that he did. This study will suggest that Shen Chi-chi's style of narration was a deliberate device, a rhetoric designed to induce in his readers an experience parallel to that of the dream experienced by the hero of his story, a dream that eventually led to understanding of and retreat from the world. This approach to storytelling and writing should be understood in the context of a long tradition, culminating in *Hung-lou meng*, that recognized the "magic" of words,

the potentially deep effects of reading, and the responsibilities of literature.

## Words and Healing

In early China words could function as a kind of "medicine." It was believed, for example, that during severe illness and death the soul left the body; thus shamans attempted to revive their patients by persuading their souls to return. Words used persuasively could heal their intended listeners. We find a later reflection of this ancient practice in the two "summons" poems included in the *Ch'u-tz'u*, the "Chao hun" (招魂 "Summons of the Soul") and "Ta chao" (大招 "The Great Summons").<sup>2</sup> In these two works a poet attempts to heal his listener by summoning his wandering soul through a series of threats and enticements. The basic patterns are similar: first descriptions of the dangers and terrors of the outside, other world and then of the pleasures of life and home. The patients in these cases being Ch'u (楚) royalty, the rewards of returning are especially inviting. The poems contain long, elaborate descriptions of palaces, food, beautiful women, and music. The poet's with words, his ability to describe and evoke was crucial. He strove to be as vivid and moving as possible with his description of pleasure and pain; the life of his subject depended upon it. The rhetoric developed in such "summons" poems—exhaustive, intoxicating, sensual descriptions and lists—would later prove essential in the evolution of the *fu* or rhapsody, a genre whose language Arthur Waley described as a sort of "word-magic" (17). As can be seen, such a style really was, in origin, a sort of spell or incantation, a part of the shaman's art. Yet these "spells" are not particularly mysterious or obtuse; rather their basic principles are clear: words have the power to evoke the objects and realities they describe—in a sense, act in their stead—and affect their audience in very concrete ways. The "summons" poets attempted to heal their patients by letting them experience of "taste" the dangers and pleasures of the world through their words.

This early awareness of the power of words would continue to

influence the literary tradition, shaping ideas of the capabilities and responsibilities of literature. A landmark in the development of these ideas was Mei Sheng's (also read Ch'eng) (枚乘 ?-141 B. C.) rhapsody, "Ch'i fa" (七發 "The Seven Stimuli"). An early Han *fu*, Mei Sheng's poem is an important example of a work that was directly heir to the shaman "summons" tradition yet also introduced important changes to it.<sup>3</sup> The poem begins with a guest from the state of Wu (吳) inquiring about the health of the Ch'u heir apparent who is suffering from the sheltered, over indulgent life of a young prince. The guest warns:

At present Your Royal Highness's complexion is pale, your four limbs are numb, your sinews and bones are disintegrating, your blood vessels are enlarged, your hands and feet are inert. Girls from Yüeh serve you in front, beauties from Ch'i wait on you in back. Always coming and going from one amusement and feast to another, yielding to pleasures in secluded rooms and private apartments—this is swallowing poison voluntarily, and playing with the claws and teeth of wild beasts. By now this has gone quite far. There is chronic congestion which does not come out into the open.<sup>4</sup> Even if you had Pien Ch'üeh as a physician and Wu Hsien as a shaman, nothing could be accomplished. (Frankel 188)

The guest then suggests that the prince can be cured by the "persuasive force of essential words and marvelous doctrines" (Frankel 189). He proceeds to describe a series of enticements: music, delicious food, a chariot ride, an outing including a party accompanied by beautiful women, a hunt, the tidal bore at Kuang-ling (廣陵), and finally the "essential words and marvelous doctrines" or thinkers and philosophers. With the exception of the last stimulus, each enticement is portrayed in an elaborate, epideictic style that had roots in works such as the "summons" poems and that would come to typify many of the classic Han rhapsodies.<sup>5</sup> The descriptions utilize long

lists and catalogues, repetition, parallelism, and binomial descriptives. The effects are vivid, lush, and sensual; the guest from Wu attempts to literally physically stimulate his listener with his words. After each description he asks the prince if he would like to pursue the described activity. The prince can only reply that he still feels unwell, although the description of the hunt stirs him and there are signs of improvement in his condition. The last stimulus, a brief announcement of the attractions of philosophy and learning finally succeeds: “My mind has been cleared as if I had just heard the words of the sages and wise men.’ In a turbid flow, perspiration issued. With a sudden outburst, the illness ended.” (Frankel 202)

The actual nature of the cure and its effect has raised questions among later scholars. Although the debt to the shaman “summons” tradition is obvious, the process is not the same. The shaman attracts and heals with the promise of life’s pleasure. The guest from Wu, on the other hand, attempts to cure the prince of overindulgence with elaborate descriptions of some of the very pleasures he wants to discourage. The logic of the cure is somewhat obscure and has even led Burton Watson to suggest that the “Seven Stimuli” was simply an exercise in rhetoric, “a pretext for the poet to display his skill on a series of conventional themes” (268). Watson considers the moralistic conclusion a “didactic convention” and suggests the main purpose of the piece was to entertain. Later studies by Knechtges and Swanson and Frankel disagree, though each stresses a different facet of the poem’s approach. Knechtges and Swanson point out the debt of the “Seven Stimuli” to a type of persuasion (the “double persuasion”) often seen in the *Chan-kuo ts’u* (戰國策) and other early examples of rhetorical prose. The failure of each enticement to cure the Prince constitutes a kind of subtle argument (“overindulgence cannot cure overindulgence”) that leaves the moral alternative—the words and teachings of the sages and philosophers (102-06). Frankel, on the other hand, suggests that the words of the guest constitute a sort of “psychotherapy” and have a suggestive and cathartic effect (202-07). He explains with the example of the sixth stimuli, the description of the tidal bore. Evidence from the description suggests the bore was

originally thought to have cathartic, medical effects (the cleansing power of its waters).<sup>6</sup> Frankel suggests that eventually simply observing the spectacle was also considered purifying and that now in the final stage we see that a description of the bore could have the same effect: "The magic power of the tidal bore is transformed into the magic power of words" (203). As Frankel notes, there are in fact historical instances of *fu* being recited for their therapeutic effects during the Han dynasty.<sup>7</sup>

Knechtges and Frankel are, I think, both correct. Mei Sheng uses both principles in his composition, and this is one reason the logic of the cure sometime appears obscure and confused. I would also suggest that in addition to the example of a description having a cathartic or purifying effect as in the case of the tidal bore, other descriptions may have been intended to provoke a feeling of satiation, perhaps were even intended to stimulate or exacerbate the conditions the poet wishes to discourage. For example, the descriptions of rich, exotic foods in the second and fourth stimuli can hardly have been attractive to a man suffering from overindulgence. Rather they probably deliberately had the opposite effect. As sometimes sweating and vomiting are induced as part of a cure, the guest intensifies and draws out feeling as a step toward their final purging. Thus the first six stimuli can be seen as part of a complex "medical" process in which words are used to evoke physical sensations that entice, stimulate, purge, and purify until finally the prince is ready for philosophy, breaks out into a sweat, and is cured. It is not philosophy in itself that heals the prince, but rather the art of poetry and the process of sensations it induces which prepare the subject for the final enticement. The reader too can, I think, empathize with the relief the prince must have felt upon hearing the plain, simple pleasures of philosophy after the rich stimulus of the earlier descriptions.

The "summons" of the shaman were physical cures; in Mei Sheng's work, literature is used to induce a moral, spiritual cure. Since the heyday of the shamans, the moral, Confucian transformation of Chinese society had taken place, and the pleasure once evoked to attract the wandering soul were now discouraged. Despite the differ-

ences between the aims of the shaman and the poet-persuader, there are essential constants and principles in their approach that were continued and developed in the later tradition. The pattern of a healer who cures his patient through the power of words would become a metaphor and model for the writer and his audience. In the "Seven Stimuli" the metaphor is in transition—the prince is both physically and morally healed. Later the healing is purely spiritual or moral thought medical metaphors continued to be alluded to. Crucial to the pattern is the nature and potential of words. They were not used to preach or moralize in obvious ways. Instead they could act as a sort of "spell." But they were not obscure incantations or formulas, rather the Chinese from very early times simply recognized the power of words to evoke the objects and actions of their descriptions and the potential of these descriptions to effect their audience in real and sometimes physical ways.<sup>8</sup>

### **T'ang *Ch'uan-ch'i* and the Motif of the Induced Dream**

There is a popular Hassidic tale about a man fond of boasting of his great hospitality. The rabbi sent to reform him causes him to have a dream in which the man plays host to a great noble. When the noble dies after drinking some wine, the host is forced to flee, becomes a water carrier, and breaks his leg. When he wakes up the rabbi explains: "You have been given the privilege of contemplating what will be your lot if you continue to sustain Satan with the arrogance which compels you to solicit compliments for your hospitality" (Caillois xxi). The man promises to change his ways. The motif of the induced dream utilized in this story is common to a number of traditions in both folklore and sophisticated literary works.<sup>9</sup> Although it does not always involve a moral, a moral is ordinarily an important part of the stories which utilize the motif, and the motif can often be found in religious and philosophical parables. A basic pattern in such stories involves two primary characters, a "wise man" and a main character in need of instruction or enlightenment. In the Hassidic tale above, the wise man is a rabbi. In Chinese stories he is usually a Buddhist or Tao-



ist personage. In these stories the wise man does not attempt to reform through words and preaching but through inducing a dream. Implicit in this motif is the conviction that in certain circumstances words, preaching, and argument are not sufficient in themselves to convince a man to reform. Rather, experience is the best teacher, and if in some way a person could live the consequences of his misguided actions and desire it would be enough to convince him to reform and change his way of life. It is from these convictions that the idea of the induced dream arose. It is a *literary* motif in which a wise man teaches using the instrument of a dream. The induced dream is equivalent to an experience as real as that in actual life, but it occurs in an instant. It is also an experience from which the patient does not suffer real consequences, it is after all only a dream intended to instruct.

The motif of the induced dream can be found in a number of Chinese works of literature, in particular in fiction. One of the earliest extant examples of this motif occurs in a Six Dynasties *chih-kuai* (志怪) anecdote.<sup>10</sup> In this story a merchant stops in a temple where a priest asks him if he would like a good marriage. When the merchant replies yet, the priest leads him to a pillow which the merchant enters. He finds himself in the mansion of a minister who gives him his daughter in marriage. They have six sons, all of whom become successful officials. After several decades he awakes and finds himself by the pillow. Some scholars have suggested that this Chinese story had its origins in an Indian tale included among Buddhist sutras translated into Chinese in the early fifth-century. But others disagree and believe that the story is a native creation.<sup>11</sup> The stories do not resemble each other except in their basic use of the dream motif, moreover, they differ in their in their approach to the development of a moral. In the very brief Chinese anecdote there is little attempt to develop any moral. The story simply concludes that the merchant was distressed by his experience. In the Indian tale, however, we have the classic pattern of the wise man who attempts to reform a wayward hero.<sup>12</sup> The reasons for the lack of a moral in the Chinese tale are unclear. The tale may be abbreviated or excerpted as were many of the anecdotes collected in *chih-kuai* collections. More likely it may simple

reflect the general taste of the *chih-kuai* compilers and their audiences for the odd and the strange anecdote sometimes irregardless of any overt moral import.<sup>13</sup> In later Chinese literature, however, the motif of the induced dream was always linked to a moral. It was first fully developed in T'ang *ch'uan-ch'i* and formed the basis of several well known tales such as "Chen chung chi," "Nan-k'o T'ai-shou chuan," and "Ying-t'ao ch'ing-i." It is later seen in plays inspired by some of the above stories such Ma Chih-yüan's (馬致遠 ca. 1260-1325) "Huang-liang meng" (黃梁夢) and T'ang Hsien-tsu's (湯顯祖 1550-1617) "Han-tan chi" (邯鄲記) and "Nan-k'o chi" (南柯記). The motif was also used by P'u Sung-ling (蒲松齡 1640-1715) in *Liao-chai chih-I* (聊齋志異) and Ts'ao Hsüeh-ch'in in *Hung-lou meng*.

In "Chen chung chi" a young farmer named Lu (廬) encounters a Taoist at an inn. After complaining of his lot and expressing his wish for fame and success, the Taoist gives him a pillow on which to rest. While the inn-keeper is steaming some millet, Lu falls asleep and has a dream in which he experiences the life of a powerful, successful official with all its ups and downs, its glories and its pain. He essentially lives a lifetime in a dream, and despite the successes of this life, it is enough to convince him of the folly of his ambitions. When he awakes the millet is still cooking. He thanks the Taoist for "checking his desires," bows, and leaves.<sup>14</sup> In "Nan-k'o T'ai-shou chuan" a profligate knight-errant gets drunk at a party and dreams of the success he wishes for in real life. He finds himself in a strange, wonderful kingdom, marries a princess, and leads the life of a great politician, again with the typical successes and failures. One day he is urged to return to his home. When he awakes he tells his friends his dream and they then discover his former home and kingdom consist of no more than a colony of ants located a little way off at the base of a tree. Moved by the emptiness and transience of the world, he gives up women and wine, and his mind becomes fixed on the Tao.<sup>15</sup> In "Ying-t'ao ch'ing-i" a scholar falls asleep in a temple while listening to a priest chanting a sutra. He dreams of a successful career in which he passes the exams, attains rank and power, marries, and has successful sons. When he awakes the priest has just finished his sermon. The scholar resolves

to abandon the world and seek enlightenment.<sup>16</sup> An important and revealing variation on the induced-dream motif can be found in "Tu Tzu-ch'un" (杜子春).<sup>17</sup> In this story the hero is a profligate young man who has squandered all his wealth on drinking, women, and other dissipations. He is approached by an old man who offers to help him with money. He asks Tu Tzu-ch'un how much he needs, and when Tu suggests an amount he insists that he take even more. Wealthy once more, Tu resumes his high living ways until he is broke. Again the old man offers his help and again Tu spends all the money. When he meets the old man a third time he turns away in shame, but the old man insists on giving him the money saying, "If you are not cured this time, then your poverty is incurable." Tu decides to reform. He pledges to use the money to put his affairs in order and restore his good name and then promises to put himself at the old man's disposal. The old man comments, "This was what I had in mind." It turns out that the old man is a Taoist master who needs Tu to help him prepare an elixir of immortality. The Taoist had encouraged Tu's profligacy as the beginning steps of a process in which he hoped to purge Tu of human emotions such as joy and anger, grief and fear, loathing and desire, only then would the preparation of the elixir be successful. It fails when Tu continues to be bound by the emotion of love.

Although the story of "Tu Tzu-ch'un" does not make use of the induced-dream motif, it contains significant parallels with stories that do. There is the basic pattern revolving around a wise man attempting to educate a young man by discouraging his worldly ways and desires. In stories such as "Chen chung chi" and "Ying-t'ao ch'ing'i," Taoist and Buddhist induce dreams in which the hero's desires and ambitions are for a moment fulfilled. The experience of "living" their ambitions is enough to convince them of the folly of the world and their desires. In "Tu Tzu-ch'un" the Taoist does not make use of dreams. Instead he induces experience by continually providing Tu with the wealth to pursue his desires. Although the method is different, the principles are the same. The Taoist cures Tu by letting him experience what he wants. Tu then finally decides to reform his ways partly out of a sense of shame and gratitude, but also because by encouraging

his desires the Taoist in a sense purges him of these desires. The Taoist's use of medical imagery is significant, as he explains, he hopes to "cure" (*ch'uan* 痊) Tu Tzu-ch'un. The Taoist's method together with the use of medical imagery to describe a spiritual healing should remind us of Mei Sheng's rhapsody in which the indulgent prince's spiritual cure also involved a kind of purging. Again part of the process of the cure calls for evoking and stimulating the very experiences the healer attempts to discourage. The patient is offered the objects of his desires until he is "satiated" and finally rejects and is cured. In a story such as "Chen chung chi" this is accomplished through a dream, in "Ti Tzu-ch'un" the Taoist induces experience by providing the wherewithal for Tu's indulgence, in "The Seven Stimuli" the guest evokes various experiences through the magic of words, words that evoke the objects and actions they so vividly describe.

By the T'ang dynasty we find certain concepts of literature and literary motifs existing in suggestive proximity. There was the ancient belief that words could cure both physically and spiritually by evoking actions and objects that could effect the listener. And there was the more recent literary motif of the induced dream in which dreams were used to evoke an experience for a subject's benefit. Parallels in these concepts suggest a possible merging. The shaman/healer patient relationship seen in the "summons" poems and "The Seven Stimuli" resembles the wayward young man and wise man relationship often seen in induced-dream motif stories. In both cases the healer and wise man attempt to heal and reform by evoking an experience, the former through the power of words, the latter through dreams (but in the case of "Tu Tzu-ch'un" by encouraging actual experience). The common conviction is that preaching or logical argument are in themselves not enough to cure and reform. Rather if only the patient could in some way experience for himself, he would naturally be cured of his illness be it physical or spiritual. We also see that granting the subject his desires is a fundamental part of the cure. The primary difference between these concepts is that the tradition seen in the "summons" poems and "The Seven Stimuli" was rooted in real practice—words could cure—while the motif of the induced dream was purely literary.

It was an invention that expressed certain convictions, but in real life one did not go about inducing dreams as a way teaching.<sup>18</sup> Eventually, however, encouraged by traditional convictions of the duties of the writer and a belief in the power of literature to effect its audience, the literary motif of the induced dream may have suggested to writers a parallel in the real world. Though they could not induce dreams, they had words—not ordinary words which preached and lectured, but the art of words which could have the same effect as the dreams depicted in their stories. That is, the traditional recognition of the power of words, the image of the healer and patient, and the motif of the induced dream, may have merged and helped to shape conceptions of the role of a writer, his purpose, and his methods. The relationship between healer and patient was paralleled by that of author and reader. It was not necessarily a common or fully conscious, concrete conception. But at least in some instances and to a certain degree, literature was conceived as a sort of dream, that as a Buddhist or Taoist monk induces a dream, the writer creates a sort of illusionary experience for his reader and towards the same purpose, to "heal" and enlighten. Certainly the motif of the induced dream was well known, and must have had a place in the literary consciousness of many writers. It is constantly used and alluded to in later writers from T'ang Hsien-tsu to Ts'ao Hsüeh-ch'in to P'u S'ung-ling. And there is evidence that to at least some degree certain writers may have consciously likened their work to induced dreams or experience. Writing was a way to let their readers experience and learn; words the medium of a complex relationship between writer and reader in which the writer was very aware of the aesthetic and moral effect of his art upon his audience.

The culmination of this tradition can be found in Ts'ao Hsüeh-chin's *Hung-lou meng*. The concepts and motifs discussed above are woven into the novel at various levels and in different forms. In the crucial fifth chapter, Pao-yü (寶玉) has his famous dream in which he is both enticed and warned about the pleasure and sorrows of the world—both through art (paintings, poetry, and song) and dream experience. During a party Pao-yü becomes tired and is led away to rest. He refuses a room full of trappings that remind him of his societal

duties and responsibilities, instead choosing the luxurious bedroom of the beautiful Ch'in-shih (秦氏). He then has a dream in which he finds himself in a fairy land greeted by the Goddess of Disenchantment (Ching-huan Hsien-ku 警幻仙姑). She leads him through the Land of Illusion, explaining at one point that she has been asked to "use the pleasures of the senses and flesh to shock him out of his silliness in the hope he may escape the traps of life and enter the correct path" (60). Through his tour he glimpses the files of the register of girls which hints at the tragedy of future events and later listens to a song suite "Hung-lou meng" composed by the Goddess of Disenchantment. She explains her method and purpose:

I began by showing you the various life files of the girls from various levels. I wanted you to become thoroughly acquainted with them, but you still were not enlightened. So I have brought you here so that you may fully experience the illusions of drinking, feasting, music, and love. Perhaps in the future you may awake. (60)

When Pao-yü shows no sign of understanding or awakening after listening to "Hung-lou meng," the Goddess of Disenchantment goes a step further and gives him her younger sister in marriage:

I have brought you here and intoxicated you with wonderful wines, drenched you with fairy teas, startled you with marvelous songs. Now I will give you my sister, Two Beauties, courtesy name K'o-ch'ing, in marriage. Tonight will be the night for you to consummate your marriage. All this is to let you experience (*ling-lüeh* 領略) that if even this fairy realm is a land of illusion, how much more the mortal world. Henceforth I hope you will free yourself, awaken from your old ways, fix your mind on Confucius and Mencius, and follow the path that serves society. (65)

In addition to Pao-yü's dream and the efforts of the Goddess of Dis-

enchantment to awaken him through different types of experience, the idea of induced experience is also embedded in the larger mythology of the novel. In the first chapter it is explained that Pao-yü was the incarnation of a stone brought down into the world to experience the illusion of human life<sup>19</sup>—as the Buddhist monk puts it, so it can “*ching-li ching-li* (經歷經歷).”<sup>20</sup>

The dream imagery within the novel is paralleled outside the novel in the relationship between the author and reader. In the opening pages, Ts'ao Hsüeh-ch' in subtly suggests that his novel is akin to a dream which we the reader experience and hopefully may learn from. The author describes his life as dream and illusion, the truths of which he has hidden in his story:

This is the opening chapter of the book. In the author explains how after experiencing dream all illusion, he then hid true matters and availed himself of the magic stone to create this book, *The Story of the Stone*.<sup>21</sup> (1)

He explains that the words “dream” (*meng* 夢) and “illusion” (*huan* 幻) suggest the meaning of his story, and that through them he hopes he can enlighten the reader:

Moreover, the use of terms such as “dream” and “illusion” lies at the heart of this book; they also hint at the intention of enlightening the reader. (1)

更於篇中間用夢幻等字卻是此書本旨，兼寓提醒閱者之意。

Later in the chapter we are given the example of Vanitas, the story's first reader, who becomes enlightened after his second reading of this “written dream.” The idea of the story as a sort of dream from which the reader may learn forms part of the basic frame of the novel. We should not forget that one of the titles of the novel is of course *Hung-lou meng* (*Dream of the Red Chamber*). We, the audience, are reading the author's “dream” as Pao-yü read the libretto to and watched the

performance of the Goddess of Disenchantment's "Hung-lou meng."

### The Rhetoric of "Chen chung chi"

We have seen that the use of the induced-dream motif within *Hung-lou meng* is paralleled by Ts'ao Hsüeh-ch'in's conception of the function of his work and its effect upon his readers. These conceptions have deep roots in early traditions. Although *Hung-lou meng* can be seen as the culmination of a process in which these traditions merge, perhaps the earliest example in which a work of fiction is envisioned as the equivalent of a "dream" experience is "Chen chung chi."<sup>22</sup> That Shen Chi-chi conceived of his story in such terms is suggested by the unusual narrative style of the dream portion of the story. After Lu complains of his present lot and expresses his ambitions and desires, he begins to feel sleepy. The Taoist offers Lu a pillow, promising that it will enable him to experience the glory and success he hopes for. Lu falls asleep, enters the pillow, and commences his dream. Shen Chi-chi's narration of the dream is curious. One might expect an elaborate description of a strange "other" world. Instead there is a flat, dry account of his life and career that consists of little more than a list of the events in his dream life:

The next year he participated in the *chin-shin* exams and passed. As his first job he was given the post of Editor in the Palace Library. By imperial order he was transferred to be District Defender of Wei-nan (in modern Shensi). Soon afterwards he was promoted to the office of Investigating Censor and then was shifted to the position of Imperial Diarist concurrently serving as Participant in the Drafting of Proclamations. After three years he was sent to take charge of T'ung-chou (in modern Shensi) and then was transferred to be Governor of Shen-chou (in modern Honan). He had always had an interest in engineering and so from Shen-chou to the west 80 *li* he constructed a canal so as to link areas that were not connected. The people of



the region were greatly benefited and had a memorial carved to commemorate his virtue. He was sent to be Governor of Pien-chou (K'ai-feng in modern Honan), also taking the position of Investigating Commissioner of the Honan circuit. He was then summoned to be the mayor of the capital.<sup>23</sup> (Wang Meng-ou, *T'ang-jen hsiao-shuo chiao-shih*, Vol. 1, 24)

Much of the dream continues in this vein. We further learn that Lu is successful in thwarting a Tibetan incursion and that he continues to receive honors and promotions until he becomes the object of the Ministers' jealousy. False rumors are spread and he is demoted. Later he is recalled and becomes even more powerful and honored. Again, however, he is attacked, imprisoned, then exiled. He longs for his former humble life and almost commits suicide. The Emperor realizes his innocence and he is recalled and again regaled with honors, even enfeoffed as a duke. We are told of the success of his five sons and then of the later years of his life, which he lives in wealth and luxury. In the last days of his old age the Emperor shows an extraordinary concern for his health and Lu finally passes away successful and honored as he had always wished. He then wakes from his dream:

"Could this all have been a dream?" The Taoist answered, "Success in the mortal world is no more than this." Lu thought it over for a long time and then thanked him saying, "The ways of favor and shame, fate in poverty and success, the principles of gain and loss, the conditions of life and death, I now understand it all. All this has been your way of halting my desires. How can I not accept your lessons?" He then bowed several times and left. (Wang Meng-ou, *T'ang-jen hsiao-shuo chiao-shih*, 25)

As the reader reads through the dream section of the story he should recall the biographies found in the official dynastic histories. The style of the narration in language and approach is in fact an al-

most exact replica of the *vita* style that had become standard in the histories. In these biographies the focus is on the subject's career, which is recounted in the same dry, listing style seen in the dream section of "Chen chung chi." Shen faithfully follows the various conventions of the genre.<sup>24</sup> For example, the account of the subject's offspring and their careers was a common motif in the histories (Lu had Five sons, each of whose careers are briefly noted). Even more striking is the inclusion of Lu's memorandum to the Emperor and his reply. In his memorandum Lu, on his death bed, expresses his gratitude to the Emperor for his favors. The document (again, painstakingly composed in an official style) does not have any direct role in advancing the events of the story. The incorporation of the memorandum is, however, typical of official biographies, which often include a sample of the subject's writing (usually documents of an official, formal nature such as memorials). Clearly Shen Chi-chi is deliberately writing in the style of the dynastic histories, and the invention of the memorandum (and the Emperor's reply) is intended to further capture the flavor and illusion of reading history and biography. Readers both traditional and modern have briefly commented on his style. In his *Kuo shih pu* (國史補), Li Chao (李肇 fl. 818) remarks:

Shen Chi-chi's "Chen chung chi" was composed as a Chuang-tzu type parable. In Han Yü's (韓愈 768-824) "Mao Ying chuan" (毛穎傳) the style is especially lofty and is comparable to that of the historian, Ssu-ma Ch'ien (司馬遷 ca. 145-ca. 85 B. C.). Truly, in both pieces there is the talent of a fine historian. (3.4a)

More often, however, when attention has been called to the style of "Chen chung chi" it has been found lacking. Lu Hsün (魯迅), for example, comparing "Chen chung chi" to "Nan-k'o T'ai-shou chuan" finds the latter far superior, praising its richer descriptive detail, the blend of fantasy and reality, and its greater resonance<sup>25</sup> (85).

Although the historical style found in "Chen chung chi" has on occasion been noted, it has not been explained. Indirectly, as least, it

has even been criticized and found wanting when compared to stories composed in a more conventional narrative style. Why then did Shen Chi-chi write in the way that he did and to what purpose? At first glance it might be suggested that Shen Chi-chi's style was a result of his personal background and possible the still primitive state of the *ch'uan-ch'i* genre. A closer look at the evidence, however, suggests that it was a deliberate choice and was intended to have a designed effect upon his readers. Shen Chi-chi's biography provides the first clue to understanding his style.<sup>26</sup> Shen Chi-chi was a historian. Author of the *Chien-chung shih-lu* 建中實錄 (*Veritable Record of the Chien-chung Period*), it was his talent for history that first gained him recognition:

He was broadly learned in a variety of texts; his talent for writing history especially fine. Yang Yen 楊炎 (727-781), Attendant Gentleman in the Ministry of Personnel, met and praised him. At the beginning of the Chein-chung reign period (780-783) when Yen became minister he recommended Chi-chi saying that his talents befit a historian. He was then summoned as Reminder of the Left (in the Chancellery) and Senior Compiler in the Historiography Institute. (*Chia T'ang shu* 149.4034)

Another factor that must be considered in explaining Shen Chi-chi's style is the nature and history of the genre. Scholars of early Chinese "fiction" (*hsiao-shuo*) have often pointed out the close links between early *hsiao-shuo* (i.e. *chih-kuai* and *ch'uan-ch'i* tales) and history.<sup>27</sup> In certain cases and aspects they were extremely similar. For example, a common way to begin a story was with the basic biographical date of its hero: his name, courtesy name, hometown, office etc., the kind of information that was standard in the biographies found in the dynastic histories. Early "fiction" was sometimes seen as "unofficial" history, history that dealt with unusual, strange, unorthodox topics. Classic examples of proto-fiction such as Kan Pao's *Sou shen chi* were often categorized as history in early bibliographies (c.f. the *Sui shu* 隋書

and *Chiu T'ang shu* 舊唐書). Shen Chi-chi, one of the earliest of the great T'ang *ch'uan-ch'i* authors, wrote at a time when *hsiao-shuo* was in the crucial transition stage between unofficial history or proto-fiction and true fiction.

Although these factors—Shen Chi-chi's background as a historian and the traditional links between history and *hsiao-shuo*—may help to explain his ability and propensity to compose in the historical style, they do not go far in explaining why he chose this style. All other evidence strongly suggests that Shen Chi-chi's choice was a deliberate one and can even be thought of as a kind of rhetoric. To begin with, the degree to which sections of Shen Chi-chi's narration resembles that found in the histories is unparalleled. While it is true that early *hsiao-shuo* and historical writing share some basic stylistic features and approaches, I know of no other story in which the writing is virtually identical to that of a historical biography. The essential "flavor" of the biography with all its "officialness and formality are carefully reproduced. The dream section of "Chen chung chi" could be inserted into the "Lieh chuan" (列傳 "Biographies") section of a history and one would almost not know the difference. That Shen Chi-chi is being deliberately imitative is also suggested by the fact that the historical style is only seen in the dream section of the story. This section, in which Lu lives his desired life, is enclosed in a frame that is narrated in a livelier and more conventional *hsiao-shuo* style. Shen intentionally switches "modes" for the dream. That Shen was not limited to the historical style by his training as a historian or the limits of the *hsiao-shuo* genre is also suggested by a comparison to his other extant *ch'uan-ch'i*, "Jen-shih chuan" (任氏傳 "Miss Jen"). This classic "fox fairy" story is narrated in style very different from that of "Chen chung chi." It is a longer, seemingly more sophisticated piece of story telling. While it is heir to the historical tradition that was an important element in the *hsiao-shuo*—it is told as a "true" story—it has little of the official historical flavor that distinguishes "Chen chung chi." It is one of the earliest of the mature *ch'uan-ch'i* that in complexity and scale led the way for classic tales such as "Nan-k'o T'ai-shou chuan," Yüan Chen's (元稹 779-831) "Ying-ying chuan"

(鶯鶯傳 "The Story of Ying-ying") and Pai Hsing-chien's (白行簡 ca. 776-826) "Li Wa chuan" (李娃傳 "The Story of Li Wa"). It should also be noted that while the date of composition of "Chen chung chi" cannot be determined with certainty, scholars who have attempted to date it have usually suggested that it was composed during approximately the same period as "Jen-shih chuan" (781-782?) or later.<sup>28</sup> This suggests that the scale and approach of "Chen chung chi" and not the result of any limitations on the part of the author or genre. "Jen-shih chuan" demonstrates that Shen could write in what *appears* to be a more sophisticated, richer narrative style when he felt it was appropriate.

Although "Jen-shih chuan" may appear to be a more ambitious, sophisticated narrative, "Chen chung chi" in its own way demonstrates a high degree of planning and purpose. As will be explained below, the use of historical narrative style is best understood as a complex rhetorical device. But in addition to the use of the historical style, other features of the story also suggest the author was careful and deliberate in his use of language and in his approach to the structure and composition of his tale. There is, for example, Shen Chi-chi's extensive use of punning and other word play. In the opening section of the story, before the dream, the word "*shih*" (適) is used six times and then once more at the conclusion. The term "*shih*" has several meanings including "reach, attain, success, contentment." It is first used in the sense of to "reach" or "go" when Lu is described as riding a black pony on his way to the fields ("*shih yü t'ien*" 適於田). When Lu meets the Taoist at the inn they get along and talk happily, but the Taoist then complains of his present life. The Taoist questions him saying that as he is healthy and that they have just been chatting contentedly ("*t'an hsieh fang shih*" 談諧方適) why should he complain? Lu asks how his present life can possibly be considered "content/successful" ("*Ho shih chih wei?*" 何適之謂). The Taoist in turn questions if this is not "*shih*" what is "*shih*" ("*Tz'u pu wei shih, erh ho wei shih?*" 此不謂適而何謂適). Shen Chi-chi plays on these various uses of "*shih*" to question the meaning of happiness and success, the issue that lies at the heart of the theme of the story. At the story's conclusion, after Lu

experiences in a dream the success he so longs for and finally realizes that it is illusion, the Taoist concludes, "Success in the mortal world is no more than this" ("*Jen sheng chih shih, i ju shih i*" 人生之適亦如是矣).<sup>29</sup> Another important pun is the use of the word "pillow." When Lu grows tired, the Taoist offers him a pillow saying, "Take my pillow as your pillow" ("*Tzu chen wu chen*" 子枕吾枕). The wording of the phrase is a bit awkward and is a signal to the reader to reconsider its significance. "*Chen*" ("pillow" 枕) is probably a pun for "*chen*" ("truth" 真). Although in Middle/Ancient Chinese these two words were not homonyms, they appear to be close enough in sound to constitute a pun.<sup>30</sup> Thus the other meaning of this line is "Take my truth as your truth." This pun also adds another dimension to the story's title, "*Chen chung chi*," which then can also mean "Record of the True."<sup>31</sup> Shen is playing on the "trueness" of the dream (and his story). It is both true and false, "history" (a true record) and illusion, but it also contains "truth." Shen's word play is one kind of evidence of the growing sophistication found in *hsiao-shuo*. Much of earlier proto-fiction consisted of the simple recording of strange facts and stories. The persona or voice of the author was kept in the background and there was little direct dialogue with the reader. It was a very different medium than, for example, poetry, which was often autobiographical and directed to a specific audience, be it to friend or to future reader. The dialogue between author and reader was far richer and complex in poetry than in early *hsiao-shuo*. During the T'ang, however, this began to change, and Shen's use of puns is evidence of an approach to narrative that shows a greater consciousness of the reader. The advances we see in T'ang *ch'uan-ch'i* are not simply advances in narrative technique such as greater complexity and scale in the plots and more detailed, refined language. There is also the growing conviction that *hsiao-shuo* could be approached in more serious ways than in the case of other more established genres.<sup>40</sup>

The deliberateness and uniqueness of Shen Chi-chi's decision to compose in the historical style is highlighted when seen in the context of the *chih-kuai* and *ch'uan-ch'i* tradition. One of the fundamental premises of the early *hsiao-shuo* tradition is the existence of an

"other" world. The "other" world. This "other" world could be the world of the dead, the world of the spirits and gods, or some strange mirror world that coexists in parallel with the "real" or mortal world. Many tales center around the temporary interaction or conflict between this "other" world and the mortal world, worlds that ordinarily were separate. This could take place for various reasons. An injustice or unfulfilled love could rupture the boundaries between the two worlds. A common saying in these stories, for example, is: "the living and the dead take different paths" ("ssu sheng i lu" 死生異路), but of course the story is about how in this instance the injunction is violated. Such stories often follow common patterns. One of the basic steps in these stories is the entry of the hero into the "other" world. There are several basic motifs by which this occurs. As we have seen, dreams are a common mode of passage. In other cases the hero is traveling or hunting, becomes lost and disoriented and finds himself in another world. Another common pattern is for the hero to be picked by a god or spirit to act as a messenger between the two world. Although the "other" world often bears strong resemblance to the mortal world, ordinarily its strangeness or "otherness" is hinted at as the hero makes his entry. Later, especially in T'ang *ch'uan-ch'i*, this "otherness" is elaborated on with rich, fantastic descriptions. In "Nan-k'ò T'ai-shou chuan" after the hero gets drunk and falls asleep, two messengers bring him into another world. They enter through a cavity in an old *huai* (槐) tree.<sup>41</sup> He finds himself in a strange, wonderful kingdom that is the fulfillment of his desires, but in which the landscape, trees, and plant are different from the human world and the music played by transcendent beauties has an unearthly quality. There are various threads that connect this world with his own mortal world: a message from his father and the presence of former friends; at the same time there are foreshadowings that he is in the realm of ants that he will eventually discover after he awakes. The mixture of the real and the "other" world is typical of *chih-kuai* and *ch'uan-ch'i*. It is this blend that often gives these genres the flavor of the strange and fantastic. "Nan-k'ò T'ai-shou chuan," although more elaborate than earlier *chih-kuai* tales, follows in this basic tradition. In "Jen-shih chuan"

Shen Chi-chi also plays with the mix of the real and the other world. The heroine is first referred to as the "white dressed one" (*pai I* 白衣) which has a rather "ghostly" ring to it, and later her beauty and demeanor are described as unearthly (*fei jen shih suo yu* 非人世所有).<sup>42</sup> In the dream section of "Chen chung chi," however, Shen Chi-Chi adopts a mode that appears to downplay any sense of the fantastic. With the strict imitation of the historical biographical style the "other" world has no air of "otherness"; there is nothing dream-like about Lu's dream.

It is evident that Shen Chi-chi's adopting of the historical mode can only have been deliberate: it is used only in the dream section of the story; it carefully imitates the dynastic biographical style to an unprecedented degree; and it diverges from a tradition in which such passages were usually imbued with a sense of "otherness." Although Shen's background as a historian and the traditional links between *hsiao-shuo* and history help to explain Shen's ability to write in the historical style, they cannot explain his purpose. Nor should the style of "Chen chung chi" be seen as evidence of Shen Chi-chi's limitation as a writer. Although the style of "Chen chung chi" has sometimes been criticized, the scale, complexity, and detail of "Jan-shih chuan" (often thought to be earlier than "Chen chung chi") show that Shen was at the forefront of *hsiao-shuo* narrative and could compose in a very different style when necessary. We have also seen evidence to suggest that "Chen chung chi" is more sophisticated than is sometimes thought. The extensive use of punning and other word play indicate Shen's complex designs and a direct consciousness of his readers. Why then and to what purpose did Shen choose to adopt the historical mode? To answer this question we must consider Shen's readership, the rhetorical effect of the historical style, and Shen's purpose in writing "Chen chung chi."

Shen's readers, of course, consisted primarily of the literati class—the educated members of society like himself whose duties, interests, and ambitions centered around scholarship, literature, and government. Although to later readers Shen's dream narrative may seem flat, prosaic, and clichéd, to contemporary readers it must have



had additional effects that compensated for its inherent limitations. We can take as a clue, Li Chao's comment praising the historical qualities of the story. The sense of history and what history (in particular, historical biography) meant to Shen Chi-chi's readers is essential to understanding the rhetorical effects of Shen's narrative. For the literati, written history was perhaps *the* representation of reality. Each dynasty had its official history, its legacy to the future, and noteworthy men had their biographies recorded in these histories. One knew the past through written history, the future would know you through history. When the Taoist asks Lu what he means by success, Lu begins his reply with the phrase "*chien kung shu ming*" (建功樹名 "to do meritorious deeds and establish my fame"). The biographical sections of the histories, in particular, with their accounts of important officials and literary figures must have been especially resonant and inspiring to the average literati. These were the sections with the models he could aspire to. Although minatory examples were included in the biographical section of the histories, ordinarily, inclusion in the biographies was a signal of merit and success. The prestige of a biography was such that there was even lobbying on the part of a deceased individual's family and friends for his inclusion.<sup>43</sup> To a degree not easy for us to appreciate, for the Chinese one was what the histories recorded one as.

Over the centuries written history had become standardized and formulaic. Histories were composed by official historians and committees. The literati grew up reading hundreds of biographies written in a common style, a style that Shen virtually duplicates in "Chen chung chi." It was in fact because this style was standardized and formulaic that Shen adopted it. He knew that for his readers this style would have a certain established effect. In essence, as they read the dream it would seem real. In itself the historical style was not particularly realistic or moving, but because of its tradition it had a tremendous ring of authenticity and truth—it was history. The writing in other stories such as "Nan-k'o T'ai-shou chuan" and "Jen-shih chuan," is more detailed, vivid, and realistic, but the historical style has its own weight and force because of its tradition and the nature of

the reader. As they read Lu's dream, Shen's audience would in sense be rereading a biography that they had read many times before, reliving lives they had experienced in words, and in most cases no doubt seeing their own ambitions and desires reenacted. One could also suggest that in a sort of Aristotelian sense, the reading of the dream was cathartic. The reader follows a life with its successes and failures, and although the story cannot be considered a tragedy, enough of life's pain and failure is experienced by the hero and to some degree the reader to convince them of the futility of life. What is interesting and significant in this (and other Chinese stories) is that in his dream life the hero is successful. He attains all that he had desired, yet it is still not enough, he now realizes it is illusion.

Although the content of the dream is important, just as crucial is the sound and flavor imparted with the historical style. The poetry of the shamans and *fu* poets moved their listener's with their oral art, their rich, intoxicating language, their word-magic. Shen used the very different style of written history. Despite its literary limitations, he knew the effect of its physical sounds and rhythms upon his readers as they read. They had read and heard it so many times before. To the traditional literati the dream must have felt "real." Even we modern, scholarly readers who have read our share of dynastic biographies and followed the careers of officials and poets with all their ups and downs experience a sense of both reality and *deja vu* in "Chen chung chi." It is this rhetorical and even psychological effect that explains Shen Chi-chi's unique use of the historical style and the rationale for its extreme authenticity to the point of even including official documents. Also to be noted is the meticulous accuracy found in the dream narration. A number of historical events are alluded to, some rather obscure, which have been shown to be recorded with great exactness.<sup>44</sup> This is another way that Shen imparts sense of history and authenticity to the readers, a way to convey the sense of "reality" or "*chen*."

The historical style found in "Chen chung chi" then was used by Shen Chi-chi for the air of truth and authenticity if imparted and its special effects upon the literati reader, who in a sense had been condi-

tioned by tradition to be moved by it in ways that would otherwise be difficult to imagine. It is a rhetorical device in the most basic sense, designed by Shen to sway the reader, and it is linked to the fundamental theme and purpose of his story. In "Chen chung chi" the Taoist seeks to teach Lu with a dream. Through dream his student could learn through "experience." Shen Chi-chi, of course, did not have this choice. He did, however, have words, and as Lu began his dream, Shen switched modes using a language and style that could induce an analogous experience for his reader. Lu experiences a lifetime in a dream and learns, and so too Shen hopes does his reader though his experience comes through words and reading.

### Conclusion

Shen Chi-chi's use of the historical biographical mode was a deliberate rhetorical device aimed at his readers; perhaps it can even be described as a sort of "trick." Although it is used with tremendous skill and effect in "Chen chung chi," the narrative style in itself is limited and only works because of the frame that Shen has designed for it. The rhetorical use of the historical style had little potential for future development, and I know of no later attempts to repeat Shen's device. More in the mainstream are the more usual advances in narrative seen in stories such as "Jen-shih chuan" and "Nan-k'o T'ai-shou chuan," with their detailed descriptions, elaborate plots, and vivid dialogue. There are vestiges of Shen's style in stories that appear to have been directly inspired by "Chen chung chi: "Nan-k'o T'ai-shou chuan" includes a memorial and "Ying-t'ao ch'ing-i" contains passages describing the hero's career composed in the basic historical style, but vestiges is all they are. Their use is limited; they are not part of an overall design as seen in "Chen chung chi."

Although the actual techniques utilized in "Chen chung chi" had their limits, Shen Chi-chi's approach to writing was an important landmark in the literary tradition. From the earliest beginnings we have seen evidence of the "magic" of words in the Chinese tradition. Words could summon wandering souls. Words captured and evoked

the objects and actions they described and thus affected their listeners in physical ways. The power of words to medically cure soon evolved into the potential to spiritually cure. This was inevitable in a tradition such as China's with its rich literary culture and its recognition of the moral of the writer. Mei Sheng's rhapsody shows the tradition in transition, the prince's cure is both physical and spiritual. The introduction of the induced-dream motif was a crucial step in the further development of these conceptions. This literary motif in which a wise man teaches through the experience of dream mingled with the belief that a poet could heal with words, introduces a new potential and dimension to these ideas. The shift in mediums is crucial. Previously the "healer" was a shaman/poet; the medium was verse. The poet evoked with rich, sensual, elaborate descriptions. Despite the powers of the shaman/poet, the potential scale and scope of his words were limited by a tradition of verse that was essentially lyric in nature. Now, however, the medium was "fiction" or *hsiao-shuo*. In the induced-dream motif, the wise man used dream to evoke the experiences of a lifetime, the writer on his part now used words to narrate, to tell the story of a life. It is significant that these stories begin with the idea of biography, with accounts of lives with all their vicissitudes. Biography, of course, had always been an important genre in the tradition. We have seen its place in the dynastic histories. It had also long had an important role in *chih-kuai* and *ch'uan-ch'i* "fiction," which often consisted of *chuan* (傳), biographical accounts usually centering a strange, unusual episodes in the subject's life. Shen Chi-chi recognized the rhetorical potential of biography, its capacity to effect an audience, and adopted it into his storytelling. Reading a biography could be equal to reading and experiencing a life. The first step taken by Shen Chi-chi with his brief imitation of the historical biography would eventually culminate in *Hung-lou meng*, which, in a sense, is a story that consists of many biographies: of Pao-yü, the Stone, of the young girls, of the many other members of a great family, and of this family's rise and fall. In both stories Shen Chi-chi and Ts'ao Hsüeh-ch'in saw their words as metaphorically equivalent to dreams. They designed their stories to teach through experiences induced through reading. Their readers,

akin to the heroes who lived a lifetime in a dream, could experience a lifetime in the moments it took to read a story and a book.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> This story is found in two version. See Li Fang (李昉 925-996), *T'ai-p'ing kuang-chi* (太平廣記) 526-28 (under the title "Lü Weng" (呂翁) and *Wen-yüan ying-hua* (文苑英華) 4395-97. The later version is preferred; for a collated, annotated edition based upon the *Wen-yüan ying-hua* version, see Wang Meng-ou (王夢鷗), *T'ang-jen hsiao-shuo chiao-shih* (唐人小說校釋), Vol. 1, 23-34. There have been a number of translations of "Chen chung chi"; a recent reliable translation by William H. Nienhauser, Jr. can be found in Ma and Lau 435-38.

<sup>2</sup> For translations and discussion of these works, see Hawkes 219-38. Hawkes suggest that both works were probable composed for members of the royal Ch'u family in the third-century B. C. Traditionally, these works have been attributed to various poets including Ch'ü Yuan (屈原 340?-ca. 278 B. C.) and Sung Yü (宋玉 ca. 290 B.C.-ca. 223 B. C.), but the authorship is uncertain.

<sup>3</sup> The "Ch'i fa" is included in the *Wen hsuan* (文選 chüan 34). For studies and translations, see Knechtges and Swanson; Frankel 186-211.

<sup>4</sup> Frankel emends, substituting *fa* (發 "come forth") of *fei* (廢 "abolish"); see Frankel 245n4.

<sup>5</sup> On the epideictic style of the *fu*, see Knechtges, *The Han Rhapsody* 30-32.

<sup>6</sup> "Thereupon it bathes the breast, / Washes the five organs, / Cleanses hands and feet, / Rinses the hair and teeth./It does away with indolence, /Purges impurities, / Clears up suspicions and doubts, / Sharpens ears and eyes" (Frankel 198).

<sup>7</sup> Wang Pao (王褒 ?-ca. 61 B. C.) was summoned by the Emperor to recite his compositions for the ill Heir Apparent who then recovered. See Pan Ku (班固) 64b.2829.

<sup>8</sup> In addition, the tradition of arcane incantations and spells did

have a significant role in Han conceptions of language and literature, in particular the *fu*. Donald Harper, in his study of Wang Yen-shou's (王延壽 fl. Mid-second century A. D.) "Meng fu" (夢賦 "Nightmare Poem"), addresses the nature of "word magic" in the Han *fu*, and suggests that it was not simply figurative. He demonstrates that demon curses and dream incantation (some of which are medical prescriptions) were a direct influence on the Han *fu*, and this helps explain Han ideas on the power and magic of language and its potential to affect its audience: "What evidence there is indicate that people of Han times regarded language as potentially magical; that words were believed to be capable of symbolically representing things and acting on the human intellect and emotions like incantations did." He concludes by suggesting that at least some Han poets believed that their words could replicate things, "and that those replicas were of the same nature as the things." See Harper, respectively.

<sup>9</sup> The term, "induced dream," is my invention. Callois points out that this motif can be found in the folklore tradition of a number of countries (xxi). For a comparative study of the motif in the literary traditions of Europe and China, see Knechtges, "Dream Adventure Stories." A recent variation of this motif can also be found in the cinema; for example, the classic American movie named "It's a Wonderful Life" (1946).

<sup>10</sup> It is recorded in *T'ai-p'ing Kuang-chi* 283.2254 under the title, "Yang Lin" (楊林). Here the original source is given as Liu I-ch'ing's (劉義慶 403-444) *You ming lu* (幽明錄). It also occurs in Yüeh Shih's (樂史 30-1007) *T'ai-p'ing huan-yü chi* (太平寰宇記), which gives as an additional source, Kan Pao's (干寶 fl. 320) *Sou shen chi* (搜神記), see Yüeh Shih 126.6a.

There are, however, problems with this latter attribution and the story does not occur in present editions of the *Sou shen chi*. See Foster 23-24 (note 64). For translation and discussion of this story, see Chang 195-216. See also Knechtges, "Dream Adventure Stories" 108-09, 114.

Another often cited early example of a dream story can be found in the Taoist text, *Lieh-tzu* (列子 third- or fourth-century A. D.). See

Yang 3.92-4. It was Hung Mai (洪邁 1123-1202) who first pointed out the place of the *Lieh-tzu* story in the dream story tradition, see Wang Meng-ou (王夢鷗), "Chen chung chi"; Hung Mai 1.7-8.

It is not discussed in this study because "Yang Lin" appears to be the direct antecedent to the series of T'ang stories based upon the induced-dream motif.

<sup>11</sup> The story in question of Sha-lo-na (娑羅那) and Katyayana (迦旃延) occurs in the *Ta-chuang-yen-lun ching* (大莊嚴論經) and *Tsa-pao-ts'ang ching* (雜寶藏經), works that existed in translation during the early fifth-century (see Knechtges, "Dream Adventures" 114).

P'ei P'u-hsien (裴普賢), in her study of the influence of Indian literature upon Chinese literature, argues that this story was the source of "Yang Lin." See *Chung Yin wen-hsüeh kuan-hsi-chiu* (中印文學研究) 26-28.

For the two versions of the Indian story, see *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* (大正新修大藏經) 4/323-26 and 4/447-49 respectively.

Several later scholars have questioned this conclusion, see Knechtges, "Dream Adventures" 114-15; Foster 23-24, (note 64).

<sup>12</sup> In the Indian story, a young prince who has renounced the world is insulted by a king and beaten. When he expresses his wish to return to the world and take revenge, Katyayana, his master, produces a dream in which the young prince experiences his defeat. Captured and about to be executed, he awakens cured of his desire for revenge and devotes himself to the religious life.

<sup>13</sup> For example, a story recorded in Wu Jun's (吳均 469-520) *Hsü Ch'i-hsieh chi* (續齊諧記) named "Yang-hsien shu-sheng" (陽羨書生) tells of a student's encounter with a scholar who possessed certain magic powers. During a picnic the scholar spits out a beautiful young girl. When the scholar becomes drunk the girl spits out a handsome young man who in turn spits out his own lover. This story is clearly based upon an episode from an Indian story in the *Jiu tsa p'i-yü ching* (舊雜譬喻經) (*Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 4/514).

The original Indian story, however, has a clear moral theme (the distrustfulness of women) that the Chinese story ignores. P'ei P'u-

hsien quotes and discusses both stories as well as another related Chinese story (*Chung Yin wen-hsüeh* 21-24). For a collated text of this story with commentary, see Li Chien-kuo (李劍國) 601-03.

<sup>14</sup> For studies of "Chen chung chi," see Knechtges, "Dream Adventures"; Wang Meng-ou "Chen chung chi"; Wang Meng-ou, *T'ang-jen hsiao-shuo chiao-shih* (唐人小說校釋), Vol. 1, 34-37; Wang Meng-ou, *T'ang-jen hsiao-shuo yen-chiu* (唐人小說研究) 237-46; Chang Han-liang.

<sup>15</sup> Li Kung-tso's (李公佐) (late eight-early ninth-century) "Nank'o T'ai-shou chuan" is recorded in the *T'ao-p'ing kuang-chi* (475.3910-15) under the title "Ch'un-yu Fen (淳于棼)." The source recorded is the *I-wen lu* (異聞錄). For a collated edition with commentary, see Wang Meng-ou, *T'ang-jen hsiao-shuo chiao-shih*, vol. 2, 171-88. For studies of Li Kung-tso and this story, see Knechtges, "Dream Adventures"; Wang Meng-ou, *T'ang-jen hsiao-shuo chiao-shih*, Vol. 2, 188-99; Wang Meng-ou, *T'ang-jen hsiao-shuo yen-chiu*, 46-56; Chang Han-liang. For a recent translation. See William H. Nienhauser, Jr. 861-71.

<sup>16</sup> Jen Fan's (任繁 fl.841-846) "Ying-t'ao ch'ing-i" can be found in the *T'ai-p'ing kuang-chi* (281.2242-44). For studies of this story, see Knechtges, "Dream Adventures"; Chang Han-liang.

<sup>17</sup> Recorded in the *T'ai-p'ing kuang-chi* (16.109-12), which gives as its source, Li Fuyan's (李復言 fl. early ninth-century) collection of stories, *Hsü Hsüan kuai lu* (續玄怪錄). For an annotated version of this story, see Wang Ju-t'ao (王汝壽) 330-37. A recent translation by James R. Hightower can be found in Mair 830-35.

<sup>18</sup> In traditional China as in many other cultures there has been a history of using dreams in medical practice. For a brief description of the medical literature of dreams, see Strickmann 29-31. As far as I know, however, the function of dreams is primarily diagnostic. For example, through a dream an ancestor or spirit may prescribe certain actions the patient should take to cure himself. I am unaware of any practice of inducing dreams as actual medical treatment such as seem in the induced-dream motif. The motif of the induced dream appears to be a purely literary metaphor that expresses ideas such as life is a



dream and we best learn by experience. It is likely, however, that ancient medical practices may have encouraged the emergence of this motif. There apparently was a tradition of inducing dreams for diagnostic purposes in China as well as other ancient cultures. (e. g. Egypt and Greece), but again there is no evidence to suggest that the motif directly reflects any actual treatment practices. On the practice of "incubating" dreams for diagnostic purposes, see Ong 39-44.

<sup>19</sup> It should be noted that account of Pao-yü's origins vary somewhat in different versions of the novel.

<sup>20</sup> For a careful study of the theme of experience in Chinese literature from another perspective, see Wai-yee Li. Much of this important work is devoted to the study of *Hung-lou meng*.

<sup>21</sup> It should be noted that there are a host of questions concerning the authorship, editions, and versions of the text (especially in regard to this opening chapter). I have not attempted to unravel these problems, but have assumed that Ts'ao Hsüeh-ch'in is the author of this and the following passage. For the purposes of this study, the exact author of these ideas is not as crucial as the fact of their existence.

<sup>22</sup> The Ming novel, *Chin P'ing Mei* (金瓶梅), can perhaps be seen as a step in the development of the conceptions of writer and reader seen in "Chen chung chi" and *Hung-lou meng*. *Chin P'ing Mei* is of course most famous as an "erotic" novel. The use and purpose of the novel's graphic eroticism, however, have been much debated. Some have seen it as simple pornography, others as a celebration of eroticism. Several recent scholars have suggested that vivid depiction of sex is a deliberate device whereby the author turns his reader into voyeurs. Through this device the reader becomes aware of his own frailties and eventually feels surfeited by the increasingly extravagant descriptions. See Carlitz 44-52; Roy xxxvii-xxxviii. I remember a class on *Chin P'ing Mei*, in which one of the reader's comments was that by the end of the novel one felt sickened by the actions and events depicted in the book. This apparently was the author's intention. Again we see an author's awareness of the power of words and the attempt to induce experience through words as a way of teaching and healing.

<sup>23</sup> I have consulted Nienhauser's translation of this passage in *Ma and Lau* 436.

<sup>24</sup> For a study of the biographies found in the dynastic histories, see Twitchett 24-39.

<sup>25</sup> Professor Knechtges, discussing the narration of the dream in Chinese dream stories, notes: "The Chinese authors develop in an extremely pedestrian and stereotyped manner (an exception might be "The Governor of the Southern Branch") the various successes of the hero" ("Dream Adventure Story" 113). Although Professor Knechtges is speaking of these stories in general, "Chen chung chi" was perhaps foremost in his mind (the two most important T'ang dream stories were "Chen chung chi" and "The Governor of the Southern Branch").

<sup>26</sup> Shen Chi-chi's official biographies are found in Liu Hsü's (劉昫) *Chiu T'ang shu* (舊唐書) 149.4034-37; Ou-yang Hsiu's (歐陽修 1007-1072) *Hsin T'ang shu* (新唐書) 132.4538-40. The biographies are extremely brief, their bulk consisting of quoted documents. Wang Meng-ou has carefully gathered and discussed these and other materials and reconstructed Shen's biography. See Wang Meng-ou, "Chen chung chi' chi ch'i tso-che" (枕中記及其作者) 7-16.

<sup>27</sup> For a recent study of the link between history and fiction, see Lu, Sheldon Hsiao-peng.

<sup>28</sup> Li Tsung-wei (李宗為) suggests that "Jen-shih chuan" was written around 781 and that "Chen chung chi" was composed around the same period. See *T'ang-jen ch'uan-ch'i* (唐人傳奇) 37. Wang Meng-ou, "Chen chung chi" 27, suggests dates of 782-783, respectively. For a collated, annotated edition, see Wang Meng-ou, *T'ang-jen hsiao-shuo chiao-shih*, Vol. 1, 41-56.

<sup>29</sup> Given the extensive play on the meaning of "shih," the first use of the word now takes on a second meaning, giving the sentence a Taoist flavor. In addition to literally meaning "going to the fields" there is the suggestions of being "contented in the fields."

<sup>30</sup> In Chou Fa-kao's reconstruction the two words differ only in their final consonants, both of which are nasals: "chen" ("pillow")=*tsilm* (*sang* and *qu sheng* readings), "chen"("truth")=*tsiln* (*ping sheng*), and in their tones. See Chou Fa-kao (周法高) 140, 218, It

could be argued that these differences are significant enough to suggest that a pun was not intended. However, given the other examples of word play in "Chen chung chi" (and in Shen Chi-chi's other story "Jen-shih chuan") as well as the striking wording of the phrase, "*Tzu chen wu chen*," I feel that Shen Chi-chi was almost certainly punning. Although puns are clearest when words are homophones, it is possible to pun with words whose sounds or tones are not identical. In *Hung-lou meng*, there are several such instances; for example: Feng Su (fourth-tone) 封肅 (father-in-law of Chia Yü-ts'un) puns on *feng-su* (second-tone) 風俗 ("common customs"). See Chih-yen-chai's (脂硯齋) comment in *Ch'ien-lung chia-hsü Chih-yen-chai ch'ung-p'ing Shih-t'ou chi* (乾隆甲戌脂硯齋重評石頭記) 1.17; Chiao-hsing (Chiao is first-tone) 嬌杏 (the maid who would marry Chia Yü-t'sun) is a pun on *chiao-hsing* (*chiao* is third-tone) 僥倖 ("fortunate, lucky"), see Li Tzu-ch'ien (李子虔). As an example of punning with words with different final consonants, it is usually suggested that the Ch'in of Ch'in-shih (秦氏) (Chia Jung's wife) is a pun on the word for "love, feeling," *ch'ing* (情) (I would like to thank Wann Ai-jen of Indiana University for directing me to these examples). In his study of punning in Southern Dynasties songs, Wang Yün-his 王運熙 has an extensive list of puns, several examples of which the sounds and/or tones are not exactly identical (e.g. *tsou* 走 and *tsu* 誼; *pei* 碑 and *pei* 悲; *chih* 雉 and *t'i* 涕). See "Lun Wu-sheng His-ch'ü yü hsieh-yin shuang-kuan yü" (論吳聲西曲與諧音雙關語) 121-66. In addition, Shen Chi-chi's word play in "Jen-shih chuan" is also suggestive. His use of the place name, "Huai-li" (槐里) (Wang Meng-ou, *T'ang-jen hsiao-shuo chiao-shih*, Vol. 1, 46), is possibly a visual (and audial?) pun on the ghost element (*kuei* 鬼) in *huai*, and perhaps the source of the similar pun in "Nan-k'o T'ai-shou chuan" (see below, note 29). Most interesting is the choice of the heroine's surname. She is nominally a fox-spirit, but throughout the story Shen Chi-chi stresses her human qualities, and so I suspect he named her Jen (任) as a pun on *jen* (人) (human). The apparent pun is significant because it parallels the example seen in "Chen chung chi." The words are identical in sound except for final-m vs. -n (*nilm* and *nihn*; see Chou 5-6, respec-

tively), though in this case the words are in the same tone. The apparent pun on Jen and *jen* in "Jen-shih chuan" further suggest the likelihood of the pun on *chen* in "Chen chung chi." It should also be noted that the putative use of *chen* as a verb ("to regard as truth") while not a common usage, was well within the parameters of the Classical language. Shen Chi-chi's famous contemporary, Han Yü (韓愈) (768-824), modeling his style on pre-Ch'in works, invented unusual verbal functions from nouns in his prose. See, for example, the famous concluding lines in his "Yüan tao" (原道).

<sup>31</sup> In the *T'ai-p'ing kuang-chi* this story appears with the title "Lü Weng." As was mentioned above, however, the version of the story found in the *Wen-yüan ying-hua* is superior, and here it bears the title "Chen chung chi." Remember also that Li Chao (fl. 818) specifically mentions the story by the title "Chen chung chi." Given the punning on "*chen*" within the story one assumes that Shen Chi-chi also had this pun in mind when he chose the title.

<sup>32</sup> Glen Dudbridge's careful and study of Pai Hsing-chien's "Li Wa chuan" has shown how sophisticated and subtle the language and approach of *T'ang ch'uan-ch'i* could be. I do not always agree with Professor Dudbridge's conclusions and interpretations. There are times when it appears he is reading too much into the text. Nevertheless, his research is ground breaking in revealing that in certain instances writers approached the *ch'uan-ch'i* genre with the care and deliberation seen in more established, prestigious genres. The subtle language of "Li Wa chuan" with its many references and echoes of the past, its intricate design, and the serious philosophical and moral import of the story had not been fully appreciated until Professor Dudbridge's study. See Dudbridge. The examples of "Chen chung chi" and "Li Wa chuan" show that while *hsiao-shuo* was for the most part a minor, unrecognized genre, at least in some cases, literati authors drew upon elements from the more traditional, orthodox literary and moral heritage and applied them to their stories. The writing in T'ang tales could be more sophisticated than is usually thought. In general, the maturation of a new genre involves not only advances in technique and style, but the introduction of traditional approaches and

attitudes to literature ordinarily reserved for more established, prestigious genres.

<sup>33</sup> William H. Nienhauser, Jr. suggests the visual (and audial?) word play of "huai" (*sophora japonica*) and "kuei" (鬼) ("ghost"). "Kuei" is the phonetic in "huai"; one could read "huai" as "tree of ghosts." See Mair, p. 861. It should be noted, however, that there is no traditional lore linking the *huai* tree with ghosts or spirits. If a pun was intended it was invented by Shen Chi-chi. Perhaps more relevant is the association of the *huai* tree with high office, so that Li Kung-tso may have been pointing to the hero's desires and dream career (it is also possible that this is a case of double word play). I would like to thank Wann Ai-jen for pointing this out. Convenient gatherings of traditional lore about and references to the *huai* tree can be found in various *lei-shu* (類書) entries. See, for example, Ou-yang Hsün (歐陽詢) (557-641) 88.1516-19.

<sup>34</sup> The phrase "pai i" is often used to mean "plain clothed person," i.e. a person who does not hold office. This is not the usage in this story in which the heroine is at first repeatedly referred to as the "white dressed one" (four instances). One would expect a person of her status (she purports to belong to the *chiao-fang* (教坊) [Music Office], i.e. is a singer/musician) to be dressed far more colorfully. Shen Chi-chi's use of the image must be deliberate, and I assume it is to convey an "other worldly" quality.

<sup>35</sup> Y. W. Ma comments on this aspect of "Chen chung chi": "But the incidents in the dream itself, on closer examination, reveal an incredibly high factualness. Almost every major event, except the personal involvements of the dreamer and his family members, is historically true." See Ma.

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