

Aspects of a Socio-Cultural Appraisal of Ming Short Fiction – the *Chien-teng hsin-hua* and Its Sequels as Example¹

William H. Nienhauser, Jr.

Political history alone is often a misleading base from which to purvey literature. Nevertheless, it plays an important role in any assessment of Ming fiction. In political terms James B. Parson's divisions of the dynasty into the following six eras provide a particularly apt background for this study: I. initial stability [1368-1402], II. greatest stability [1403-1449], III. beginning decline [1450-1505], IV. decided decline [1506-1566], V. moderate recovery [1567-1620], and VI. final decline [1621-1644]. The late fourteenth century (Parsons' "initial stability") was an era in which a peasant tyrant ruled, the mid-seventeenth one of aristocratic, ineffectual rulers ("final decline"). Chu Yüan-chang (朱元璋) restored the empire to Chinese rule, Ssu-tsung (朱由檢, Chu Yu-chien) hung himself as the empire fell – first into rebel hands and then to the Manchus. The Ming founder had restricted eunuch control; the penultimate emperor, Hsi-tsung (熹宗, r. 1620-27), allowed Wei Chung-hsien (魏忠賢, 1568-1627) a virtual dictatorship. The rates of growth of the population and the economy, which had made such advances during the Sung, were slowed during the Yüan and early Ming, only to increase again beginning in the late fifteenth century (following the period of "greatest stability"). In the early Ming the term "barbarian" referred to Mongol, Japanese, Korean and Vietnamese – the traditional vassals of China. By 1644 Westerners had to some extent replaced these East Asian predecessors. The many technological achievements of the early Ming were followed by a period of stagnation and then importa-

tion of technology from the West. Artisans and merchants who had been suppressed for centuries found their social and economic positions enhanced greatly throughout the dynasty. The political center shifted from Nanking, where it had been surrounded by many of the families of the intelligentsia, to Peking, where the milieu was more purely political. Thus it is no surprise that the cultural temper evolved between the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries, too. The early Ming (Parsons' eras I and II) was a period in which the classical tale (傳奇, *ch'uan-ch'i*) enjoyed a revival in the enormously popular collection *Chien-teng hsin-hua* (剪燈新話, New Tales [Recorded] While Trimming the Lamp)² and its sequels, while the late Ming (Parsons' IV-VI) was the great era of the vernacular short story (話本, *hua-pen*). The following chart (based on a similar one by Maeno Naoaki [前野直彬]³) notes other important Ming publications and their approximate dates:

Date	Event
1368	Ming dynasty founded.
1397	<i>Chien-teng hsin-hua</i> published.
1398?	Death of Lo Kuan-chung (羅貫中).
1420	<i>Chien-teng Yü-hua</i> (剪燈餘話) published.
1522?	<i>San-kuo chih yen-i</i> (三國志演義) Published.
1541	<i>Ch'ing-p'ing shan-t'ang hua-pen</i> (清平山堂話本) published.
1566	100-chapter <i>Shui-hu chuan</i> (水滸傳) published.
1570?	<i>Hsi-yu chi</i> (西遊記) completed.
1582	Wu Ch'eng-en's (吳承恩) death.
1606	<i>Chin P'ing Mei</i> (金瓶梅) completed.
1619?	<i>Feng-shen yen-i</i> (封神演義) completed.
1621	First of the <i>san-yen</i> (三言), <i>Yü-shih ming-yen</i> (喻世明言), published.
1627	Last of the <i>san-yen</i> Published.
1628/1632	<i>Erh-k'o</i> (二刻) published.
1644	Ling Meng-ch'u (凌濛初) died.
1645?	Feng Meng-lung (馮夢龍) died.

From this outline it becomes immediately apparent that for the generation and a half from its completion in 1378 through the publication of its sequel, the *Chien-teng yü-hua* (餘話, in 1420), the *Chien-teng hsin-hua*, compiled by Ch'ü Yu (瞿佑, 1341-1427), had the Ming audience for written fiction virtually to itself (this statement is, of course, a simplification, since we are not sure what vernacular short stories or other classical tales were

in circulation). Nevertheless, the century following the founding of the Ming (in Parsons' scheme, from "initial stability" through "beginning decline") is known for its failure to produce any notable literature (Plaks, 1980, pp. 5-6, n. 7; Bryant, 1977, p. 83). These circumstances allowed the *Chien-teng hsin-hua* and its imitations a great popularity, as Lu Hsün (魯迅) notes (1973, p. 178):

By the reign of Chia-ching, early in the sixteenth century, T'ang dynasty tales were published and booksellers often made new collections of stories from the *Tai-ping Miscellany* and other tales. Thus genuine classical tales were mixed with later imitations. These collections were so popular, however, that scholars who had never tried their hand at fiction started writing about unusual characters, swordsmen, slaves, tigers, dogs or even insects, and included these tales in their works. So by the end of the Ming dynasty it was the fashion to write fiction and continued to be so in the new dynasty.⁴

迨嘉靖間，唐人小說乃復出，書估往往刺取太平廣記中文，雜以他書，刻爲叢集，真偽錯雜，而頗盛行。文人雖素與小說無緣者，亦每爲異人俠客童奴以至虎狗蟲蟻作傳，置之集中。蓋傳奇風韻，明末實瀰漫天下，至易代不改也。

The *Chien-teng yü-hua* (Residual Tales [Recorded] While Trimming the Lamp), a sequel to the *Hsin-hua* written by Li Ch'ang-ch'i (李昌祺, 1376-1452) between 1419 and 1420 – during Ch'ü Yu's lifetime – may be seen, along with the proscription of the *Hsin-hua* shortly thereafter, as more tangible evidence of the *Hsin-hua's* success.

Since this latter event is central to our discussion, it will require a closer perusal. According to the *Ming Ying-tsung shih-lu* (明英宗實錄, 1964, ch. 90, fol. 5a [p. 1813]) on the 20th of April 1442 Li Shih-mien (李時勉, 1374-1450)⁵, then *Kuo-tzu chien chi-chiu* (國子監祭酒, Libator in the National University), submitted a memorial to the throne in which he attacked the *Hsin-hua*.⁶ His salvo read in part:

In recent years there have been cases of vulgar scholars (俗儒, *su-ju*) using strange events in their writings and (then) ornamenting them with groundless words – like the *Chien-teng hsin-hua*. Not only have those frivolous fellows of the marketplace rushed to "master" them (誦習, *Sung-hsi*,

translated here as "master," is normally associated with studying the Classics), but many classicists and scholars have given up their formal studies and don't speak of them, day and night memorizing their (works like the *Hsin-hua*) contents as material for conversation. If these writings are not strictly proscribed, I fear heterodox theories and agnostic premises will appear daily, becoming so numerous in a matter of months that they will delude the minds of the people. This is truly not a trifling matter! I beg you to order the Ministry of Rites to circulate orders to yamen officials both within the capital and in the provinces . . . that they search wherever they go (for such works). Whenever they encounter these sorts of books, they should immediately order them burned. If there are those who print, sell, or hide these writings away to read, they should be punished in accordance with the law, in the hope that people will learn what is the proper way and will not be deluded by irrational ideas.

近年有俗儒假托怪異之事飾以無根之言如剪燈新話之類不惟市井輕浮之徒爭相誦習至於經生儒士多舍正學不講日夜記意以資談論若不嚴禁恐邪說異端日新月盛惑亂人心實非細故乞勒禮部行文內外衙門及提調學校僉事御史并按察司官巡歷去處凡遇此等書籍即令焚毀有印賣及藏習者問罪如律庶俾人知正道不為邪妄所惑

Following a partial translation of this memorial, Herbert Franke (1959, pp. 338-9) wondered why such an innocuous collection (he refutes the claim that the work is erotic) should have received such vituperative criticism. For the moment, however, we shall leave this question and turn to another raised by Li's memorial: that of the *shih-ching ching-fu chih t'u* (市井輕浮之徒 "frivolous fellows of the marketplace"). *Shih-ching* (市井) suggests the trades and certainly by this time tradespeople enjoyed some degree of literacy. But at this early period it is simply unthinkable that literacy of the extent needed to read a classical tale was widespread.⁷ In fact, the marketplace was much more readily associated with the vernacular short story — *shih-min wen-hsüeh* (市民文學) being a synonym for *hua-pen*.⁸ This apparent anomaly can perhaps be explained, however, for we know that short stories were often based upon plots taken from classical tales. Thus it is not inconceivable that Li Shih-mien, in mentioning the popularity of the *Hsin-hua* among the "frivolous fellows of the marketplace," was actually referring to the stories adapted by authors of the short story from the *Hsin-hua*, or even to those adapted by oral story-tellers and dramatists.⁹

But before we speculate further, let us review some of the major theories

of the influences and relations between the classical tale and the short story. We shall summarize these theories somewhat in the order they have been advanced:

1. Numerous short studies for over a generation now have traced the source of a single or several short stories to a classical tale, giving rise to a commonly held belief that the relationship between these two forms has been completely one-sided, i.e. *ch'uan-ch'i* → *Hua-pen*.
2. A. N. Zhelokhovtzev (1964) argues convincingly that in many instances where classical tales have been assumed to have been the sources of short stories, both the short story and the tale actually derived their plots independently from folk tales, i.e., the classical tale often had no direct influence on the short story.
3. André Lévy (1978) adopts Maurice Molho's scheme of popular, folklorized, popularized, and vulgarized fiction, as illustrated in the following chart, to address a broader spectrum of traditional Chinese short fiction:

	<u>transmitter</u>	<u>mode</u>	<u>transformable</u>	<u>receiver</u>
popular	popular	oral	yes	popular
folklorized	non-pop.	"	"	"
popularized	"	written	"	"
vulgarized	"	"	"	non-popular

He applies these distinctions to works which have proved troublesome to other schemes, such as the *Lü-ch'uang hsín-hua* (綠窗新話) and the *Tsui-weng t'an-lu* (醉翁談錄), which he considers to contain "vulgarized versions" of T'ang classical tales. But the most appealing features of Lévy's approach are (a) the flexibility to classify any relationship between any form(s) of traditional Chinese fiction (the influence of the classical tale on the short story is, for example, a form of "popularization"), and (b) the implication that there need be no set sequence in any system of influence.

4. Patrick Hanan (1964 & 1974) notes that there are several literatures (highbrow, middlebrow and oral – he does not use these terms, however) which coexist; he implies that interrelationships and mutual influences would be the norm. T'an Cheng-pi (譚正璧, 1957) among others, has suggested this concept, too.¹⁰

The studies by Lévy and Hanan (and to some extent that by Zhelokhovtzev) are crucial in that they address synchronic varieties or levels of Chinese fiction, whereas most traditional accounts look purely at the diachronic relationships.¹¹

If we now return to Li Shih-mien's comments we can see that it is likely that the initial success of Ch'ü Yu's works, and the dearth of other contemporary models in the early 15th century, may have led authors of the short story, the *t'an-tz'u* (彈詞), the *ta-ku-tz'u* (大鼓詞) or other popular literary forms to adapt material from the *Hsin-hua* thus affording the "frivolous fellows of the marketplace" access to these tales. This process is not unique to the Ming dynasty or even to China.¹² It would seem, therefore, that rather than examining such relatively simple relationships as the source of a short story, we should begin to attempt to recreate the literary (and extra-literary whenever possible) contexts for Ming stories (and for those of any other period). Even if this context is unavailable, because of insufficient textual evidence, we must still take care not to claim that such and such a story was based solely on a simple antecedent. To do so would cheapen a complex society and its arts.

It is in this society that we may seek the answer to Franke's question: why Li Shih-mien would want to castigate the *Hsin-hua* so severely? To do so, we must first ask who the readers of such collections were. If not the "frivolous fellows of the marketplace," they must have been members of what has been called the "high culture." However, with social barriers breaking down, the relation of social position to cultural style had been disintegrating since the Sung. Charles Hucker (1977, p. 339) describes this new elite aptly:

Adopting the Great Tradition of the long past, it steeped itself in the classics and histories and became the pillars of conservative Confucianism, while at the same time seeking profit and pleasure in the commercial bustle, the often bawdy entertainments, and the general bourgeois comforts and attractions of the towns.

One of the "attractions of the towns" was certainly fiction and its related forms. Indeed, the short story with its prologue, complex structure, poetry, allusions, and even style — which though influenced by the vernacular language, was by no means a direct representation of such speech — presented a text which would have demanded virtually as literate a reader as the clas-

sical tale.¹³ And, as we know, many authors compiled both short stories and classical tales, the major distinctions (as Hanan, 1973a & 1974, Lévy, 1971, and others have pointed out) being the form (narrative method, style) and function (illustrative vs. realistic meaning) rather than audience (cf. Jauss, 1978, pp. 184-5). Nevertheless, it had been a tradition in China for supporters of high culture to consider only the most formal literature (classics and histories [經史]) as proper even before Neo-Confucianism. With the advent of Neo-Confucianism, however, calumny of belles lettres became commonplace. Chu Hsi (朱熹, 1130-1200) fretted constantly over his practice of composing verse. And fiction, ever since it has been clearly distinguished from history (cf. Chang Chi's [張籍, 766-829] criticism of Han Yü's [韓愈, 768-824] efforts as early as the mid-T'ang), has been considered mundane, base, and a part of popular culture. This attitude arose in part from the *Ta-hsüeh* (大學, The Great Learning) which stresses the irrefragable interrelationships between man, society, and the world.¹⁴ (It was certainly held by Li Shih-mien, an academic at a Confucian institution when he attacked the *Hsin-hua*.) Thus belles lettres (including all fictional genres) which emphasized "emotional response" (情, *ch'ing*) were disparaged; the more exigent concerns of reality (*li* [理] "principle" or "reason") and the proper control of the feelings (*ch'eng* [誠] "sincerity") comprised the only accepted themes for literature. Serious scholars were able to overcome their interest in the unusual, which provided so much of the *Stoff* for fiction, as the following quotation from Wang Yang-ming (王陽明, 1472-1529) illustrates (excerpted from a letter to an unknown friend, 1508):

You ask if "Immortals" really exist and demand more precise details. You wrote three times before, and I did not answer you, not because I did not want to, but simply because I know nothing about the matter. . . . When I was eight years old, I took great pleasure in reports [about "Immortals"]. [Yet today,] when I am over thirty, my teeth have already fallen out one by one, some of my hair is grey, and my eyes and ears have become weak. Not infrequently, I find myself confined to bed for a month at a time, and my consumption of medicine rises alarmingly. That's what reality looks like . . . [translation from Bauer, 1976, p. 221].

Given this state of affairs, it is now time to turn to Herbert Gans, author of *High Culture and Popular Culture*, whose work on Western criticism of popular culture exhibits numerous parallels to the Chinese situation. He

sums up Western attitudes towards popular culture as follows (p. 3):

The advocates of high culture criticize popular culture as a mass culture which has harmful effects on both individuals consuming it and on society as a whole.

Gans notes that high-culture critics prefer the perjorative term "mass culture" for the more neutral "popular culture" and that they engage in a more or less constant attack on this mass culture; he terms this attack the "mass culture critique." This critique, he says, "is endemic to urban-industrial society, and has existed ever since daily life became divided into periods of work and free time (p. 4)." Gans also argues that the critique emphasizes four major themes (p. 19):

1. *The negative character of popular culture creation.* Popular culture is undesirable because, unlike high culture, it is mass-produced by profit-minded entrepreneurs solely for the gratification of a paying audience.
2. *The negative effects on high culture.* Popular culture borrows from high culture, thus debasing it, and also lures away many potential creators of high culture, thus depleting its reservoir of talent.
3. *The negative effects on the popular-culture audience.* The consumption of popular culture content at best produces spurious gratifications, and at worst is emotionally harmful to the audience.
4. *The negative effects on the society.* The wide distribution of popular culture not only reduces the level of cultural quality — or civilization of the society — but also encourages totalitarianism by creating a passive audience peculiarly responsive to the techniques of mass persuasion used by demagogues bent on dictatorship.

Although it should be noted that these are themes abstracted from the work of Western critics in the last two centuries, they do seem to fit well the situation in the Ming. This can especially be seen in the following excerpts from some of the prefaces to the *Hsin-hua* and its sequels in which there are repeated attempts to defend especially the "licentious nature" of the stories¹⁵ through comparison to the Classics. Ch'ü Yu, for example, in his own preface (1378) to the *Hsin-hua* relates his feelings on having completed his recording of these tales (Chou I, 1957, p. 3):

... once finished, I again felt I had overstepped proper bounds in speaking of the strange, come close to educating in licentiousness, so I stored them in my bookcases and didn't want to circulate them. Those visitors who heard about them and wanted to see them were so numerous that I wasn't able to completely refuse them; thus I further disentangled myself by saying, "The *Book of Odes*, the *Book of Documents*, the *Book of Changes*, and the *Spring and Autumn Annals* are all recorded by the pens of sages, and are considered great Classics and great models for ten-thousand generations. Yet the *Book of Changes* tells of dragons fighting in the wilds, the *Book of Documents* records (the omen of) a crowing pheasant alighting on one of the handles of a tripod, elopement poems were selected for the 'Odes of the States,' and the *Spring and Autumn* sets down the affairs of rebels and robbers [all involve "speaking of the strange" or "educating in licentiousness"]. Therefore, one cannot only hold to a single principle. Now in this work although I have nothing to add to the education of the world and the correction of people's behavior, yet in encouraging the good and punishing the evil, in lamenting the poor and grieving for the wronged, haven't I come close to the mode of those who recite them cause no offense, yet those who hear them caution themselves? The visitors felt there was some logic in my words and therefore I wrote this at the beginning of the book.

既成，又自以爲涉于語怪，近于誨淫，藏之書笥，不欲傳出。客聞而求觀者衆，不能盡卻之，則又自解曰：『詩』、『書』、『易』、『春秋』，皆聖筆之所述作，以爲萬世大經大法者也；然而『易』言龍戰于野，『書』載雉雊于鼎，『國風』取淫奔之詩，『春秋』紀亂賊之事，是又不可執一論也。今余此編，雖于世教民彝，莫之或補，而勸善懲惡，哀窮悼屈，其亦庶乎言者無罪，聞者足以戒之一義云爾。客以余言有理，故書之卷首。

Tseng Ch'i's (曾槩, 1372-1432) preface to the *Chien-teng yü-hua*, written in 1420, is similar (Chou I, 1957, p. 123):

... Then Li Ch'ang-ch'i entrusted it to me to preface. The great Classics and the grand models of the sages and saints, which are written in books, are taught in every family, read by every person. There are those things which are incredible, those which are sufficient to broaden one's knowledge of things, to aid one's ability to converse, and debate, which also should not be discarded. Ch'ang-ch'i's learning is broad, his talent lofty; the abundance of intelligence in his literary thought is not less than that in the bubbling of a spring or the formation of mountains. Therefore, that which

he has written is thickly beautiful and richly luxuriant, (so that) his literary gatherings sparkle brightly.

既而昌祺以屬余序。夫聖賢之大經大法，載之于書者，蓋已家傳人誦；有不可思議，有足以廣材識、資談論者，亦所不廢。昌祺學博才高，其文思之敏贍，不啻泉之涌，而山之積也。故其所著，穠麗豐蔚，文采爛然；

Finally, let us examine Wang Ying's (王英, 1375-1450) preface to the *Yü-hua* (also dated 1420; Chou I, 1957, p. 124):

I have read the *Chien-teng yü-hua* which was written by Mr. Li Ch'ang-ch'i of Lü-ling. That which it contains are all stories of personages from other worlds and of the supernatural. I was secretly pleased with Ch'ang-ch'i's broad range of experience, his lofty talent and great foresight, and the workmanship and beauty of his literary creations. Someone asked me, "If certain (stories) are vague and confused, the sort of thing an ideal gentleman would not put his trust in, why are you so pleased with them?" "Not so," I replied. "The Classics are intended to convey the Way, histories to record events. Other than these there are the various philosophers, who by means of stylistic skill and comparison of events, in great variety and profusion, composed books. There are also the sayings of the hundred schools which record the legacy of antiquity, together with contemporary collections of conversations, riddles, tales of the spirits and the strange which have been transmitted (along with the Classics and the histories) to the present generation. Though they are different with regard to their degree of truth and benefit (to the world), how could they indeed be without that which one can gain from them? The crucial point lies merely in careful selection. For this reason those narratives which are without basis should be put aside, those which are true, without prevarication and with a relevance to moral teaching in the world should be recorded. Indeed, I find in this collection that which should be taken (and recorded). . . .

余讀廬陵李君昌祺所著『剪燈餘話』，所載皆幽冥人物靈異之事，竊喜昌祺之博聞廣見，才高識偉，而文詞制作之工且麗也。或有詰余者曰：『某事幽昧恍惚，君子所未信，子何爲而喜耶？』余曰：『不然！經以載道，史以紀事；其他有諸子焉，托詞比事，紛紛藉藉，著爲之書；又有百家之說焉，以志載古昔遺事，與時之叢談、談語、神怪之說，并傳于世；是非得失，固有不同，然亦豈無所可取者哉！在審擇之而已，是故言之泛溢無據者置之；事核而其言不誣，有關於世教者錄之。余于是編、蓋亦有所取也。

Other prefaces to these works are similar, some even borrowing whole lines verbatim from their predecessors. Generally, they emphasize one of two

arguments. First, that the stories in the collection at hand are in some manner "classical." This is Ch'ü Yu's approach in his comparison of the effect his tales have to that of the "Airs of the States" — the line "those who recite them cause no offense, yet those who hear them caution themselves" (言之者無罪，聞之者足以戒), is taken from the "definition" of *feng* (風) in the "Ta-hsü" (大序, Great Preface) to the *Book of Odes*.¹⁶ Or, secondly, the classics are shown to be not totally dissimilar to the stories collected. Ch'ü Yu in his description of strange and erotic accounts in the Classics and Tseng Ch'i in his claim that the functions of the Classics and the stories approximate one another illustrate this approach.

These arguments in the prefaces and memorial are also refutations along the lines of Gans' "four major themes." They claim that profit is not their goal (theme 1), that their stories will not debase high culture (theme 2), that they cannot harm and may even mildly ameliorate the moral standards of their readers (theme 3), and that they can, through their considerable literary quality, at least maintain the cultural quality of Chinese traditional civilization (theme 4).

If we can now accept the reality of a socio-cultural milieu in Ming China which parallels that of the West today, Gans' further suggestion (p. 7), that "the existence of the critique has less to do with changes in high or popular culture than with the position of intellectuals in society, particularly those intellectuals who are or feel themselves to be part of the 'Establishment'; over time, the critique has appeared when intellectuals have lost power and the status that goes with power . . .," may also be of interest. It is perhaps unnecessary at this juncture to recall that during the early fifteenth century, following the tragedy of Fang Hsiao-ju (方孝孺, 1357-1402) [this case is only representative — for others see Goodrich, 1938], when the intellectuals had little power, a fusillade such as Li Shih-mien's was not unexpected. His choice of terms reveals his high-culture distaste for the popular: he reviles Ch'ü Yu as a "common" or "popular" scholar (俗孺, *su-ju*¹⁷), he worries about serious students neglecting their work (recalling theme 2 above) and the corruption proleddedly produced by such literature (theme 3), which is at the level of those "frivolous fellows of the marketplace" (theme 4). The first theme, that of profit, a Confucian anathema, is of course implied in Li's criticism of the general popularity of the tales. The whole of Li's appeal to the emperor may be seen as a classic case of mass critique.

Thus from the point of view of high culture, there was little difference between the Ming classical tale and the short story. Both were to be considered *Trivialliteratur* and products of mass culture, but not formal literature. This conclusion provides the answer to Franke's question and may lead scholars to view the Chinese intelligentsia as bifurcated or fragmented (cf. Silberman, 1973, on the fragmentation of the Western intelligentsia). There may well be a group of the Ming elite which was most concerned with aesthetic functions of literature (the literati), and another which stressed primarily the social and didactic functions (the Neo-Confucians). Similar to the recent Red/expert dichotomy in the PRC, these groups would have valued *ts'ai* (才, talent) and *ch'eng* (誠, sincerity) respectively.¹⁸ The concept of a social class being tied to certain genres therefore needs revamping (cf. Muscatine, 1976, who has shown similar assumptions for the fabliau to be invalid), for both tale and story seem clearly to have been a part of both Ming high culture and popular culture. One might in fact attempt to posit a schematic overview of Ming literature based upon several of the hypotheses proposed above which would resemble the following chart:

LITERARY AUDIENCE			NON-LITERARY AUDIENCE		
	oral	written	oral	written	
high culture	puns, ch'ing-t'an (清談), rhetoric	poetry	memorized excerpts from Classics, etc.	Classics, histories, letters, formal prose	highly literate
		tales, stories, drama			
middle culture	adapted tales & stories, songs, jokes	various oral-related genres	religious spells	practical manuals, simplified & abridged versions of Classics	moderately literate
low culture	"	∅	prayers	∅	illiterate

Thus, although to the modern students of Ming fiction, as well as to the authors of the texts themselves (both groups are within their respective "literary audiences"), the classical tale and the short story may be seen to be diametrically opposed, our brief examination of the literary context and reception of the *Chien-teng hsin-hua* and its sequels has perhaps begun to establish some degree of socio-cultural affiliation between these two genres — an affiliation that may have been perceived by many of those who chanced upon these works, during the Ming, especially those who belonged to the "non-literary audience." They may have seemed no more distinct than "Let's Make a Deal" would be from "Masterpiece Theatre" to a contemporary high-culture critic of television. And if so, classical-tale collections such as the *Chien-teng hsin-hua* and their overall role in the development of Ming fiction, which have been relatively neglected in the recent past, would seem to merit our renewed attention.

Notes

1. This paper is a preliminary study. The selected references provided a working bibliography — some have been used in this paper, some have not. They may give, however, an indication of the extent of materials available for a more thorough investigation of the cultural context of Ming short fiction.
2. Its popularity is attested by the near contemporary *T'ing-yü chi-t'an* (聽雨紀談) by Tu Mu (都穆, 1459-1524); cf. Lu Hsun, *Hsiao-shuo chiu-wen ch'ao* (小說舊聞鈔) (Hong Kong: Ta-t'ung, 1959), pp. 48-49. The only edition (*Hsü Chih-pu-tsu chai ts'ung-shu* [續知不足齋叢書]) I have been able to consult, however, does not contain this passage.
3. *Bungaku shi* (文學史), v. 5 of *Chūgoku bunka sōsho* (中國文化叢書) (Tokyo: Taishukan, 1967), pp. 309-310.
4. Translation by Yang Hsien-i and Gladys Yang, *A Brief History of Chinese Fiction* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1964), p. 269.
5. On Li see Goodrich, 1976, pp. 865-868; he was widely known as a courageous moralist who often found himself in trouble because of his caustic criticism of the more powerful.
6. Perhaps because he was involved with students at this time, Li Shih-mien was especially sensitive to the young spending their leisure at idle pursuits such as reading fiction. The rest of his memorial dealt with topics such as the medical care of examinations candidates, conditions in the academies, etc.
7. On literacy during the Ch'ing see Rawski, 1979. Idema, 1974, pp. XI and 126ff

points out that in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the "truly popular printed fiction" catered "to a more broad-based reading public." See also Plaks, 1980, pp. 3-4.

We are unfortunately quite ignorant of how such tales were actually read during the Ming. Certainly to assume that many (if any) readers attempted a logical, organic and complete understanding or interpretation of a text may be unfounded. Considering that few texts were available to any one reader even at this time, that the mnemonic tradition is overwhelmingly important in Chinese literary history, and that there were varying degrees of literacy, it may well be that many readers approached a classical tale only after they had heard it read aloud (in some form) and were perhaps even familiar enough with the verse it contained to skim over it.

8. Several colleagues have altered me to the danger of assuming that "shih-ching ching-fu chih t'u" refers literally to the marketplace (they argue that it may simply be a disparaging epithet for scholars who read fiction in any form). Even if we allow for the validity of their claims — though it seems to me that Li wants us to understand the term "frivolous fellows" in opposition to the serious scholars he mentions — the basic argument that the *Chien-teng hsin-hua's* influence transcended generic boundaries would not be seriously attenuated.
9. Ch'ü Yu himself was familiar with such performances, cf. Prusek, 1970, pp. 237-238, n. 6. On the broad social contacts of story-tellers see Prusek, 1977, p. 353.
10. Similar theories have been expressed by Hanan, 1964, pp. 115-143, and Wayne Schlepp in his *San-ch'ü, Its Technique and Imagery* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1970), pp. 4-7. This whole concept is very similar to what Yuri Lotman has variously called "text" or "extra-text"; cf. Shukman, 1977, pp. 64-65. Lotman includes literary norms, ideologies, perception, codes, etc. under the term "text," and literary tradition as well as the reader's own ideology which "he uses to form a system of relationships" within his concept of "extra-text." Indeed, this approach to "texts" would provide an interesting base for future examinations of the literary distinctions between classical tales and short stories.
11. There may be a normal process or "evolution" of a story-line, and that process may begin with oral sources, develop through vernacular or classical "recordings" and eventually become a full-fledged vernacular short story, but more importantly this would seem to always be accompanied by a virtually simultaneous dispersal of any popular story-line throughout several genres. This can be seen in our own culture today, where the "normal sequence" is often (1) novel or play, (2) film, and (3) renovelization, spin-off films, or television series. Yet there are other links in these chains; Hanan (1973a, p. 127), for example, observes that "the main source of Classical fiction" is the "amateur, casual story-telling which takes place in company." The nature of such literary activity is difficult to determine. In fact, despite the claims by authors of classical tales from the T'ang through the Ch'ing that much of their material was related to them by friends, these allegations may be at least in part merely literary conventions.

12. During the last fifty years in the West, for example, the various transformations of the Superman story in literary and entertainment circles may be seen as similar. Created by a teenager in the summer of 1933, Superman was alternately a comic-book hero (late 1930s), the protagonist of a novel (1942), the star of cartoons for theaters (1940s) and television (1960s to the present), the leading man in a television series (1950s), featured in several movies (the latest, 1978, something of an attempt to appeal to a more "literate public"), and even the subject of a Broadway musical (1966). To discuss the literary context of Superman in twentieth-century American literature or film, one could not ignore even those forms which are non-literary (or quasi-literary), since there have been so many influences across generic lines (Kryptonite, for example, was introduced by the creators of the animated-film Superman).
13. Cf. also note 7 above. At this juncture a comparison between one of the short stories and its classical-tale model might be expected. However, since such a comparison would not be in keeping with the objectives of this study, and since at least four such studies are already available (Prusek, 1957; Franke, 1959; Voskresenskij, 1973; Hanan, 1973a), this exercise can safely be abjured.
14. The best known passage is that which links the governing of the state with a well ordered family and rectified mind, cf. James Legge, *The Chinese Classics* (Taipei: Chin-hsteh shu-chü, 1969), v. I, pp. 357-9.
15. Wang Shao-ch'uan (王曉傳, 1958, p. 33) notes that *hsiao-shuo* (小說) was often called *yin-tz'u hsiao-shuo* (淫詞小說).
16. Cf. Legge, *Classics*, v. 4, p. 35.
17. Li Chi (1972, p. 79) notes Chu Hsi's abhorrence for the term *su* (俗, "vulgar") which he opposed to *kao* (高, "high" or "spiritually noble").
18. These values are only intended to suggest the differences between these groups and were by no means the watchwords of any particular coterie.

List of Abbreviations Not Otherwise Noted

AM	Asia Major
AO	Archiv Orientalni
BEFEO	Bulletin de l'Ecole Francaise d'Extreme-Orient
BSOAS	Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies
CLEAR	Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews.
HJAS	Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies
JAS	Journal of Asian Studies
MS	Monumenta Serica
NAIA	Narody Azii i Afriki
OE	Oriens Extremus
TP	T'oung Pao

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