

Notes towards a Poetics of Characterization in the Traditional Chinese Novel: *Hung-lou meng* as Paradigm

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ABSTRACTS

The paper is divided into two parts. In the first part, I observe that "inter-characterization" is one of the most important features of characterization discourse in the traditional Chinese novel. This feature is related to the holistic nature of traditional Chinese thought and especially Confucian "philosophical anthropology." With illustrative examples from *Hung-lou meng*, I discuss two basic kinds of inter-characterization: "immediate-characterization" and "postponed inter-characterization."

The second part is an analysis of the technique of psycho-narration in the traditional Chinese novel, again taking *Hung-lou meng* as an example. First I briefly discuss the significance of the continuum concept of *hsü* (non-being) and *shih* (being) and the unique idea of *hsin* (mind) in traditional Chinese culture. Then I proceed to analyze how psycho-narration is rendered in *Hung-lou meng* in terms of these concepts.

The central idea that is behind almost every argument in this paper is the interdependent nature of the relation between the "self" and the "other" and the profound awareness of the importance of "relationality" in traditional Chinese culture in general and in its novelistic discourse in particular.

The paper is only a *preliminary* attempt towards a poetics of characterization in the traditional Chinese novel. Many conclusions drawn in the paper are, to say the least, tentative, and have to be modified and validated by a much fuller study which examines more works in that tradition.

KEY WORDS

Inter-characterization
psycho-narration
relationality
self

other
mind
hierarchy

parallelism
centrifugal
holistic

A reader nurtured in the tradition of Western narrative will be immediately struck by certain features of characterization in the traditional Chinese novel such as the large number of characters, the profusion of dialogue, the lack of direct psycho-narration,¹ and the unstable distinction between main and secondary characters. This essay is a preliminary exploration of the possible aesthetics of characterization and its various configurations in the traditional Chinese novel as exemplified in *Hung-lou meng* 紅樓夢.² My study will be based on two basic concepts in the Chinese philosophical tradition, "relationality" and "hsü-shih" 虛實.³ These two concepts, I believe, are essential to any understanding of the aesthetics underlying characterization in the traditional Chinese novel. The specific examples analyzed in this essay, though occasionally drawn from other novels, will be mainly confined to *Hung-lou meng*, simply because as the greatest Chinese novel it represents the highest achievement in characterization in this tradition.

Since there has been no substantial study devoted to character theory in the traditional Chinese novel,⁴ I am fully aware of the possible pitfalls and difficulties involved in a project as ambitious as a poetics of characterization. My conclusions, therefore, must be considered tentative observations that will, I hope, lead to such a study.

I. Inter-characterization: Man as Relational Being

Many scholars agree that traditional Chinese philosophy is characterized by its holism, the belief that reality is made up of organic or unified wholes that are greater than the simple sum of their parts. What is emphasized is the interdependence of the parts. A part can only be understood in terms of its relationship to other parts in the context of the whole.⁵ This holism as expressed in Confucian "philosophical anthropology" will be directly relevant to the concerns of this study.

The idea of *jen*: 仁 occupies a central status in the Confucian conception of man. Its implications have been understood and interpreted in many different ways. Among those who have commented on it, K'ang Yu-wei 康有為 offers an interesting etymological explication: graphically, "the word *jen* consists of one part meaning man (亻) and another part meaning many (亼). It means that the way of men is to live together."⁶ Peter A. Boodberg, probably enlightened by K'ang's explication, suggests rendering *jen* in English as "co-humanity." According to Boodberg, the prefix "co-"

would satisfy the semantic factor present in this Chinese term, "the notion of pliant accommodation to others and identification with humanity of the commoner sort."⁷ We might say that in Confucius's philosophical anthropology, a man can only *co-exist* with others. The implications of *jen* are further extended to the important concept of *shu* 恕, which is often translated into English as "altruism" or "reciprocity." Some passages from the *Analects* may be illuminating: "A man of humanity, wishing to establish his own character, also establishes the character of others, and wishing to be prominent himself also helps others to be prominent."⁸ Here, the awareness of 'otherness' is highlighted. To fulfill oneself, one must help others to fulfill themselves.⁹ One's self depends on his or her interactions with others for identification. To be human is to be a human being among other human beings. Liang Shu-ming 梁漱冥 characterizes the Chinese people as *kuan-hsi pen-wei* 關係本位 (relation-oriented): "The focus is not fixed on any individual nor on society, but on the particular nature of the reciprocal relations between individuals who interact with each other. The focus is placed upon the relationship."¹⁰ In the Chinese philosophical tradition, the self has never been conceived of in terms of total opposition to society (otherness). (This certainly reflects the typical "both" thinking mode of the Chinese as opposed to the Western "either-or" thinking mode.) What has been given special emphasis in traditional Chinese thought is the mutual dependence *between* self and others.¹¹

This conviction of the 'relational' nature of an individual is reflected in the traditional Chinese novel where it becomes a central concern for both the novelists and the readers. The most immediate result is that in the full-length traditional Chinese novel there are often more "protagonists" than there are in the Western novel. Furthermore, few traditional Chinese novels are named after a single protagonist as is often the case in the West. In fact the title of many Chinese novels often suggests the presence of a community of "protagonists" within the novels themselves: e.g. *Chin P'ing Mei* 金瓶梅 *Ju-lin wai-shih* 儒林外史 and *Hung-lou meng* (another title for which is *Chin-ling shih-er ch'ai* 金陵十二釵).

The description of one character is often dependent on that of other characters. The contextual relations between the characterizations of different individual characters are often emphasized through various highly self-conscious techniques. Many characterization techniques (which I will discuss in detail later in the essay) typical of traditional Chinese novelistic discourse are closely related to this concept of 'relation.' In fact, we might

say that inter-characterization is one of the most important features of the traditional Chinese novel.¹²

Inter-characterization in the novel is often achieved by means of various kinds of narrative rhetoric, among which the use of the numeral symbol is perhaps the most obvious. Thus, the author uses number images to highlight the special contextual community in which a particular character exists, such as "the twelve beauties of *Chin-ling*," "the one hundred and eight heroes," "the five tiger generals," etc.¹³ All these numbers, apart from their other possible symbolic significance, alert the reader to the communal relations between the characters in a novel.¹⁴

While a large number of characters is a most conspicuous feature of the traditional Chinese novel, another significant feature few critics have noticed is the large number of "a-hierarchical" characters. That is to say, there are often many characters who stubbornly resist our efforts to categorize them as "protagonists," "secondary characters" or "chorus characters" as we can often comfortably do with the characters in a Western novel. In *Shui-hu chuan* 水滸傳, for instance, there are so many characters receiving more or less the same amount of novelistic attention that a reader finds it extremely difficult to attribute the status of protagonist(s) to a single or even only a few characters. All these features are probably due to the holistic design of inter-characterization, which requires not only a large group but also a set of characters that receive approximately the same amount of novelistic attention to enhance its cross-reflection effect.

Many readers have noted that the traditional Chinese novel tends to have an episodic structure composed of various small units each with different individual characters as the focus of characterization. (A character that is a protagonist in one particular unit may become a secondary character in another unit, much like a dramatic performance where various characters appear and exit in turn with no single character monopolizing the stage.) This "instability" further expands the use of inter-characterization to link characters from one hierarchical stratum to those of another. Thus inter-characterization often relies on a spatial character structure. For example, in *Hung-lou meng*, Ch'ing-wen 晴雯 is constantly compared with Hsi-jen 襲人, Ping-erh 平兒, and Yüan-yang 鴛鴦, whose characters (as well as social) status in the novelistic discourse are similar to her own. But, more subtly, Ch'ing-wen is also compared with Tai-yü 黛玉 and Fang-kuan 芳官 who apparently belong to different strata (both in terms of character and social status). A complete picture of the character of Ch'ing-wen requires that we

have to take into account these various strategies of inter-characterization. In fact, given the relative economy in the total description of Ch'ing-wen compared with that of other central characters in the novel, we can say that the often-admired success of her characterization lies partly in the inter-characterization rhetoric. Our knowledge and understanding of Ch'ing-wen as a novelistic character result not only from the author's direct descriptions about her but also, often more subtly, from our own extrapolation of her other features that are only indirectly suggested. These kinds of extrapolation are made possible largely by the total holistic character structure of the novel. Our understanding of Ch'ing-wen as a character is always complemented by our knowledge of other characters. For example, the apparent physical, and, to some extent, emotional resemblance between her and Tai-yü and the contrast between her and Hsi-jen give rise to complex interactions on the level of characterization discourse. These relationships compel the reader to retrieve her character with the simultaneous awareness of the presence of "others," the contextual character zone in which she is presented.

There are two kinds of basic inter-characterization in *Hung-lou meng*: immediate inter-characterization and postponed inter-characterization. By immediate inter-characterization, I refer to those configurations in which comparisons (contrast and parallelism) between different characters are evoked in an immediate context and the significance of inter-characterization is often directly observable. By postponed inter-characterization I refer to those configurations in which the comparison between different characters is not directly perceivable and the significance of inter-characterization cannot be comprehended until it is placed in a much larger perspective (somewhat like the concept of "parallelism at a distance" [*yao-tui* 遙對] often referred to by traditional commentators). Of course, these two kinds of inter-characterization are closely related and interdependent, and the distinction between them is never absolute.

One technique of immediate inter-characterization often successfully employed in *Hung-lou meng* is juxtapositional characterization, where the narrator describes the different responses of a group of characters to a similar phenomenon in a *brief* and yet *sequential* fashion. The juxtapositional intention is often underscored by the very briefness of the depiction allocated to each individual character (which quickens the pace of reading and facilitates a simultaneous vision). This comparative strategy through juxtaposition seems to make particularly effective use of parataxis and conciseness that characterizes the Chinese language. A ready example of this use of

juxtaposition can be found in Chapter 40:

There was a moment of awestruck silence; then, as it dawned on them that they really had heard what they thought they had heard, the whole company, both masters and servants, burst out into roars of laughter.

Shi Xiang-yun, unable to contain herself, spat out a whole mouthful of rice.

Lin Dai-yu, made breathless by laughter, collapsed on the table, uttering weak 'Aiyos.'

Bao-yu rolled over, convulsed, on to his grandmother's bosom.

Grandmother Jia, exclaiming helplessly 'Oh, my heart!' 'Ph, my child!' clung tightly to her heaving grandson.

Lady Wang pointing an accusing finger at Xi-feng, but laughter had deprived her of speech.

Aunt Xue exploded a mouthful of tea over Tan-chun's skirt.

Tan-chun planted a bowlful of rice on the person of Ying-chun.

Xi-chun got up from the table and going over to her nurse, took her by the hand and asked her to massage her stomach.

The servants were all doubled up. Some had to go outside where they could squat down and laugh with abandon. Those who could control themselves sufficiently helped the casualties to mop up or change their clothes.

Only Xi-feng and Faithful remained straight-faced throughout this outburst, politely urging Grannie Liu to begin.

(Hawkes, II, p. 288)¹⁵

Within the space of this short passage, the reader is told how each of a dozen characters responds differently to the trick played on Grannie Liu. Although rendered with great economy, each one's response is perfectly true to his or her character: Tai-yü is "breathless" and "collapsed" because she is supposed to be weak physically (this is the way a "sick beauty" laughs); Pao-yü rolls over on to Grannie Chia's bosom thus reflecting the special relationship between this grandson and his grandmother; Lady Wang 王夫人, although speechless with laughter, points an accusing finger at Hsi-feng 熙鳳, who as an in-law from the Wang family is supposed to listen to her; the servants, of course, are not allowed to laugh as freely as their masters do

and must leave the room to laugh if they cannot control themselves. Thus we see all these very complex relations are subtly referred to in this short passage describing reactions to a joke. The significance of the response of each character has to be conceived of in the context of those of the others.

A passage in Chapter 36 will show another aspect of juxtapositional characterization. One afternoon, Tai-yü happens to see Pao-ch'ai sitting and embroidering beside Pao-yü, who is taking a nap:

This scene made Tai-yü *speechless* and she hid herself quickly behind the window. After a few moments, she suddenly began to *giggle*. Fearful of the possible disturbing noise, she quickly *subdued* her giggles and beckoned Hsiang-yün to come over to look. Wondering what spectacle could have excited her so much, Hsiang-yün hurried over for a peep. She was *tempted to laugh too*, but *restrained* herself at the thought how kind Pao-ch'ai had been to her and how merciless Tai-yü could be with her sharp tongue. . . . "Come on," she said, dragging Tai-yü away before she could make any cutting remarks. "I remember now, Hsi-jen said she was going to the pool at noon to wash some clothes. Let's go and look for her there." Tai-yü saw through this ruse and *snorted*. . . .

When Pao-yü started calling out in his sleep: "who believes what those bonzes and Taoists say? A match between gold and jade? Nonsense! Between wood and stone more is likely, I'd say." Pao-ch'ai was stunned. . . .

(My translation based on the Yangs'. See The Yangs, pp. 524-525. My Italics)¹⁶

黛玉見了這個景況，早已呆了，連忙把身子一躲，半日又抿着嘴笑，卻又不敢笑出來，便招手呼叫湘雲。湘雲見他這般，只當有什麼新聞，忙也來看，才要笑，忽然想起寶釵素日待他厚道，便忙掩住口。知道黛玉口裡不認人，怕他取笑，便忙拉過他來，道：“走罷。我想起襲人來，他說擣午要到池子裡去洗衣裳，想必去了！咱們找他去罷。”黛玉心下明白，冷笑了兩聲，只得隨他走了。

這里寶釵只剛做了兩三個花瓣，忽見寶玉夢中喊罵，說：“和尚道士的話如何信得？什麼‘金玉姻緣’？我偏說‘木石姻緣’！”。

寶釵聽了這話，不覺怔了。

(Here I have to quote the original Chinese passage as some of the subtlety which the English translation has failed to convey is important to my discussion.)¹⁷ In this passage, the responses of the three characters to what they have seen or heard are described with a series of references to their actions. The word *t'ai* 呆 (which I have translated as "speechless") has many connotations. It can mean "blank-minded" or "being at a loss as a result of surprise," and when associated with the word *ch'ih* 痴 (crazy or silly), it can also refer to "infatuation in love." Certainly all these connotations are applicable to Tai-yü's psychology here. Then Tai-yü begins to giggle with her hand over her mouth 握着嘴笑. Note the fact that she does not begin to giggle until after "a while" (*pan-jih* 半日). This alerts us to a possible psychological process which is not directly depicted but which we as readers are expected to infer: that at first, much to her dismay, Tai-yü is shocked at the apparent intimacy between Pao-ch'ai and Pao-yü suggested by the scene, but after "a while," concludes that what she has just seen is pure coincidence and nothing to worry about. This psycho-change is evoked by Tai-yü's transitions from "speechlessness" (呆) to "giggling" (握着嘴笑); at first, out of jealousy, she manages to stifle her giggling in order to keep the scene "intact," hoping that she can embarrass Pao-ch'ai more by laughing at it later together with Hsiang-yün 湘雲. An outsider to this romance triangle, Hsiang-yün also refrains herself from laughing, but for a totally different reason—her concern for Pao-ch'ai. The contrast between them is highlighted in a juxtapositional strategy. They both refrain from laughing and yet one is made "speechless" while the other is apparently simply "indifferent." Furthermore, the word *cheng* 怔 (which I have translated as "stunned") used to describe Pao-ch'ai's response after she hears what Pao-yü says in his sleep certainly echoes the word *t'ai* that depicts Tai-yü's state of mind when she sees the "touching scene." Both words suggest "being at a loss as a result of surprise": *t'ai* reveals Tai-yü's hopeless (at that moment) jealousy whereas *cheng* describes Pao-ch'ai's feelings of terror at Pao-yü's dream talk. Thus, Tai-yü is again juxtaposed with Pao-ch'ai although in a somewhat distant manner.

What is interesting is that in this passage it is the psychology of Hsiang-yün, who is outside the love triangle, that is being directly explored, while, paradoxically, the inner worlds of both Tai-yü and Pao-ch'ai, who are directly involved in the love triangle, are only indirectly and briefly referred to. Thus a superb juxtaposition of "internal" and "external" discourses impels the reader's to create a portrait of "collective psychology." The reader is

urged to infer the psychology of both Tai-yü and Pao-ch'ai on the basis of information about the contents of Hsiang-yün's thoughts (I will return to this example again when I discuss the concept of *hsü-shih*).

Another technique closely related to immediate inter-characterization is parallel characterization, which is sometimes associated with the parallel structure design of a particular chapter.¹⁸ This parallelism is often suggested by chapter titles such as the one that opens Chapter 19: "A very earnest young woman offers counsel by night/And a very endearing one is found to be a source of fragrance by day" (情切切良宵花解語·意綿綿靜日玉生香). The chapter consists of two such incidents: Hsi-jen threatens Pao-yü that she will leave unless he gets rid of his "bad habits," and Pao-yü pays a visit to Tai-yü. Hsi-jen and Tai-yü express their feelings toward Pao-yü in different ways. In fact, Hsi-jen serves as a contrasting parallel to Tai-yü and the individuality of each is thrown into sharper relief because of the comparison embedded in the parallel structure. However, in terms of the character structure of the novel as a whole, Hsi-jen is usually regarded as being parallel to Pao-ch'ai (a fact that few careful readers would miss), Pao-ch'ai is indirectly involved in the comparison as well.

The inter-characterization of Pao-yü, although closely related to this parallelism, takes place on another plane. Chapter 19 opens with a brief prelude in which Pao-yü finds that his page, Ming-yen 茗烟, is "indulging in the game taught to Pao-yü by the Goddess Disenchantment."¹⁹ It is shortly after this that Pao-yü goes to visit Hsi-jen, with whom he has played "the game taught by the Goddess Disenchantment" before, and this is significant. In Chapter 5, before the Goddess teaches Pao-yü about sexual love, she names two kinds of lust: "lust of the flesh (*p'i-fu lan-yin* 皮膚濫淫) and "lust of the mind" (*i-yin* 意淫). From the Goddess's somewhat ambiguous discourse it would seem that the "game" is intended to enable Pao-yü to transcend both the physical and mental aspects of lust.²⁰ The contrast between lust of the flesh and lust of the mind and the sometimes paradoxical inseparability of the two are certainly one of main thematic concerns of the novel. In fact this chapter can be understood as an account of Pao-yü's oscillation between these two poles of "lust," the first symbolically represented by Hsi-jen (as well as Pao-ch'ai) and the second by Tai-yü. In a sense, the whole novel is a grand expression of regret over the "either-or" reality that allows no possibility of an ideal integration of the two (the so-called "combination of beauty" or *chien-mei* 兼美). The image of Ch'in Ko-ch'ing, who is involved with Pao-yü in the "game" in the dream in Chapter 5, reminds Pao-yü of both

Pao-ch'ai and Tai-yü, who respectively represent the two aspects of "lust," carnal and mental. What it appears to indicate is that this kind of "integration" can only be fulfilled in a dream, a fact that has a lot to do with the title of the novel, *Hung-lou meng* (*The Dream of the Red Mansions*). Despite the basic parallel structure of Chapter 19, the inter-characterization involves not two but three characters of which each depends on another for his or her characterization. The subtle comparison between Hsi-jen and Tai-yü evoked in the parallel characterization is made possible by the presentation of Pao-yü, which, in turn, depends on the parallel characterization of Hsi-jen and Tai-yü for heightened effect. In addition, the characterization of Pao-yü, which in this chapter is executed in the context of the parallel presentation of Hsi-jen and Tai-yü, has to be conceived of with reference to the character and thematic structure of the novel as a whole. In this regard, the characterization of Pao-yü is moving toward the category of postponed inter-characterization, which I will discuss in detail shortly, and which illustrates well the frequent convergence of the two kinds of inter-characterization in the novel, and the concomitant as well as inevitable integration of characterization of individual figures with the thematic totality of the novel.

Chapter 21, "Righteous Aroma discovers how to rebuke her mastery by saying nothing/And artful Patience is able to rescue hers by being somewhat less than truthful," (賢襲人嬌嗔箴寶玉, 俏平兒軟語救賈璉), is another example of parallel characterization. P'ing-erh and Hsi-jen, as maids, show their feeling and loyalty to their respective masters in different ways. The contrast between "lust of the flesh" and "lust of the mind" also surfaces here by virtue of the parallel characterization of the two masters, Chia-lien 賈璉 and Pao-yü: the former is having a vulgar affair with a servant girl while the latter is pursuing his indiscriminating love (*fan-ai* 泛愛) (Pao-yü is happy to have a chance to show his admiration to P'ing-erh), giving vent to his "lust of the mind."

One of the most frequently employed techniques of postponed inter-characterization in *Hung-lou meng* is repetitive characterization. Seen in a broader perspective, it is also one of the configurations of what Andrew Plaks has termed "figural recurrence,"²¹ a larger aesthetic concept that concerns the overall structure of novelistic discourse (similar to the concept of *fan* 犯 in the critical vocabulary of traditional Chinese novel commentators). *Fan* originally means "violation." In classical prose criticism, it is a rule that "repetition" is something one should avoid in his prose writing. However, the novel commentators seem to have noticed that, in novelistic discourse,

a purposeful "violation" of this rule in terms of "figural recurrence" can be an extremely effective narrative rhetoric. Here is a perceptive passage from Chang Chu-p'o's (張竹坡) criticism of *Chin Ping Mei* that illustrates this:

One of the marvelous things about the *Chin Ping Mei* is the expert use of the device of duplication (*fan-pi* 犯筆) without being repetitive (*fan* 犯). For example, the author depicts a Ying Po-chüeh and then goes on to depict a Hsieh Hsi-ta, but throughout the work, Ying Po-chüeh remains Ying Po-chüeh and Hsieh Hsi-ta remains Hsieh Hsi-ta. . . . All of these are examples of the marvelous way in which the author purposely duplicates characters (*t'e-t'e fan-shou* 特特犯手) and yet succeeds in individualizing each character so that they all remain distinct.²²

A modern critic, Tzvetan Todorov, also notes that character is "a compromise between difference and repetition."²³ In fact, without difference, repetition is impossible since repetition itself paradoxically implies difference as well as similarity. In other words, nothing can repeat itself or be repeated exactly without any change for repetition is a temporal movement and the effect of time is inevitable.²⁴

Repetitive characterization can take the form of character projection (e.g. Hsi-jen is the projection of Pao-ch'ai or Ch'ing-wen is the projection of Tai-yü) or the form of behavior repetition (e.g. Ming-yen and Pao-yü both indulge in "the game taught" of sexual dalliance). Different characters will do more or less the same thing and thus their deeds form a "comment" on each other. However, both of these types of characterization techniques are usually implicit and can only be perceived in the overall structural perspective of the novel. Since the more readily observable technique of character projection in *Hung-lou meng* has received wide critical attention, I will concentrate on the configurations of "behavior repetition" to illustrate the concept of postponed inter-characterization.

As mentioned above, in Chapter 19 Hsi-jen lies to Pao-yü and tells him that her family is planning to ask the Chia family to release her in order to test Pao-yü's feeling for her and to persuade him to "reform." In Chapter 57, Tai-yü's maid, Tzu-chüan 紫鵲 tells Pao-yü a somewhat similar lie that the members of the Lin family are planning to send for Tai-yü. This lie causes Pao-yü fall ill and thus ensues one of the most fascinating incidents in the novel, a touching comedy. Both Hsi-jen and Tzu-chüan are known for their loyalty to their respective master and mistress. However, Hsi-jen's

loyalty is tinged with self-interest (some readers even accuse her of being disloyal since ultimately she marries someone else), while Tzu-chüan's loyalty seems more selfless. What makes this repetition of lie more ironic is Hsi-jen's remark to Tzu-chüan after the incident: "He's such a fool, he always takes every joke seriously." (你還不知道他那傻子，每每玩話認了真) (*HLM*, pp. 727-728) It is precisely because of this vulnerability of Pao-yü's that Hsi-jen can at least temporarily control him (as we have discussed before). Again, this indirect repetition of a lie, emphasizes the constant effort on Pao-yü's part to achieve an ideal balance between the two kinds of lust mentioned by the Goddess Disenchantment.

The repetition of the symbolic act of "sharing a bed" with Pao-yü on the part of three different characters is also connected with this motif of "lust of mind." Throughout the novel, the narrator explicitly tells us that Tai-yü, Ch'ing-wen and Fang-kuan have slept in the same bed with Pao-yü: in Chapter 19, Pao-yü lies in the bed where Tai-yü is taking a nap; in Chapter 51, after Ch'ing-wen tries to scare She-yüeh 麝月, afraid that she might catch cold, Pao-yü invites her into his bed to warm up; in Chapter 63, after a party, Fang-kuan spends the night asleep at Pao-yü's side. What is emphasized here is that though they have all ostensibly shared a bed with Pao-yü, none of them has had any physical (sexual) relation with him. Thus it would seem that within the character structure of the novel, Tai-yü, Ch'ing-wen and Fang-kuan all belong to the same "category" of "lust of the mind." (The resemblances among the three repeatedly hinted to in the novel attest to this fact.) Interestingly, neither of the only two girls who are said to have had sexual relation with Pao-yü, Pao-ch'ai and Hsi-jen, is involved in this ritual of sharing a bed.

Metaphorical characterization is probably one of the most important devices of postponed inter-characterization in *Hung-lou meng*. The repeated and constant association of different characters with the images of different "objects" throughout the novel gives rise to a complex reciprocity at two levels: the first level is that of reciprocity between specific characters and corresponding objects (e.g. Tai-yü and "wood" or Pao-ch'ai and "snow." It is reciprocal in the sense that the implications of a character and the significance of his or her corresponding objects are mutually dependent on each other. The second level of reciprocity is that between the implications of two different objects symbolizing two different characters, or two different aspects of a single character (e.g. wood [Tai-yü] and metal [Pao-ch'ai] or metal and snow [two aspects of one character—Pao-ch'ai]). At the discourse level,

this close reciprocity results in a fascinating but latent web of cross reference among the characters.

The complexity of metaphorical characterization in *Hung-lou meng* lies in the fact that a character is often associated with several motifs (images of things that appear again and again) which correspond to the different aspects of a character. While Lin Tai-yü is often associated with wood, she is also characterized as a girl of tears. (The allegorical explanation being that she has to repay with her own tears the debt incurred to Pao-yü who watered her when she was a "Crimson Pearl Flower" growing on the bank of the Magic River.) Wood, by extension, plants depend on water for life. Readers of *Hung-lou meng* have often noted that the complementary bipolar relationship between Tai-yü and Pao-ch'ai is rendered metaphorically in terms of the relationship between wood and metal,²⁵ but few have noticed the implications of the link between "tears" and "snow." Snow, the motif so frequently associated with Pao-ch'ai, is simply another form of water under different temperature conditions. And water, as Pao-yü is so fond of saying, "is what girls are made of." Thus, Pao-ch'ai as a girl, like Tai-yü, is certainly made of water too. This reiterates, although in a different manner, the central ideal of the novel, the "combined beauty" or the ideal balance between two kinds of "lust" as we have discussed before. Here, the main factor seems to be temperature. If snow is associated with water, it is also associated with "cold," which is constantly related to Pao-ch'ai who is often described as a "cold beauty." Furthermore, snow has many sometimes paradoxical associations. For instance, while snow is cold, it can also serve as insulation, keeping whatever under it warm. That is why we are told that Pao-ch'ai, despite being always associated with "coldness," suffers from a disease which causes her to become "overheated" (*je-tu* 熱毒). We see, then, that the complexities of a motif demonstrate the complexities of the corresponding character.

When a metonymic image is associated with more than one character, it highlights the dialogic relations between (among) them. For example, because Ch'ing-wen is compared to hibiscus flower (*fu-jung* 芙蓉), after her death, Pao-yü writes the "Invocation to the Hibiscus Spirit" in her memory. The commentator Chih Yen-chai 脂硯齋 observes: "Although this memorial piece is written for Ch'ing-wen, it is in fact directed at Tai-yü '(雖誄晴雯，實乃誄黛玉也)'.²⁶ This is because in Chapter 63, while playing a drinking game, Tai-yü has drawn the card painted with a hibiscus flower. All these plays of metonymic strategy constantly remind the reader of the special

"familial" relation between Tai-yü and Ch'ing-wen.

The above discussion of the various configurations of inter-characterization in *Hung-lou meng* is by no means intended to be an exhaustive taxonomy. But it will, I hope, suffice to demonstrate the nature of inter-characterization and its importance as a decisive feature of traditional novelistic discourse.

II. Between *Hsü* and *Shih*: Aspects of Psycho-narration

Another important aesthetic concept that shapes this traditional novelistic discourse is *hsü-shih* (being and non-being), a concept of continuum. As the character order of the Chinese phrase *hsü-shih* suggests, "non-being" tends to receive more emphasis than "being" ("*hsü-shih*" but not "*shih-hsü*" while in English it is usually not "non-being and being" but "being and non-being"). This linguistic phenomenon may be explained by the persistent fascination of Chinese philosophical and artistic speculation with "negation"—non-action, absence, void, silence, etc.. The most eloquent classical exposition of the significance of negation can be found in the works of the Taoist philosophers Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu: "Tao is empty (like a bowl), it may be used but its capacity is never exhausted. It is bottomless, perhaps the ancestor of all things."²⁷ Here the ultimate being and origin of the Universe, Tao, is identified with the void (*hsü*).

The Tao (Way) that can be told of is not the eternal Tao; the name that can be named is not the eternal name. The Nameless is the origin of Heaven and Earth; The Named is the mother of all things. Therefore let there always be non-being so we may see their subtlety, and let there always be being so we may see their outcome.²⁸

Thus, the concept of *hsü* is extended to also include silence and non-action. The word *hsü* appears as many as fifty times in *Chuang Tzu*.²⁹ Chuang Tzu seems to share Lao Tzu's idea about "negation" when he states "At the Great Beginning there was Non-being. . ." and "the Tao abides in emptiness."³⁰ However, upon closer observation, we find that often the negation emphasized in Taoist thought is actually purposive, or an "affirmation" in the form of negation:

Thirty spokes are united around the hub to make a wheel, but it

is on its non-being that the utility of the carriage depends. Clay is molded to form a utensil, but it is on its non-being that the utility of the utensil depends. Doors and windows are cut out to make a room, but it is on its non-being that the utility of the room depends. Therefore turn being into advantage, and turn non-being into utility.³¹

These examples of common sense call our attention to the often neglected positive significance of those ostensibly negative concepts such as emptiness, non-being and non-action. Furthermore, they demonstrate the dialectic between solidity and emptiness, being and non-being and action and non-action. It is only through the interaction between being (solid matter) and non-being (space) that a wheel can be a wheel, a room can be a room. In Taoist philosophy, the relationship between being and non-being is conceived as complementary and mutually dependent. This profound awareness of the significance of non-being in traditional Chinese thought generates an aesthetics of paradox: "saying more by saying less, or, in the extreme form, saying all by saying nothing."³² This aesthetics of paradox gives rise to one of the most abiding features of Chinese literature and arts: the general tendency to "prefer the implicit over the explicit, the oblique over the direct, and suggestion over description."³³ This heightened aesthetic awareness of negation is epitomized in Lao Tzu's epigram "Great music sounds faint" (*ta-yin hsi-sheng* 大音希聲).³⁴

Perhaps the most splendid expression of this paradoxical aesthetics can be found in Chinese painting. Throughout the history of Chinese painting, artists seem to have been particularly obsessed with "blank space" in painting. This obsession can be witnessed in the remarks of Yün Shou-p'ing, a painter of the late seventeenth-century:

Modern painters apply their minds only to brush and ink, whereas the ancients paid attention to the *absence of brush and ink* (the empty space). If one is also to realize how the ancients applied their minds to the absence of brush and ink, one is not far from reaching the divine quality in painting.³⁵

The handling of space and the use of the blank (the absence of brush and ink) constitute the most original contribution of Chinese painting.³⁶ By the same token, the subtle interplay of *hsü* and *shih* is one of the central aspects of

the dynamic behind Chinese narrative in general and in the discourse of characterization in particular.

In his criticism of *Chin P'ing Mei*, Chang Chu-p'o pays particular attention to narrative techniques related to this concept:

In his treatment of P'an Chin-lien and Li P'ing-erh, he [the author] describes certain of Hsi-men Ch'ing's crimes in full (*shih-hsieh* 實寫), where in his treatment of Li Chiao-erh he describes others of Hsi-men Ch'ing's crimes by implication (*hsü-hsieh* 虛寫).

If the crimes that are actually described are as bad as they are, those that are not portrayed leave us free to wonder how many other indescribable crimes he has committed in the past. How deep is the author's hatred of Hsi-men Ch'ing!"³⁷

Here Chang illustrates the dialectic of *shih-hsieh* (which David Roy translates as "description in full" in the above quoted passage) and *hsü-hsieh* (translated as "description by implication"). Commenting on another aspect of this technique, Chang says:

"In this novel, undescribed but implied incidents (*pu cho pi-mo ch'u* 不著筆墨處) occur without number. In the case of Chang Erh-kuan, the author has hidden another large book between the lines of his text (*wu-pi ch'u* 無筆處). This is an example of profound significance implied but not directly written out on the page (*pi pu tao erh yi tao* 筆不到而意到)."³⁸

Chih Yen-chai, the main commentator on *Hung-lou meng*, is, of course, also keenly aware of the significance of this aesthetics of paradox. Such terms as *shih-hsieh*, *hsü-hsieh* and *pu-hsieh chih hsieh* (不寫之寫 description through non-description) appear very frequently in his criticism of the novel.

In this section, I will discuss psycho-narration in *Hung-lou meng* in the light of the aesthetics of *hsü-shih*. My discussion will concentrate on two aspects: how the inner world of a character is explored by virtue of the subtle interplay between *hsü-hsieh* or implicit discourse and *shih-hsieh* or explicit discourse;³⁹ and how the omniscient third-person narrator suddenly gives up the privilege of directly entering the inner world of a character (authorial silence) in order to achieve a desired effect. As we will see, these two aspects of psycho-narration are closely related to the concept of inter-characterization that I have discussed in the first section of this study.

First, however, a quick look at how human consciousness is conceived of in traditional Chinese thought is in order. Traditionally, there was no exact equivalent to what would be later described as *i-shih* 意識 (consciousness) a term that began to be widely used only as a result of Western influence).⁴⁰ Of course, this does not mean that consciousness as a phenomenon was never studied. The closest concept to "consciousness" in Chinese is perhaps *hsin* (mind-and-heart), although *hsin* is considered "the seat of the affections (*ch'ing*) as well as of thought or reflective consciousness (*ssu*)," and is a concept that has "associations which were visceral rather than cerebral."⁴¹ In classical Confucian thought, the distinction between body and mind (body and soul) never received as much emphasis as it has in the dualist tradition in the West (which was initiated by Plato and developed in Christianity). Rather, what is emphasized is the continuity and correlation between mind and body. Thus the concept of mind is holistic rather than dualistic. "In classical Confucianism, the bodily and ultimately perishable aspect of the human being was . . . never excluded as part of the definition of the person. . . ." ⁴² In this regard, Tu Wei-ming's explication of the Ming philosopher Wang Yang-ming's relevant idea is to the point:

The ears, eyes, mouth, nose, and four limbs are parts of the body. But only in reference to the mind can they see, hear, speak, or act. Simultaneously the mind depends on the functions of the sensory organs to satisfy its own demands for seeing, hearing, speaking, or acting. The body as a physical existence is where the mind dwells, but the mind gives command to the body.⁴³

Thus, mind and body have always been conceived of in the context of "person" as a "psychosomatic process."⁴⁴ In Neo-Confucianism, "mind is understood as both the unifying center of the person and the unifying element among persons. It is the agency of communication through which the person recognizes his fundamental relatedness to others and to the totality of being."⁴⁵ This fascination with "mind" in the so-called *Hsin-hsüeh* school of Neo-Confucianism (the School of Mind) (which de Bary has described as the "Neo-Confucian interiority"⁴⁶) has some paradoxical implications: what has received so much emphasis is not the autonomy of the mind but its "centrifugal" aspect—its capacity to internalize the outside "others" so that harmony can be achieved between the inner and outer.

We may now better understand certain basic convictions behind the Chinese novelists' approaches to psycho-narration. For one thing, the

psychology of an individual always has to be explored with the holistic awareness of the continuity of inner mind and outer action (a Chinese novelist would seldom indulge in a kind of psycho-narration that totally neglects outer action). That is to say, what fascinates the Chinese author is not the exploration of mind per se but its significance with regard to what is outside it; choice making, which is such an important aspect of the concept of individual psychology in the West, is significant to the Chinese novel not because of the fascination with the action of choice making itself but because of the interest in the *consequence* of such choice in terms of its effect not only on the choice maker himself but also on others. In other words, what receives most novelistic attention in psycho-narration in a traditional Chinese novel is the centrifugal rather than the centripetal aspect of psychology. The generalization here will, I believe, be validated by the following specific analyses.

Let us turn to the first aspect of psycho-narration, namely, how the inner world of a character is explored by means of the interplay of implicit discourse (*hsü-hsieh*) and explicit discourse (*shih-hsieh*). Few readers of *Hung-lou meng* would forget the superb psycho-narration of Tai-yü when she hears Pao-yü enthusiastically praising her in front of Hsi-jen and Hsiang-yün (Chapter 32). In this passage the narrator explicitly tells us what is going on in Tai-yü's mind:

. . . Mingled emotions of happiness, alarm, sorrow and regret assailed her.

Happiness:

Because after all (she thought) I wasn't mistaken in my judgement of *you*. I always thought of *you* as a true friend, and I was right.

Alarm:

Because if *you* praised me so unreservedly in front of other people, *your* warmth and affection are sure, sooner or later, to excite suspicion and be misunderstood.

Regret:

Because if you are my true friend, then I am yours and the two of us are a perfect match. But in that case why did there have to be all this talk of "the gold and the jade"? Alternatively, if there had to be all this talk of gold and jade, why weren't we the two to have them? Why did there have to be Bao-chai with her golden locket?

Sorrow:

Because though there are things of burning importance to be said, without a father or a mother I have no one to say them for me. And besides, I feel so muzzy lately and I know that my illness is gradually gaining a hold of me. (The doctors say that the weakness and anaemia I suffer from may be the beginning of a consumption.) So even if I am your true-love, I fear I may not be able to wait for you. And even though you are mine, you can do nothing to alter my fate. (Hawkes, II, pp. 131-32. My italics)

黛玉聽了這話，不覺又喜又驚，又悲又嘆。所喜者：果然自己眼力不錯，素日認他是個知己，果然是個知己；所驚者：他在人前一片私心稱揚于我，其親熱厚密，竟不避嫌疑；所嘆者：你既為我的知己，自然我亦可為你的知己，既你我為知己，又何必有“金玉”之論呢？既有“金玉”之論，也該你我有之，又何必來一寶釵呢？所悲者：父母早逝，雖有銘心刻骨之言，無人為我主張；況近日每覺神思恍惚，病已漸成，醫者更云：“氣弱血虛，恐致勞怯之症。”我雖為你的知己，但恐不能久待；你縱為我的知己，奈我薄命何！——
(HLM p. 388; my emphasis)

As indicated by the words, “happiness,” “alarm,” etc., Tai-yü’s direct discourse is framed by that of the narrator.⁴⁷ Hawkes seems to be quite conscious of this mixed discourse in his translation since he typographically isolates these words of the narrator. However, he fails to notice the subtle nuances in Tai-yü’s discourse suggested by the change of interlocutor from “he” to “you” in referring to Pao-yü. Hawkes must have felt uneasy with the apparent inconsistency of the pronoun and thus translates “he” in the original to “you” (italized in my quotation above). In fact, this calculated inconsistency of interlocutor is crucial for it evokes the psychological process by which Tai-yü attempts to persuade herself. In the first two passages, when Tai-yü refers to Pao-yü as “he,” the logical interlocutor of her internal speech, the implied “you,” is actually herself: she is the hypothetical audience of her own words. However, as soon as she appears to have successfully persuaded herself, the interlocutor of her discourse changes to the “you,” which corresponds to the earlier “he,” that is Pao-yü. The hypothetical listener is now Pao-yü (instead of herself), and what has been a formal monologue becomes a formal dialogue. After having convinced herself of Pao-yü’s love, she calls his attention (as well as her own) to the obviously insur-

mountable obstacles in the way of fulfilling that love. Her sense of sorrow over what cannot be helped becomes the keener because she is convinced of Pao-yü's love for her. The subtle psychological process suggested by the implicit discourse (the change of interlocutor) complements her rigorous reasoning of the explicit discourse, and can be taken as an example of an implicit discourse within an explicit one (*shih chung yu hsü* 實中有虛).

This passage is also representative of the use of psycho-narration in the traditional Chinese novel in general in that the presence of "otherness" is often given a prominent place in the direct depiction of the inner world of a character. In other words, the psychology of an individual is often rendered in the form of an internal monologue which, paradoxically, always amounts to a dialogue between the self and the other(s). In *Hung-lou meng*, whenever the author resorts to psycho-narration in terms of direct discourse (directly describing the character's thoughts), the presence of an interlocutor (the other) becomes a must. That is, the internal thinking of a character is always "addressed" to an addressee and the psychological state of a character must be perceived in its context of psychological reference to others. The subtle function of interlocutor in revealing the psychological process of Tai-yü is very illuminating in this regard. That is why many psychological descriptions in the traditional Chinese novel are in the form of "interior dialogues" rather than "interior monologues."

Now let us return briefly to the example in Chapter 36 in which the reader is shown how Tai-yü and Hsiang-yün respond differently to the same situation (the scene where Pao-ch'ai sits embroidering beside the sleeping Pao-yü). Here the narrator merely describes Tai-yü's external reactions without any direct excursion into her inner psyche but allows the reader direct access to Hsiang-yün's mind. In other words, Tai-yü's state of mind is described by means of implicit discourse while Hsiang-yün is depicted through explicit discourse. The individuality of the psyche of each character is deftly explored through the interplay of *hsü* and *shih*.

Another kind of interplay of explicit and implicit psycho-narration is paratactical. That is to say, an explicit discourse is juxtaposed with an implicit one without any *apparent* connection. There is an excellent example of this in Chapter 27:

... she suddenly became aware that the figure ahead of her just disappearing inside it was Bao-yü. She stopped and lowered

her eyes pensively again to the ground.

"Bao-yü and Dai-yü know each other since they were little," she reflected. "They are used to behaving uninhibitedly when they are alone together. They don't seem to care what they say to one another; and one is never quite sure what sort of mood one is going to find them in. And Dai-yü, at the best of times, is always so touchy and suspicious. If I go in now after him, he is sure to feel embarrassed and she is sure to start imagining things. I would be better to go back without seeing her . . ."

. . . but just at that moment she noticed two enormous turquoise-colored butterflies a little way ahead of her. . . . She watched them fascinated and thought she would like to play a game with them. . . . To and fro fluttered the pair of butterflies, sometimes alighting for a moment, but always flying off again before she could reach them. . . . By the time she had reached the Rain Drop Pavilion she was perspiring freely. . . . She was about to turn back when she became aware of a low murmur of voices coming from inside the pavilion. . . . Bao-chai, listening outside, gave a start. . . .

(Hawkes, II, pp. 25-27)

At first, the reader is allowed direct access to Pao-ch'ai's mind as she tells herself that she must avoid emotional involvement and embarrassment — a very cool mind indeed. This explicit discourse is followed by a seemingly unrelated passage describing her chasing butterflies. However, a reader acquainted with traditional Chinese literary conventions will soon detect the strong sensuality and poetic sensitivity that inform this passage, which bear some resemblance to the famous scene of "Garden Sweeping" in *the Peony Pavilion* 牡丹亭 in which Bridal Tu 杜麗娘 experiences sexual awakening. The title of the chapter is telling enough: "Beauty Perspiring sports with butterflies by the Raindrop Pavilion" 滴翠亭楊妃戲彩蝶, and very suggestive also are such phrases as *hsiang-han ling-ling* 香汗淋漓 and *chiao-ch'uan hsi-hsi* 嬌喘細細, whose erotic innuendo the English translation "perspiring freely" obviously fails to convey. The desires which Pao-ch'ai has consciously reasoned away are unconsciously channeled into this "ritual" of sexual awakening. Thus, this superb interplay of implicit and explicit discourses explores, in a paratactical manner, both the conscious and unconscious levels of Pao-ch'ai's psyche as well as the intricate relations between these two levels.

Another aspect of psycho-narration in *Hung-lou meng* is what I would term "paralipsis," which is defined in *OED* as "a rhetorical figure in which a speaker emphasizes something by affecting to pass it by without notice." (1933, VII, 455)⁴⁸ More specifically, by "paralipsis," I refer to those narrative situations in which the narrator suddenly stops and changes his discourse, much against the reader's expectations, as when, for example, he refuses to enter the inner world of a character or withholds much-needed information). This sudden "stop" or "change" often creates a conspicuous blank which the sensitive reader must fill in on his or her own. In order to do this, the reader has to depend on cross-reference for extrapolating the potential meanings concealed by paralipsis, and a holistic vision becomes an aesthetic necessity.

For an illustration of the technique of paralipsis, I will again refer to the incident in Chapter 36 in which Pao-ch'ai hears the dreaming Pao-yü saying that he would prefer to believe in the predestined match between wood and stone than in that between gold and jade. Although the reader would normally expect the narrator to offer a substantial passage detailing Pao-ch'ai's psychological state at this kind of *telling* moment, Pao-ch'ai's response is described simply as "stunned." Thus, the reader is denied this "crucial" information and there is no "telling." It is as if the narrator simply had no time for further elaboration or Pao-ch'ai's thoughts were unexpectedly cut short by the sudden return of Hsi-jen ("She had still not recovered from the shock of hearing them when Aroma returned." Hawkes, II, p. 203). In order to retrieve the meaning omitted as a result of this paralipsis, the reader has to rely on things Pao-ch'ai has thought and done on other occasions that can be related to "the match between gold and jade." Thus, he or she will remember that in Chapter 8 Pao-ch'ai, perhaps not so innocently, has asked to see Pao-yü's jade, which in turns prompts Pao-yü to ask to see her golden locket. And in Chapter 28, Pao-ch'ai feels embarrassed (the original Chinese is *wu-i-szu* 無意思, *HLM* p. 341) and purposely keeps aloof from Pao-yü because her mother has mentioned that she must be married to someone who owns the jade that matches her golden locket and also because Yüen-ch'un has singled her out as the only girl who would receive the same selection of gifts as Pao-yü.

Interestingly enough, the paralipsis here in Chapter 36 echoes a minor paralipsis in Chapter 34, where Pao-ch'ai comes as near as she will to explicit expressing her feelings when she says to Pao-yü after he has been whipped by his father. "If you had listened to what one said, this would never have happened. Everyone is so upset now. It isn't only Grandmother and Lady

Wang, you know. Even — She checked herself abruptly, *regretting that she had allowed her feelings to run away with her*, and lowered her head, blushing." (Hawkes, II, p. 156. The italicized words represent Hawkes's own interpretation rather than a word-for-word translation. See also *HLM* p. 404). Pao-ch'ai is oscillating between a conscious effort to maintain a proper distance from Pao-yü and an often unconscious love for him. Returning to the example in Chapter 36, we will see that Pao-ch'ai is stunned at this unexpected and direct (even though it is spoken in a dream) revelation of the meaning of "the match between gold and jade" and she is stunned to find that Pao-yü is so predisposed toward Tai-yü rather than herself, probably a result of her own aloofness. In short this extremely subtle passage in Chapter 36, which we have analyzed from three different perspectives, is a superb example of inter-characterization in terms of the interplay of *hsü* and *shih*.

Many readers have been impressed with the depth *Hung-lou meng* achieves in the exploration of the inner world of its various characters. However, as the above discussion has shown, this depth is the result of subtle configurations of interplay between *hsü* and *shih* rather than direct excursions (*shih-hsieh*) into the psychology of individual characters. *Hung-lou meng* contains more direct psychological depictions than earlier Chinese novels. However, compared with most Western novels, *Hung-lou meng* places far greater emphasis on implicit discourse as a means of psycho-narration. In short, the technique of "actional psycho-narration" (whereby the psychology of a character is explored through the description of his or her outer behavior with limited direct excursion into his or her inner mind), which is typical of most traditional Chinese novels, achieves its highest sophistication in *Hung-lou meng*.

In the preceding pages, I have attempted to highlight some features of characterization in the traditional Chinese novel with illustrations from *Hung-lou meng*. Retrospectively, I might point out that underlying almost every argument in this discussion has been the concept of "otherness." One has to remain constantly aware of the contextual significance of *other* characters in order to fully comprehend the individuality of a particular character; an implicit discourse can only acquire its full meaning when it is perceived in the context of reference to an explicit discourse (the other), or vice versa. Both types of discourses are meaningful only in terms of a *relational* process. I hope the discussion of "inter-characterization" in this essay will lead to further discussion not only on the question of characterization but

also on other narrative features of the traditional Chinese novel, whose generic nature is, to a large degree, shaped by this aesthetics of "relationality."

Notes

1. A term used by Dorrit Cohn in her *Transparent Mind: Narrative Modes of Presenting Consciousness* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973). Throughout the paper, I borrow this term to refer to all those narrative elements that directly bear upon our understanding of the inner world of a character. The reason for adopting such a broad term will become clear in my discussion of how the concept of mind is holistically conceived in traditional Chinese culture.
2. Here, by "traditional Chinese novel," I refer to those novels of the pre-May Fourth Movement, most of which were produced without interactions with their Western counterparts. They are mainly represented by the novels of the Ming-Ch'ing period.
3. The semantic implications of *hsü-shih* in Chinese resist any accurate English rendering and have to be determined in a specific context. For the time being, I render it as "being and non-being."
4. As far as I know, the only two studies in English that touch on theory of character in the traditional Chinese novel are John C. Y. Wang's "The Nature of Chinese Narrative: A Preliminary Statement on Methodology," *Tamkang Review* 6-7 (1975-1976): 229-245 and Andrew H. Plaks's "Towards a Critical Theory of Chinese Narrative," *Chinese Narrative: Critical and Theoretical Essays*, ed. Andrew H. Plaks (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), pp. 309-352; the most ambitious study in Chinese to date is Liu Tsai-fu's (劉再復) *Hsing-ko tsu-he lun* 性格組合論 (Shanghai: Shang-hai wen-i, 1986). But none of them is solely concentrated on characterization in the traditional Chinese novel.
5. For various discussions of the possible implications of holism in Chinese philosophical tradition, see Donald J. Munro, ed., *Individualism and Holism: Studies in Confucian and Taoist Values* (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies of the University of Michigan, 1985).
6. Wing-tsit Chan ed. & trans., *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 735.
7. Peter A. Boodberg, "The Semasiology of Some Primary Confucian Concepts," *Philosophy East and West* 2 (Jan. 1953), p. 330.
8. 6:28, Chan, p. 31.
9. This Confucian moral imperative of relationality assumes an epistemological dimension in *Chuang Tzu*: "Everything is its own self; everything is something else's other. Things do not know that they are other things' other; they only know that they are themselves. Thus it is said, the other arises out of the self, just as the self arises out of the other. This is the theory that self and other give rise each other." *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, compiled by Wm. Theodore de Bary et. al (New York: Columbia University, 1960), pp. 70-71. On the role played by this concept of "relationality" in the sinicization process of Buddhism in China (especially in case of the Hua-yen school), see Francis H. Cook, *Hua-yen Buddhism* (University Park and London: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1977), chapter 2, pp. 20-33.

10. Liang Shu-ming, *Chung-kuo wen-hua yao-i* 中國文化要義 (Taipei: Cheng-chung shu-chü, 1967), p. 94.
11. Cf. Ambrose Y. C. King, "The Individual and Group in Confucianism: A Relational Perspective," Munro, pp. 57-70.
12. Cf. Andrew H. Plaks's idea of "composite characters" in his "Toward A Critical Theory of Chinese Narrative." My hypothesis of inter-characterization may share a lot with his "composite characters." The main difference, however, is that Plaks's emphasis is on the total effect suggested by a group of "composite characters," while mine is on the highlighted individuality of each character as a result of inter-characterization. Note Plaks's elaboration: "It must be emphasized that this method of characterization goes beyond the simple grouping of characters to provide a set of mutual foils to highlight the specific traits of each, to a point at which composite image of the hero, the pilgrim, the woman of pleasure, or the ideal young maiden." p. 345. Tang Chün-i 唐君毅 offers a similar observation in his *Chung-kuo wen-hua chih ching-shen chü-chih* 中國文化之精神價值: "The Chinese novel and drama strive to present a broad picture of the whole human world rather than concentrate on the character of a single protagonist" (Taipei: Cheng-chung shu-chü, 1957, 1975 rpt.), p. 247.
13. Cf. Hsiao Ping 蕭兵, "Chung-kuo ku-tien hsiao-shuo ti tien-hsing ch'un," 中國古典小說的典型群 *Ming-Ch'ing hsiao-shuo yen-chiu* 明清小說研究 I (1985): 19-47.
14. The contextualism implied in this aesthetic concept of inter-characterization may also be related to the linguistic mentality of the Chinese people. Without any inflections and conjugations, the same word can function as noun, adjective or verb, depending on the context. This is especially true with classical Chinese, in which the meaning of a word is extremely contextual.
15. The English translation of *Hung-lou meng* quoted in this essay, unless otherwise noted, is from *The Story of the Stone*, trans. David Hawkes and John Minford, 5 vols., (Penguin Books, 1973-1986). Hereafter cited as "Hawkes."
16. Ts'ao Hsüeh-ch'in and Kao Ngo, *A Dream of Red Mansions*, trans. Yang Hsien-yi and Gladys Yang (Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1978). Hereafter as "The Yangs."
17. *Hung-lou meng* 紅樓夢 (Peking: Jen-min wen-hsüeh, 1979), vol. II, pp. 436-437. (hereafter as *HLM*) The emphasis is mine.
18. However, the fact that most chapters in a traditional Chinese novel consist of an account of two incidents does not necessarily presuppose the existence of parallel characterization. This has to depend on whether any meaningful relation can be established between the characters involved in the two incidents narrated in the chapter.
19. This euphemism 干那警幻所訓之事 appears only three times in the novel. The other two times are when Pao-yü in his dream has his first sexual experience with Ch'in Ko-ch'ing 秦可卿 and when he actually makes love with Hsi-jen. Thus, Ming-yen's sexual adventure here can be considered a parody of Pao-yü's.
20. The "reliability" of the discourse of the Goddess has remained an unsolved mystery in the novel.
21. A term Andrew Plaks uses in his *The Four Masterworks of the Ming Novel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), pp. 87, 95f, 98, 102-104, 216-219, 392-94, 314.
22. David Robston, ed. *How to read the Chinese Novel* (forthcoming), p. 398.
23. Tzvetan Todorov, "Reading as Construction," *The Reader in the Text: Essays on*

- Audience and Interpretation*, ed., Susan Suleiman and Igne Crosman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 77.
24. For an interesting discussion of two basic concepts of repetition, one emphasizing similarity and the other difference, see J. Hillis Miller's "Introduction" in his *Fiction and Repetition: Seven English Novels* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), pp. 1-21. For a discussion of the paradoxical nature of repetition, see Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, "The Paradoxical Status of Repetition," *Poetics Today*, 1:4 (1980), 151-159.
 25. Cf. Plaks's comment on the possible implications of the relation between wood and water metaphors in the character of Lin Tai-yü, *Archetype and Allegory in the Dream of the Red Chamber* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 62, and also Chapter 4, pp. 54-83.
 26. Cheng Ch'ing-ho 陳慶浩 *Hsin-pien shih-t'ou-chi chih-yen-chai p'ing-yü chi-hsiao* 新編石頭記脂硯齋評語集校 (Taipei: Liang-chih ch'u-pan shih-ye kung-ssu, 1979), p. 633.
 27. Chan, p. 141.
 28. Chan, p. 139.
 29. *A Concordance to Chuang Tzu* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956), p. 423.
 30. Arthur Waley, *The Way and Its Power* (London: 1938), p. 58.
 31. Chan, pp. 144-45.
 32. James J. Y. Liu, "The Paradox of Poetics and the Poetics of Paradox," *Proceedings of the Xth Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association*, ed. James J. Wilhelm (New York and London: Carland Publishing Inc., 1985), p. 640. The same essay with modifications (concentrating more on Chinese poetics) also appears under the same title in *The Vitality of the Lyric Voice: Shih Poetry from the Late Han to the T'ang*, ed. Shuen-fu Lin and Stephen Owen (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), pp. 49-70.
 33. Liu, p. 296.
 34. Cf. Li Tse-hou 李澤厚, et. al eds., *Chung-kuo mei-hsüeh shih* 中國美學史 (Peking: Chung-kuo she-hui k'o-hsüeh ch'u-pan she, 1984), v. 1, pp. 220-23.
 35. Osvald Siren, *The Chinese on the Art of Painting* (Peking, 1936), p. 199; my emphasis.
 36. Cf. Mai-mai Sze, *The Tao of Painting: A Study of the Ritual Disposition of Chinese Painting* (New York: Pantheon Books Inc., 1956), v. 1, pp. 95-97.
 37. "Chang Chu-p'o and his *Chin P'ing Mei tu fa*," trans. David T. Roy, Rolston, p. 77.
 38. Rolston, p. 384; I have slightly modified the translation.
 39. Here I prefer to translate *hsü-hsieh* and *shih-hsieh* as "implicit discourse" and "explicit discourse."
 40. Cf. Ru xin, "Mind and Consciousness in Chinese Philosophy: A Historic Survey," *Phenomenology of Life in a Dialogue between Chinese and Occidental Philosophy*, ed. Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka (Dordrecht, Holland, D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1984), pp. 77-84. Consciousness as phenomenon attracted enormous attention from the early Chinese Buddhist school—the Consciousness-Only School (*Wei-shih* 唯識). However, the "hair-splitting" and abstract approaches of the School proved too alien to the Chinese and it failed to exert any substantial influence on the later generations of Chinese intellectuals.
 41. Irene Bloom, "On the Matter of Mind: The Metaphysical Basis of the Extended

- Self," Munro et. al, pp. 293-330.
42. Bloom, p. 296.
 43. Tu Wei-ming, "Subjectivity and Ontological Reality: An Interpretation of Wang Yang-ming's Mode of Thinking," in Tu Wei-ming, *Humanity and Self-cultivation: Essays in Confucian Thought* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985), pp. 151-152.
 44. A term Roger T. Ames uses in his "the Meaning of Body in Classical Chinese Thought," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 24:1 (1984) 39-54.
 45. Bloom, p. 301.
 46. "Introduction," *The Unfolding of Neo-Confucianism*, ed. Wm. Theodore de Bary et. al (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975), pp. 13-15.
 47. In the Yangs' translation, all the direct discourse of Tai-yü here is rendered into the form of indirect discourse (reported by the narrator). This certainly loses much of the subtlety of the original (The Yangs, pp. 469-70). And this kind of mixed discourse (direct and indirect discourse integrated together) is different from the so-called "free indirect speech" in a Western novel, which has been so heatedly discussed in recent theories of narratology.
 48. In his discussion of focalization, Gerard Genette defines "paralipsis" as "the omission of some important action or thought of the focal hero, which neither the hero nor the narrator can be ignorant of but which the narrator chooses to conceal from the reader." *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, Jane E. Lewin, trans (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1984), p. 196.

