

The Locality of the Novel: Some Peculiarities of Chinese and Japanese “Small Talk”

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ABSTRACT

The possibility of a universal poetics of the “novel” depends on close analysis of the origin and development of this narrative form in East and West. While the first Western novel might have been *Don Quixote* in the 16th century, *The Tale of Genji*, which meets many novelistic criteria, appeared in Japan in the 11th century. But while it is commonly assumed that the (Western) novel is grounded in epic poetry, the Far East lacks an epic tradition. However, China and Japan do have a strong tradition of what Frye calls *epos*, oral story-telling. The argument here is that the classic Chinese and Japanese novels originated from this oral tradition, which is perhaps the best way to explain a unique feature of these novels: the permeation of the narrative structure by verse, by lyric forms. The (Far Eastern, and perhaps also Western) novel is a large “narrative vessel” made by linking together smaller units. This—and/or the fact that the Japanese and Chinese novel traditionally has a lower status than the lyric poem—may be why the novel is called *hsiao shuo*, “small talk” in Chinese and Japanese.

KEY WORDS

novel
epic
epos
lyric
oral tradition
episodic

continuous
story-teller
discourse
narrative
“small talk”

In the studies of the rise of the novel, critics usually either, like Ian Watt, describe Defoe, Richardson, Fielding, Smollett, and Sterne as the first group of writers to produce what can be called novels, or, like Harry Levin, consider *Don Quixote* as the "archetypal" novel. Although Water L. Reed, in his *An Exemplary History of the Novel*, rightly states that "the novel can only be understood as a multinational phenomenon," he contends that the novel is "rooted in European national cultures although eventually spreading to almost every modern nation-state, continent, or local region" (22). Specifically, he mentions the Japanese novel, saying that "The Japanese novel is to a large extent a late nineteenth-century importation from the West" (23). This perception of the novel as rooted in Europe met little challenge until recent years.

At the 1989 annual convention of the South Atlantic Modern Language Association, M. Thomas Inge, president of the SAMLA, delivered a speech entitled "Lady Murasaki and the Craft of Fiction." In that speech, Inge questions whether it is wise to talk about the rise and development of the novel without taking into account such Asian novels as *Genji monogatari* (*The Tale of Genji*). He points out that the *Genji*, written between 1005 and 1015, is a novel which not only came into being "ahead of" the fiction of Chaucer, Boccaccio, Cervantes, Defoe, Richardson, Fielding, Smollett, Stern, etc., but also, with its "portrayal of complex, three-dimensional characters in a fully developed social and historical context," its "sophisticated and sensitive treatment of psychological and emotional states of mind," and its "dramatically realized scenes," can well compare with modern novels by, say, Henry James, Marcel Proust, and Virginia Woolf (7-14).

Some reference books, including *Academic American Encyclopedia*, *The Readers' Companion to World Literature*, and *Encyclopedia of Literature*, have taken the *Genji* as the earliest and finest Japanese "novel." (The entry on the *Genji* in *The Readers' Companion* confirms that "The work is a novel in the full modern sense of the term" 214.) In fact, partly owing to printing, which was invented in China around 1000 A.D., the Chinese Ming novel, starting with *San-kuo Yen-yi* 三國演義 (*The Tale of Three Kingdoms*, first printed in 1495), seems also to have flourished earlier than its Spanish and English counterparts. Of course, there are always problems in defining what is a novel and what is not. Some have chosen to call the *Genji* a Japanese "romance" and the *San-kuo* a Chinese "romance." Such differences are never easy to reconcile. Is *Don Quixote* a "realistic novel" or a "chivalric romance"? The question, too, has caused endless debates.

Nevertheless, once the Asian novel, or to be more accurate, once the Japanese/Chinese novel, is brought into the theoretical discourse of the novel as a whole, new questions about the origins of the novel arise. In the West, it is almost impossible to discuss the origins of the novel without locating its roots in the epic. The novel, many believe, evolves from the epic. It has inherited, most visibly, the length and the structure of epic narrative.

A striking difference between Western and Chinese/Japanese literatures lies in the fact that while the epic—a long narrative poem in elevated style recounting the deeds of a legendary or historical national hero—occupies a distinguished place in the history of Western literature, it has never been an indigenous tradition in the literature of the two Asian nations. In other words, in the early period of Chinese and Japanese literatures, there is no long verse narrative resembling the Greek *Iliad*, or Latin *Aeneid*, or Sumerian *Gilgamesh*, or Indian *Mahabharata*, or English *Beowulf*, or Persian *Shanamah*.

Not only that. In the available anthologies of Chinese and Japanese pre-modern poetry, one finds no poem as long as Coleridge's "Christabel" (677 lines). Traditional Chinese and Japanese poetics favors inspirational poems, hence the brevity of poetic composition. Jin'ichi Konishi, a Japanese critic, has made the following comments:

In considering the general qualities of Japanese literature in contrast to that other literary 'world,' we recognize first of all, if only as a matter of external form, Japanese brevity. For poetry, the haiku with its fixed form of seventeen syllables may well be the shortest poetic form in the world. The fact that it and the tanka, with its thirty-one syllables, still flourish at the present time after so many centuries means nothing less than that brevity is one of the most important properties of Japanese literature. In the Ancient Age, the choka, or long poem, flourished. But even the longest of them, Kakinomoto Hitomaro's "Elegy on the Death of Prince Takechi" is only 149 lines long. This is no match in length for the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey*, nor does it compare with either the literature of the Ainu or of the Ryukyus. And even the choka declined steadily after Hitomaro, losing its vitality by the end of the ninth century. There was a later attempt to revive the long poem for one kind of chanson (kayo) in versions such as the fast-song (soga) and banquet poem (enkyoku). It was a brief affair (10-11).

In Chinese literature, the earliest collection of poems is the *Shih-ching* 詩經 (The Book of Poetry) compiled by Confucius around 500 B.C. Of the three hundred and five odes in the collection, few exceed fifty lines. From Confucius' time all the way up to the nineteenth century, Chinese poetry, which was predominantly lyrical, maintained its characteristic brevity. The longest ancient poem that I know of is Ch'ü-yüan's "Li-sao" 離騷, which runs 367 lines. A few Tang poems such as Pai Chü-yi's "Ch'ang Hen Kê" 長恨歌 ("An Everlasting Woe") run over one hundred lines. But these are rare exceptions.

The conspicuous absence of the epic and, in fact, the apparent lack of long verse narrative of any kind in the history of Chinese and Japanese literatures, directly challenges some Western conceptions of the origins of the novel as a whole. For instance, it has been a widely accepted view that epic, romance, and novel, in the development of world literature, seem to fall into line as a single, continuous tradition. A conclusion one may easily draw from this formulation of the epic-romance-novel sequence is that without its pre-existing epic models, the novel would not have come into existence.¹ Since the Japanese/Chinese novel does not have pre-existing epic models, we have to rethink the possibilities of the novel's origins. It becomes obvious that novels of different nations or continents do not all share the same origins. We also face the question whether the novel has to evolve only from "large-sized" and "official" pre-existing genres such as long epic poetry, or tragedy, or historiography.

Andrew H. Plaks, an American scholar of Chinese literature, speculates that "in both Europe and China the development of the novel may be traced to the linking of smaller forms to gradually build up a larger, more comprehensive, narrative vessel" (331). Here, Plaks is offering an interesting metaphorical description of the novel's formation. The novel is seen to resemble a large vessel made of hybrid and relatively small generic entities. The process of vessel-building is a gradual "linking" of those entities. The completion of the process marks the birth of the novel — a large "narrative vessel" composed of smaller narrative compartments.

It is interesting that Plaks uses the word "small" — though in a comparative form — to describe those pre-existing genres from which the novel evolves, for both in Chinese and in Japanese, 小說, which means literally "small talk," corresponds to the English term "novel." Since most Chinese and Japanese novels, especially classics (by "classics" I mean popular novels written in and before the nineteenth century), are long and contained in huge

volumes, the term "small talk," seems to be a misnomer. *Genji monogatari* (1015, *The Tale of Genji*), for example, is composed of fifty-four chapters; its most recent English translation contains 1090 pages.² *Hong Lou Meng* 紅樓夢 (1791, *Dream of the Red Chamber*), the best-known Chinese novel, has 120 chapters and a cast of hundreds of characters; one English translation of the novel runs up to 3,330 pages in five volumes.³ Other novels of similar length and size include *Heike monogatari* (1371, *The Tale of the Heike*), *San-kuo Yen-yi* 三國演義 (1495, *Tale of Three Kingdoms*), *Chin P'ing Mei* 金瓶梅 (1610, *Golden Lotus*), and *Koshoku Ichidai Otoko* (1682, *The Life of an Amorous Man*). Reading one of these novels is, indeed, like hearing a talk. Only this "talk" goes on far too long and is far too inclusive to be "small."

What has prompted the Chinese and the Japanese to call the novel "small talk"? The question itself provides clues to the answer. Misnamed as it may be, the Chinese/Japanese novel must have had much to do with certain "small" genres characteristic of "talk" or orality.

Northrop Frye has used the term *epos* to describe works in ancient European literature which are orally transmitted by a "speaking poet" (often a blind bard) to a "listening audience." The material of *epos*, Frye observes, can be in prose as well as in meter. In the development of literature, as the verse part of *epos* grows into the epic to "conventionalize" and "unify" its meter, its prose part "passes insensibly" into the "more continuous" forms of prose fiction which "goes its own way" in forms "separate" from the epic. Having passed into fiction, *epos* remains both part of fiction and distinct from it: "The chief distinction, though not a simple one of length, is involved with the fact that *epos* is episodic and fiction continuous" (248-325).

In ancient Greek, *epos* means poem; in modern English, it usually refers to *oral* epic poetry. Frye's distinction between *epos* and epic seems to emphasize the orality of *epos* and the textuality of epic. His perception of prose fiction as more related to *epos* than to epic sheds light on the novel's relationship with oral narrative. However, because to Frye, as to many others, the novel is the youngest of the four forms of fiction (the other three are anatomy, confession, and romance), and because "the drift [of *epos*] toward an unseen audience sets in very early" (Frye 249)—in fact, before the novel came into being—the novel can only inherit elements of *epos* from other pre-existing fictional forms such as anatomy. In other

words, oral storytelling is seen as an "ancient" or "primitive" form which has long ceased to be viable or competitive in Western literature. This is not to say that there has been no more oral narrative. Frye reminds us that under certain conditions *epos* is retrievable. He uses Dickens's work as an illustration.

The novels of Dickens are, as books, fiction; as serial publications in a magazine designed for family reading, they are still fundamentally fiction, though closer to *epos*. But when Dickens began to give readings from his own works, the genre changed wholly to *epos*; the emphasis was then thrown on immediacy of effect before a visible audience (249).

Having the novelist read from his own texts before an audience is something still fairly common in the West. The practice serves well as a reminder of *epos* (oral storytelling) as an important one of the novel's origins and components. But in China and Japan, novelists rarely read from their own works to an audience. It is oral storytellers who carry out the task. It is remarkable that in these two Asian countries oral storytelling has never ceased to be a popular literary form.

In Japan, oral storytelling is an old and well-preserved tradition. That storytelling has much bearing on the development of the novel finds strong evidence in the case of *Heike monogatari* (*The Tale of Heike*, 1371), a long historical novel. Hiroshi Kitagawa and Bruce T. Tsuchida, translators of the novel, describe it as "a piece of oral literature of multiple authorship," whose stories "are fragmented, lacking in the unity to be found in descriptive or epical literature" (xxi). One may well suspect that the book is just a group of short stories of historical nature collected from streetside storytellers. The book's publication, instead of putting an end to the streetside narration of those stories, has further promoted such narration by making itself available as printed episodic scripts for streetside storytellers.

According to Kitagawa and Tsuchida, for hundreds of years, the *Heike* continued to be recited to the audience by *biwa hoshi* (singing monks). Reciting from the novel, the monks would accompany themselves on a four- or five-stringed musical instrument called "biwa."

Biwa hoshi [singing monks] wandered throughout the country chanting the tale in the streets, at temples, at shrines, or wherever they could gather an audience. The *Heike* was an oral work appreciated for its musical quality, dramatic impact, and Buddhist teachings. This oral tradition continued up to the late Edo period (1600-1868) (xv).

(Edward Seidensticker, however, indicates that the tradition has never stopped. He writes, "Some passages of the *Heike* are still recited by Japanese" xix).

In China, although oral storytelling had been in existence as early as Confucius' time, it was during the Northern Sung dynasty (960-1127) that it became a nationwide vogue in public places of entertainment. Chinese literary historians, have discovered that in the Sung dynasty some storytellers even formed groups and shared certain scripts. In reviewing the few existent scripts, Ch'u Chai and Winberg Chai, authors of *A Treasury of Chinese Literature*, find that oral storytelling tends to begin with a verse and conclude with a verse, and that many later novelists have adopted this structure (190).

I have had chances, in China, to hear streetside storytelling which, even today, remains a fairly popular form of entertainment especially in rural areas. The stories that I heard did usually begin and end with verses. The storyteller, after beating drums or playing a piece of music to gather the audience's attention, would start with a high-pitched recital of a verse as a kind of introduction to the tale to be narrated. The tale could last from forty minutes to two hours before coming to a sudden end, with a verse that either summarizes what has been told or highlights a crucial moment of the story—a moment of suspense—followed by a brief statement inviting the audience to come again the following day.

Readers familiar with Chinese fiction know that Chinese classical novels are distinctively episodic. An important feature is that almost every chapter ends with this statement: "If you want to know what is to follow, please listen to what will be told in the next chapter." The statement is apparently a slightly altered version of what a traditional streetside storyteller would tell his audience after finishing his episode of a story for the day: "If you want to know what is to follow, please come here tomorrow and listen to what will be told."

In terms of structure, many classical novels, including three of the four "masterworks" 四大奇書 of the Ming novel — *The Tale of Three Kingdoms*,

The Water Margin, and *The Golden Lotus*—indeed, begin and end with verses. For example, upon opening *Three Kingdoms*, the first thing we see is a poem:

“The Long River passes east away,
Surge over surge,
Whiteblooming waves sweep all heroes on
As right and wrong, triumph and defeat all turn unreal.
But ever the green hills stay
To blush in the west-waning day.

The woodcutters and the fishermen,
Whiteheaded, they’ve seen enough
To make good company over the winejars,
Where many a famed event
Provides their merriment.”⁴

After we have gone through the long narrative of the story and reach the final paragraph of the book, we find ourselves invited to read a poem summarizing all the historical events previously narrated:

“It was the dawning of a glorious day
When first the Founder of the House of Han
Hsienyang’s proud palace entered. Noontide came
When Kuang-Wu the imperial rule restored.
Alas, the Hsien succeeded in full time
And saw the setting of the sun of power!
Ho Chin, the feeble, fell beneath the blows
Of palace minions. Tung Cho, vile though bold,
Then ruled the court. The plot Wang Yun devised
To oust him, failed, recoiled on his own head.
The Li and Kuo lit up the flame of war
And brigands swarmed like ants through all the land.
Then rose the valiant and deployed their might.

...

All down the ages rings the note of change,
For fate so rules it; none escapes its sway.
The kingdoms three have vanished as a dream.
The useless misery is ours to grieve.”⁵

One may well reason, in Frye's terms, that perhaps because there has been no epic in China and Japan to take over the verse part of *epos*, and because "*epos*" (oral storytelling) has been a living and undivided literary form up to this date, Japanese and Chinese novels, from the very beginning, have been enjoying everything that oral narrative can offer—verse as well as prose. Professor Plaks has noted this impact of oral storytelling on the Chinese novel when he writes: "various genres of quasi-narrative linked verse in streetside oral literature in China from Sung times to the present day—*ku-tzu-tz'u* 鼓子詞, *chu-kung-tiao* 諸宮調, *t'an-tz'u* 彈詞, etc.... have had a direct influence on the development of the Chinese novel" (322). Reading Chinese and Japanese classic novels, one will find that verse and prose are frequently intermixed in almost all of them. Typical examples are *The Tale of Genji* and *Hong Lou Meng*. In the *Genji*, characters frequently talk in verse, write in verse, and even think in verse. Lyric verse appears almost on every page of this huge book. The prominent presence and high quality of verse in the novel has prompted Fujiwara Shunzei, the highest authority in poetic circles of twelfth century Japan, to announce that "writing poems without having looked at the *Genji* is an unforgettable crime" (Konishi 28).⁶ In *Hong Lou Meng*, there are hundreds of poems intermixed with the prose. During the nineteenth-century alone, Chinese scholars published more than a dozen collections of poems from *Hong Lou Meng*—a phenomenon I find absolutely unique in the studies of fictional narrative.⁷

In his "Discourse in the Novel," Mikhail Bakhtin criticizes traditional European stylistics for excluding the novel from the realm of poetry and treating it as a form inferior to epic, lyric, and tragedy. "The novel is a poetic discourse," he writes, "but one that does not fit within the frame provided by the concept of poetic discourse as it now exists... The very concept—in the course of its historical formulation from Aristotle to the present day—has been oriented toward the specific 'official' genres and connected with specific historical tendencies in verbal ideological life" (269).

Despite the high degree of versification of Chinese and Japanese novels, until the twentieth-century the novel as a genre had not been treated as "poetic," or "decent," or "serious" reading material for the intellectual and moral benefit of people. Although there were favorable comments on the high quality of poems within the *Genji* and there was enthusiasm in collecting poems from *Hong Lou Meng*, the purpose was the same—to study poetry for poetry's sake. Traditional stylistics failed to recognize poetry as an organic part of novelistic narrative.

Take some poems within *Hong Lou Meng* for example. In Chapter 37, the narrative focuses on a joyous event in Ta-kuan Yüan — the organization of a poetry club by Pao-yü, Tai-yü, and a number of other ladies and maids. The youngsters gather to demonstrate their poetic talents. Their poetry contests reach a climax in chapters 50 and 51 when they start improvising verses one person after another and each within a time limit. The author's description of these scenes reflects an enduring custom of ancient imperial China in general, and of the Emperor Ch'ien Lung era in particular — the so-called “乾隆遺風”: members of genteel families and intellectual circles, young and old, loved to be associated with poetry; they not only took the recital of inspirational poems as an expression of one's social gentility or intellectual superiority, but as, simply, a channel to express one's feelings—joy, sorrow, friendship, frustration, contempt, confusion, etc.—at parties, along travel routes, in solitude, or during meetings between lovers.

Traditional critics would not approach the Hong Lou poems in order to understand the novel as a “poetic” discourse dealing with contemporary cultural, social, economic, or political reality. A standard method was to take a certain number of poems out of their novelistic contexts, and then concentrate on analyzing the techniques the author has employed in composing those poems, or discovering the “original” sources of a strange phrase, or a wonderful line, or a puzzling word.

So, like streetside storytelling, the novel as a genre was treated as, to use a Chinese phrase, “hsia-li pa-jen” 下里巴人 (stuff of low taste for entertainment), if not as “poisonous weed.”⁸ Lyric poetry, on the other hand, stood as “yang ch'un pai-hsieh” 陽春白雪 (pure and highbrow art), and was designated as a predominant form in government examinations. Focusing on famous poets, traditional criticism largely ignored the existence and positive roles of novelists. Today, historians continue to be baffled by thorny problems in identifying the authors of many popular novels written before 19th century, including *Genji monogatari*, *Heike monogatari*, *Sui Hu Chuan*, *Chin P'ing Mei*, and *Hong Lou Meng*. We seem to know that the *Genji* was written by an eleventh-century Japanese court lady known as Murasaki Shikibu, but we cannot be certain whether Murasaki Shikibu is the author's real name, or exactly when, why, and how she wrote it. More acutely, we simply do not know who the author or authors, of the *Heike* are. As to the Chinese novel, even when critics, after a long debate, now tend to agree that Luo Kuan-chung, who wrote *San Kuo Yen-yi*, probably also authored

the *Sui Hu Chuan*, deep doubt remains about the book's authorship, mainly because the available biographical material on Luo is scarce. It is ironic that we have more detailed biographical accounts of Chinese T'ang and Sung poets than we have of Ming and Ch'ing novelists who lived centuries closer to our time.

There are reasons for all this. In Japan as well as in China, traditional stylistics was based on Confucian ideals. In his lifetime, Confucius compiled *The Book of Poetry*. In *The Analects*, he repeatedly mentions the book and persuades his disciples to study the poems in it. He believes that good poetry can help purify one's thought, give one healthy pleasure, and inspire one to become a virtuous person.⁹ Anyone who desires to be a gentleman, he advocates, should possess the necessary accomplishments such as skill in music, chess, painting, and the writing of poetry. Owing to Confucius' teachings, lyric poetry soon became a dominant genre in Chinese literature (and later also in Japanese literature). History shows that even many Chinese and Japanese emperors worked hard to learn how to compose poetry and turned out to be fairly renowned lyric poets.

In contrast, the novel, especially to Confucian moralists, was something hard to appreciate. To them, the novel was associated too closely with the "ugly" aspects of society and individual personality to be pleasant, and too filled with the vernacular to be textually refined. From *Genji monogatari* through *Kosokoku Ichidai Otoko* and *Chin P'ing Mei* to *Hong Lou Meng*, it is true that Chinese and Japanese novels tend to expose the dark sides of society and personality, and narrate in languages spoken by people of all ranks, including monks, prostitutes, and beggars. That the novel has been closely interrelated with streetside oral storytelling, whose listeners were usually the "rustic poor," seems to have been itself a reason for the old stylistics to look down upon it.

So economic, social, and political power relations play important roles in the evaluation of literary forms. "Small talk" as a name for the novel reflects not merely the genre's literary associations but its social status.

In conclusion, as a "multinational phenomenon," the novel has its roots in different nations, continents, and local regions. In genre studies, while it is necessary to move "towards a poetics of the novel" as a whole, more attention should be paid to the novel's national or continental or local peculiarities. Chinese and Japanese novels demonstrate some significant peculiarities when viewed together with Western novels.¹⁰ First of all, they seem to have

risen earlier, and their earliest author was a woman (Murasaki Shikibu) rather than a man. Secondly, unlike Western novels, they do not have pre-existing epic models. Thirdly, throughout their development, they have been in steady interaction with oral storytelling.¹¹ Fourthly, they appear more ready to narrate in lyric verse, although unlike the lyric they have been mistreated as non-poetic and indecent. Finally, as if remembering being looked down upon, and honoring those of their origins which are small in size and oral in form, they remain known as "small talk."

Notes

1. Anthony Burgess, for instance, speculates that probably it is "in the turning of the epic into prose story we seem to find the beginnings of the novel" (15). Although Harry Levin and Maurice Z. Shroader argue that the romance, instead of the epic, seems to be the novel's "immediate predecessor," they too consider the epic as the generic predecessor of both the romance and the novel, without which neither the novel nor the romance could have come into existence (Levin 40, Shroder 17).
2. I am referring to the translation by *Edward G. Seidensticker*.
3. *This refers to The Story of the Stone*, translated by David Hawkes.
4. The quotation is taken from Moss Roberts's translation of the novel, entitled *Three Kingdoms*.
5. I personally like this version of the poem rendered by C.H. Brewitt-Taylor in his translation entitled *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*.
6. The sentence was quoted by Jin'ichi Konishi in his *A History of Japanese Literature*.
7. For a complete list of early collections of poems from *Hong Lou Meng*, consult *Encyclopedia of Hong Lou Meng*, ed. Xifan Li and Qiru Feng (Beijing: Culture and Arts Press, 1990), 1088-1156.
8. Many Chinese and Japanese classical novels have been labeled as "pornographic" or "subversive" and suffered official censorship. Typical examples are *Chin P'ing Mei* (*The Book of the Golden Lotus*), *Koshoku Ichidai Otoko* (*The Life of an Amorous Man*), and *Shuo Yu Ch'üan-chuan* (*The Complete Tale of Yu Fei*). For detail on some Chinese classical novels banned for political reasons, see Tai-loi Ma, "Novels Prohibited in the Literary Inquisition of Emperor Ch'ien-lung," in *Critical Essays on Chinese Fiction*, ed., Winston L.Y. Yang & Curtis P. Adkins (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1980), pp. 201-212.
9. In *The Analects*, Confucius says, "I can use one phrase to characterize all the poems in *The Book of Poetry*: "no evil thought." He shows special interest in a poem entitled, "The Osprey," praising it as "well expressing pleasure but not to the point of debauch" 樂而不淫. He also tells his disciples that poetry can uplift one's spirits. See *The Analects*, trans. Arthur Waley (New York: Vinage Books, 1938), 2:2, 3:20, 8:8.
10. There are differences between Japanese and Chinese novels, which is itself a topic for an essay. In order to keep focus on the issues I have been discussing, I will, for the time being, refrain from exploring that topic.

11. This does not imply that Chinese and Japanese novels have been interacting only with oral storytelling. Just as oral storytelling has displayed rich elements of lyric, historiography, dramatic performance, etc., as a result of its continuous interrelations with those literary genres and artistic forms, Chinese and Japanese novels have proved to be large "narrative vessels" containing multiple forms, styles, and languages, owing to their interactions with various genres apart from oral storytelling.

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