# The Techniques of Narrative: Mao Tsung-kang (fl. 1661) and *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*

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Sometime during the early 1640s, Chin Sheng-t'an 金聖嘆 had published his annotated edition of the *Shui-hu Chuan* 水滸傳 (*The Water Margin*). One thrust of Chin Sheng-t'an's extensive critical apparatus was to argue this novel's claims on the attention of readers in opposition to the attractions of other novels:

> In *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* [Chin maintains] three are too many characters, too many events, and too much dialogue. The author's pen, therefore, cannot move and turn at will. The [entire work] is just like an official sending orders through his attendants – the latter simply repeat the command given them, for how dare they change a word of it? *The Journey to the West*, on the other hand, is altogether too fantastic. The author has just made it up paragraph by paragraph as he has gone along – like letting off a string of firecrackers on New Year's Eve, each one exploding in turn with no connecting link between them. When we read it, we can stop at any point [in the novel].[1]

Chin Sheng-t'an's edition of *The Water Margin* proved both popular and influential. He had shortened the novel by removing its last thirty chapters (Lu Hsün says of this that it leaves the novel like "a dragonfly with a broken tail"), and had also made numerous alterations to the actual text of the work. But despite (or because of) such editorial efforts, Chin Sheng-t'an's 70-chapter version of the novel very quickly superseded all previous editions

and became the version most usually read by suceeding generations of Chinese readers of the novel – a situation that prevailed until recent decades. More importantly, Chin Sheng-t'an's commentary was at once a summation of an increasing critical awareness of the nature and value of vernacular fiction, and an inspiration to later critics. Both the substance of the commentary – Chin Sheng-t'an's techniques of analysis and the nomenclature he employed – as well as its format, served in large part to shape the future course of fictional criticism in traditional China.

Yet Chin Sheng-t'an's specific opinions on individual novels did not remain unchallenged. Writing some twenty years latter, in about 1661, Mao Tsung-kang 毛宗崗,[2] a man much influenced by Chin Sheng-t'an's critical methodology, in advocating the claims of the novel *San-kuo chi t'ung-su yen-i* 三國志通俗演義 (*The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*), was to take direct issue with Chin Sheng-t'an's view of this novel:

> It is better to read *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* [Mao argues] than to read *The Water Margin*. Although the story of *The Water Margin* is more true to fact than that of *The Journey to the West*, it too is prone to willful fabrication and invention. Its craftsmanship, therefore, is not demanding, and in the final analysis it cannot compare with *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* which relates actual events without allowing [the author] any room for distortion. This indeed is masterful craftsmanship![3]

This divergence of opinions over the relative merits of the two earliest produce of China's major vernacular novels is more than just a case of special pleading.[4] Mao Tsung-kang's reference here to "actual events" – elsewhere he states that the novel ". . . gives a factual account of the affairs of prince and emperor; its story is true and verifiable"[5] – points to an understanding of the purpose and method of vernacular fiction that differs markedly from that argued by Chin Sheng-t'an. As at once both an important novel in its own right and the most outstanding representative of a predominant sub-genre of traditional Chinese fiction, *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* presented Mao Tsung-kang with particular problems. In his critical treatment of the novel, therefore, Mao Tsung-kang, a critic who has been held to have done little more than ". . . appl[y] Chin's [Chin Sheng-t'an's] critical approaches to China's best-known historical novel,"[6] arrives at some noteworthy insights into the nature of the narrative of the

novel. And, as I hope to show, when contrasted with Chin Sheng-t'an's analysis of *The Water Margin*, Mao Tsung-kang displays a unique awareness of the importance of pace, rhythm and economy to narrative in general.

In order to fully appreciate Mao Tsung-kang's work on *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, we must first consider the novel as it presented itself to him. The earliest extant edition of *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (and possibly the first ever published edition) carries a preface dated 1494. The novel however is said to have in fact been published in 1522[7] – that is, more than sixty years before the probable dating of the earliest extant edition of *The Water Margin*.[8] It is a work of immense length. Its style is terse, and its language tends toward a simple form of classical Chinese. As indicated by its title, the novel concerns itself with the history of the Three Kingdoms Period (220-280) – that period of disorder and almost continuous civil war which followed the collapse of the Eastern Han dynasty (250-280) and which continued until the establishment of the Western Chin dynasty (265-317). The narrative focuses its attention upon the conflict between the three states of Shu, Wei and Wu, and for its stuff-material it is largely indebted to the Standard Dynastic History of the period, Chen Shou's 陳壽 (233-297) *San-kuo chi* 三國志 (*Chronicle of the Three Kingdoms*) as supplemented by P'ei Sung-chih's 裴松之 commentary of 429. In contrast to this work, however, but in keeping with later official historiography,[9] the novel accords the state of Shu with legitimacy.

The 1522 edition of the novel carried an important preface, attributed to one Chiang Ta-ch'i 蔣大器.[10] It is a preface that provides one of the earliest discussions of the nature and value of vernacular fiction, and a defence of historical fiction in particular. After a restatement of the orthodox Confucian didactic view of history, the preface goes on to argue that the novel manages to avoid both the impenetrability to ordinary people of official historiography, and the vulgarity of language and doubtful historicity of the many popular accounts of the period. "The waxing and waning of the states of the Three Kingdoms Period, the alternating periods of order and chaos, the worth of the individuals involved, [in short] all the events of a thousand years become immediately intelligible as soon as one opens up the first volume,"[11] Chiang Ta-ch'i claims, and ordinary men and women will be able to model their own behaviour on the exemplars of loyalty, filial piety, chastity and righteousness found therein.[12]

This then was the novel that Mao Tsung-kang set to work upon in the early 1660s. His commentary takes up some of the arguments found in the

earliest edition of the novel. It is unlikely, however, that he was working from the 1522 edition. The mid-and late Ming period had seen the publication of numerous editions of the novel, a number of which carried rudimentary commentaries.[13] Mao Tsung-kang declared himself dissatisfied with such "vulgar editions" (*su-pen* 俗本). His first task, therefore, was that of editor, and in this regard he proved himself more scrupulous, if also just as disingenuous as his literary mentor Chin Sheng-t'an. On the one hand, he does not indulge his own critical prejudices at the expense of the text of the novel to the extent that Chin Sheng-t'an had earlier with his edition of *The Water Margin*, providing us also with a very clear statement of the extent and nature of the revisions that he did make.[14] On the other hand, he claims that in making such textual changes he was working from an "ancient edition" (*ku-pen* 古本) – a claim that is almost certainly not true.[15] The overall effect of Mao Tsung-kang's editorial labours is that his recension of the novel presents itself unashamedly as a novel, rather than as some form of popularized historiography, a guise assumed by the 1522 edition. But it was a novel that was firmly grounded in historical fact, that served to make its didactic message abundantly clear, and from which infelicities of style or language had been removed in order that it did not offend the sensibilities of an educated readership. One specific example of this can be observed in the changes that Mao Tsung-kang made to the typographical format of the work. He divided the novel into 120 chapters, supplying a two lined parallel phrase as title for each, in a manner that had become conventional with vernacular fiction.[16] By Mao Tsung-kang's time, the novel had become a self-conscious art. It had the air of having a conviction, almost a theory behind it and of being the expression of an artistic faith. Not only was it now considered a valid medium for serious mimetic and moral meaning, but its extrinsic appearance had also to accord with certain expectations.

Chin Sheng-t'an's edition of *The Water Margin* had been entitled *The Fifth Work of Genius*. In a fit of one-upmanship, Mao Tsung-kang gave his edition of *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* the title *The First Work of Genius* (*Ti-i ts'ai-tzu shu* 第一才子書). To it he appended a preface, a section entitled "How to Read *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*," a 'Chapter Critique' to the beginning of each chapter and an interlinear commentary printed throughout the text of the novel in double rows of lower case characters. It was a critical methodology that had served earlier Chinese critics of fiction well. The prefatory material afforded the critic

the opportunity to give expression to his generalized views on fiction in general, and the novel in hand in particular, while the interlinear commentary served both to relate these views directly to the text of the novel and to guide reader's in the critic's own idiosyncratic reading of it. The methodology had its origins in much earlier traditions of textual and literary criticism, but had become especially prevalent during the Ming dynasty.[17] It had initially been reserved to editions of the Classics, the canons of official historiography, and later, the prose writing of the T'ang and Sung dynasty masters. Its use in the hands of critics of vernacular fiction such as Chin Sheng-t'an in particular, was in some senses an argument in itself for the literary and intellectual respectability of the genre.

The Preface provides an interesting insight into both the etiquette of literary debate during this period, and into certain of the conventions of the world of commercial publishing in which early critics of fiction worked. Entitled "Original Preface" (*yüan-hsü* 原序), it bears the name of Chin Sheng-t'an and is dated 1644. However, it presents a defense of the novel couched in the very terms that Mao Tsung-kang employs elsewhere to take issue with Chin Sheng-t'an's views on fiction,[18] and is believed to be almost certainly written by Mao Tsung-kang himself during the 1660s. If this is in fact so, the final section of the Preface is even more self-serving. Chin Sheng-t'an is caused to recall that he had once decided to write a commentary to the novel but had been prevented from doing so by illness. He then came across a manuscript copy of "Master Mao's" commentary to the novel on a friend's desk. Declaring that this commentary displayed "a ready pen and a lively intelligence, expressing exactly my ideas on the novel," Chin Sheng-t'an had to say that he decided to restrict himself to just this preface in order that readers be made aware of the confluence of their views.

Having thus established the authority of his commentary, Mao Tsung-kang then turns to a systematic exposition of his analysis of the novel. The most pressing concern of his "How to Read *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*" is thematic. Developing ideas found in the preface to the 1522 edition, Mao Tsung-kang justifies the whole enterprise of the novel in terms of its explicit didacticism. "Readers of *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*," he states, "must know that there is a difference between legitimate succession, intercalary succession and usurpation."[19] The reality of history was that, in the words of the first line of the novel, "Empires wax and wane; states cleave asunder and coalesce,"[20] and this being so, much of the first part of this section of Mao Tsung-kang's commentary is

given over to providing readers with a practical guide to the theory of legitimate succession as illustrated by other historical examples. Mao Tsung-kang concludes this disquisition by declaring that his views of legitimacy during the Three Kingdoms Period will be based on those found in Chu Hsi's *Summary of the Comprehensive Mirror for Aid in Government*, and that he will seek to prove the correctness of these views throughout his commentary to the novel.

Given this conception of the novel, therefore, it is not surprising that Mao Tsung-kang was to take issue with Chin Sheng-t'an's views on the nature of fiction. Chin Sheng-t'an had made the important distinction between novels that were written in accordance with the principle "To create events to meet the needs of the narrative" (*yin-wen chêng-shih* 因文生事 ) and those that "Used the narrative to convey an account of events" (*yi-wen yün-shih* 以文運事 ), as embodied in *The Water Margin* and *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* respectively.[21] For Chin, novels of the former kind were far superior to those of the latter. Mao Tsung-kang, however, argued that the narrative configuration of a novel had to be found within the actual events of the past themselves (*wen tsai shih-chung* 文在事中 ). "The events of the past that have been transmitted to us," he says, "naturally and of themselves contained . . . ebbs and flows . . . twists and turns, causing this matchless work of narrative to be formed."[22] It was the creator himself (*tsao-wu* 造物 ) that should be called the master craftsman.[23] And it was simply because the events of the Three Kingdoms Period were unparalleled in their complexity and excitement that caused the novel to be the most popular of all historical novels.[24]

This conception of fiction as being in some way the product of the creative forces of reality itself leads us on to consideration of another aspect of the difference between Chin Sheng-t'an and Mao Tsung-kang. Chin begins his commentary by saying that "All readers of a book must first come to some understanding of the motive of the author in composing his work."[25] Shih Nai-an 施耐庵 (*Chin-shih* 1330), the putative author of *The Water Margin*, Chin Sheng-t'an maintains, ". . . had no feelings of rancour that he wished to express, but being well-fed and warm, with nothing pressing for him to do, could not abstain from spreading out his paper and playing his brush, and, after finding a topic, writing out this splendid [story] of his own making."[26] The rationale that lay behind Chin Sheng-t'an's critical labours, therefore, was the desire to explicate the compositional techniques (*wen-fa* 文法 ) employed by the author in any given work, and which Chin

Sheng-t'an considered himself uniquely able to perceive. His commentary to *The Water Margin* is laden with references to the author, and as Shih Nai-an's work embodied all the best compositional techniques, to read it with Chin Sheng-t'an's guidance was also both to learn how to read all great works of literature,[27] and to learn how best to write.[28]

In contrast, Mao Tsung-kang's commentary to *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* makes not one reference to Lo Kuan-chung by name. For Mao's purposes, the author of the novel was in a sense irrelevant, merely the agency whereby the events of a marvellous and significant period of history were brought to the attention of a wider audience, successful to the extent that he removed himself from the text and allowed history to enact itself. And in keeping with the seriousness with which Mao Tsung-kang viewed history, the mainspring of his literary endeavours lay in a concern that readers arrive at a proper understanding of the moral principles that underlay the workings of history.

Yet Mao Tsung-kang was of course aware that written history and fiction, whatever their affinity of purpose, were not the same thing. He recognized that the novel had also to work to dictate what was essentially literary in nature. In the critique that he attached to Chapter 39 of the novel, for instance, Mao has this to say:

> When readers reach this point [in the novel] they are caused to doubt whether the plan will succeed . . . and it is only once the enemy has been defeated that they can truly appreciate the literary excellence of the novel for they can never guess the outcome of events [before they happen]. If one were to give but a plain and direct narration of [these events], all one would require would be a single sentence in imitation of [the style] of [Chu Hsi's] *Summary of the Comprehensive Mirror for Aid in Government* to the effect that "Chu-kê Liang defeated Ts'ao [Ts'ao's] troops at Po-wang," and what need would there have been for the author to compose this novel?[29]

And elsewhere, much later in the novel, Mao Tsung-kang tells us ". . . even if this event didn't actually take place, it certainly makes marvellous reading."[30]

This concern with the literary qualities of the novel occupies the second half of Mao Tsung-kang's "How to Read *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*," as well as much of the rest of Mao's critical apparatus, and in

my discussion I will again be making comparisons between these sections and Chin Sheng-t'an's analysis of *The Water Margin*. For Chin Sheng-t'an, the highest ideal in writing was what he termed *ching-yen* 精嚴, that is the organizational control an author has over his work when it is the result of years of thought and planning: "Every word must have its principle of organization," he tells us, "as must each sentence, each chapter and each section of the novel have their principles of organization."[31] In specific terms, Chin considers *The Water Margin* to comprize highly individualized biographies of each of the 108 main characters of the novel:

> With other books [Chin Sheng-t'an asserts] it is enough that one reads them once. Only *The Water Margin* one never tires of reading. And this is precisely for no other reason than that it depicts the individual dispositions of each and every of the 108 bandits.[32]

The bulk of this section of Chin Sheng-t'an's commentary devotes itself to an attempt to isolate the fifteen main compositional techniques (*wen-fa*) whereby the author draws these separate biographies together into a single narrative.

Mao Tsung-kang too is concerned with management of text (*ching-ying* 經營). But if Chin Sheng-t'an was interested in how the larger structural units of a novel are bound together, the problems posed to Mao Tsung-kang by *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* are somewhat dissimilar, and he attacks these problems from a different angle. In keeping with his concern for how the novel should be read, he is interested in the narrative progression of the novel – with its configurational dynamic (*wen-shih* 文勢) – in other words, with how the innumerable separate events told of in the novel are fused together into a single narrative, the pace, economy and suspense of which conspires to draw the reader through to the end of the novel. He was above all aware that the novel was of immense length.[33] He recognized also that the novel had to narrate the simultaneous happenings in at least three states. And lastly, he knew that the broad outline of events would be known to most readers already, whether through their reading of official historiography or their watching of dramatic performances.[34]

To be successful, any work of extended prose narrative was required to have a very taught structural integrity. "From start to finish," Mao Tsung-kang tells us of the novel, "there is not one point at which the

narrative could be discontinued."[35] To read a novel, he argues again and again, should be like reading a sentence.[36]

> Present day novelists [Mao complains], in writing the early sections [of their novels] give no thought to what is to follow, and in writing the latter sections they do not concern themselves with what preceded. And even worse, readers of novels, in reading the earlier chapters of a novel forget that the narrative must continue [for many chapters yet], whilst they forget also what went before once they get to these later chapters. It is said that this type of person should be caused to read *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. I maintain that it is just this kind of person that should not be permitted to read *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*.[37]

In describing his ideal of narrational unity and coherence as found epitomized in *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, Mao Tsung-kang uses an analogy adapted from Sun-tzu's *The Art of War*:

> [This novel] is like the ['simltaneously responding'] snake of Mount Ch'ang – if you beat its head, it responds with its tail, if you attack its tail, it responds with its head, and if you strike it in the middle, it responds with both head and tail. Is [the novel] not an example of the most sublime structural unity (*chieh-kou* 結構)?[38]

But in narrational terms, *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* had to overcome particular problems in achieving this unity.

> Whenever I read records of events written by contemporaries [Mao Tsung-kang tells us], [I observe] that they narrate one line of action casting aside all other lines of action; [their narratives] lose their ligatures and become disjointed (*shih-chih t'ou-chieh* 失枝脫節) with the defect that certain events are omitted. If, on the other hand, they alternate between lines of action, they lose control over their narratives which then have the defect of being too lengthy and jumbled (*jung-tsa* 冗雜).[39]

*The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* comprized three main lines of action

– one for each of the major contending states. Official historiography could solve such problems of narrative by means of its extrinsic structure – a point made explicitly by Mao Tsung-kang both in his "How to Read *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*" and on several occasions in his interlinear commentary:

> The excellence of the narration of events in *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* is directly akin to that of the *Records of the Grand Historian*, but the problems of narration are several times more difficult than those encountered in the *Records*. In the *Records*, the events of each state are narrated separately, and each character is given a separate biography, and in this way the work is divided into Basic Annals, Hereditory Houses, Biographies, etc. Now *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* is not the same, for it draws together these various sections into the one narrative. Split up, the text is short and easy to write. Brought together, however, the text is long and difficult to write well.[40]

How then, in Mao Tsung-kang's analysis, does *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* achieve such narrative unity? In terms of the larger structural patterns, Mao Tsung-kang describes within the text of the novel six minor beginnings and six minor endings – that is six discrete lines of action.[41] Having enumerated these lines of action, Mao Tsung-kang goes on to explain their relationship within the text:

> All these segments (*tuan* 段) of text are interwoven and interposed (*lien-lo chiao-hu* 聯絡交互) throughout the [novel], with this [line of action] about to begin whilst another [line of action] has already ended, or this [line of action] is not yet ended whilst another [line of action] starts up. When reading [the novel] one is unconscious of such textual transitions (*tuan-hsü chih chi* 斷續之際) and it is only upon analysis that one becomes aware of its innate structural unity (*chang-fa* 章法).[42]

So the lines of action that interpenetrate the novel are neither sequential nor do they alternate according to a fixed and orderly pattern. This implies a novel of some considerable textural density. Fortunately, Mao Tsung-kang equips us with the techniques of analysis that allow us to read the novel

in the manner that he requires of us. Firstly, he makes the important distinction between main and subsidiary narrative lines – his terminology is host (*chu* 主) and guest (*pin* 賓) – which whilst always clearly distinguishable are also complementary.[43] An example of the practical application of this critical methodology is Mao's "Chapter Critique for Chapter 15," which reads, in part:

> The previous chapter narrated the establishment of a state by the Tsao clan. This chapter tells of the Sun clan's founding of a state. . . . Only Liu Pei as yet stands alone and without a base. And yet it is Liu Pei, who is the legitimate claimant to the Han dynasty's [Mandate of Heaven]. Therefore the previous chapter concluded with Liu Pei, and this chapter commences with him. In narrating the [affairs] of the two other clans, [the novel] must also insert narration (*chia-hsü* 夾敘) of Liu Pei . . . and although this is the main line of action, the words employed are few. . . . This type of narrative, wherein the main line of action is found within the narration of subsidiary lines of action, resembles a snake in the grass, now we see its head, and now its tail. . . . In the recording of events, nothing is more sublime than this. . . .[44]

The narrative technique mentioned in this passage – 'inserted narration' (*chia-hsü*) – is but one of the range of techniques isolated by Mao Tsung-kang in the novel. He also establishes within the novel a network of resonances (*chao-ying* 照應) whereby sections of text, whether through contrast or similarity of event or personality involved, serve to set off previous sections of the novel.[45] Other sections of the text, conversely, serve not only their immediate narrative functions, but also lay the threads for future developments (*fu-hsien* 伏綫), ensuring that such developments are in keeping with the internal narrative logic of the novel.[46] Such resonances and connecting threads can be found both within a single chapter or spaced out over many chapters, Mao Tsung-kang informs us. Other sections of the text can act as introductions to impending events (*tso-yin* 作引), or serve as text paradigms (*yang-tsu* 樣子) that present in miniture models of later developments in the novel. Neither are events ever allowed to stand alone in the novel for they all produce reverberations (*yü-po* 餘波) in later sections of the novel.[47] Mao Tsung-kang is particularly acute in his analysis of the points in the narrative where one line of action gives on to another – the

dovetailing of narrative lines (*tou-sun* 斗榫) – in Mao Tsung-kang's terminology, where one "moves from the branch to the leaf" (*kuo-chih chieh-yeh* 過枝接葉). And if Mao Tsung-kang is aware that a novel had to present a highly textured surface, he also perceives that it must conduct its narrative business with some considerable dispatch. To this end, narrative in the novel was either direct (*shih-hsü* 實敍) or indirect (*hsü-hsü* 虛敍) – that is, for instance, where two events are happening simultaneously, one line of action is only narrated briefly through reports of this action that reach the protagonists involved in the main narrative line of that particular moment in the novel. The same effect of acceleration of the narrative progression of the novel could be achieved through economy of narrative detail (*sheng-pi* 省筆), these details being made up (*pu-pi* 補筆) later in the novel if necessary.[48] Above all, each section of the novel had to have the right proportions as seen from a consistent perspective, and in expressing this ideal, Mao Tsung-kang uses an analogy taken from the visual arts:

> *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* makes use of the marvellous technique of 'Thick wash for nearby mountains, light outlines for distant trees' (*chin-shan nung-mo, yüan-shu ch'ing-miao* 近山濃抹遠樹輕描). The method of the painter is to apply the inkwash thickly and in several layers for close mountains and trees, but in few layers and lightly for distant ones. Otherwise, how could one paint in detail everyone of those remote and distant forests and foothills or layered piles of peaks and cliffs in the limited space of a painting? The techniques of writing are analogous to this . . . [For example, when describing] Ts'ao P'i's three-pronged attack on the state of Wu, and his loss on all three fronts, only one thrust is narrated directly while the other two are narrated indirectly. . . . Such examples are innumerable. How many events are encompassed by just one or two sentences, and how much ink is spared![49]

But if Mao Tsung-kang was conscious that in treating its lengthy and disparate stuff-material the novel had to achieve such levels of narrative pace and continuity, he knew that at times it had also to attempt the opposite otherwise it would have no interest (*mei-ch'ü* 沒趣) for readers. This was particularly so of a novel whose main story-line was so well known to its readers. The novel had to arrest the flow of the narrative, interrupt one line of action with another:

> People who are hasty and direct (*ch'ing-shuai ch'ing-sui* 輕率徑遂) are never extraordinary people [Mao tells us], and so too with writing which is never sublime if hasty and direct. Novelists writing today, whenever they have two characters about to meet are impatient to realize this meeting, fearing only that it cannot take place [soon enough]. How could [their novels] have the sort of twists and turns [contained in this novel]?[50]

To this end, Mao Tsung-kang illustrates how the novel makes effective use of both continuous narration (*i-lien hsieh-ch'ü* 一連寫去) and interrupted narration (*tuan-hsü hsü-lai* 斷續敍來). In his "How to Read *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*," Mao Tsung-kang discusses the types of event that are best handled in one or other of these two ways:

> [The novel] makes use of the marvellous technique of 'Clouds cutting the mountain range in halves, the bridge connecting the two banks of a stream' (*hêng yün tuan ling, hêng ch'iao so hsi* 橫雲斷嶺橫橋鎖溪)[51] [i.e., interrupted and continuous narrative, respectively]. In writing, there are events that are appropriate to continuous narration, and those that are appropriate to interrupted narration . . . [examples given]. . . . Events that are of brief duration, if they are not narrated continuously, become disjointed, whereas events of some length, if not narrated intermittently become fearfully prolix. Their narration must, therefore, be interrupted by the narration of other events, and only in this way does the configurational dynamic (*wen-shih*) [of the novel] become intricate and ever variable (*ts'o-tsung chin-pien* 錯綜盡變).[52]

A reader's progression through the novel is also arrested through a complex series of contrasts within similarities of either event, place or character which force him to read back into previous sections of the novel fresh layers of meaning.[53] In explaining the complexity of the narrative configuration of the novel, Mao Tsung-kang also comes up with an inchoate analysis of point of view in narrative, whereby certain events or characters are seen by the reader through the eyes of other players in the action of the novel.[54] Above all, however, it is suspense and unexpectedness of outcome that impels Mao Tsung-kang's reader to read on to the end of the novel.[55] *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, he tells us, is like sudden flashes of lightening, or the rising and falling of violent waves. Without

this element of surprise and suspense, a novel is not literature. Scenes of violent action are interrupted by periods of quietude ("Cold ice dispells the heat, a chill wind raises dust" *han-ping p'o-jê, liang-fêng sao-ch'ên* 寒冰破熱 涼風掃塵 )[56] or "Amidst the flutes and pipes are heard the sounds of the drums of war" (*sheng hsiao chia ku* 笙簫夾鼓 ) when scenes of domestic detail are interrupted by war and destruction painted on a large canvus.[57]

It is a bewildering array of narrative techniques that Mao Tsung-kang introduces us to and teaches us to isolate in the novel. His reader is dazzled by the brilliance of the action (Vol. 1, p. 63); one moment he is frightened out of his wits (Vol. 1, p. 55), at another he weeps over the fate of the characters involved (Vol. 1, p. 234), and at others he is enjoined to raise his cup in celebration of the novel's artistry. Above all, the reader is required to make sense of the text – not only to understand the actual course of events during the period covered by the novel (i.e., the story), but also to apprehend the moral significance that Mao Tsung-kang believed had been encoded within this story. Fortunately for Mao Tsung-kang's reader, and for us, Mao Tsung-kang himself is forever on hand, indeed embedded within the actual text of the novel, ever ready to guide the forgetful and uninitiated reader through the complex text. As earlier, in the case of Chin Sheng-t'an's edition of *The Water Margin*, and later with Chang Chu-p'o's edition of *Golden Lotus*, Mao Tsung-kang's critical edition of *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* rapidly superseded all previous editions of the novel, a situation that persisted until the publication of some of these earlier editions in recent decades. He sat at the shoulders of generations of Chinese readers of the novel, and any attempt to assess the impact of a traditional reading of this novel on the popular consciousness – in terms particularly of a popular Chinese understanding of the cyclical nature of history, or the role of the individual in this history, for instance – must take into consideration Mao Tsung-kang's controlled reading of the text.

Despite the lasting success of the edition of the novel he established, however, Mao Tsung-kang's critical efforts have fared less well. Of all the major early critics of fiction in China, he appears the most orthodoxly Confucian in his attitudes to both life and literature. In many ways he stood at odds to the general trends of a developing tradition of fictional criticism. In his analysis of character for example – an aspect not dealt with in this paper[58] – and more importantly in his strictures about the factual basis of fiction, Mao Tsung-kang appears to take a stance decidedly more 'conservative' than critics such as Chin Sheng-t'an. Few subsequent critics

refer specifically to his literary views, and those that do tend to be critical of them. Chang Chu-p'o, for example, is impatient with Mao's attempts in his commentary to the drama *The Lute* to identify a particular object for the satire of the drama: "Although every commentator is entitled to his own views," Chang tells us, "I wonder if the time spent on these inconclusive speculations might not better be devoted to the appreciation of the literary techniques embodied in the work."[59] Even within the realm of historical fiction, Mao Tsung-kang seems to have maintained a somewhat isolated position. His two friends Yüan Yü-ling 袁于令 (1599-1674) and Chu Jên-huo 褚人穫 (ca. 1620-ca. 1705), both major historical novelists,[60] were prepared to accord historical fiction a far greater license to manipulate the agreed 'facts' of history in the telling of its tales. In the preface to his novel *Forgotten Tales of the Sui Dynasty*, for instance, Yüan Yü-ling argues that his work is designed to supplement the Standard Histories: "Forgotten histories collect what has been overlooked . . . to transmit what is marvellous. Works which transmit the credible [i.e., the Standard Histories] place greatest value on truth (*chên* 眞 ). . . . Works which transmit the marvellous [i.e., historical fiction] place greatest value on fancy (*huan* 幻 )."[61]

As we have seen, in his concern that ordinary readers of the novel be brought to a proper understanding of both the facts and the moral of history, Mao Tsung-kang was less ready than his contemporaries to deny vernacular fiction the responsibilities inherent in official Chinese historiography. It is this very insistence on the moral value of historical fiction that has served to divert the attention of more recent Chinese critics also from Mao Tsung-kang's very real contribution to the literary analysis of narrative. Understandably, perhaps, critics such as Yeh Lang 葉朗 and Shên Kuo-fang working on the mainland find themselves uncomfortable both with Mao Tsung-kang's brand of Confucianism and his views on fiction.[62] Elsewhere, critics have argued that his commentary to *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* is either derivative or of little value.[63] Such relative neglect is unjust however. If the value of literary criticism lies, as Gerard Genette argues it does, in its ability ". . . to illuminate the conditions of existence – of production – of the text . . . by revealing the hidden complexities that are the *secret* of [its apparent] simplicity,"[64] Mao Tsung-kang's commentary remains the most brilliant and detailed analysis of the novel yet produced. More generally, Mao Tsung-kang's perceptions into the nature and variety of narrative technique predate developments in the criticism of fiction in the West. Pre-Jamesian criticism of the novel also placed great emphasis

on the relevance and the interdependence of parts to the overall design of fictional narrative. Kenneth Graham, for example, speaking of the period 1865-1900, claims that ". . . the deliberate application of the principle of organic unity is one of the most remarkable and unexpected features of the whole age's criticism of fiction."[65] Earlier than this, in 1749, Henry Fielding, complaining of the "Stage-Coach [-like]" narratives of his contemporaries which performed ". . . constantly the same Course, empty as well as full," claimed himself to be the first writer to vary the rhythm of his narrative.[66] Almost a hundred years earlier, Mao Tsung-kang had articulated a very similar concern with subordination of parts of narrative to the whole, and with the pace, economy and proportion of narrative. And in his interest in the dynamic qualities of narrative and in reader response rather than authorial intent, in particular, Mao Tsung-kang showed himself to be a very different critic from his literary mentor Chin Sheng-t'an.

## Notes

1. "Tu ti-wu ts'ai-tzu shu fa'' 讀第五才子書法 ("How to Read *The Fifth Work of Genius*"), in *Shui-hu chuan hui-p'ing-pen* 水滸傳會評本 (Peking: Peking Ta-hsüeh ch'u-pan-shê, 1981), Vol. 1, p. 16. For a discussion of Chin Sheng-t'an's critical views on this and other works of literature, see John Ching-yu Wang, *Chin Sheng-t'an* (New York: Twayne, 1972).
2. For the sake of convenience, I refer to the commentary on *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* written by Mao Tsung-kang (*tzu* Hsü-shih 序始 ). This is to ignore the problem of his father's (Mao Lun 毛綸 *tzu* Tê-yin 德音 *hao* Shêngshan 聲山 ) almost certain involvement in the project. What little biographical information we have on these two men is contained in a critical edition of Kao Ming's 高明 *ch'uan-ch'i* drama *P'i-p'a chi* 琵琶記 (*The Lute*) that they produced jointly in conscious imitation of Chin Sheng-t'an's critical work on the *Hsi-hsiang chi* 西廂記 (*Romance of the Western Chamber*). In prefatory comments appended to this work, entitled *Ti-ch'i ts'ai-tzu shu p'i-p'a-chi* 第七才子書琵琶記 (*The Seventh Work of Genius: The Lute*) (preface dated 1666), Mao Lun informs us that as his sight had become impaired he had entrusted the transcription of this commentary to his son who had also come up with ideas of his own. See, *P'i-p'a chi* (Shanghai: Ta-ta t'u-shu, 1934), p. 26. Elsewhere, Mao Lun writes of having earlier worked on a critical edition of *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* which had then been taken off by one of his students, thus disrupting publication plans. See, Andrew Hing-bun Lo, "*San-kuo-chih yen-i* and *Shui-hu chuan* in the Context of Historiography: An Interpretive Study," Ph.D., Princeton University, 1981, p. 25. Although most editions of the novel name Mao Tsung-kang alone as commentator, it is probable that the edition finally published was a result of their joint efforts. Certainly, many of the ideas expressed in the *P'i-p'a chi* commentary are also found in the commentary to the novel. For a brief discussion of the Mao's dramatic criticism, see Aoki Masaru 青木正兒 *Shindai bungaku hyoron shi* 清代文學評論

史(*A History of Literary Criticism During the Ch'ing Dynasty*) (Tokyo, 1950; Chinese translation by Chen Shunü 陳淑女 , Taipei: K'ai-ming shu-tien, 1969).

3. "Tu San-kuo chi fa" 讀三國志法 ("How to Read *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*"), in *Ch'üan-t'u hsiu-hsiang San-kuo yen-i* 全圖綉像三國演義 (Huhehot: Jên-min ch'u-pan-shê, 1981) [Hereafter, *San-kuo yen-i*] Vol. 1, p. 14.
4. Chang Chu-p'o 張竹坡 , in his commentary to *Chin P'ing Mei* 金瓶梅 (*Golden Lotus*), is critical of just such conventional depreciations by critics of works other than the particular one they happened to be working on. He argues, very sensibly, that the excellence of any novel need not detract from the qualities of any other novel. See his "Chin P'ing Mei tu-fa" 金瓶梅讀法 ("How to Read *Golden Lotus*"), Section 35, pp. 13a-14a, in *Liang-chung Chu-p'o p'ing-tien-pen hê-k'an t'ien-hsia ti-i ch'i-shu Chin P'ing Mei* 兩種竹坡評點本合刊天下第一奇書金瓶梅 (Hong Kong: Huiwen shu-tien, 1975) [Hereafter, *Chin P'ing Mei*]. Is it possible that Chang Chu-p'o had Mao Tsung-kang specifically in mind when he wrote this? The next section of Chang's commentary makes explicit criticism of the Mao's work on *The Lute*. Both men lived and worked in Su-chou during the 1660s and it is more than likely that they knew each other – certainly they had many friends in common. It would seem probable that Chang Chu-p'o had read Mao Tsung-kang's commentary on *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. For a discussion of this coterie of literary figures all involved in the writing, editing or criticism of vernacular literature during these years, see R. G. Hegel, "*Sui T'ang yen-i* and the Aesthetics of the Seventeenth-Century Suchou Elite," and D. T. Roy, "Chang Chu-p'o's Commentary on the *Chin p'ing mei*," both in A. H. Plaks, ed., *Chinese Narrative: Critical and Theoretical Essays* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1977), pp. 124-59 and pp. 115-23, respectively.
5. "Tu San-kuo chi fa," *San-kuo yen-i*, Vol. 1, p. 14.
6. R. E. Hegel, *The Novel in Seventeenth-Century China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), p. 212. After making note of a number of Mao's critical concerns, Hegel continues (p. 213), "But in his more specific, practical criticism, Mao Tsung-kang [Tsung-kang] falls short of his model. That is, Mao more often records his personal reflections and moral pronouncements in his interlinear commentary than any analysis of the stylistic or structural features of the work (although this tendency is more pronounced in the earlier chapters of the *Three Kingdoms*)." Hegel is of course to be congratulated for according Mao Tsung-kang's commentary the attention he does. Chao Ts'ung 趙聰 , in his edition of the novel (Hong Kong: Yu-lien ch'u-pan-shê, 1969), excises Mao's critique completely, declaring it to be ". . . of no use whatever to readers" (p. 32).
7. This edition, often incorrectly designated the Hung-chih (1488-1505) edition (it should more correctly be called the Chia-ching edition), is divided into 24 volumes (*chüan* 卷 ), consisting of 240 sections (*tsê* 則 ). For a description of this edition, see Sun K'ai-ti 孫楷第 , *Chung-kuo t'ung-su hsiao-shuo shu-mu* 中國通俗小說書目 (Peking: Jên-min wen-hsüeh ch'u-pan-shê, 1982), pp. 35-36. For a discussion of the novel, see C. T' Hsia, *The Classic Chinese Novel* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980), pp. 34-74.
8. The T'ien-tu Wai-ch'ên 天都外臣 (Wang Tao-k'un 汪道昆 ) edition which carries a preface dated 1589. The dating of this edition remains extremely problematical, of course. For a description, see Sun K'ai-ti, *Chung-kuo t'ung-su hsiao-shuo shu-mu*, p. 211.
9. Hsi Tso-ch'ih 習鑿齒 (d. 384) was apparently the first to question Chen Shou's

attribution of legitimacy to the state of Wei. Chu Hsi 朱熹 (1130-1200), in his *Tzu-chih t'ung-chien kang-mu* 資治通鑑綱目 (*Summary of the Comprehensive Mirror for Aid in Government*), argues that the state of Shu was the legitimate inheritor of the Han Mandate of Heaven. See, Andrew Hing-bin Lo, "*San-kuo-chih yen-i* and *Shui-hu chuan* in the Context of Historiography: An Interpretive Study," Ph.D., Princeton University, 1981, pp. 13-14. Mao Tsung-kang takes explicit issue with both Chen Shou and Ssu-ma Kuang 司馬光 (1019-1086) in his "Tu San-kuo chi fa," *San-kuo yen-i*, Vol. 1, p. 1.

10. The preface is signed with the pseudonym Yung Yü-tzü 庸愚子 . For a punctuated and annotated version of the preface, see Huang Lin 黃霖 and Han T'ung-wen 韓同文 , eds., *Chung-kuo li-tai hsiao-shuo lun-chu hsüan* 中國歷代小說論著選 (Chiang-hsi: Jên-min ch'u-pan-shê, 1982), Vol. 1, pp. 104-08.
11. *Chung-kuo li-tai hsiao-shuo lun-chu hsüan*, Vol. 1, p. 104.
12. The preface also attributes the novel to Lo Kuan-chung 羅貫中 (circa. 1330-1400). Liu Ts'un-yan, "Lo Kuan-chung and His Historical Romances," in W. L. Y. Yang and C. P. Adkins, eds., *Critical Essays on Chinese Fiction* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1980), pp. 85-114, brings together as much information as can be gathered about this man.
13. Sun K'ai-ti lists over twenty different Ming editions of the novel. Cf., *Chung-kuo t'ung-su hsiao-shuo shu-mu*, pp. 35-44. Chao Ts'ung 趙聰 , *Chung-kuo ssu-ta hsiao-shuo chih yen-chiu* 中國四大小說之研究 (Hong Kong: Yu-lien ch'u-pan-shê, 1964), p. 125, argues that Mao Tsung-kang based his edition on a version which carried a commentary attributed to Li Chih 李贄 (1527-1602) (but which is almost certainly by Yeh Chou who apparantly made quite a business of appending Li Chih's name to his own commentaries) entitled *Li Chou-wu hsien-shêng p'i-p'ing San-kuo yen-i* 李卓吾先生批評三國演義 , published in Chien-yang Fu-chien by Wu Kuan-ming 吳觀明. Item Six of Mao Tsung-kang's "Fanli" 凡例 [Guilding Principles] would seem to confirm this view. Mao informs us that he has excised from his edition a commentary that he too believed to have been falsely attributed to Li Chih, and which he takes exception to. He nevertheless apparently incorporates parts of this earlier commentary into his own.
14. "Fanli", in *San-kuo yen-i*, Vol. 1, unpaginated. For a translation of the ten items of this section of Mao Tsung-kang's critical apparatus, see Andrew Hing-bin Lo, "*San-kuo-chih yen-i* and *Shui-hu chuan* in the Context of Historiography: An Interpretive Study," pp. 27-34.
15. This ploy was not original. Chin Sheng-t'an had earlier made the same sort of spurious claim when arguing the provenance of his edition of *The Water Margin*.
16. Item 5 of Mao Tsung-kang's "Fanli" reads: "The chapter titles found in the 'vulgar editions' are irregular and not in parallel form. They are haphazardly written and have no discernible pattern. And further, each chapter is divided into two parts. In the present [edition], in accordance with the author's intent, I have brought these two parts together [to form one chapter]. Also, I have given each chapter a title written in two parallel phrases. In doing thus, I have strived for literary excellence in order that [the novel] may please the sensibilities of readers.'" See, *San-kuo yen-i*, Vol. 1, unpaginated. Ling Mêng-chu 凌濛初 (1580-1644), in the "Fanli" 凡例 [Guiding Principles] appended to his first collection of *hua-pen* 話本 short stories, (continued) *P'ai-an chin-ch'i* 拍案驚奇 (*Slapping the Table in Amazement*) (published in 1628), had earlier expressed much the same view. A number of the other items in Ling Mêng-chu's "Fanli" seem to be echoed

by Mao Tsung-kang. See, *P'ai-an chin-ch'i* (Shanghai: Ku-chi ch'u-pan-shê, 1982), Vol. 1, p. 3. Whether or not this was a case of direct influence is not important. What is significant is that there was an increasingly firm body of critical opinion among writers and editors of vernacular fiction (and one imagines, among readers) as to what a novel should look like.

17. For a generally unfavourable discussion of this development, see Kuo Shao-yü 郭紹虞 , *Chung-kuo wen-hsüeh p'i-p'ing shih* 中國文學批評史 (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1961), pp. 389-94.
18. In this preface, Chin Sheng-t'an had to argue that in keeping with the nature of all historical fiction, *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* is firmly grounded in historical fact, and that because the period of history that it covered was the most marvellous in all history, so too the novel had no equal! See, *San-kuo yen-i*, Vol. 1, unpaginated. The dating of the preface is itself problematic and almost certainly retrospective. It makes use of a Ch'ing dynasty reign title at a time when Su-chou (where the edition was produced) was still under the nominal control of the Ming dynasty. In 1644, moreover, Mao Tsung-kang would have still been in his teens. It is extremely unlikely that he would already have managed to impress Chin Sheng-t'an to the extent that the latter would willingly abjure the very basis of his earlier critical work on *The Water Margin*.
19. *San-kuo yen-i*, Vol. 1, p. 1.
20. *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, C. H. Brewitt-Taylor, trans. (Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle, 1959), Vol. 1, p. 1. This line does not appear in the 1522 edition of the novel. It is obvious that the beginning of the novel has been substantially rewritten in order to highlight the generalized historical significance that the text was now considered to carry. When this sentence occurs again, towards the very end of the novel, Mao Tsung-kang inserts an interlinear comment that reads: "This directly echoes [the lines with which the first voluem begins] and it truly is as if the whole novel comprized but this one sentence." *San-kuo yen-i*, Vol. 1, p. 1190.
21. "Tu ti-wu ts'ai-tzu shu-fa," in *Shui-hu chuan hui-p'ing-pen*, Vol. 1, p. 16.
22. *San-kuo yen-i*, Vol. 1, p. 4.
23. *San-kuo yen-i*, Vol. 1, p. 6. This of course is a restatement of traditionally the most authoritative, Confucian view of the creative process. For a recent discussion, see V. H. Mair, "Narrative Revolution in Chinese Literature: Ontological Presuppositions," *CLEAR* (1983), 5(1): 1-27.
24. *San-kuo yen-i*, Vol. 1, pp. 1-2.
25. "Tu ti-wu ts'ai-tzu shu-fa," in *Shui-hu chuan hui-p'ing-pen*, Vol. 1, p. 15.
26. "Tu ti-wu ts'ai-tzu shu fa," in *Shui-hu chuan hui-p'ing-pen*, Vol. 1, p. 15. For a translation of Chin Sheng-t'an's very similar views on authorial intent in the case of the *Romance of the Western Chamber*, see John Ching-yu Wang, *Chin Sheng-t'an* (New York: Twayne, 1972), p. 45. James J. Y. Liu, in a chapter on expressive theories of literature, deals briefly with Chin Sheng-t'an, see *Chinese Theories of Literature* (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1975), pp. 82-83.
27. See in particular Chin Sheng-t'an's Third Preface to the novel, *Shui-hu chuan hui-p'ing-pen*, Vol. 1, pp. 8-11. This preface is couched in terms of an injuction to his son. It concludes: "After you have read [the novel with my commentary] you will know the method for reading any book. If you can truly master this method, in future years once you have passed your examinations, you will be able to (continued) use it to read through all books in the world as easily as splitting bamboo, and you will exclaim that in truth Shih Nai-an's *The Water*

*Margin* represents the mainstay of all literature."

28. Liao Yen 廖燕 , Chin Sheng-t'an's younger contemporary and admiring biographer, was to declare that Chin Sheng-t'an ". . . caused all later generations [of writers] to become enlightened to the methods of composition." Cited in Hê Man-tzu 何滿子 , "Chin Sheng-t'an tê sheng-p'ing jên-sheng t'ai-tu hê wen-hsüeh-kuan" 金聖嘆的生平人生態度和文學觀 , in *Chung-hua wen-shih lun-ts'ung* 中華文史論叢 (1983), 2: 282. It is an aspect of Chin Sheng-t'an's motivation and influence that has earned him much obloquy at the hands of contemporary Chinese critics. See, for instance, Lu Hsün's influential "T'an Chin Sheng-t'an" 談金聖嘆 , *Lu Hsün San-shih-nien chi* 魯迅三十年集 (Peking: Lu Hsün ch'üan-chi ch'u-pan-shê, 1947), Vol. 23, pp. 113-15, where he decries the influence the aesthetics of the examination essay (*pa-ku-wen* 八股文 [Eight-legged essay]) has on Chin Sheng-t'an's views on writing.
29. *San-kuo yen-i*, Vol. 1, p. 386.
30. *San-kuo yen-i*, Vol. 3, p. 1171.
31. "Hsü san"序三 [Third Preface], *Shui-hu chuan hui-p'ing-pen*, Vol. 1, p. 10.
32. "Tu ti-wu ts'ai-tzu shu-fa," in *Shui-hu chuan hui-p'ing-pen*, Vol. 1, p. 15.
33. It is significant that the earliest discussions of vernacular fiction in China show an increasing awareness of this characteristic feature of the genre, both in China and elsewhere. Kao Ju高儒 , in his private book catalogue *Pai-ch'uan shu-chih* 百川書志 (prefaced dated 1540), for instance, has this to say of this novel: "*The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* in 120 *chüan* . . . is neither vulgar nor fabricated. It is easy to read and comprehend . . . (continued) [although] it narrates the history of a hundred years and encompasses ten thousand events". See, *Chung-kuo li-tai hsiao-shuo lun-chu hsüan*, Vol. 1, p. 113.
34. See for instance Mao's critique of Chapter 36 where he discusses the effect on readers of the hitherto non-appearance of Chu-kê Liang: "[Chu-kê Liang] is the most sublime character in *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* and readers of . . . [the novel] all desire to read of events involving him. Having read 35 chapters without . . . [Chu-kê Liang] appearing, they are truly on tenterhooks." (*San-kuo yen-i*, Vol. 1, p. 353). At various points throughout his interlinear commentary, Mao Tsung-kang makes a comparison between how certain characters are depicted in the novel and in contemporary dramatic literature. It is obvious that he assumes in his readers a prior knowledge of the story.
35. "Tu San-kuo chih fa," in *San-kuo yen-i*, Vol. 1, p. 14.
36. "Tu San-kuo chih fa," in *San-kuo yen-i*, Vol. 1, p. 12; Vol. 2, pp. 525, 564; Vol. 3, p. 929.
37. *San-kuo yen-i*, Vol. 1, p. 363. A very similar argument occurs in the Mao's commentary to *The Lute*, where it is claimed that the careless writing of contemporaries is a result of their careless reading, *P'i-p'a chi* (Shanghai: Ta-ta t'u-shu kung-ying-shê, 1943), p. 28.
38. *San-kuo yen-i*, Vol. 3, p. 929. Ch'ang-shan常山 was another name for Hêng-shan 恒山 . See, *Sun-tzu chin-i* 孫子今譯 (Shanghai: Jên-min ch'u-pan-shê, 1977), p. 100. For a translation, see S. B. Griffith, trans., *Sun Tzu: The Art of War* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), p. 135.
39. *San-kuo yen-i*, Vol. 1, p. 200.
40. "Tu San-kuo chih fa," in *San-kuo yen-i*, Vol. 1, p. 14. The *Shih chi*史記 provided an important narrative model for early Chinese critics of fiction. Chin Sheng-t'an had maintained that the narrative techniques employed in *The Water Margin*

had all originated from the *Shih chi*, but that the novel surpassed the latter in its use of such techniques. Chang Chu-p'o was later to make the same sort of structural comparison as Mao Tsung-kang makes above. See Section 34 of his "Chin P'ing Mei tu-fa," *Chin P'ing Mei*, pp. 13a-13b.

41. "Tu San-kuo chih fa," *San-kuo yen-i*, Vol. 1, p. 5. Peter Li, in his "Narrative Patterns in *San-kuo* and *Shui-hu*", in A. H. Plaks, ed., *Chinese Narrative: Critical and Theoretical Essays*, pp. 73-84, makes use of this section of Mao Tsung-kang's commentary in his own analysis of the novel.
42. "Tu San-kuo chih fa," *San-kuo yen-i*, Vol. 1, p. 5.
43. "Tu San-kuo chih fa," *San-kuo yen-i*, Vol. 1, p. 6. Mao Tsung-kang also employs the terms *chêng* 正 and *p'ang* 旁 to distinguish these two types of narrative line.
44. *San-kuo yen-i*, Vol. 1, p. 135.
45. "Tu San-kuo chih fa," *San-kuo yen-i*, Vol. 1, p. 13.
46. "Tu San-kuo chih fa," *San-kuo yen-i*, Vol. 1, p. 11. In discussing this technique, Mao Tsung-kang is again critical of his contemporaries: "I often observe that whenever the novelist of today reach a difficult section in the narration [of their story], they will invent a character or fabricate an event [in order to overcome the difficulty] and one perceives a discontinuity in their narrative, with what preceded bearing no connection to what follows. If one were to cause them to read *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, would they not blush in shame!"
47. In "Tu San-kuo chih fa," Mao Tsung-kang labels these techniques (continued) "Seeing the graupel before it begins to snow or hearing the thunder before it begins to rain" (*chiang hsüeh chien hsien, chiang yü wen lei* 將雪見霰，將雨聞雷) and "The ripples that follow the wave or the drizzle that follows the downpour" (*lang-huo po-wen, yü-huo mai-mu* 浪後波紋，雨後霾霂) respectively. See, "Tu San-kuo chih fa," *San-kuo yen-i*, Vol. 1, p. 10.
48. In his "Tu San-kuo chih fa," Mao designates these related techniques as "Adding thread to make up the brocade, shifting (continued) the needle to even out the embroidery" (*t'ien ssu pu chin, i ch'en yün hsiu* 添絲補錦移針匀綉). See, *San-kuo yen-i*, Vol. 1, p. 12.
49. "Tu San-kuo chi fa," *San-kuo yen-i*, Vol. 1, p. 12. This is an important aspect of Mao Tsung-kang's 'theory' of the novel, the full implications of which cannot be dealt with here. For a recent discussion of the importance of perspective in fiction, see E. D. Ermath, *Realism and Consensus in the English Novel* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1983).
50. *San-kuo yen-i*, Vol. 1, p. 345. In his Chapter Critique attached to Chapter 2 (*San-kuo yen-i*, Vol. 1, p. 13), Mao Tsung-kang is again critical of contemporary novelists whose novels are hasty and direct despite the fact that they can invent their stuff-material at will, an option not available to the author of *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. Mao Tsung-kang makes this same point in his commentary to *The Lute*.
51. Chin Sheng-t'an isolates both these techniques – he labels them "Clouds cutting the mountain in halves" (*hêng yün tuan shan* 橫雲斷山) and "Glue joining a broken string" (*luan chiao hsü hsien* 鸞胶續絃) respectively. See, "Tu ti-wu ts'ai-tzu shu fa," *Shui-hu chuan hui-p'ing-pen*, Vol. 1, p. 22. Also, J. Ching-yu Wang, *Chin Sheng-t'an*, p. 73 for a discussion of these techniques. Significantly, this example of borrowing on Mao Tsung-kang's part serves also to highlight the very different concerns of these two early critics of fiction. Whereas Chin Sheng-t'an illustrates the use of these techniques in terms of details of texture,

Mao Tsung-kang is concerned with narrative progression.

52. "Tu San-kuo chih fa," *San-kuo yen-i*, Vol. 1, p. 9.
53. In his "Tu San-kuo chih fa," *San-kuo yen-i*, Vol. 1, p. 8, Mao Tsung-kang calls this "On the same tree, differing branches; on the same branch, differing leaves; by the same leaf, (continued) differing flowers; and by the same flower, differing fruit" (*t'ung-shu i-chih, t'ung-chih i-yeh, t'ung-yeh i-hua, t'ung-hua i-kuo* 同樹異枝，同枝異葉，同葉異花，同花異果). "All trees are trees," Mao tells us, "all branches are branches, leaves are leaves, and flowers are flowers, but the manner in which they plant their roots, grow their stems, bloom and form seeds differs in both colour and individual brilliance. From this the reader can become aware that in writing there is both the method of contrast of dissimilarity (*pi* 避) and of contrast within similarity (*fan* 犯)". In his analysis of narrative contrasts in fiction, in particular, Mao Tsung-kang appears decidedly more sophisticated than his mentor Chin Sheng-t'an. See, Shên kuo-fang 沈國芳, "Mao Tsung-kang hsiao-shuo chieh-kou i-shu li-lun p'ing-shu" 毛宗崗小說結構藝術理論評述 *Ku-tai wên-hsüeh li-lun yen-chiu* 古代文學理論研究 No. 9, pp. 326-29.
54. See in particular *San-kuo yen-i*, Vol. 1, pp. 27, 65, 140, 201, 243, and Vol. 2, p. 451.
55. Mao Tsung-kang deals with the techniques involved here (*viz.* "Stars move and constellations revolve" *hsing i tou chuan* 星移斗轉, "Ingenious endings and fantastic outcomes" *ch'iao shou huan chieh* 巧收幻結) in "Tu San-kuo chih fa," *San-kuo yen-i*, Vol. 1, pp. 5-6 and p. 8, respectively.
56. "Tu San-kuo chih fa," *San-kuo yen-i*, Vol. 1, p. 10.
57. "Tu San-kuo chih fa," *San-kuo yen-i*, Vol. 1, p. 10.
58. Mao Tsung-kang is inclined to view character in terms of absolutes – to his mind, for instance, Chu-kê Liang, Kuan Yü and Ts'ao Ts'ao embody the quintessential attributes of the character types 'worthy minister', 'brave general' and 'wicked hero' respectively. See, "Tu San-kuo chih fa," *San-kuo yen-i*, Vol. 1, p. 2. Mao Tsung-kang's views on characterization must be understood in light of his attempt to invest the story of the events of the Three Kingdoms period with new levels of generalized moral and historical significance. Once again, this aspect of Mao Tsung-kang's commentary contrasts with the emphasis that Chin Sheng-t'an places upon the highly individualized characterization of the major protagonists of *The Water Margin*.
59. "Chin P'ing Mei tu-fa," *Chin P'ing Mei*, Section 34, pp. 14ab. See D. T. Roy, "Chang Chu-p'o's Commentary on the *Chin p'ing mei*," A. H. Plaks, ed., *Chinese Narrative: Critical and Theoretical Essays*, pp. 119-20 for a full translation of this section of Chang Chu-p'o's commentary.
60. They wrote, respectively, *Sui-shih i-wen* 隋史遺文 (*Forgotten Tales of the Sui Dynasty*) (preface dated 1633) and *Sui T'ang yen-i* 隋唐演義 (*Romance of the Sui and T'ang Dynasties*) (dated circa. 1675), R. E. Hegel discusses these two novels in his *The Novel in Seventeenth-Century China*.
61. "Hsü" 序 [Preface], *Sui-shih i-wen* (Taipei: Yu-shih yüeh-k'an-shê, 1975), p. 1, excerpted. For a translation of part of this preface, see R. E. Hegel, op. cit., p. 129. It would be tempting to understand this debate over the character of historical fiction in terms of differing reactions to the disordered events of the times. In the absence of more complete biographical information about the main participants, however, any such attempt remains essentially speculative.
62. Yeh Lang, *Chung-kuo hsiao-shuo mei-hsüeh* 中國小說美學 (*The Aesthetics of*

*Chinese Fiction*) (Peking: Peking ta-hsüeh ch'u-pan-shê, 1982), pp. 120-21, 153, claims that Mao Tsung-kang's aesthetics of fiction is considerable inferior to Chin Sheng-t'an's and that Mao was too much of an historian to be receptive to the literary qualities of the novel. Shên Kuo-fang, op. cit., pp. 326-29, provides a more penetrating analysis of Mao Tsung-kang's contribution to the traditional Chinese aesthetics of fiction, but he too feels bound to voice reservations about Mao Tsung-kang's 'ideology'.

63. See footnote 6.
64. G. Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, trans. J. E. Lewin, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1980), pp. 137-38.
65. K. Graham, *English Criticism of the Novel, 1865-1900* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), p. 113. See also, R. Stang, *The Theory of the Novel in England, 1850-1870* (London: RKP, 1959), pp. 111-21.
66. *Tom Jones*, Book II, chap. 1 (Norton Critical Edition), p. 58. It is a claim that is made, as Genette says, with "some exaggeration," op. cit., p. 107.