THE MYSTERY OF THE HALVED JUDGE DEE NOVEL: THE ANONYMOUS *WU TSE-T'IEN SSU-TA CH'I-AN* AND ITS PARTIAL TRANSLATION BY R. H. VAN GULIK*

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I

The typical characteristic of the Western detective novel is that in the course of its action a crime is solved. The typical characteristic of the traditional Chinese crime story is that in it an instance of gross injustice is undone. A Western detective novel is a 'whodunit'; how and why the villain committed his crime is only revealed at the end. Its Chinese counter-part as a rule opens with a full description, often in gruesome detail, of the atrocity. The identity of the author of the crime is from the very beginning known to the reader, and usually also to the other characters in the story, yet he escapes punishment for the time being by intimidating or bribing all those concerned. The villain usually is an underworld boss, a relative of a high official, or both at the same time. Priests and monks also quite often act the bad part. They can continue their evil practices until the incorrupt judge makes his appearance. This incorrupt judge, often one newly named to his post or a travelling censor, may well be a smart fellow, but there is no need for him to be so. If the perpetrator of the crime and the method by which he did it are not already common knowledge, there will be ghosts appearing in black whirlwinds, riddles posed in dreams, and incorrupt corpses that reveal the crime and its author. Sometimes the judge will assume a disguise, travel incognito through his district, and before long overhear a conversation at a streetcorner or in a teahouse giving him all the details. If everything else fails, the magistrate can always use torture to extract the confession. The principal trait of the hero of a Chinese crime story is his burning and unshakable desire to see

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justice done, to bring down the powerful and help out the poor and weak.

No good judge has become as popular a fictional figure as Judge Pao. The historical Pao Cheng lived in the eleventh century and his official biography in the *Sung-shih* (宋史) describes him indeed as fearless and incorruptible in dealing with the mighty families of the capital when he was the metropolitan prefect. It also stresses that he took special measures, curtailing the traditional functions and power of his underlings, the yamen clerks and runners, in order to be accessible to the common people. By the Yüan dynasty (1280-1368) Judge Pao had already established himself as the most popular good judge. He plays a part in no less than ten *tsa-chü* (雜劇) plays of that period.[1] He also figures prominently in some of the recently discovered *shuo-ch'ang tz'u-hua* (說唱詞話) of the 15th century. During the last fifty years of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) he became a central figure in some of the collections of curious cases, and only the one in which he figured prominently, the *Lung-t'u kung-an* (龍圖公案), achieved a lasting success. In some of the stories included there, Judge Pao even works double shifts: At night he passes judgment in Hell. In 1879 there appeared the *San-hsia wu-i* (三俠五義), a novel in 120 chapters, based on the oral performance of Judge Pao's adventures by a famous Peking story-teller. This novel had many sequels. In it, Judge Pao is assisted in his work by a great number of assistants, formidable fist-fighters, stick-fighters, swordsmen and the like, that help him to cut through bureaucratic red tape. Judge Pao also figures prominently in many other Ch'ing novels.[2]

Even so, Judge Pao certainly was not the only popular good judge, his novels had to compete with those about Hai Jui (海瑞)[3] Judge Shih (施公), Judge P'eng (彭公)[4] and others. He even had to compete with some emperors, as no sharp dividing line can be drawn between these stories and those about August Sons of Heaven like the K'ang-hsi emperor and the Ch'ien-lung emperor, who travelled incognito through their realms to bring aid to the oppressed, to reward the deserving and to punish the evil-doers.[5] These latter stories show a striking similarity to the stories about Harun Al Rashid we all know from *Thousand and One Nights.*

It is no doubt a safe assumption to consider the figure of the good judge as it appears in these stories as the embodiment of the hopes of the lower strata of society, which saw in the incorrupt official or helpful emperor their only chance for assistance against local bullies and the imperial bureaucracy. This assumption is corroborated by our knowledge of the origin of those stories which formed part of the repertoire of professional story-tellers and of the

popular theatre. The great majority of the novels in this class were only written and printed beginning from the last quarter of the 19th century, at which time the introduction of modern printing techniques into China had changed a situation whereby, "in a country where printing was invented, books are the luxury of the rich" (A. H. Smith, *Village Life in China,* Edinburgh, 1899, p. 96). The manner of printing and the characteristics of the contents make it very clear that the mass-public of those days was aimed at.

It is therefore rather surprising to see how vehemently these novels have been criticized in the People's Republic of China. A sole exception is made sometimes for the already mentioned *San-hsia wu-i,* that is to say, for the modern edition that has been cleaned of "feodal dross."[6] The common element in this criticism is the objection that by presenting the picture of an incorrupt judge or good emperor those novels suggest that justice could exist in a class society like traditional China, and that they therefore prevent the reader from realizing the true nature of traditional society and his own relationship to it. The continuous vehemence of such criticism was apparently caused by the stubborn popularity of this type of fiction. In this respect it is important to note that most of these criticisms were not to be found in scholarly journals but in publications like the *Chung-kuo ch'ing-nien pao (Chinese Youth),* published by the Communist Youth League. Right up to the Cultural Revolution many young laborers continued to prefer these "poisonous books" to modern novels about revolutionary struggle and labour heroes.[7] It is not difficult to see why. Academic pundits may say these novels have no literary merit, but their style is simple, their vocabulary limited, the conversations of the characters short and every page is packed with suspense, sensation and sex.

The difference in character between the typical Western detective novel and the typical Chinese crime story is clearly manifested in the differences between their heroes. The typical Western detective is a "loner," someone who by preference works outside any organization in his own peculiar and unique ways. This applies as much to a Victorian example like Sherlock Holmes[8] as to a modern example like Lew Archer. In their own modest way both of them are examples of the "problematical hero" that is typical of so much of Western fiction since the 18th century. The traditional Chinese crime story finds its closest modern Western equivalent in hard-boiled fiction. Judge Pao and James Bond are colleagues. Both of them, each for his own society, are the curious embodiments of mixed high- and low-class values and ideals, spotlessly clean, ever victoriously fighting the craftiest villains. Technical

gadgets help Bond instead of the spiritual agencies that assist Pao, but advanced technology and magic are both realms of higher knowledge, sealed off from the common reader.

This does not mean one can find no story at all in traditional Chinese fiction where an initially mysterious crime is eventually solved by combination and deduction. Some such stories may be found among the vernacular short stories printed in the 16th and 17th centuries.[9] One might even detect forerunners of the modern detective in the clever clerks and astute policemen that bring the villains to justice in some Yüan plays. But there is no continuous development, no specific genre. The near-total absence of 'whodunits' in traditional Chinese fiction explains the tremendous success with the sophisticated Chinese public of the first translated detective novels in the beginning of this century. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was in 1900-1910 one of the best known Western novelists in China. Even those Chinese critics that at that time valued traditional Chinese fiction above the translated works readily admitted that the detective novel was new to China and were enthusiastic about it.[10]

This near-total absence of the detective story in traditional Chinese fiction also explains why Robert van Gulik had to find the inspiration for his Judge Dee novels (which are, despite the setting, essentially modern Western detective novels) in a Chinese novel that in China itself is not well-known at all, that is ignored by all standard histories of Chinese fiction, and that has attracted no scholarly attention to speak of – the *Wu Tse-t'ien ssu-ta ch'i-an* (武則天四大奇案 *[Four Important and Curious Cases from the Time of Empress Wu*). Van Gulik, moreover, in the introduction to his translation of this novel as *Dee Goong An: Three Murder Cases Solved by Judge Dee* (Tokyo, 1949) – which version precedes the writing of his own Judge Dee novels – declared the latter half of the original to be an inferior continuation by a later hand and consequently left it out, even though the Chinese title explicitly refers to this second part of the novel.[11] What is the mystery of this halved Judge Dee novel?

II

It is not clear when and by whom the *Wu Tse-t'ien ssu-ta ch'i-an* was written. The earliest preserved printed editions date from the late 19th century.[12] Van Gulik was in possession of a manuscript copy that had in his opinion been made in the second half of the 19th century. At different places

in the introduction and in the afterword to his translation he mentions as possible dates for the composition of this novel the 16th, the 17th, the 18th and the 19th century. It appears improbable to me that a novel in 64 chapters would circulate for centuries without leaving a trace, so I would think it safest to assume that the novel was written somewhere in the 19th century, perhaps in the first half of it, as the novel shows no signs of influence by novels like the *San-hsia wu-i* that appeared in the last quarter of the century. In contrast to these novels, the *Wu Tse-t'ien ssu-ta ch'i-an* does not appear to be based on a pre-existing popular cycle of stories and it does not share their loose episodic structure. The *Wu Tse-t'ien ssu-ta ch'i-an* can only be divided into two major parts: the first 30 chapters describing the activities of Ti Jen-chieh (Judge Dee) in a provincial post (and translated by VanGulik) and the remaining 34 chapters relating his doings as metropolitan prefect (and left untranslated). Not only is the plotting better in the *Wu Tse-t'ien ssu-ta ch'i-an,* but also the style. It is certainly not a masterpiece, and Van Gulik thought the last 34 chapters stylistically inferior to the first half (an impression I do not share), but its style doubtlessly is far superior to the dry, monotonous idiom of the later crime novels. It is not the hasty compilation by a hack writer of popular stories, but the original composition of a sophisticated author writing for his equals. The *Wu Tse-t'ien ssu-ta ch'ia-an* does not belong to the chapbook tradition in Chinese fiction, but to that of the literary novel written by well-educated members of the gentry, exemplified in the *Ju-lin wai-shih* (儒林外史, *The Scholars*) by Wu Ching-tzu (吳敬梓, 1701-1754) and the *Hung-lou meng* (紅樓夢, *The Dream of the Red Chamber*) by Ts'ao Hsüeh-ch'in (曹雪芹, 1715-1763), even if it occupies only a very small position in that tradition.

As is clear from the title, the *Wu Tse-t'ien ssu-ta ch'i-an* is set in the reign of Empress Wu. Empress Wu is a unique figure in Chinese history as the only woman to wear the imperial crown. Other empresses (or more accurately, empress-dowagers) have dominated court and consequently national politics as regents, but she was the only one ever to reign in her own name. She started her career as a concubine of Li Shih-min, the second emperor of the T'ang dynasty (618-906). After his death she became the wife of his son, who reigned until his death in 683. Then she tried to rule as a regent, but within a year she had used up two emperors, her own son and then a grandson. She banned both of them to outlying districts, did away with the other members of the imperial Li clan, and reigned alone. Her rule was stern but competent, as the scandalized traditional Chinese historiographers had to admit. In 690

she even changed the name of the dynasty from T'ang to Chou and she considered a succession to the throne by a nephew of hers from the Wu clan, but shortly before her death she gave in to the growing opposition to these plans and called back the banned princes. The eldest became emperor in 705 and renamed the dynasty T'ang again. Later historiographers have found in Ti Jen-chieh the head of the opposition against Empress Wu and the defender of the House of T'ang; his persuasive admonitions should have kept Empress Wu back from naming her nephew crown-prince. Ti Jen-chieh achieved his reputation even though, born in 630, he had already died in 700.

Theatre and fiction had always shown little interest in this weird episode in China's history. The titles have been preserved of a few lost 14th century *tsa-chü* plays which seem to have treated Ti Jen-chieh's opposition. As for antecedents of the novel, we have a short text, rather old (dating perhaps from the 14th or 15th century) and consisting of nine admonitions by Ti, called the *Liang-kung chiu-chien* (梁公九諫).[13] In the 16th century historical romances that treat the T'ang dynasty the episode is cursorily dealt with. Also in Ch'u Jen-huo's (褚人穫) 100 ch. novel *Sui T'ang yen-i* (隋唐演義), written around 1680, it occupies only ch. 70-75. Only pornography has always been drawn to this period and has dwelt with loving detail on the Empress's sexual activities.[14] Her role in these works may be compared to that of Catherine the Great in Western fantasy.

But at the end of the 18th century and afterwards at least four long novels were set in this period. Apart from the *Wu Tse-t'ien ssu-ta ch'i-an*, we also have the *Ching-hua yüan* (Flowers in the Mirror) by Li Ju-chen (1763-1830?), and the anonymous *Lü mu-tan* (綠牡丹 , *Green Peony*) and *Hsüeh Kang Fan T'ang* (薛剛反唐, *Hsüeh Kang's Revolt Against the T'ang*). This sudden interest can perhaps be explained by the political circumstances of the time. From 1644 to 1911 China was ruled by the non-Chinese Manchus. No criticism of the ruling dynasty or of the privileged social position of the Manchus was allowed. The middle of the 18th century witnessed a drawn-out, intensive inquisition directed against all works that contained any passages that could directly or indirectly be considered to contain such criticism. Novels describing the Manchu conquest, and the Chinese opposition against it, were forbidden, as was the *Shuo* Yüeh *ch'üan-chuan* (說岳全傳), a long novel on the life of *Yüeh* Fei (岳飛, 1103-1141), a general who defended the Southern Sung dynasty against the Chin, who were considered by the Manchus to be their forefathers. To me it seems not at all unlikely that the choice of this particular period may be explained as an attempt to find a

suitable, yet safe historical parallel to Manchu rule, since other periods of foreign conquest had already been condemned. The Manchu emperors ruled competently, but was not their position on China's throne as unnatural, as opposed to the *Tao,* as that of Empress Wu, a woman? Moreover, the name Chou she chose for her dynasty has barbarian connotations: The first Chou dynasty reigned over China from 1122 B.C. to 256 B.C. and its institutions, as developed by Confucius, were the core of Chinese civilization, yet its founders were "western barbarians." Empress Wu's own family name is written with the character *wu* (military). Especially in the *Ching-hua yüan* (鏡花緣) it is very clear, by the names and activities of the opposition to Empress Wu, *viz.* T'ang Ao and the Hundred Flower Spirits, that this opposition is supposed to stand for everything that is Chinese, civil(ized) (*wen*), and therefore legitimate.

In all four of these novels history is drastically rewritten. In all four of them Empress Wu is forced to abdicate by a military revolt led by the dethroned emperor. The life of Ti Jen-chieh is extended to enable him to support this revolt from within and to see his life-long loyalty crowned with success. In the other novels Ti Jen-chieh is still a subsidiary character; only in the *Wu Tse-tien ssu-ta ch'i-an* is he allowed to mastermind the restoration.

The *Wu Tse-t'ien ssu-ta ch'i-an* does not provide a full biography of Ti Jen-chieh. It first describes his activities as the district magistrate of Chang-p'ing in the province of Shantung, and after that it describes his doings as metropolitan prefect. As a district magistrate Ti is confronted on one and the same day with three cases. At the morning session it is reported that the bodies of two silk-merchants have been found outside an inn, and the inn-keeper is accused of the double murder of his rich clients. When Ti is on his way back from the autopsy the chastity of a widow whose house he is passing by is praised to him, but his suspicions are aroused because he overhears her scolding her mother-in-law. During the evening session a young student is accused of the murder of his bride, who has died the night before, by the family of the bride. Ti succeeds in proving the innocence of the inn-keeper; the two silk-merchants turn out to have been killed by a third colleague who is duly arrested. Ti also finds out that the student has been unjustly suspected; his bride died on account of the poison a venomous snake had let drip into her cup of tea. Ti's inquiry also reveals that the reputation for chastity of the widow is ill-founded: actually she has killed her husband by driving a nail into his cranium, and she keeps her doors shut in order to have full freedom to carry on her adulterous relationship with a student living next to her. Ti finds

out the true state of affairs in this case by posing as an itinerant doctor. He extracts a confession from the widow by visiting her in jail at night dressed as Yama, King of Hell.

On account of his now proven ability Ti Jen-chieh is made metropolitan prefect. Here he encounters the cronies of Empress Wu. To keep their position it is of prime importance to them to keep the empress suspicious of her son. Ti Jen-chieh can only realize his loyalty to the house of T'ang if he succeeds in reuniting mother and son in such a way that she steps back and lets him resume his due position. To be able to do so he has to get rid of her miserable favourites. One after another the following four cases, referred to in the title of the novel, occur. First he has one of the favorites arrested. He promises him he will let him go if he will confess to being only a servant who has dressed up as his master, but once Ti has extracted this confession he punishes him severely. Ti's next success comes when he manages to frame the lascivious monk Huai-i for murder and has him executed for it. When after this another lover of Empress Wu tries to enter her palace, forbidden to men, in the disguise of a eunuch, Ti has him arrested and, as befits his costume, castrated. Finally, Empress Wu's nephews try to get rid once and for all of the crown-prince by bribing a bandit to rise in revolt against the Empress in the name of the crown-prince. They hope this will so exasperate her that she will have her son murdered. But thanks to Ti's clever scheming the bandit indeed victoriously enters the capital, accompanied by the crown-prince. Empress Wu steps back, the crown-prince is reinstated, and at Ti's death the T'ang has been saved. In this second part of the novel Ti Jen-chieh has become a brazen manipulator of facts, evidence and popular opinion, utilizing his reputation as an incorruptible judge to achieve his ends.

The two halves of the novel offer a contrast in many more respects. In the first half, Ti is the local official of an unimportant district having to deal with his subjects; in the second, he decides court and national politics by the manipulation of his superiors. Especially important in this respect is the differing relationships of illusion and reality in the two halves of the novel. In the first half of the novel Ti sees through plausible suspicions and cultivated pretense, destroys illusions, and reestablishes the real facts. By doing so the innocent are set free and the real villains are punished. In the second half the relation between fact and fiction is reversed. Ti achieves his aims by forcing reality to conform to illusions. Sometimes Ti himself creates these illusions (the false confession and the false murder); sometimes he utilizes those which others have created (the false disguise and the pretended revolt

of his adversaries).

This duality, the juxtaposition of contrastively related elements that may change into each other, becomes apparent on all levels of the narrative. We find it, for example, in the values that determine Ti's behaviour. He is led both by his love for the common people and by his loyalty to the dynasty. Loyalty to the dynasty requires both competent local administration and the removal of bad elements from the court. The first means the correct implementation of the common law, the second may imply drastic private action outside the law. In his loyalty to the dynasty he tries to serve both the mother and the son by securing for each their legitimate function. The favorites of the Empress are both a danger to the dynasty and a plague upon the population. The Empress herself must be censured for her monopolization of political power and her unbecoming personal conduct, but still deserves respect as wife and mother of emperors and for her competent rule of the country.

The ubiquitous recurrence of these dualities on all levels of composition—incidents, characters, values—rules out the possibility of accident. This duality is the basic structuring element in the novel and its principle of unity. Van Gulik was attracted to the Judge Dee who solved his cases by seeing through outward appearances, but the anonymous Chinese author attempted to paint a far more complicated and complete character—the ideal public servant who acts differently in different situations while attempting to practice consistent, if complex values.

III

This same duality has also been noted as the structuring element in many other literary novels from the second half of the 17th century to almost the end of the 19th century. Robert Hegel, in his discussion of the construction of the *Sui-T'ang yen-i,* has pointed out the balance that is maintained throughout the novel by related episodes with contrasting contents. He has also drawn attention to the complex nature of characters which have both good and bad traits.[15] I myself have on several occasions drawn attention to the juxtaposition of many sets of contrastively related elements as the structuring device and principle of unity in such diverse works as the *Hsü Ying-lieh chuan* (續英烈傳, econd half of the 17th century), the *Nü-hsien wai-shih* (女仙外史, early 18th century), the *Fei-lung chuan* (飛龍傳, 18th century), and the *P'in-hua pao-chien* (品花寶鑑, mid-19th century).[16] Nakano Miyoko refers to

the same phenomenon by the term "ambivalence" in her discussion of the 19th century novels *Erh-nü ying-hsiung chuan* (兒女英雄傳) and *Hua-yüeh hen* (花月痕). The first of these two works contains side by side the change of a girlish boy into a gentleman and of a boyish girl into a real lady. The second novel describes side by side two love affairs of two couples of comparable background—one couple has only luck, the second affair develops tragically.[17] Others have detected this structure in the two most famous novels of this period, the *The Scholars* and *The Dream of the Red Chamber.* Oldrich Kral gives the following analysis of the former novel: "The contrast between ideas and facts, and the contrast between the conflicting characters of individual figures constitute the chief elements of the dramatic nature of Wu Ching-tzu's work; these elements arise . . . primarily out of the artist's world outlook and his evaluation of facts. The world seemed to him a contradiction, a large scale clash between shadow and light . . . ."[18] Kral also noted that persons are described by confronting their words and deeds, by contrasting what they want others to believe and what they actually do. He has pointed out the lack of tempo in the novel. Instead of a continuous narrative, *The Scholars* presents episodes side by side. The main theme of the *The Dream of the Red Chamber,* the detailed chronicle of life in the immensely rich Chia family, has been defined as follows by Jeanette Knoerle: "It is in the complexity of the everyday lives of its individual members that the theme of appearance and reality is explored in minute detail. . . ." She also draws attention to lack of tempo: "At . . . times the narrative expands laterally: that is, one episode is finished and the actions of a different set of characters, simultaneous to the first, are described . . . ."[19] She also notes two main contrasting plot lines and the complexity of the main characters. Some Chinese critics have recently stressed the contrast between the *Ta-kuan-yüan* garden and the Chia household as a contrast between purity and squalor, illusory ideal and grim reality.[20] Lucien Miller concludes his overwhelmingly detailed discussion of (mainly the first chapter of) the novel as follows: "The author perceives reality in terms of a tension between the divine and the human and he enfolds that reality in the movements of complementary opposites . . . ." In the first chapter of his book he shows how not only the everday world of the novel is imperfect, but the divine one also. In his second chapter he traces the final identity of contrasting characters (like Chen Shih-yin and Chia Yü-ts'un, Chia Pao-yü and Chen Pao-yü) and of conceptual opposites (like illusory and real). In his third chapter he shows how each *persona* that presents the story contains contradictory elements—even the author Ts'ao Hsüeh-ch'in himself, writing

and debunking his tale at the same time.[21] Most recently Andrew Plaks, in his analysis of the overall structure of *The Dream of the Red Chamber,* has coined a new term for this phenomenon: complementary bipolarity.[22] Actually, as far as my reading goes, the structure of a great many more novels—on a variety of topics and of widely different degrees of literary merit—can be described by that term: *ts'ai-tzu chia-jen* (才子佳人) fiction like the *P'ing-shan leng-yen* (平山冷燕); and long novels like the *Lin-lan hsiang* (林蘭香), the *Lü-yeh hsien-tsung* (綠野仙踪), the *Yeh-sou p'u-yen* (野叟曝言) and the *Ching-hua- yüan.*

While Miller apparently thinks its structure makes the *Hung-lou meng* unique, Plaks wishes to see complementary bipolarity as an archetypal narrative pattern throughout Chinese literary history. I agree with neither. In my opinion fiction structured by complementary bipolarity makes its appearance in the second half of the 17th century. The conventions and topics of vernacular fiction that evolved in the preceding century and a half when fiction had been structured by inverse proportionality (often exemplified in stories of retribution)—conventions such as a narrative line which is strictly singular and chronological; chapters that end on a note of suspense, the frequent use of gnomic poetry, the cynical delineation of good and bad, of temptation, lust and desire—these conventions were gradually discarded. In their place new ones developed, such as multiple simultaneous and contrasting narrative lines, chapters of contrasting episodes, extended descriptive passages, ironical confrontation of pretense and capacities, ideal and action, illusion and reality, fact and fiction. As the 18th and 19th centuries went on, the authors of novels felt less and less compulsion to bind the different narrative lines together into one overall narrative. The contrast alone apparently provided sufficient unity. This is particularly striking in works like *The Scholars,* the *P'in-hua pao-chien* or the *Hua-yüeh-hen.* These novels all present a panoramic survey of a social class by way of the description of the manifold contemporaneous actions of its different members. When one wishes, however, to present a full picture of a social type (like the epitomized official), as happens in the *Yeh-sou p'u-yen* and in the *Wu Tse-t'ien ssu-ta ch'i-an,* his different activities necessarily have to follow one another.

Fiction manifesting a structure of complementary bipolarity is fundamentally different from modern Western fiction as it has taken shape since the middle of the 18th century. The typical modern Western novel has one central character who fits but uneasily into the society around him. To bring out the unique individuality of this main character the description

focuses on the detailed delineation of his thoughts and deeds, and their gradual development (necessary to bring the novel to its end), in reaction to his society, in this way producing the completely individualized round characters our critics and most of us like so much.

A modern reader, brought up in this way of thinking, finds little in Chinese fiction of which he can approve wholeheartedly. Some, like C.T. Hsia[23] and Nakano Miyoko,[24] have voiced their dissatisfaction at length. Perhaps the type of Chinese fiction we actually understand most easily is that of which the common crime story, discussed in the beginning of this paper, is representative: stories of conflict between good and bad in which the forces of good always win out; stories of heroes, virtuosos or gods that arbitrarily dispose of the world around them, or of the futile struggle of man against fate or time. We find comparable stories in our own tradition in fairytales, legends, romance, and hard-boiled fiction. In China this type of fiction is found through the centuries in chapbooks, but it stands also at the beginning of vernacular fiction, both long and short. For the short story this has been analyzed by Patrick Hanan.[25] We have a tendency to look down upon such stories as simplistic, childish, primitive. When the conflicts in such works spiral inwards and are sustained by great narrative power, however, we get novels with epic grandeur like the *San-kuo chih yen-i* (三國志演義), in which the central conflict is eventually not the one between Liu Pei and the arch villain Ts'ao Ts'ao, but the much more tragic one of Liu Pei with his sworn brothers on the one hand and with Chu-ko Liang on the other hand. By his decision to honor the claims of brotherhood, Liu Pei reduces Chu-ko Liang's loyalty and their common efforts for the restoration of the Han to futility.

The modern reader feels very uneasy about Chinese fiction of the 16th and early 17th centuries. The frank description of men and women gratifying or resisting their lusts and desires presents many points of comparison with modern Western realism, yet invariable punishment of the wicked and reward for the virtuous smacks too much of moral didacticism and the modern reader thus often assumes a discrepancy between the declared and the unconscious motives of the author.

When that same reader encounters a novel like the *Wu Tse-t'ien ssu-ta ch'i-an,* structured by complementary bipolarity, he does not easily experience the different activities and attitudes that are described side by side or one after another as parts of one composite pattern. Without realizing the complexity of the characters, he experiences them as very flat indeed, and the novel as a whole presents to him little or no coherence. Once that reader is sure of

the disparity of the different parts, he will find ways to explain this state of affairs. Some bring out the assumed oral past of fiction and the commercial story-teller and find there the cause for the presumably "loose episodic structure" of most traditional Chinese fiction. If a novel, like the *Wu Tse-t'ien ssu-ta ch'i-an,* seems to fall apart into two unrelated halves, this apparently is sufficient circumstantial evidence to warrant the verdict that one of the halves has to be the clumsy forgery of an inept later hand, even if no substantial proof can be produced. Under these conditions the translator feels free to omit such things as (in his eyes) inessential episodes and appended sequels, as did Van Gulik and many others.

So much for the mystery of the halved Judge Dee novel. In view of the bulk of many traditional Chinese novels, partial translations are perhaps unavoidable. As long as the translator carefully points out what he has left out, it may be regrettable, but scarcely objectionable. Certainly as long as the truncated remnants manage to be such a fertile stimulus for such an enjoyable contribution to modern Western literature as the Judge Dee novels, one is willing to condone the misreading of the original. But this does not free us from the duty to do full justice to the originality and variety of traditional Chinese fiction.

Notes

1. The courtroom play is a distinct subgenre of Yüan *tsa-chü* literature. See Cheng Chen-to (鄭振鐸), "Yüan-tai Kung-an-chü ch'an-sheng ti yüan-yin chi ch'i t'e-chih" (元代公案劇產生的原因及其特質) in his *Chung-kuo wen-hsüeh yen-chiu* (中國文學研究) (Hong Kong, 1961), pp. 511-534; George A. Hayden, "The Courtoom Plays of the Yüan and Early Ming Period", in *HJAS* XXXIV (1974), 192-220; and Ernst Wolff, "Law Court Scenes in the Yüan Drama," in *MS* XXIX (1971-1972), 193-205.
2. The career of Judge Pao is the special concern of the studies of Y. W. Ma. See his "Themes and Characterization in the *Lung-t'u kung-an,*" in *TP* LIX (1973), 179-202. On the textual history of the *Lung-t'u kung-an* and other late Ming collections of curious cases, see Ma, "The Textual Tradition of Ming *Kung-an* Fiction: A Study of the *Lung-t'u kung-an,*" in *HJAS* XXXV (1975), 190-220 (see for the same subject also Wolfgang Bauer, "The Tradition of the 'Criminal Cases of Master Pao' *Pao-kung-an (Lung-t'u kung-an)*" in *Oriens* XXIII-XXIV (1974), 433-449). A number of stories in the *Lung-t'u kung-an* have been retold by Leon

Comber as *The Strange Cases of Magistrate Pao: Chinese Tales of Crime and Detection*, which also contains a solid introduction concerning Judge Pao.

Judge Pao also plays an important part, more as a wise elder statesman than as judge, in the novels about Ti Ch'ing (狄青), like the *Wan-hua lou* (萬花樓), *Wu-hu p'ing-hsi* (五虎平西) and *Wu-hu p'ing-nan* (五虎平南). For a discussion of these military romances see C. T. Hsia, "The Military Romance: A Genre of Chinese Fiction," in Cyril Birch ed., *Studies in Chinese Literary Genres* (Berkeley, 1974), pp. 339-390.

The *San-hsia Wu-i* and its sources has been the subject of a recently finished doctoral dissertation by Susan Blader, "A Critical Study of *San-hsia Wu-i* and its Relationship to the *Lung-t'u kung-an* Song-book," U. of Pennsylvania, Ph.D. diss., 1977.

3. The second novel on the activities of Hai Jui, the *Hsiao Hung-pao* (小紅袍), was the first Chinese novel to be partially translated into Malay; see Claudine Lombard-Salmon, "A propos de la première traduction malaise du *Hai-gong xiao-hong-bao quan-zhuan*", in *Etudes d'histoire et de littérature chinoises offertes au Professeur Jaroslav* Prusek (Paris 1976), pp. 209-225.
4. Cf. Jerome Ch'en, "Rebels between Rebellions—Secret Societies in the Novel *P'eng kung an*," in *JAS* XXIX (1970), 807-822. See also I Ting (一丁), "*P'eng-kung-an* ti chu-chiao" (彭公案的主角) in *Hsin-min-pao wan-k'an* (新民報晚刊) of September 2, 1957.
5. Thin Shen (and James Legge) trans., *De keizer Tching Tih en zijn hovelingen* (Amersfoort, 1844), is the Dutch version of the original English translation *The Rambles of Emperor Ching Tih*, and adds a different aspect: The alienation of an emperor in his secluded quarters from normal conditions in society is such that his ignorance causes him all kinds of curious adventures once he leaves the palace. The original Chinese version is known as *Cheng-te yu Chiang-nan* (正德遊江南).
6. Shih Yü-k'un (石玉崑), *San-hsia wu-i* (三俠五義) (Shanghai, 1956), iii.
7. For a summary of the criticisms of these novels, see e.g. Liu Shih-te (劉世德) and Teng Shao-chi (登紹基), "Ch'ing-tai Kung-an hsiao-shuo ti ssu-hsiang ch'ing-hsiang" (清代公案小說的思想傾向) in *Wen-hsüeh p'ing-lun* (文學評論) (February 1964), 41-60. Also *cf.* Claudine Lombard-Salmon, *op. cit.* pp. 220-222.
8. On Sherlock Holmes, see Ethel Portnoy, "Sherinford Holmes," in *De Brandende Bruid* (Amsterdam, 1974), pp. 114-122.
9. I am thinking of e.g. *Chien-t'ieh ho-shang* (簡帖和尙) in *Ch'ing-p'ing shan-t'ang hua-pen* (清平山堂話本), or *K'an p'i-hsüeh t'an-cheng Erh-lang-shen* (勘皮靴單證二郎神) in *Hsing-shih heng-yen* (醒世恒言). In the crime stories included in the *San-yen* (三言) the main emphasis as a rule is on the conditioning of the victim or on the motivation of the author, not on the judge's solution. There is only one story in the *San-yen* in which Judge Pao plays an important part, *San-hsien-shen Pao Lung-t'u tuan-yüan* (三現身包龍圖斷冤), in *Ching-shih t'ung-yen* (警世通言). During the Ch'ing this story was written up into the independent novel *Ch'ing-feng cha* (清風閘).
10. See the comparative evaluation of Chinese and Western fiction in the *Hsiao-shuo ts'ung-hua* (小說叢話) by Liang Ch'i-chao (梁啓超) et al., in A Ying (阿英)

comp., *Wan-ch'ing wen-hsüeh ts'ung-ch'ao (Hsiao-shuo hsi-ch'ü yen-chiu chüan* (晚清文學叢鈔 [小說戲曲研究卷]), (Peking, 1960), pp. 328-329. For the further history of the detective novel in 20th century China, see Nakano Miyoko (中野美代子), *Chūgokujin no shikō-yōshiki, Shōsetsu no sekai kara* (中國人の思考樣式，小說の世界加ら), (Tokyo, 1974), pp. 122-129.

11. R. H. van Gulik trans., *Dee Goong An: Three Murder Cases Solved by Judge Dee* (Tokyo, 1949). This has been translated into German as *Merkwürdige Kriminalfälle des Richters Di* (Zurich, 1960). The only Chinese article on this novel I know of is the one by Nieh Kan-nu (聶紺弩), "Wu Tse-t'ien ssu-ta ch'i-an" (武則天四大奇案) in the *Wen-hui-pao* (文匯報) of March 6, 1957, in which the novel is treated as just another example of the common crime novel and the role of torture and superstition in the work is stressed.
12. Edition used: *Wu Tse-t'ien ch'i-an* (武則天奇案) (Shanghai, 1936).
13. The Chinese text of the *Liang-kung chiu-chien* (梁公九諫) may be found in *Sung Yüan p'ing-hua ssu-chung* (宋元平話四種) (Taipei, 1965).
14. For a discussion of one of these works, the *Ju-i chün chuan* (如意君傳), see P. D. Hanan, "Sources of the *Chin P'ing Mei*" in *AM* X (1960), 23-67, esp. 43-47.
15. He Ku-li (何谷里) (Robert Hegel), "*Sui-T'ang yen-i:* ch'i shih-tai, lai-yüan yü kou-tsao" (隋唐演義：其時代來源與構造), in Hsia Chih-ch'ing (夏志清, C. T. Hsia) et al., *Chung-kuo ku-t'ien hsiao-shuo lun-chi* (中國古典小說論集) (Taipei, 1975), II, 153-166, esp. 160-166.
16. W. L. Idema, *Chinese Vernacular Fiction, The Formative Period* (Leyden, 1974), pp. 123-133, and W. L. Idema, "Novels on the Founding of the Sung Dynasty," *Sung Studies Newsletter* X, 2-9.
17. Nakano Miyoko, *Chūgokujin no shikōyōshiki*, pp. 77-89.
18. O. Kral, "Several Artistic Methods in the Classic Chinese Novel *Ju-lin wai-shih*," in *Archiv Orientalni* XXXII (1964), 16-43. The quotation is from p. 38.
19. Jeanette Knoerle, *The Dream of the Red Chamber, A Critical Study* (Bloomington, 1972), p. 38. *Cf.* also David Hawkes, "Le *Hong leou meng*, roman symboliste," in *Mélanges de Sinologie offerts à Monsieur Paul Demiéville (Paris, 1974), II,* 43-54.
20. Sung Ch'i (宋淇), "Lun Ta-kuan-yüan" (論大觀園), in *Ming-pao* 81 (Sept. 1972), and Yü Ying-shih (余英時), "*Hung-lou-ming* ti liang-ke shih-chieh" (紅樓夢的兩個世界), in Hsia Chih-ch'ing et al., *Chung-kuo ku-tien hsiao-shuo lun-chi* (Taipei, 1975), II, 1-32.
21. Lucien Miller, *Masks of Fiction in Dream of the Red Chamber: Myth, Mimesis and Persona* (Tucson, 1974).
22. Andrew H. Plaks, *Archetype and Allegory in the Dream of the Red Chamber* (Princeton, 1976).
23. C. T. Hsia, *The Classic Chinese Novel: A Critical Introduction* (New York, 1968), p. 6.
24. Nakano Miyoko, *Chūgokujin no shikōyōshiki* (Tokyo, 1974), p. 189.
25. P. Hanan, "The Early Chinese Short Story: A Critical Theory in Outline" in *HJAS* XXVII (1967), 168-207.