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CHAPTER 1

The Literati Novel:  
Historical Background

During the hundred-odd years from the Hung-chih 弘治 period (1488–1505) until about halfway through the Wan-li 萬曆 reign (1573–1619)—a span of time that roughly corresponds to the sixteenth century by Western reckoning, four of the most beloved works of traditional Chinese fiction came into circulation in their most fully developed forms. These four texts—the *San-kuo chih t'ung-su yen-i* 三國志通俗演義, *Chung-i shui-hu chuan* 忠義水滸傳, *Hsi-yu chi* 西遊記 and *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua* 金瓶梅詞話—are, with certain later modifications, essentially the same books as those that are known by those titles and read today.<sup>1</sup> As we shall see in the detailed analysis of each of these works that comprises the substance of this study, none of these sixteenth-century editions is an entirely original literary creation. Rather, each represents the culmination of a long prior and subsequent history of source materials, antecedent narratives, and alternate recensions. Yet my principal thesis here will be that in each case the sixteenth-century text we have represents the most significant phase of this

<sup>1</sup>For the dates and identification of these editions, see bibliographical notes at the end of this book (hereafter referred to as b.n.) Each of these editions was superseded by revised commentary editions in the seventeenth century. The *San-kuo chih t'ung-su yen-i* was replaced by Mao Tsung-kang's *Ti-i ts'ai-tzu shu*; *Chung-i shui-hu chuan* was truncated and revised by Chin Sheng-t'an to produce *Ti-wu ts'ai-tzu shu Shui-hu chuan*; the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua* was reissued by Chang Chu-p'o as *Ti-i ch'i-shu* in a new edition based on the Ch'ung-chen period *Hsin-k'e hsiu-hsiang p'i-p'ing Chin P'ing Mei*; and what is generally taken to be the earliest complete edition of *Hsi-yu chi*, the 1592 Shih-te t'ang edition, was eclipsed by Wang Hsiang-hsu's *Hsi-yu cheng-tao shu* by the K'ang-hsi period.

process of evolution, the one that puts the final stamp on the process and raises the respective narrative materials to the level of self-conscious artistic constructs. With this in mind, my discussions here will proceed on the supposition that it is these particular editions we should subject to the most thorough critical scrutiny and interpretation, while leaving the other versions of these narratives as simply documents in the historical development of Chinese fiction.

Once these four recensions were in place, they immediately came to function as models for the subsequent development of full-length *hsiao-shuo* 小說 fiction, what is today commonly called the traditional Chinese "novel." In fact, I could go one step further and state that it was precisely these texts that defined and shaped the generic outlines of the serious novel form in Ming and Ch'ing China.<sup>2</sup> This crucial position of the four works as fountainheads of the genre is somewhat obscured by their very pre-eminence, since few if any other examples of the genre come close to their level of richness and sophistication. And so they stand apart as a class among themselves, a special set of masterworks that was not equaled for nearly 150 years, when they were joined by *Ju-lin wai-shih* 儒林外史 and *Hung-lou meng* 紅樓夢 to form the so-called "six classic novels."<sup>3</sup>

Even before the addition of the latter two masterworks in the eighteenth century, however, the special status of the earlier four was granted due recognition. For example, Li Chih 李贄 listed *Shui-hu chuan* among what he called the "five great literary texts" (*wu ta pu wen-chang* 五大部文章), as did Chin Sheng-t'an 金聖歎 within his list of the "six works of genius" (*liu ts'ai-tzu shu* 六才子書).<sup>4</sup> By the early Ch'ing, book publishers were

<sup>2</sup>I have presented this argument in full in an article entitled "Full-Length *Hsiao-shuo* and the Western Novel," pp. 163–76.

<sup>3</sup>The term for the "six classic novels" (*ku-tien hsiao-shuo* 古典小說) is a neologism of twentieth-century scholarship. It was used as early as 1958 in Liu Hsiu-yeh's *Ku-tien hsiao-shuo hsi-ch'ü ts'ung-k'ao*, and seems to have come into common use under the influence of C. T. Hsia's *The Classic Chinese Novel*. I am not sure at what point during the Ch'ing or Republican periods this became a fixed critical category, but the view that these six works constitute a special class is reflected in a wide variety of critical writings on the novel.

<sup>4</sup>Li Chih's list of five preeminent masterpieces is reported in a late Ming *pi-chi* work by Chou Hui entitled *Chin-ling so-shih, chüan* 1, p. 5b. His other choices are *Shih Chi*, the poetry of Tu Fu and Su Shih, plus the writings of Li Meng-yang. Chin Sheng-t'an's "six works of genius" form the basis for a set of commentary editions, only some of which were apparently completed. These are described in *Hsin-ch'ou chi-wen*, p. 15b (1263). See Teng Chih-ch'eng, "Sung-k'an hsiao-chi," no. 2 (下), p. 132; and Richard G. Irwin, *The Evolution of a Chinese Novel*, p. 89. The other five "works of genius" are the *Li-sao*, *Shih Chi*, the book of Chuang Tzu, Tu Fu's poetry, and *Hsi-hsiang chi*. Cf. Chin's other commentaries on great literary texts, reprinted in *Ch'ang-ching t'ang ts'ai-tzu shu hui pien*, *Chin Sheng-t'an ch'i-shu shih-pa chung*, and other places. The most notable examples of novels labeled *ts'ai-tzu shu* or *ch'i-shu* are Mao Tsung-kang's *Ti-i ts'ai-tzu ch'i-shu* 第一才子奇書 (also *Ssu ta ch'i-shu ti-i chung* 第一種), *Hsi-yu cheng-tao ch'i-shu*, and Chang Chu-p'o's edition of *Chin P'ing Mei*, issued

regularly advertising editions of the four novels as “masterworks” (*ch’i-shu* 奇書), and even when the same terms came to be applied fairly indiscriminately to lesser works, they continued to carry the implication that the original four set the standard against which all comparable works must be measured. Eventually the expression “four masterworks” (*ssu ta ch’i-shu* 四大奇書) became something of a set term. I am not certain precisely when this expression was coined, but at least as early as the seventeenth century it was used by Liu T’ing-chi in his *Tsai-yüan tsa-chih*, as well as in a preface to a commentary edition of *San-kuo chih yen-i* attributed to Li Yü 李漁 (which ascribes the coining of the term to Feng Meng-lung 馮夢龍), among other places.<sup>5</sup> By the Ch’ien-lung 乾隆 period, it appears to have been used as the title of a set of the four novels reportedly issued in the name of the same Chieh-tzu yüan 芥子園 publishing house originally associated with Li Yü, and since that time it has come down to us as a fairly common designation.<sup>6</sup>

In proposing that it is these sixteenth-century editions of the four masterworks, rather than their earlier or later forms, that deserve the primary credit for transforming their respective narrative and textual traditions into literary monuments, I will have to pursue several lines of argumentation. First, I will review the evidence to attempt to show, in each chapter, that these particular recensions represent a significant advance over their hypothetical or extant antecedents. Next, I will provide a thorough structural and rhetorical analysis of the texts to demonstrate the degree of intricacy and artistic sophistication that goes into their composi-

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under the title *Ti-i ch’i-shu* 第一奇書. A number of reprints of the Chang Chu-p’o text bear the title *Ssu ta ch’i-shu ti-ssu chung* (copies in Gest Oriental Library, Princeton; Tokyo University Library; and elsewhere). Other examples of editions of novels and plays laying claim to *ch’i-shu* or *ts’ai-tzu shu* status include minor works such as *Yü Chiao Li* 玉嬌梨 (*ti-san ts’ai-tzu shu*), *P’ing Shan Leng Yan* 平山冷燕 (*ti-ssu ts’ai-tzu shu*), *P’i-p’a chi* 琵琶記 (*ti-ch’i ts’ai-tzu shu*), *Pai-kuei chih* 白圭志 (*ti-pa ts’ai-tzu shu*), and *P’ing-kuei chuan* 平鬼傳 (*ti-chiu ts’ai-tzu shu*). Cf. also *Nü-hsien wai shih ch’i-shu* 女仙外史奇書, *Han Sung ch’i-shu* 漢宋奇書, and other examples.

<sup>5</sup> See Liu T’ing-chi, *Tsai-yüan tsa-chih*, pp. 24a–25a. On the *Li Li-weng p’ing-yüeh San-kuo chih yen-i*, see b.n. 1.4 for additional details. A preface and *fan-li* introduction to *Hsü Chin P’ing Mei* (reprinted in *Han-pen Chung-kuo t’ung-su hsiao-shuo ts’ung-k’an* 罕本中國通俗小說叢刊 series; Taipei: T’ien-i, 1975) speaks of the “three masterworks” 三大奇書: *Shui-hu chuan*, *Hsi-yu chi*, and *Chin P’ing Mei*. See also the Hsien-chai lao-jen 閑齋老人 preface to *Julin wai-shih* for a similar usage.

<sup>6</sup> The Ch’ien-lung set of the four novels is described by Chao Ts’ung in *Chung-kuo ssu ta hsiao-shuo chih yen-chiu*, p. 126. (The “four masterworks” in Chao’s study are *San-kuo*, *Shui-hu*, *Hsi-yu chi* and *Hung-lou meng*.) A book fitting this description is listed in the Kyoto University Library catalogue. The designation *ssu ta ch’i-shu* is accepted as a fixed term in much contemporary scholarship on the Ming-Ch’ing novel. See, for example, Kuo Chen-i, *Chung-kuo hsiao-shuo shih*, pp. 185ff.; T’an Cheng-pi, *Chung-kuo hsiao-shuo fa-ta shih*, pp. 294ff.; and Shionoya On, *Shina bungaku gairon kōwa*, pp. 466ff.

tion. Once this groundwork has been set down, I will then turn to an extensive close reading and interpretation of the works, trying to relate this interpretation to some of the specific intellectual currents of the time.

Before I plunge into this task, however, it may be helpful to place these discussions in a broader context by speculating as far as possible on the question of why it was precisely at this moment in history that full-length Chinese narrative fiction reached this degree of maturity. There is obviously no reason, other than convenience, to cling to the imported time frame of the century—any more than that the conventional Chinese periodization by reign periods, for that matter, must necessarily mark out significant chunks of cultural history. One could just as well opt for a looser designation of the period in question as simply “late Ming,” or, alternatively, one could narrow that focus to particular generations, as has recently been suggested.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, one might prefer to look beyond the border of the Ming-Ch’ing transition to the swath of cultural history from, say, 1500 to 1750 as a more meaningful frame of reference. Nevertheless, I will attempt to show in this introductory chapter that the period within and around the hundred years from 1500 to 1600, which sits astride the circulation of the four masterworks, happens to take in marked developments in a wide variety of fields, so that in this case at least the unlikely division of this “century” may prove to be a useful tool of periodization after all.

Broadly speaking, an overview of Ming history begins with the impressive achievements of the founding generation, whose political and military successes were accompanied by cultural and literary accomplishments of the first order, followed by a period of retrenchment during much of the fifteenth century. Then the pace begins to pick up again in the final decades of that century, bringing us into a period of remarkable flowering right up to the generation of the fall of the dynasty. Of course, one might well assume that this apparent slackening of the rate of achievement in the fifteenth century is nothing more than an optical illusion, attributable to the shifting sands of reputation and taste and the selective preservation of evidence. But there is a widespread perception, on the part of both observers of that time and modern historians, that fresh winds were blowing in practically every field of endeavor for much of the sixteenth century, so that even certain trends that had been gradually taking shape over a much longer period of time now take on the aspect of striking new develop-

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Willard Peterson, “Ming Periodization,” pp. 7–8. Peterson designates the years from 1457 to 1521 as a transition period overlapping what he sees as a time of “contraction and consolidation” from 1449 to 1501, followed by a period of “expansion and change” for most of the sixteenth century (1502–82), up to the turning point of the demise of Chang Chü-cheng in 1582.

ments.<sup>8</sup> In the following pages, I will review some of the scholarly opinion on these historical trends, with an eye toward those points that can later be brought to bear on my interpretations of the four masterworks themselves.

First, let us consider the political climate of the period, as manifest in the court intrigues and military affairs that make up the central focus of most traditional and modern historical accounts of the dynasty. In terms of the overall span of the Ming state, what we are talking about is roughly the last half of the dynasty, which reached its arithmetical midpoint around the year 1500. The scenario of a dynamic revival of creativity at this point, gradually giving way to internal contradictions that leave the state more vulnerable than ever to challenges from within and without, is an oversimplified picture that readily conforms not only to the restoration phase of traditional dynastic cycle theories, but also to certain models in modern political theory regarding the rise and fall of empires.<sup>9</sup> When we come to look for the specific factors responsible for this failed "restoration," however, the situation, as expected, turns out to be far more complex.

On the surface, these hundred years were, relatively speaking, an age of peace and security. To be sure, the nominally swollen forces of the paper military establishment were kept busy dealing with a variety of external enemies. Chief among these were the Mongols to the north, who had been pushed back into the steppe in the earlier campaigns of the dynasty's founder and the Yung-lo 永樂 emperor but never entirely subdued (as witnessed in the T'u-mu debacle 土木之變 in 1449),<sup>10</sup> and the coastal pirates (*wo-k'ou* 倭寇), who preyed upon the southeastern littoral and succeeded in occupying sizable chunks of inland territory.<sup>11</sup> Both of these fronts remained "hot" for much of the century. The steppe forces continued their harassment and scored some notable victories, most spectacularly

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, Cheng Chen-to, *Chung-kuo wen-hsüeh yen-chiu hsin pien*, pp. 509f. Cf. James Geiss's characterization of the period 1522–84 as one of "precarious stability," in his "Peking under the Ming," p. 215. See also Matteo Ricci's optimistic assessment of the state of the Chinese empire at this point, in *China in the Sixteenth Century*, p. 45.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Mark Elvin, *The Pattern of the Chinese Past*, pp. 17–22; and Ray Huang, "Fiscal Administration during the Ming Dynasty," p. 125. For the "theory of empires," I have in mind studies by Weber, Wittfogel, Parsons, and others, such as those collected in S. N. Eisenstadt's *The Decline of Empires*, as well as in his *The Political Systems of Empires*.

<sup>10</sup> For the causes and repercussions of the T'u-mu incident, see Frederick W. Mote, "The T'u-mu Incident of 1449," pp. 243–72; Tilemann Grimm, "Cheng-t'ung," pp. 322ff.; and James Geiss, "The Chia-ching Reign," pp. 466ff., 471ff. The subject is also the central focus of chaps. 59 ad 60 in Ku Ying-t'ai, *Ming-shih chi-shih pen-mo*, pp. 624–51.

<sup>11</sup> On the *wo-k'ou* pirates, see Geiss, "Chia-ching," pp. 490f., 495ff.; and the following studies: So Kwan-wai, *Japanese Pirates in Ming China during the Sixteenth Century*; John E. Wills, Jr., "Maritime China from Wang Chih to Shih Lang," pp. 210–15; Ray Huang, "Fiscal Administration," p. 111; Roland C. Higgins, "Piracy and Coastal Defense in the Ming Period"; and Charles Hucker, "Hu Tsung-hsien's Campaign against Hsü Hai, 1556," pp. 273–307. The topic is also treated in detail in *Ming-shih chi-shih pen-mo*, chap. 55.

when a Mongol raiding party reached the gates of Peking in 1550; in the other direction, the *wo-k'ou* depredations managed to tie up some of the best government commanders for decades. Still, the Ming military somehow managed to keep an unsteady grip on the situation, showing considerable staying power in spite of the serious deterioration of its logistic base due to the erosion of its fiscal and command structure.<sup>12</sup>

Even late in the century, the government was still able to field credible enough forces to stage what came to be called, with a certain measure of poetic license, the "three great campaigns," although in doing so it also depleted the imperial treasuries beyond recovery.<sup>13</sup> By late Wan-li, the hindsight of history clearly bears witness to the rising power of the new military threat in the northeast; but through the 1620s and 1630s the handwriting was not yet on the wall. Thus, between the T'u-mu debacle, which marked the midpoint of the fifteenth century, and the Manchu conquest halfway through the seventeenth, the Ming forces were able to hold their own with little sense of a global crisis.<sup>14</sup> The same may be said with respect to internal security, since, after the suppression of the Chu Ch'en-hao 朱宸豪 (Ning-wang 寧王) rebellion of 1519–20, no serious military challenge of national proportions—other than local mutinies, riots, and other disturbances—threatened the state for a good hundred years, right up to the final decades of the dynasty.<sup>15</sup>

Something more on the order of a "crisis" does appear, however, on the home front. The series of critical issues that rocked the court and paralyzed the administration for extended periods of time were in many instances largely matters of individual rivalries and the normal political intrigues of government officials fighting for professional and personal survival. But in the bitter wrangling over certain issues, the endemic infighting comes out as a testing of the limits of institutional power in the Ming polity.

To be sure, few of the broader issues underlying these specific areas of

<sup>12</sup>Ray Huang traces the breakdown of the logistic base of the late Ming military establishment in "Fiscal Administration," p. 110. See also Ho Ping-ti, *The Ladder of Success in Imperial China*, pp. 60ff.; Elvin, *Pattern*, pp. 91–110, esp. 100f.; James P. Geiss, "Peking," pp. 99f., 121ff. Cf. the various types of mutinies and insurrections described in *Ming-shih chi-shih pen-mo*, chaps. 53, 57, 58.

<sup>13</sup>For detailed discussions of the "three campaigns," see *Ming-shih chi-shih pen-mo*, chaps. 62 (pp. 670–82), 63 (683–91), 64 (691–98). See also Ray Huang, "The Lung-ch'ing and Wan-li Reigns," pp. 563–74; and Charles Hucker, "Chu I-chün," pp. 335f.

<sup>14</sup>On the rise of Manchu power in the northeast, see *Ming shih*, "Shen-tsung pen-chi" 神宗本紀 vol. 2, *chüan* 21, pp. 291ff.; Ray Huang, "Wan-li," pp. 574–84; and Hucker, "Chu I-chün," p. 336f.

<sup>15</sup>For the background of the Ning-wang rebellion, see Meng Sen, *Ming-tai shih*, pp. 210–14; *Ming-shih chi-shih pen-mo*, chap. 47 (pp. 479–92); and James Geiss, "The Cheng-te Reign," pp. 423ff.

contention were actually new. Such problems as factionalism based on regional, generational, and ideological ties; succession disputes threatening the continuity of dynastic rule; delegation of excessive authority to eunuch officers loyal directly to the throne; battles over institutional jurisdiction between the "outer court" and the "inner court," or between censorial and ministerial control—these problems had perennially plagued many of China's dynastic regimes. Yet it is precisely in this period that some of the same issues begin to take on the dimensions of what has been described as a full-blown "constitutional crisis."<sup>16</sup>

It is significant that both the Chia-ching 嘉靖 (1522–66) and the Wan-li emperors, whose uncommonly long reigns stretch over the greater part of the century, were self-willed and stubborn men, and in this they follow in the footsteps of the Cheng-te 正德 emperor (1506–21), whose escapades were already legendary by this time.<sup>17</sup> Each of these two rulers went through earlier phases in which they attempted to assert their independence as rulers and break away from the stranglehold of entrenched political forces, only to eventually withdraw from the arena of court politics entirely for unconscionably long periods of time, leaving the exercise of statecraft in the hands of self-serving power brokers.

This range of radical swings, from willful personal control to cynical disregard, reflects the basic contradictions in the system: between theoretically absolute and in fact often brutal despotism on the one hand—most concretely manifested in the corporal punishment meted out in full court—and a kind of laissez-faire attitude in certain areas of government policy.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> The jurisdictional friction between the inner and outer court is discussed by Hucker in *The Traditional Chinese State in Ming Times*, pp. 52ff. See also Tilemann Grimm, "Das Neiko der Ming-Zeit," pp. 139–77. For a nearly contemporary description of this problem, see Shen Te-fu's *Wan-li yeh-huo pien, chüan* 7 (pp. 180ff.), 8 (206ff.), 9 (227ff.). James Geiss provides a useful evaluation of the weakness of the system in "Peking," pp. 211ff. The idea of a constitutional crisis is suggested by Ray Huang in *1587: A Year of No Significance*, pp. 30, 75, 83, 112, 114, passim. See also his *Taxation and Government Finance in Sixteenth-Century Ming China*.

<sup>17</sup> See James Geiss, "Cheng-te," and his "Peking," pp. 213f. Ray Huang evaluates the Cheng-te legacy in *1587*, pp. 95–102. See Meng Sen, *Ming-tai shih*, pp. 194ff., on the "moral lapses" (*shih-tao* 失道) of the Chia-ching emperor. Ray Huang provides an excellent portrait of the Wan-li emperor and his shortcomings in *1587*, pp. 1–41. Meng Sen divides the Wan-li reign into three phases: a period in which the youthful monarch was "overwhelmed" by the influence of Chang Chü-cheng (*ch'ung-yu* 冲幼), pp. 268–80; one of "intoxication with power" (*tsui-meng* 醉梦), pp. 280–98; and one of "disintegration" (*ch'üeh-lieh* 决裂), pp. 298–303. Geiss describes the neglect and extravagance of Wan-li rule in "Peking," pp. 201ff.

<sup>18</sup> The view of the Ming state as "oriental despotism" is evaluated by W. T. deBary in "Chinese Despotism and Confucian Ideals," pp. 153–203. See also Hucker, *Traditional State*, esp. pp. 40–60; and James B. Parsons, "The Ming Dynasty Bureaucracy: Aspects of Background Forces," pp. 175–227. Parsons takes the Cheng-te and Chia-ching reigns together as



It is probably not very accurate to credit either of these reigns with "benign neglect," as one scholar has suggested, since they were not really all that benign.<sup>19</sup> But the institutional neglect was very palpable, most obviously in such matters as fiscal irresponsibility, failure to make appointments to administrative posts, and cultivation of special interest groups at the expense of alienating large numbers of scholar-officials.

This breakdown in the system worked in two contradictory directions. On the one hand, it gave rise to much confusion and demoralization; on the other, it also led to the opening of certain windows of opportunity for the exercise of individual initiative. For the most part these cracks in the system were filled by the assertive action of a small number of strongmen, numbering among them constructive statesmen such as Hsia Yen 夏言 and Chang Chü-cheng 張居正 and obstructionist politicians such as Yen Sung 嚴嵩. They also allowed a chain of powerful eunuchs leading from Liu Chin 劉瑾 to Feng Pao 馮保 and later Wei Chung-hsien 魏忠賢 to wield significant power over the administration at certain points.<sup>20</sup> For the bulk of those in official service, however, the simultaneous presentation of both possibilities for concerted action, in conformity with the imperatives of Confucian ideology, and the all-too-real prospect of the terrifying consequences of a wrong move or alliance, resulted in a rather heady atmosphere—going beyond the earlier forms of bureaucratic resistance in the direction of something as close to political consciousness as was perhaps possible within the imperial order.<sup>21</sup> To say that the gradual relaxation of central

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his "Period IV" (1506–66), followed by a period composed of the Lung-ch'ing and Wan-li reigns (1567–1620). See also Frederic Wakeman, Jr., "Price of Autonomy," pp. 39f.

<sup>19</sup>The terms "laissez faire" and "benign neglect" are suggested by K. T. Wu in "Ming Printing and Printers," p. 258.

<sup>20</sup>For the careers of Liu Chin, Hsia Yen, Yen Sung, Chang Chü-cheng, and others, see *Dictionary of Ming Biography* (hereafter DMB), pp. 941ff., 527ff., 1586ff., 53ff. The *Ming-shih chi-shih pen-mo* devotes an entire chapter to the period of Yen Sung's ascendancy (chap. 54, pp. 564–84). See also Geiss, "Chia-ching," pp. 483ff. The contributions of Chang Chü-cheng are analyzed by Chu Tung-jun in *Chang Chü-cheng ta chuan*; Robert B. Crawford, "Chang Chü-cheng's Confucian Legalism," pp. 367–413; and Huang, "Wan-li," pp. 518–30. See also Chi Wen-fu *Wan-Ming ssu-hsiang shih-lun*, pp. 48–57. On the abuses of eunuch power in the Ming, see Hucker, *Traditional State*, pp. 55ff.; Wakeman, "Price of Autonomy," p. 40; and Robert B. Crawford, "Eunuch Power in the Ming Dynasty," pp. 115–48, esp. 137ff.; etc. The *Yeh-huo pien* also raises this issue in *chuan* 6, pp. 153ff.

<sup>21</sup>The idea of an emerging political consciousness is presented in somewhat overstated form in Thomas A. Metzger, *Escape from Predicament*. See critiques of Metzger's positions in a special issue of *Journal of Asian Studies*, 39, no. 2 (February 1980): 237–90. A more cogent formulation of the same sense of frustration is provided by Wakeman, in "Price of Autonomy," esp. pp. 39f., 44; and by Shimada Kenji in *Chūgoku ni okeru kindai shii no zasetsu*, pp. 271ff. See also Huang, "Wan-li," pp. 511ff., 544ff., 550ff.; and deBary, *Self and Society in Ming Thought*, pp. 6f. Julia Ching suggests in her *To Acquire Wisdom*, p. xxi, that the shock of the purge of Fang Hsiao-ju in 1402 never fully wore off for later Ming officials.

authority after the crushing autocracy of the Hung-wu 洪武 and Yung-lo reigns, and before the final traumas of repression and Manchu conquest, may have contributed to an unleashing of creative energies would of course be an oversimplification, but not without a measure of truth. At the least, this may help to account for the age of cultural flowering that gets under way after the slump of the mid-fifteenth century and picks up speed around the turn of the sixteenth.

Some of the clearest instances of such a phenomenon can be observed in the principal disputes dominating court politics during the Chia-ching and Wan-li reigns. The various rites controversies that embroiled the Chia-ching court, like the succession issue in Wan-li, were questions not only of theoretical import but also with immediate practical ramifications. Even such initially minor incidents as the Li Fu-ta 李福達 case in Chia-ching or the "three great cases" of late Wan-li start as specific disputes but eventually lead to an across-the-board polarization of the court and the administration, resulting in deep schisms along partisan lines.<sup>22</sup> Once again, there is nothing new about factional disputes in the history of Chinese imperial politics. But the degree to which these issues now forced the realignment of the entire government bureaucracy, the rhetorical brutality of the polemics, as well as the appearance of certain new methods of applying political pressure—from the spectacle of a public demonstration of courtiers kneeling en masse in the palace courtyard, to strikes and later gentry-organized urban riots—significantly raise the stakes of the political game.<sup>23</sup>

One of best examples of this heightened degree of political belligerence is the case of Lo Yü-jen 雒于仁, whose well-known memorial denouncing

<sup>22</sup>For further background on the rites controversies and the Li Fu-ta case that rocked the Chia-ching court, see Geiss, "Chia-ching," pp. 443ff., 453–61; Carney T. Fisher, "The Great Ritual Controversy in Ming China," pp. 93ff.; and Meng Sen, *Ming-tai shih*, pp. 218–36. The controversies are covered in the *Ming-shih chi-shih pen-mo*, chaps. 50 (pp. 508–45) and 56 (pp. 607–11); and in *Yeh-huo pien*, pp. 35f., 39–46. The succession issue in Wan-li is the focus of chap. 67 (pp. 736–48) in *Ming-shih chi-shih pen-mo*, as well as several sections in the *Yeh-huo pien* (pp. 62, 98), and in Liu Jo-yü, *Cho chung chih, chüan* 1. See also Hucker, "Chu I-chün," p. 331; and Huang, 1587, pp. 83–88. On the "three great cases" initiated in late Wan-li and spilling over into Ch'ung-chen, see *Ming-shih chi-shih pen-mo*, chap. 68, pp. 748–71; Huang, "Wan-li," pp. 554ff.; and Hucker, "Chu I-chün," pp. 332f.

<sup>23</sup>The incident of the courtiers' "demonstration" is described by James Geiss in "Chia-ching," pp. 448f., and is the subject of fictionalized narration in *Ming-shih t'ung-su yen-i*, in *Li-ch'ao t'ung-su yen-i*, chap. 57. On the phenomenon of labor strikes and mutinies, see Yuan Tsing, "Urban Riots and Disturbances," pp. 277–320, esp. 280ff., 285–93. For a general treatment of the phenomenon of bureaucratic resistance, see David Nivison, "Protest against Convention and Conventions of Protest," pp. 137–201. Lo Jung-pang discusses the kinds of leverage wielded by the court officials in "Policy Formulation and Decision-making on Issues Respecting Peace and War," pp. 41–72, esp. 69ff.

his sovereign's violation of the "four vices of excess" (*ssu t'an* 四貪) sounds as shockingly blunt to the modern ear as it must have in 1590.<sup>24</sup> The fact that Lo was not simply obliterated, but managed to get away with his mad gesture, demonstrates the subtle power of the political forces at work in his time. The same may be said of other leading examples of self-righteous defiance, including the desperate martyrdom of Yang Chi-sheng 楊繼盛 (1516–55), the more circumspect resistance activities of Ku Hsien-ch'eng 顧憲成 (1550–1612), even the quixotic gestures of Hai Jui 海瑞.<sup>25</sup>

The gradual shift into the political arena of such burgeoning academic and literary associations as the Tung-lin Academy 東林書院 and later the Fu She 復社 is but the logical conclusion of these tendencies. Although it is certainly true, as has often been pointed out, that these groups were in no way equivalent to political parties in the modern sense, still they are closer to organized interest groups than the sort of factions to which the term *tang* 黨 conventionally refers.<sup>26</sup> In any event, I will attempt here to relate this new spirit of partisanship, especially its more militant aspects, to the disputatious spirit that spills over into the area of literary polemics. And in fact, there is often a direct correlation between the literary and the political alignments in this period. I will even suggest that this new critical attitude may be one of the factors responsible for the refinement of ironic vision

<sup>24</sup> Lo's memorial is recorded in Hsia Hsieh, *Ming t'ung-chien*, vol. 3, *chüan* 69, pp. 2696ff.; and in fuller form in *Wan-li ti-ch'ao*, 1: 468–74. See David T. Roy, "The Case for T'ang Hsien-tsu's Authorship of the *Chin P'ing Mei*," pp. 2–11 and n. 134. See also Huang, 1587, pp. 223–29, where the entire interview of Shen Shih-hsing with the emperor is reproduced. The scandal also elicits comment by Shen Te-fu in *Yeh-huo pien*, p. 64, as well as by the contemporary observer Liu Jo-yü in his *Cho chung chih*, *chüan* 1, p. 11b, and *chüan* 5, p. 3a. See also fictionalized treatment in the *Ming-shih yen-i*, chap. 75.

<sup>25</sup> See relevant biographies in DMB, pp. 1503ff., 736ff., 474ff. The affair of Hai Jui is discussed by Ku Chieh-kang 顧頡剛 in "A Study of Literary Persecution during the Ming," pp. 272ff.; in Huang, 1587, pp. 130–55; and in Joanna Handlin, *Action in Late Ming Thought*. Hai Jui is also the subject of fictionalized treatment in the *Ming-shih yen-i*, chap. 67; and in the novels *Hai-kung ta hung-p'ao ch'üan-chuan* 海公大紅袍全傳 and *Hai-kung hsiao hung-p'ao ch'üan-chuan* 海公小紅袍全傳. Ku Chieh-kang's "Literary Persecution" also provides a number of additional examples.

<sup>26</sup> The large number of studies on the Tung-lin group and other academic and political factions includes Hsieh Kuo-chen's *Ming-Ch'ing chih chi tang-she yün-tung k'ao*; Heinrich Busch, "The Tung-lin shu-yüan and Its Political and Philosophical Significance," pp. 1–163; Tilemann Grimm, "Intellectual Groups in Fifteenth and Sixteenth Century Kiangsi: A Study of Regionalism in Forming Elites" (unpublished paper), and his *Erziehung und Politik im Konfuzianischen China der Ming-Zeit*, pp. 108–38; Hou Wai-lu, *Chung-kuo ssu-hsiang t'ung-shih*, 4B: 1096–1120; Jung Chao-tsu, *Ming-tai ssu-hsiang shih*, pp. 284–314; William S. Atwell, "From Education to Politics," pp. 333–68; Wakeman, "Price of Autonomy," pp. 39, 41ff., 45f., 50f.; and Nivison, "Protest against Convention." See also Huang, "Wan-li," pp. 532–50; and Hucker, "Chu I-chün," pp. 328–30. The *Ming-shih chi-shih pen-mo* also devotes a chapter to this topic (chap. 66, pp. 713–36), as does the *Ming-shih yen-i* (chap. 88).

and expression, which provides a crucial element in the development of the rhetorical conventions of the literati novel form.<sup>27</sup>

While these vexed controversies were raging at court and sending shock waves as far as the provincial yamens and academies, great changes were also beginning to be felt in the economic and social spheres. There is a widespread scholarly consensus that the entire Ming economic structure was entering a new phase of development by around the Hung-chih period, beyond the simple fact that the economy showed a sharp upturn at this point after the slump of the mid-fifteenth century.<sup>28</sup> Regardless of whether we think of these changes as evidence of "sprouts of capitalism" or incipient modernization, we witness in this period a shift from the timeless agrarian basis of the imperial order to something closer to a money economy, with increasingly varied modes of production and distribution. Such factors as the switch to cash crops, the development of cottage crafts such as spinning, weaving, and porcelain manufacturing to the level of highly organized local industries, the expansion of marketing networks, and the general increase in personal wealth and luxury, particularly in the great cities of the lower Yangtze, have been cited by a number of scholars as far-reaching changes under way during the sixteenth century.<sup>29</sup>

The striking convergence of all these factors comes at a time when the population of China increased two or threefold within the space of a hundred years.<sup>30</sup> This may be seen as the cause or the effect of these

<sup>27</sup> On the crucial significance of irony in the aesthetics of the novel form, see Chapter 6, below.

<sup>28</sup> The economic upswing of the late fifteenth century is attested to by a wide range of scholars, including Ray Huang, "Fiscal Administration," p. 110, who notes the "phenomenal strides" made by the Chinese economy between 1505 and 1590; and Ho Ping-ti, *Ladder*, p. 284, who speaks of "steady development"; Evelyn Rawski, "Economic and Social Foundations of Ming and Ch'ing Culture," p. 6ff.; William S. Atwell, "Time and Money," pp. 20f.; Mark Elvin, *Pattern*, pp. 203f., who notes an economic decline from 1300 to 1500, followed by renewed vigor after 1500; Richard Shek, "Religion and Society in Late Ming"; and many others.

<sup>29</sup> The rise of a money economy and the switch to cash crops are described by Evelyn Rawski, "Economic and Social Foundations," pp. 2ff., and in her *Agricultural Change and the Peasant Economy of South China*; Yuan Tsing, "Continuities and Discontinuities in Chinese Agriculture," pp. 35–51; James Geiss, "Peking," p. 143; Ray Huang, "Fiscal Administration," pp. 110ff.; Mark Elvin, *Pattern*, pp. 212, 268ff.; and Ho Ping-ti, *Studies on the Population of China, 1368–1953*, pp. 196ff.

<sup>30</sup> On the demographic changes in the sixteenth century, see Ho Ping-ti, *Studies on Population*, pp. 262ff.; and Michel Cartier, "Nouvelles données sur la démographie chinoise à l'époque des Ming 1368–1644," among a number of other specialized studies. On the development of specific urban areas as population centers, see Michael Marmé, "Population and Possibility in Ming Suzhou," pp. 29–64; Christian F. Murck, "Chu Yün-ming and Cultural Commitment in Suchou," pp. 24ff.; Frederick W. Mote, "A Millennium of Chinese Urban History," pp. 35–65; and his "The Transformation of Nanking, 1350–1400," pp. 101–53;

economic shifts, but either way, the demographic changes are reflected in an increasing abandonment of small landholdings, caused in part by the unequal tax burdens of the outmoded fiscal structure. The attempt to counterbalance this movement by relying more and more on commutation of land taxes to silver only reinforced the trend, especially after the adoption of the "single-whip" method 一條鞭法 of taxation on a national scale in 1581.<sup>31</sup> This, in turn, led to increased dependence on the importation of silver bullion, first from Japan and later from the New World channeled through the Manila trade, resulting in a well-documented scourge of inflation, with many of the political ills and social dislocations that go with that. In fact, one recent scholar has argued that it may be possible to arrive at a fairly precise economic periodization of the late Ming based on the volume of silver in circulation alone.<sup>32</sup>

Another consequence of the transformation of the Ming economy to a silver base is the drawing of China into the emerging sixteenth-century world trade network, carrying with this such corollary phenomena as maritime expeditions, overseas colonization, rising demand for imported goods, and even the first stirrings of renewed interest in foreign ideas.<sup>33</sup> The obvious parallels here to the convergence of similar factors in the Age of Discovery in late Renaissance Europe are perhaps easy to dismiss as misleading. But the connection between these expanding horizons in political and economic life and the rise of the novel in both Europe and China as a major form of literary expression provides very fertile ground for comparative speculation, a subject to which I will return shortly.

Even more far-reaching are the consequences of social changes under way in this period, under the pressure of the surge in population mentioned

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G. W. Skinner, *The City in Late Imperial China*, pp. 3–31, esp. 26ff.; Albert Chan, S. J., "Peking at the Time of the Wan-li Emperor," pp. 119–48; and James Geiss, "Peking," pp. 14ff.

<sup>31</sup> The abandonment of small landholdings and subsequent loss of tax revenues is described in Shek, "Religion and Society," pp. 29f, 31ff.; Elvin, *Pattern*, pp. 35ff.; Huang, "Fiscal Administration," pp. 73–128; and Geiss, "Chia-ching," pp. 485–88. See also Liang Fang-chung, *The Single Whip Method of Taxation in China*; Ho Ping-ti, *Studies on Population*, p. 210; and Amano Motosuke, "Ming Agriculture," etc.

<sup>32</sup> The great increase in circulation of silver has been documented by William Atwell in several articles: "Time and Money," "International Bullion Flows and the Chinese Economy, 1550–1650," and "Notes on Silver, Foreign Trade, and the Late Ming Economy." See also Geiss, "Peking," pp. 143–59; and Elvin, *Pattern*, p. 222. Earlier accounts of this phenomenon occur in *Ming-shih chi-shih pen-mo*, chap. 65, pp. 699–712; *Yeh-huo pien, chüan 2*, pp. 69f.; and in Matteo Ricci, *China in the Sixteenth Century*, pp. 14f.

<sup>33</sup> See articles by Atwell (see n. 32) and Geiss, "Chia-ching," pp. 491ff., 495ff.; Elvin, *Pattern*, pp. 218–22ff.; and Mote, "Yuan and Ming," in *Food in Chinese Culture*, p. 195. The example of colonization by Chinese in the Philippines is treated by Ray Huang in "Wan-li," pp. 560–62.

earlier—sustained by, among other things, the widespread introduction of New World crops at this juncture.<sup>34</sup> The sheer press of numbers, added to improvements in internal transportation networks, the abandonment of small landholdings, the first signs of a landless labor force employed in manufacturing, and the release of large numbers of military personnel due to fiscal inadequacies—all lead to a degree of horizontal demographic mobility going far beyond anything observed before.<sup>35</sup>

Perhaps the most important set of factors in this increased mobility, however, lies in the area of education. The imperial examination system, with its own network of schools as the central avenue of training and recruitment, was a longstanding institution; but certain new administrative practices in the awarding of degrees and the fixing of regional quotas rendered the system of government schools established by the dynastic founder inadequate by this time, and this led to the restoration of private academies as the premier educational institutions of the realm.<sup>36</sup> At the same time, we witness a ballooning of the numbers of first-degree licentiates, as attested by a number of recent studies, to an extent far beyond the general spread of literacy in this period.<sup>37</sup> This latter phenomenon had an undeniable effect on the broadening of the audience for printed fiction. But it is still the scholar-official class, with its own sense of identity and mission, along with its special aesthetic pretensions, that forms the social basis for the emergence of the sophisticated novel genre in the sixteenth century.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>34</sup>For further information on the introduction of New World crops see Mote, "Yuan and Ming," pp. 195–98; Ho Ping-ti, *Studies on Population*, pp. 169f., 184ff.; Amano Motosuke, "Ming Agriculture," passim; and Dwight H. Perkins, *Agricultural Development in China, 1368–1968*, esp. pp. 47ff.

<sup>35</sup>Among the many studies of the factors involved in this demographic mobility, the most important include Ho Ping-ti, *Ladder of Success*, esp. pp. 53ff., 62ff., 67ff., 264ff.; Ray Huang, "Fiscal Administration," p. 125; Amano Motosuke, "Ming Agriculture," passim; Evelyn Rawski, *Agricultural Change*, pp. 205f.; and James Geiss, "Peking," pp. 173ff.

<sup>36</sup>The rapid growth of private academies in this period is treated in John Meskill, "Academies and Politics in the Ming Dynasty," pp. 149–74. Tilemann Grimm, *Erziehung und Politik*, speaks of a "new class" of intellectuals produced by these academies (see also his "Ming Educational Intendants," pp. 129–47); Ho Ping-ti, *Ladder*, pp. 17, 32, 168ff., 194ff., 261; Evelyn Rawski, "Economic and Social Foundations," pp. 10–17; and Frederic Wakeman, "Price of Autonomy," pp. 43f.

<sup>37</sup>On the quotas and regional distribution of degree earners, see especially Ho Ping-ti, *Ladder*, pp. 20, 32ff., 46f., 172ff., 261; Frederic Wakeman, "Price of Autonomy," p. 38; Michel Cartier, "Démographie," p. 1358; and James Parsons, "Ming Dynasty Bureaucracy," pp. 181ff.

<sup>38</sup>The spread of printed literature is attested to by Evelyn Rawski in her *Education and Popular Literature in Ch'ing China*, pp. 6, 11f.; Tadao Sakai, "Confucianism and Popular Educational Works," pp. 331–66; and Richard Shek, "Religion and Society," pp. 41ff.

Within this context, it is perhaps more significant than is generally acknowledged that the consolidation of the *pa-ku* 八股 form for examination essays has been pegged to the end of the fifteenth century, according to some, the year 1487. Although the institution of the examination essay based on classical exegesis had progressed from legend to actual practice as early as the T'ang, and was reinstated and refined in the Sung, and again in Yuan and early Ming, it was only at this later point that the *pa-ku* took on its precise formal requirements and then came to symbolize, for better or for worse, the Ming ladder of success.<sup>39</sup> At the same time, it also came to be accepted as an important genre of literary prose in its own right, as I will discuss below.

This is not the place to present a thorough review of Ming economic and social history. But it is worth enumerating some of these factors here because practically every one of them suggests the same constellation of processes: things that in the European context are described with such terms as mercantilism, urbanization, and the rise of bourgeois culture, which have been associated with the rise of the novel form in Europe a century or two later.<sup>40</sup> In considering the Ming novel, I will attempt to refute the common view that this genre is primarily an outgrowth of the popular tradition, relating it instead to patterns of composition, critical theories, and prevailing intellectual trends more characteristic of the literati milieu. But it is fairly certain that the consolidation of a new mimetic narrative mode at precisely this time cannot be unrelated to the changes taking place in the contemporary political, economic, and social reality reflected directly or indirectly in the works themselves.<sup>41</sup>

At this point, however, one might still ask what connection there may have been between these various social and economic factors, assuming they are in fact an accurate representation of the state of the times, and the emergence of a sophisticated genre of vernacular fiction. The key to my argument, therefore—though perhaps the most debatable point of all—is whether or not all this horizontal mobility of economic and social oppor-

<sup>39</sup>For a review of the history of the examination essay in general and the *pa-ku* form in particular, see Sung P'ei-wei, *Ming wen-hsüeh shih* pp. 204–33; Ch'ien Chi-po, *Ming-tai wen-hsüeh*, pp. 105–16; Chou Tso-jen, *Chung-kuo hsün wen-hsueh ti yüan-lu*, pp. 41–56, 85–91; Shimada Kenji, *Zasetsu*, pp. 281ff.; and Tu Ching-i, "The Chinese Examination Essay," pp. 393–406. See also *Yeh-huo pien*, *chüan* 14–16 (pp.367–427). The year 1487 is reportedly the first time in which the precise *pa-ku* form was prescribed; see Ku Yen-wu, *Jih-chih lu chi-shih*, *chuan* 16, pp. 389f. See Huang Yün-mei, *Ming-shih k'ao-cheng*, p. 169.

<sup>40</sup>The connection between these historical trends and the rise of the European novel is frequently associated with the thesis of Ian Watt's *The Rise of the Novel*, although actually Watt's argument is not so narrow or unequivocal.

<sup>41</sup>This, at least, is reflected in the focus on less exalted characters and quotidian narrative details in much of the vernacular fiction of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

tunity translated into a corresponding mobility of consciousness.<sup>42</sup> My own conviction, based on readings in a wide spectrum of the literature of the period, is that this is indeed the case, that certain windows were opening up precisely in this period that directly contribute to and help account for the maturation of the novel form.

It is enough to recall in this context that the career of Wang Shou-jen 王守仁 (Wang Yang-ming 王陽明, 1472–1529) falls precisely within the first few decades of the sixteenth century, with the ripples it aroused spreading quickly throughout the empire until they came to dominate the intellectual scene for much of the next hundred years.<sup>43</sup> The suggestion that the thought of Wang Yang-ming marks a revolutionary new beginning is a commonplace of Ming intellectual history, but it still needs to be qualified to some extent.<sup>44</sup> On the one hand, the teachings of Wang Yang-ming were of course not invented out of whole cloth, but fall squarely within the universe of Neo-Confucian discourse. It is not simply that Wang's ideas regarding the cultivation of the mind grow directly out of the philosophy of mind pioneered by Lu Chiu-yüan 陸九淵 (Lu Hsiang-shan 陸象山, 1139–93)—and for that matter the bulk of his basic teachings conform to, more than they diverge from, the central tenets of Ch'eng-

<sup>42</sup>What I have in mind here is a concept such as that of "psychic mobility," used, for example, by Daniel Lerner in *The Passing of a Traditional Society*, pp. 49–52, to describe the crucial role of expanding mental horizons in the genesis of the great Western revolutions. Shimada Kenji says similar things about the rise of "bourgeois consciousness" in this period in *Zasetu*, pp. 254ff., 288ff. See also Araki Kengo, *Mindai shisō kenkyū*, pp. 120–26. Ho Ping-ti seems to be saying as much when he speaks of "nouveaux riches" in *Ladder*, pp. 154ff.

<sup>43</sup>For general reviews of the life and thought of Wang Yang-ming, see Wing-tsit Chan, *Instructions for Practical Living and Other Neo-Confucian Writings by Wang Yang-ming*, pp. xxiff.; Julia Ching, *To Acquire Wisdom*, pp. xxiff., 24ff.; Tu Wei-ming, *Neo-Confucian Thought in Action*; Araki Kengo, *Mindai shisō*, pp. 51–99; Hou Wai-lu, *Ssu-hsiang t'ung-shih*, pp. 875–82; and Jung Chao-tsu, *Ssu-hsiang shih*, pp. 71–81. On post-Wang Yang-ming developments during the sixteenth century, especially the rise of the T'ai-chou School, see Hou Wai-lu, *Ssu-hsiang t'ung-shih*, pp. 958–1095; Jung Chao-tsu, *Ssu-hsiang shih*, pp. 110–82, 206–69; Araki Kengo, *Mindai shisō*, pp. 100–148; Chu Wen-fu, *Wan-Ming ssu-hsiang*, pp. 1–47; Shimada Kenji, *Zasetu*, pp. 94–177; and W. T. deBary, *Self and Society*, articles by T'ang Chün-i, Takehiko Okada, and deBary. See also Yü Ying-shih, "Ts'ung Sung Ming ju-hsüeh ti fa-chan lun Ch'ing-tai ssu-hsiang shih," pp. 19–42.

<sup>44</sup>The revolutionary nature of Wang Yang-ming's thought is stressed by Wing-tsit Chan in his Introduction to *Instructions*, pp. xixff. ("a complete spiritual revolution"). Similar views are expressed by Ch'ien Mu in *Kuo-hsüeh kai-lun*, chap. 8, p. 44; and by Chi Wen-fu, *Wan-Ming ssu-hsiang*, p. 3. Edward Ch'ien claims that Wang Yang-ming "restructured" Neo-Confucianism in his review of Metzger's *Escape from Predicament*, in *JAS* 39, no. 2 (February 1980): 237. See Wakeman, "Price of Autonomy," p. 46, for the influence of Wang Yang-ming's thought on Ku Hsien-ch'eng. Huang Tsung-hsi's *Ming-ju hsüeh-an* (Taipei: Shih-chieh, 1961), pp. 380f, gives a backhanded acknowledgment of the pivotal position of Wang Yang-ming, as does a review of the stages of Ming classical scholarship at the beginning of the *Ssu-k'u ch'uan-shu tsung-mu t'i-yao*, p. 1.



Chu 程朱 learning.<sup>45</sup> They also fall in line with the succession of more proximate intellectual developments within Neo-Confucian thought of the earlier generations of the Ming, owing a considerable debt to figures such as Ch'en Hsien-chang 陳獻章, Chan Jo-shui 湛若水, and even to more orthodox thinkers such as Hu Chü-jen 胡居仁 and Wu Yü-pi 吳與弼.<sup>46</sup> One could easily argue that the elevation of Wang Yang-ming to the status of an epoch-making culture hero reflects no small measure of hindsight; or perhaps it can be chalked up to the image of Wang as a model Confucian official.<sup>47</sup> On the other hand, what we call "Wang Yang-ming thought" may simply be a convenient rubric to describe ideas and trends long in the incubation and nurtured in a number of minds in addition to his. But that does not change the fact that during much of the period in question Wang Yang-ming was perceived to have played a pivotal role in intellectual life. Although it is true that certain of his teachings are very much in the mainstream, others, especially his insistence on the autonomy of individual moral consciousness (*liang-chih* 良知), and his rethinking of the relation of theoretical cognition to concrete realization (*chih-hsing ho-i* 知行合一), open up new paths of conceptualization.<sup>48</sup> Whether or not one

<sup>45</sup> The continuities and discontinuities between Wang Yang-ming's ideas and Ch'eng-Chu teachings are brought out in Julia Ching, *To Acquire Wisdom*, pp. 75–103, 171–77; Wing-tsit Chan, *Instructions*, pp. xxxiif., xxxviiiif.; Metzger, *Escape from Predicament*, pp. 70ff., 134–60; Tu Wei-ming, *Thought in Action*, pp. 153–72; Araki Kengo, *Mindai shisō*, pp. 150–54; Shimada Kenji, *Zasetsu*, pp. 19–24; and Takehiko Okada, "Wang Chi and the Rise of Existentialism," pp. 123ff.

<sup>46</sup> Wang's debt to early Ming Confucianism is explored by Wing-tsit Chan in "The Ch'eng-Chu School of Early Ming," pp. 29–51; David Gedalecia, "Evolution and Synthesis in Neo-Confucianism," pp. 91–102, esp. 94–97; Jen Yu-wen, "Ch'en Hsien-chang's Philosophy of the Natural," pp. 53–92; Jung Chao-tsu, *Ssu-hsiang shih*, pp. 18–23ff., 34ff., 51ff.; Araki Kengo, *Mindai shisō*, pp. 51ff., 71–80, 292–328; Helmut Wilhelm, "On Ming Orthodoxy," pp. 1–26; and W. T. deBary, Introduction to *The Unfolding of Neo-Confucianism*, pp. 21f. See also T'ang Chün-i, "The Development of the Concept of Moral Mind from Wang Yang-ming to Wang Chi," and his *Chung-kuo che-hsiieh yüan-lun*, pp. 202–54, 354–60; and Julia Ching, *To Acquire Wisdom*, pp. 12ff.

<sup>47</sup> See Ho Ping-ti, *Ladder*, p. 198.

<sup>48</sup> The concept of *liang-chih* is defined and discussed in Julia Ching, *To Acquire Wisdom*, pp. 107–24, 177ff.; Jung Chao-tsu, *Ssu-hsiang shih*, pp. 87–93; T'ang Chün-i, "Moral Mind," pp. 97ff., 108ff., 298–311, 320–48, 360–65; his *Chung-kuo che-hsiieh yüan-lun*, pp. 320–38; and his "Liu Tsung-chou's Doctrine of Moral Mind and Practice and His Critique of Wang Yang-ming," pp. 305–32; Hou Wai-lu, *Ssu-hsiang f'ung-shih*, pp. 882–967; Chi Wen-fu, *Wan-Ming ssu-hsiang*, pp. 3ff.; Shimada Kenji, *Zasetsu*, pp. 45f., 73f.; and Irene Bloom, "Wang Yang-ming, Lo Ch'in-shun, and Concepts of Personal Identity in Ming Neo-Confucianism," pp. 268ff., 274f. For the concept of *chih-hsing ho-i*, see Julia Ching, *To Acquire Wisdom*, pp. 66–69; Wing-tsit Chan, *Instructions*, pp. xxxivf.; Jung Chao-tsu, *Ssu-hsiang shih*, pp. 202–6; Tu Wei-ming, *Thought in Action*, pp. 147–53, 172–76; Metzger, *Escape from Predicament*, pp. 78ff.; A. S. Cua, *The Unity of Knowledge and Action*; and Ronald G. Dimberg, "The Sage and Society," pp. 20ff.

judges these ideas to be entirely original in themselves, we certainly can say that the extreme positions later espoused by Wang Chi 王畿, Wang Ken 王艮, Ho Hsin-yin 何心隱, and other thinkers associated with the "T'ai-chou 泰州 School" would never have been possible without the groundwork laid down by Wang Yang-ming.<sup>49</sup>

In my discussions of the interpretation of the four masterworks, I will have frequent occasion to speak about their reflection of a revised understanding of certain key concepts of basic Four Books Neo-Confucian thought, with special emphasis on the terms of *hsin-hsüeh* 心學 occasionally involved in the texts (or brought into the discussion of commentators).<sup>50</sup> It would be a bit facile to say that Wang Yang-ming's attempt to bring sagehood down to the common man may find expression in the more down-to-earth characters of colloquial fiction, or that his insistence on concrete realization of abstract truths may lend epistemological support to the medium of mimetic narrative.<sup>51</sup> But on a more subtle level, such things as the new exploration of the substance of individual desire, or the reappraisal of the significance and consequences of moral action, have a very special relevance to the intellectual underpinnings of the novel. This latter phenomenon is, no doubt, related to the widely observed sixteenth-century interest in the evaluation of personal behavior, taking on a variety of forms, from the so-called "morality books" (*shan-shu* 善書) and "registers of good and evil" (*kung-kuo ko* 功過格) to instances of traumatic public confession.<sup>52</sup> This heightened sense of commitment to the rigorous evaluation of individual moral behavior lends perhaps an even greater urgency to the dilemma of these few generations of intellectuals, imbued with Neo-

<sup>49</sup> On the excessive tendencies of the T'ai-chou School, see Chi Wen-fu, *Wan-Ming ssu-hsiang*, pp. 55–77; Araki Kengo, *Mindai shisō*, pp. 100–107, and his "Confucianism and Buddhism in the Late Ming," pp. 48ff.; Julia Ching, *To Acquire Wisdom*, pp. 185ff.; T'ang Chün-i, *Chung-kuo che-hsueh yüan-lun*, pp. 366–91, 422–45, and his "Liu Tsung-chou," pp. 305–31; Hou Wai-lu, *Ssu-hsiang t'ung-shih*, pp. 958–1002; Shimada Kenji, *Zasetsu*, pp. 94–177, 178–254, 258f.; W. T. deBary, "Individualism and Humanitarianism in Late Ming Thought," pp. 157ff., 171ff.; and his Introduction to *Self and Society*, pp. 1–3; Okada Takehiko, "Wang Chi," pp. 121–44; Edward Ch'ien, "Chiao Hung and the Revolt against Ch'eng-Chu Orthodoxy," p. 272; and Frederic Wakeman, "Price of Autonomy," pp. 46f.

<sup>50</sup> For some very explicit examples in comments on *Hsi-yu chi*, see below, Chapter 3, notes 163, 164, etc.

<sup>51</sup> For an argument of this sort in the history of Western narrative, see Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis*.

<sup>52</sup> On the *shan-shu*, *kung-kuo ko*, etc., see deBary "Individualism and Humanitarianism," pp. 175f.; Tadao Sakai, "Popular Educational Works," pp. 341ff.; and Richard Shek, "Religion and Society," p. 65. The phenomenon of confessions is treated in Rodney L. Taylor, "The Centered Self," pp. 266–84; Wu Pei-yi, "Self-examination and Confession of Sins in Traditional China," pp. 5–38; Chou Chih-wen, *T'ai-chou hsüeh-p'ai tui wan-Ming wen-hsüeh feng-ch'i ti ying-hsiang*.

Confucian values of noble service, yet confronting the impasse of late Ming political life. It also gives an edge to the defensiveness that characterizes the heated polemics and debates of the period, in which the participants often seem to be struggling just to put their names on the intellectual map.<sup>53</sup>

At the heart of these philosophical debates is the redefinition of the crucial issue of self-cultivation, in line with the new focus on the autonomy of the self and the revalorization of individual desire. The familiar ring of these terms to our modern ears reminds us that the issue of the realization of the individual self is also central to the intellectual assumptions of post-Renaissance, bourgeois culture underlying the emergence of the novel in eighteenth-century Europe. Here, however, the specific Chinese understanding of the concept of self-cultivation—as a means of bridging the gap between the abstract self in isolation and the physical self within its interpersonal context—marks it as a characteristically Neo-Confucian concern.<sup>54</sup>

While recognizing the essentially Confucian intellectual orientation of the sixteenth-century literati, we may also note here that the same period marks something of a renaissance in Buddhist, and to a lesser extent Taoist, thought as well. This resurgence is partly the result of notable court patronage, first by the Chia-ching emperor, whose flirtation with Taoist luminaries and especially his infatuation with Taoist liturgical poetry (*ch'ing-tz'u* 青詞) are bywords for his misrule;<sup>55</sup> then by the Wan-li emperor, whose Buddhist leanings under the influence of his devout mother led to what has been described as a pendulum swing of Buddhist restoration.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>53</sup> On the "dilemma" of Ming-Ch'ing intellectuals, see Wakeman, "Price of Autonomy," p. 37ff.; and Metzger, *Escape from Predicament*, pp. 42ff.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. deBary's discussion of "Neo-Confucian interiority," in his Introduction to *Unfolding*, pp. 18ff.; and his discussions of the "Ming Experience of the Self," in his Introduction to *Self and Society*, and his "Individualism and Humanitarianism," esp. pp. 150ff. Edward Ch'ien's critique of Metzger acknowledges a "new view of the self" developing in this period. See also Irene Bloom, "Concepts of Personal Identity"; Tu Wei-ming, "Ultimate Self-transformation as a Communal Act," pp. 237–46; and Shimada Kenji, *Zaetsu*, pp. 178f., 271ff.

<sup>55</sup> On the patronage of Taoism during the Chia-ching period, see Geiss, "Chia-ching," pp. 479–82; Wu Han, "Chin P'ing Mei ti chu-tso shih-tai chi ch'i she-hui pei-ching"; and Miyakawa Hisayuki, "Min no Kasei jidai no dōkyō," pp. 631–43. See also Liu Ts'un-yan, "Taoist Self-cultivation in Ming Thought," pp. 291–330, and his "Ming-ju yü tao-chiao," pp. 233–71, also published as "The Penetration of Taoism into the Ming Neo-Confucian Elite," pp. 31–102; Judith Berling, "Paths of Convergence," pp. 123–47. A section is devoted to this subject in the *Ming-shih chi-shih pen-mo*, as well as in *Yeh-huo pien*, *chüan* 2, p. 59.

<sup>56</sup> On the revival of Buddhism in the Wan-li period, see Wu Han, "Chin P'ing Mei ti chu-tso," pp. 24ff.

But it is probably more meaningful to credit this phenomenon to the impact of a small number of impressive monks, most notably Chu-hung 株宏, Te-ch'ing 德清, Chih-hsü 智旭, and Ta-kuan 達觀, about whom a considerable number of studies have been published in recent years.<sup>57</sup> Significantly, these alternating movements of Buddhist and Taoist influence do not seem to have elevated any particular sects to a dominant position, although the Ch'an school does stand out as a factor in intellectual developments, due to the ease with which its teachings could be harmonized with the predominant *hsin-hsiieh* strains in Confucian thought.<sup>58</sup>

This common philosophical ground shared with the more accommodating strains of Buddhism and Taoism is most widely referred to as the "unification of the three teachings" (*san-chiao ho-i* 三教合一).<sup>59</sup> In outlines of Ming intellectual history this syncretic tendency is generally treated as at best a passing fashion, and at worst a hodgepodge of unsophisticated popular notions. But as an aspect of the intellectual background of the sixteenth-century novel it may be isolated as perhaps the central factor.<sup>60</sup>

The perception of common ground shared by the three schools is of course not a fresh discovery on the part of the sixteenth-century thinkers.

<sup>57</sup> Specific studies on Buddhist figures include Yü Chün-fang (Kristin Yü Greenblatt), "Chu-hung and Lay Buddhism in the Late Ming," pp. 93–140, and her more recent unpublished paper "Some Ming Buddhists' Responses to Neo-Confucianism"; Leon Hurvitz, "Chu-hung's One Mind of Pure Land and Ch'an Buddhism," pp. 451–81; Araki Kengo, "Confucianism and Buddhism," esp. pp. 54ff., and his *Mindai shisō*, pp. 284f., 336ff., 354ff.; Wu Pei-yi, "The Spiritual Autobiography of Te-ch'ing," pp. 67–92, and his "Self-examination and Confession," pp. 19f., 24ff.; and Hsü Sung-peng, "The Life and Thought of Han-shan Te-ch'ing." See also Chi Wen-fu, *Wan-Ming ssu-hsiang*, pp. 78–97; Richard Shek, "Religion and Society," p. 76; and deBary, "Individualism and Humanitarianism," pp. 176f.

<sup>58</sup> For background on sectarian Buddhism in the Ming, see Daniel L. Overmyer, *Folk Buddhist Religion*, and his "Boatmen and Buddhas," pp. 284–302; and Yü Chün-fang, "Chu-hung and Lay Buddhism." On the relation between Ch'an Buddhism and *hsin-hsiieh*, see Araki Kengo, *Mindai shisō*, pp. 81–99, 265ff., 291, 329–54; and his "Confucianism and Buddhism," pp. 40ff., 54ff.; Tu Wei-ming, "Ultimate Self-transformation," pp. 241ff.; Wing-tsit Chan, *Instructions*, pp. xxxviii.; deBary, Introduction to *Self and Society*, pp. 13ff.; and Julia Ching, *To Acquire Wisdom*, pp. 189f. See also Rodney L. Taylor, "Meditation in Ming Neo-Orthodoxy," pp. 149–82.

<sup>59</sup> On the three-teachings trends in late Ming, see Araki Kengo, "Confucianism and Buddhism," pp. 46ff., 53.; Koyanagi Shikita, "Min-matsu no sankyō kankei," pp. 349–70, esp. 358ff.; and Sawada Mizuho, "Sankyō shisō to engi shōsetsu," pp. 163–67. See also deBary's discussion of "A New Liberalism and Pragmatism in Late Ming," in his Introduction to *Self and Society*, pp. 22ff.; and Kenneth Ch'en, *Buddhism in China*, p. 439.

<sup>60</sup> The more popular side of three-teachings syncretism as the background for one colloquial novel is treated in Judith Berling, "Paths of Convergence," pp. 131ff.; and in her "Curing the Delusions of the Sages in the Streets." See also Liu Ts'un-yan, "Lin Chao-en, the Master of the Three Teachings," pp. 253–78, and his "Yüan Huang and His Four Admonitions," p. 128; and Yü Chün-fang, "Chu-hung and Lay Buddhism," pp. 93–140.

One might say it is the basic premise of all Neo-Confucian thought.<sup>61</sup> But it is in this period that three-teachings syncretism begins to provide the basic language of discourse, horizontally across the entire spectrum of philosophical writing, and vertically from humble exercises in popular wisdom on up to serious philosophical inquiry. This last point needs special emphasis here, since in vernacular fiction we are usually not dealing with the most systematic form of intellectual pursuit, and at times we get from it a quite simplistic view of the human condition. Yet I will argue that the intellectual level reflected in the four masterworks, at the very least, is nothing like the hypothetical shopkeeper's mentality often envisioned in reconstructions of the "popular" audience for these works.<sup>62</sup> We must acknowledge that the authors of colloquial fiction in general, and even the compilers of the crucial sixteenth-century editions of the four masterworks, were not exactly rigorous thinkers in their own right.<sup>63</sup> The most I can claim for them is that they reflect the bedrock conceptions of their intellectual milieu, which were thoroughly grounded in three-teachings formulations, and that they rise at least occasionally to some rather penetrating insights.<sup>64</sup>

Moving on to the broader realm of cultural history, we once again observe in the sixteenth century a period of outstanding achievements following what is largely perceived to be a lull during much of the preceding hundred years.<sup>65</sup> By the second half of the fifteenth century, however, the pace begins to quicken with the appearance of a brilliant new generation marked by such names as Shen Chou 沈周 (1427–1509), and later Wen Cheng-ming 文徵明 (1470–1559), Chu Yün-ming 祝允明 (1460–1526), and T'ang Yin 唐寅 (1470–1523)—members of the same generation that produced Wang Yang-ming.<sup>66</sup>

This burst of creativity around the turn of the sixteenth century covers a wide spectrum of cultural activities, including the major artistic media, as well as various minor arts. Many of these pursuits, such as elaborate garden

<sup>61</sup> See, for example, Liu Ts'un-yan and Judith Berling, "The Three Teachings in the Mongol Yuan Period," pp. 479–509. See also Wing-tsit Chan, "The Ch'eng-Chu School," pp. 44f.

<sup>62</sup> See Shimada Kenji, *Zasetsu*, pp. 130ff., 254, 287, 285f.; and Richard Shek, "Religion and Society," pp. 41ff. This argument will be restated at several points later.

<sup>63</sup> On the other hand, they do show greater depth and breadth of vision than many of their fellow fiction writers in the following century. See my article, "After the Fall," pp. 546ff.

<sup>64</sup> For a recapitulation of some of these moments, see Chapter 6 of this book.

<sup>65</sup> For example, Susan Bush speaks of a "cultural hiatus" with respect to literati painting in the first century of Ming rule in *The Chinese Literati on Painting*, p. 152.

<sup>66</sup> See Bush, *Literati*, pp. 153–58.

design,<sup>67</sup> fine book collecting, and connoisseurship of antiquities and rare objects, were obviously made possible by the new profusion of wealth observed in this period. This is especially true in the lower Yangtze region, particularly in and around Su-chou, whose cultural supremacy was reclaimed precisely at this point.<sup>68</sup>

I should mention here the very significant expansion of book printing and publishing in this same period. A number of recent general descriptions of sixteenth-century social history have paid special attention to this development, and their reports of a publishing boom are corroborated by specialized studies on the history of Ming printing by private studios, government agencies, and commercial publishing houses.<sup>69</sup> We must be cautious, however, in assessing the connection between the spread of printing in this period and the rise of the new genres of prose fiction. It is certainly true that a larger number than ever before of various types of "popular" books were printed at this time. This includes guidebooks to a wide range of subjects, simplified encyclopedias, religious tracts, even digests and simplified editions of the classics and histories, not to mention collections of successful examination essays for the use of upwardly mobile young men.<sup>70</sup> But it is misleading to associate our masterworks of vernacular fiction with this development, as many would have it. At least, this is denied by the fact that many of the earliest known editions of all four works were relatively fine printings, apparently expensive and meant for only limited circulation.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>67</sup>The art of Ming gardens takes in not only the famous actual examples, but also a number of critical treatises on garden design, such as Chi Ch'eng's *Yüan-yeh*. For additional bibliographical references on Ming gardens, see my *Archetype and Allegory in the Dream of the Red Chamber*; Maggie Keswick, *The Chinese Garden*; and Osvald Sirén, *Gardens of China*.

<sup>68</sup>On the cultural revival of Su-chou in the late fifteenth century, see Mote, "Millennium" and "Transformation"; and Murck, "Chu Yün-ming." For a general discussion of Su-chou in Ming-Ch'ing culture, see Robert Hegel, *The Novel in Seventeenth-Century China*, pp. 4ff.

<sup>69</sup>The various general descriptions of Ming printing include Ho Ping-ti, *Ladder*, pp. 212–15; Evelyn Rawski, *Education and Popular Literature*, pp. 115ff.; and her "Economic and Social Foundations," pp. 17–31; Hegel, *Novel*, p. 10; as well as the observations of Matteo Ricci reported in *China in the Sixteenth Century*, pp. 20f. For specialized studies of printing establishments and techniques, see K. T. Wu, "Ming Printing"; Shih Mei-ts'en, *Chung-kuo yin-shua fa-chan shih*, pp. 80–100; Liu Kuo-chün, *Chung-kuo shu-shih chien-pien*, pp. 74–82; Nagasawa Kikuya, *Wakansho no insatsu to sono rekishi*, pp. 73–83; Lo Chün-t'ang, *Li-tai f'u-shu pan-pen chih-yao*, pp. 74–79; Liu Ts'un-yan, *Chinese Popular Fiction in Two London Libraries*, pp. 1–44, and his *Ming-Ch'ing Chung-kuo f'ung-su hsiao-shuo pan-pen yen-chiu*.

<sup>70</sup>For the late Ming printing of certain popularizations of the *Tzu-chih f'ung-chien*, see Andrew Hing-bun Lo, "San-kuo chih yen-i and *Shui-hu chuan* in the Context of Historiography."

<sup>71</sup>See Wilt Idema, *Chinese Vernacular Fiction*, pp. xl, lv, n. 81; and Hegel, *The Novel in Seventeenth-Century China*, pp. 10f.

By far the most impressive areas of cultural activity in this period, however, are surely those of painting and calligraphy. The most productive period of late Ming painting neatly conforms to our chronology, with relatively disappointing fifteenth-century output followed by an upswing of both quality and quantity by late in the century,<sup>72</sup> especially thanks to Shen Chou, followed by the masters just mentioned.<sup>73</sup> The standard explanations for this spurt of activity—as a response to general economic development and the leisure afforded by increased personal wealth, or to the need to turn to alternative spheres of cultivation due to blocked channels of official advancement or forced retirement under political pressure—are fairly convincing, especially since the most impressive successes in this period were scored by the Wu School around Su-chou, an area of special economic and political maturity.<sup>74</sup>

The late fifteenth century saw a new impetus in the worlds of both “professional” and “amateur” painting. It is the latter category that is of most interest to us here. The phenomenon of the so-called “literati painter” had already appeared in the Sung, but it now took on new proportions and new ideological bases precisely in this period, when the material circumstances for indulgence in cultivated pursuits happily coincided with refinements in aesthetic theory and technique.<sup>75</sup>

For the purposes of this review of the state of the empire in the sixteenth century, however, the crucial point is not the social basis of this art as much as its ideological commitment to the aesthetic and moral values of literati culture. This is because a number of the literary developments that culminate in the four masterworks display many of the same presumptions observed in the world of painting, based on shared education, common aesthetic expectations, and, most of all, a sense of commitment to self-realization through the practice of the arts of civilization (*wen* 文).<sup>76</sup> With this in mind, I will speak of these fictional masterpieces as “literati novels” (*wen-jen*

<sup>72</sup> See Bush, *Literati*, pp. 152ff.; and James Cahill, *Parting at the Shore*, p. 57.

<sup>73</sup> On the painting of Wen Cheng-ming, T'ang Yin, and others, see Cahill, *Parting at the Shore*, pp. 193–218, as well as his *The Compelling Image*, pp. 36–70, and *Distant Mountains*, pp. 87–128.

<sup>74</sup> On the rise of the Wu School, see Bush, *Literati*, pp. 152f., 158f.; and Nelson Wu, “Tung Ch'i-ch'ang,” pp. 260–93.

<sup>75</sup> The concept of literati painting is delineated in Nelson Wu, “Tung Ch'i-ch'ang”; Cahill, *Distant Mountains*, pp. 17ff.; Bush, *Literati*, pp. 1–29, 158ff., 169, 180ff.; and Yoshizawa Tadashi, “Nanga to bunjinga,” 82:9:257–62 (esp. 259), 82:11:345–50, 82:12:336–81; and 83:1:27ff. See also Joseph Levenson, “The Amateur Ideal in Ming and Early Ch'ing Society,” pp. 320–41. Cf. Willard Peterson's argument that the term “literati” should be reserved for the *shih* class ± of scholar-officials (in *Bitter Gourd*, p. 13).

<sup>76</sup> For this notion of *wen* as an all-inclusive expression of the literati life-style, see Peter Bol, “Culture and the Way in Eleventh-Century China.”

*hsiao-shuo* 文人小說), to the extent that they exhibit many of the same pretensions to high wit and deep seriousness as those found in literati painting—pretensions that set the four works sharply apart from the popular materials out of which they are fashioned.

The notion of literati painting refers at one level to lofty artistic purposes, or at least the affectation of such, but it also takes in a set of specific qualities that comprise the canons of a changing aesthetic of composition. Sixteenth-century painting stands out as somehow different, almost modern, in its outlook, in spite of its basic continuities with the tradition and its normative reliance on models of past masters. This difference can perhaps be summed up in the expression “self-consciousness,” with a sense of individualized perspective coming out in a variety of ways in late Ming examples. We see the projection of wit, even whimsy, in such things as choice of subject matter, playful manipulation of the elements of composition, positioning of shapes, use of color, and the like, plus the application of certain innovative techniques: the use of worn-out brushes, for example, or other eccentricities of execution—even experiments that betray the incipient influence of some of the exotic approaches to representation introduced to China by Jesuits at this time.<sup>77</sup>

These features add up to the impression of a strong dose of self-consciousness in relating to the past artistic tradition. This seems to be what Cahill has in mind when he uses the term “irony” to describe certain paintings by Ch'en Hung-shou 陳洪綬 (1598–1652) and others.<sup>78</sup> This aesthetic attitude will form the key to my argument regarding the comparable ironic revision of traditional narrative conventions in the four masterworks of the literati novel.<sup>79</sup>

Many of the same individualistic tendencies that link the world of literati painting to that of prose fiction also run through each of the other genres of the late Ming literary repertoire, to which we now turn. In the rich and varied output of sixteenth-century literature, we find both a qualitative and a quantitative leap beyond the work of the preceding hundred years. Quantitatively, this is immediately evident from a glance at practically any of the later anthologies of Ming poetry or prose, which nearly uniformly give space to a handful of masters from the founding generation—Sung Lien 宋濂, Kao Ch'i 高啟, Wang Wei 王禕, Fang Hsiao-ju 方孝孺 —

<sup>77</sup> See Marilyn Fu and Shen Fu, *Studies in Connoisseurship*; Cahill, *Compelling Image*, pp. 38–60; and Nelson Wu, “Tung Ch'i-ch'ang.” See also Richard Barnhardt, “Wild and Heterodox School in Ming Painting,” pp. 365–96.

<sup>78</sup> See Cahill, *Compelling Image*, pp. 106–45, esp. 134; *Distant Mountains*, pp. 120ff., 203, 206, 244–66; *Fantastics and Eccentrics in Chinese Painting*; and *The Restless Landscape*.

<sup>79</sup> For the aesthetic concept of irony as a defining feature of the novel genre, see n. 27, and my “Full-length *Hsiao-shuo*,” pp. 171ff.



followed by just a sprinkling of fifteenth-century representatives, if any, until we come to the sudden proliferation of major stylists in the Hung-chih and Cheng-te reigns.<sup>80</sup> Granted, this impression is distorted by the selectivity of our collections, but it is by that very reasoning not entirely gratuitous, as this same fact proves that later anthologizers perceived this middle period to offer only a slim harvest of masters.

In any event, a number of the critics of late Ming and Ch'ing saw the turn of the sixteenth century as the start of a new phase in classical prose and poetic literature. For example, the collective biography of the literary world (*Wen-yüan* 文苑) in the *Ming shih* specifies the Hung-chih and Cheng-te reigns as a new phase of activity following the "increasingly flaccid style" (*ch'i-t'i chien jo* 氣體漸弱) of the preceding period.<sup>81</sup> In the more restricted area of *ku-wen* 古文 classical prose, which I will consider first, a comparable opinion is expressed in prefaces to Huang Tsung-hsi's 黃宗羲 *Ming-wen an* 明文案 and in the *Ming-wen shou-tu* 明文授讀, as well as in a preface to the Ch'ung-chen collection *Huang-Ming wen-chüan* 皇明文雋; and a number of recent scholars have seconded this judgment.<sup>82</sup> Even those Ch'ing critics who regard this entire phase of late Ming culture as essentially decadent also recognize the sharp changes of direction, away from the jejune literary styles of the preceding hundred years that are commonly reduced to the single rubric of the so-called "chancellery style" (*t'ai-ko t'i* 臺閣體).<sup>83</sup> This rather uninspired aesthetic refers less to a set style of prose composition per se than to the prizing of the measured cadences of documentary style, endowed with a degree of literary respectability by virtue of the high political office of some of its best-known practitioners, notably the "three Yangs" who served as top ministers of state during the fifteenth century.<sup>84</sup>

<sup>80</sup> For example, the *Ku-wen kuan-chih* 古文觀止 gives a few pieces by Sung Lien, Liu Chi 劉基, and Fang Hsiao-ju; and then skips to Wang Ao 王鏊, Wang Shou-jen (Wang Yang-ming), T'ang Shun-chih 唐順之, Kuei Yu-kuang 歸有光, Mao K'un 茅坤, Wang Shih-chen, and Yüan Hung-tao. Other anthologies include mid-Ming compositions by such figures as Yü Ch'ien 于謙, Wang Chih 王直, Hsüeh Hsüan 薛瑄, Li Shih-mien 李時勉, and Ch'eng Min-cheng 程敏政, etc.

<sup>81</sup> See *Ming shih*, vol. 24, *ieh chuan*, no. 174, *Wen-yuan* 文苑, pt. 2, p. 3348.

<sup>82</sup> For *Ming-wen an*, *Ming-wen shou-tu*, *Huang-Ming wen-chüan*, and *Ming-wen ying-hua*, see bibliography. Chu Tung-jun also describes the Hung-chih and Cheng-te reigns as a period of unprecedented flourishing (*Chung-kuo wen-hsüeh p'i-p'ing shih ta-kang*, p. 224). The 1959 Peking University history of Chinese literature, *Chung-kuo wen-hsüeh shih*, p. 875, speaks of a "crisis" (*wei-chi* 危機) in literature at this point caused by the influence of the *t'ai-ko* style.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. the rendering of this term as "censorate—grand secretary style," in the biographies of Li Tung-yang, Yang Shih-ch'i, and others in *DMB*, pp. 879, 1539, and "cabinet-style," in Daniel Bryant, "Three Varied Centuries of Verse," p. 83.

<sup>84</sup> For background on the *t'ai-ko* style, see Ch'ien Chi-po, *Ming-tai wen-hsüeh*, pp. 13–17; Kuo Shao-yü, *Chung-kuo wen-hsüeh p'i-p'ing shih*, pp. 297, 307–14, 342–48; and Sung P'ei-

When we come to the Hung-chih reign, we observe a marked reaction against this type of writing. It is almost as if the new generation deliberately sets out to overturn the dominance of the *t'ai-ko* style, even though the latter had never been defended as a superior mode in theoretical terms. There is no small measure of irony in the fact that the so-called "restoration" (*fu-ku* 復古) movement in prose, which was later to become a target of attack by more radical literary polemicists, was itself conceived as a reaction against conventionality—and it, too, was associated with men who were often high government ministers. In fact, Li Tung-yang 李東陽, who is regarded as the forerunner and teacher of the "former seven masters" (*ch'ien ch'i-tzu* 前七子), was also known as a master of *t'ai-ko* style. The same inconsistency is true of the succession of polemical "movements" in literary theory that run through much of the century: the "restoration" of ancient style associated with the "former and latter seven masters" (*ch'ien-hou ch'i-tzu* 前後七子); the substitution of models from the more recent past, whose advocates are sometimes referred to as the "T'ang-Sung School" 唐宋派; and later the supposed rejection of the value of imitation in favor of individual expression, ascribed to the Kung-an 公安 and Ching-ling 竟陵 literary cliques.<sup>85</sup>

In reviewing this bewildering array of literary positions, one often gets the impression that each new movement is mostly determined by the need to counter the influence of its predecessors, especially since these so-called "schools" are far indeed from evincing any degree of programmatic purity in their theoretical positions. For one thing, the well-known slogans of the various schools are often taken out of context and interpreted as more extreme pronouncements than they really are. Take, for example, the much-quoted dictum "In prose one must emulate the works of Ch'in and Han, in poetry one must emulate the High T'ang" (*wen pi Ch'in-Han, shih pi sheng-T'ang* 文必秦漢, 詩必盛唐), with which Li Meng-yang himself is

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wei, *Ming wen-hsüeh shih*, pp. 57–64; etc. See also Juan K'uei-sheng, *Ch'a-yü k'e-hua, chüan* 11, pp. 307f. A large body of such writings is collected in Liao Tao-nan, ed., *Tien-ko tz'u-lin chi*. For the "three Yangs," see n. 118.

<sup>85</sup>For reviews of the literary theories of the "former and latter seven masters" and the T'ang-Sung School, see Kuo Shao-yü, *P'i-p'ing shih*, pp. 333, 343–46; Chu Tung-jun, *P'i-p'ing shih ta-kang*, pp. 224–52; Ch'ien Chi-po, *Ming-tai wen-hsüeh*, pp. 17–51; Sung P'ei-wei, *Ming wen-hsüeh shih*, pp. 89–100, 125–48; and the Peking University *Chung-kuo wen-hsüeh shih*, pp. 877–87; The "former masters" include Li Meng-yang 李夢陽 (1473–1529), Ho Ching-ming 何景明 (1483–1521), Hsü Chen-ch'ing 徐禎卿 (1479–1511), Pien Kung 邊貢 (1476–1532), K'ang Hai 康海 (1475–1541), Wang Chiu-ssu 王九思 (1468–1551), and Wang T'ing-hsiang 王廷相 (1474–1544). The "latter masters" include Wang Shih-chen 王世貞 (1526–90), Li P'an-lung 李攀龍 (1514–70), Hsieh Chen 謝榛 (1495–1575), Tsung Ch'en 宗臣 (1525–60), Liang Yu-yü 梁有譽 (1522–66), Hsü Chung-hsing 徐中行 (1517–78), and Wu Kuo-lun 吳國倫 (1524–93). See also Yoshikawa Kōjirō, "Gen-Min shi gaisetsu," pp. 169ff.; and Hsia Ch'ung-p'u, "Ming-tai fu-ku p'ai yü T'ang-Sung wen-p'ai chih ch'ao-liu," pp. 1219–28.

said to have established his leading role on the Chia-ching literary scene. In actuality, although this line is cited in Li's biography in the *Ming shih*, there is no direct evidence that he ever uttered anything as unequivocal as this; and even if he had, this would not have been unique, as much the same idea was voiced earlier by, among others, Ch'en Hsien-chang.<sup>86</sup>

Moreover, when we take a more careful look at the relevant sources, we find nothing like the consistency of positions implied by simplistic accounts. On the contrary, we see considerable disagreement among the various masters, as in the substantive disputes between Li Meng-yang and Ho Ching-ming, the two most prominent "former masters," over the question of literary models (*fa* 法), or the rather sharp exchanges between Wang Shih-chen 王世貞 and his fellow "latter master" Li P'an-lung 李攀龍. Even individual critics often show a high degree of inconsistency in their theories, especially over the span of their entire careers, and they frequently reverse themselves on key issues, as in the cases of Wang Shih-chen and T'ang Shun-chih, whose later literary theories to some extent contradict their earlier positions. The same is true for the Kung-an critics such as Yüan Hung-tao, whose earlier youthful rejection of T'ang-Sung models later gives way to expressions of basically unqualified praise for Sung masters, especially Su Shih 蘇軾.<sup>87</sup>

In order to understand the vehemence with which the critical battles over these points were joined, we must therefore reconsider the broader context of political, intellectual, even social and economic factors within which they took place. For one thing, the literary alignments of the period were part of a complex network of interlocking relationships based on personal ties, generational affiliations, common places of origin, intertwined official careers, and common degree-years, which so greatly determined the configurations of the Ming intellectual and cultural map. For example, a

<sup>86</sup> *Ming shih*, vol. 24, *lieh-chuan* no. 174, *Wen-yüan*, pt. 2, p. 3348. Cf. the line in Ch'en Hsien-chang's poem "Chi Wai-shih Shih-ch'ing Yü-t'ai" 寄外史世卿玉臺, no. 4: "The art of prose declined in Eastern Han, the great masters disappeared; When poetry passed the Mid-T'ang, few writers of stature remained" 文衰東漢無高手, 詩過中唐少作家 in *Pai-sha tzu ch'üan-chi*, *chüan* 8, p. 12b. This reference was pointed out to me by Chu Hung-lam. Richard Lynn notes in his "Orthodoxy and Enlightenment," p. 232, that Yen Yü's *Ts'ang-lang shih-hua* in the Sung period had already established the exclusive preeminence of High T'ang poetry.

<sup>87</sup> For the disagreement between Li Meng-yang and Ho Ching-ming, see Kuo Shao-yü, *P'i-p'ing shih*, pp. 305ff.; Ch'ien Chi-po, *Ming-tai wen-hsiieh*, pp. 25f.; and Chu Tung-jun, *P'i-p'ing shih ta-kang*, pp. 227f. On the differences of opinion between Wang Shih-chen and Li P'an-lung, see Kuo Shao-yü, *P'i-p'ing shih*, pp. 320ff.; Ch'ien Chi-po, *Ming-tai wen-hsiieh*, p. 33; and Matsushita Tadashi, "Ô Seitei no kobunjisetsu yori no dakka ni tsuite," pp. 72ff. Chu Tung-jun, *P'i-p'ing shih ta-kang*, pp. 237, 252, discusses Wang Shih-chen's change of positions in his later years; and Chou Chih-p'ing points out the later softening of Yüan Hung-tao's literary stands in "The Poetry and Poetic Theory of Yüan Hung-tao (1568-1610)," pp. 133ff.

quick review of biographical data shows that the former seven masters who dominated the literary scene in the 1490s and 1500s were primarily of northern origins, with a disproportionate number of them having roots in Shensi (including Li Meng-yang, Ho Ching-ming, Wang Chiu-ssu, K'ang Hai), whereas all of the latter seven masters, with the exception of Li P'an-lung, came from the south.<sup>88</sup> To give examples of other personal connections, Li Meng-yang was a youthful member of the poetic circle of Li Tung-yang, and Wang Chiu-ssu and K'ang Hai were lifelong friends and political allies.<sup>89</sup> We may also note here that a surprising number of the leading literary figures of this period happen to have been men without impressive pedigrees, often coming from military backgrounds or low officialdom, and their behavior after reaching prominence sometimes displays a bit of the air of the self-made man.<sup>90</sup>

In any event, these various types of relationships were cemented by a wealth of shared experience gained in the same educational path and career ladder, through common interests in intellectual currents such as the teachings of Wang Yang-ming or the later influence of Buddhist savants, as well as by virtue of the binding effect of having gone through political crises together in many cases.<sup>91</sup> For example, Li Meng-yang's rise to prominence is not unrelated to his skillful tightrope walk during the ascendancy of the regime of the eunuch Liu Chin, while Yang Shen 楊慎 and Wang Shih-chen both suffered the bitter consequences of the Chia-ching emperor's misrule. T'ang Shun-chih, on the other hand, primarily benefited from his relationship with the Yen Sung faction.<sup>92</sup> Given these various levels of group

<sup>88</sup> The significance of northern and southern regional affiliations is highlighted in Wang Chiu-ssu's biography in *DMB*, pp. 1366f. The rapid advancement of Li Meng-yang and his Shensi fellows K'ang Hai and Wang Chiu-ssu may be related to the fact that the eunuch politician Liu Chin hailed from the same province (see *DMB*, p. 693). Other examples include Pien Kung, Li P'an-lung, and Li K'ai-hsien, all from Shantung, or the common Yangtze delta origins of Wang Shih-chen, Hsü Chung-hsing, Wu Kuo-lun, Kuei Yu-kuang, T'ang Shun-chih, and Mao K'un.

<sup>89</sup> On the personal connections between Li Meng-yang and Li Tung-yang, see *DMB*, p. 841. For the friendship between K'ang Hai and Wang Chiu-ssu, see n. 88.

<sup>90</sup> For example, Li Meng-yang, Hsü Chen-ch'ing, and Wu Kuo-lun came from military families. Ho Ching-ming, Pien Kung, K'ang Hai, and Wang T'ing-hsiang were sons of minor officials. Li P'an-lung's father was a peasant. Hsü Chung-hsing, T'u Lung, Wang Shih-chen, and T'ang Shun-chih are among the few "masters" of cultivated stock. Li Meng-yang's swift leap to literary prominence is conventionally described with the expression "meteoric rise" (*chüeh-ch'i* 崛起). See, for example, Chu Tung-jun, *P'i-p'ing shih ta-kang*, p. 238.

<sup>91</sup> On the influence of Buddhist ideas on Wang Shih-chen, see Lynn, "Orthodoxy and Enlightenment," pp. 221ff., 253ff.; and Matsushita Tadashi, "Dakka," pp. 81ff. The Kung-an and Ching-ling critics in Wan-li, of course, tend to draw upon Ch'an style and terminology.

<sup>92</sup> See *DMB* biographies of Li Meng-yang, (pp. 841ff.), Yang Shen (pp. 1531ff.), Wang Shih-chen (pp. 1399ff.), and T'ang Shun-chih (pp. 1252ff.). Yang Shen (1488–1559) was a victim of the 1524 purge at the height of the "great rites controversy" (see n. 22). On Wang Shih-chen's struggles with Yen Sung, see Wu Han, "Chin P'ing Mei ti chu-tso" (see below,

interaction, it is not surprising that these literati developed a number of types of formal organizations, from the academies and political associations discussed earlier to the various prose and poetry circles (*wen-she*, *shih-she* 文社, 詩社) that proliferated in this period.<sup>93</sup>

Against the background of these interlocking relations, the rather perplexing lineup of literary positions frequently emerges as less a question of purely academic debates, and more a matter of newcomers establishing their reputations by staking out polemical territory and maneuvering to form alliances. In many cases, we can observe a direct correlation between extremism of literary advocacy and uncertainty of political and social status.

Another dimension of significance can be perceived in these literary debates when we view them as reflections of the broader philosophical issues of the day. Thus the championing of Ch'in-Han prose may sometimes be taken as a deliberate rejection of Sung Neo-Confucianism (i.e., *li-hsüeh* 理學), rather than as an actual distaste for the prose styles of the T'ang-Sung masters in themselves.<sup>94</sup> By the Wan-li period, the battle lines are already less programmatically drawn, and social mobility seems to have reached the point at which generational and regional origins are less crucial a factor.<sup>95</sup> On the other hand, the various literary qualities advocated by the later Ming critics— notions such as *ch'ü* 趣 and *hsing-ling* 性靈—are clearly invested with rather pointed implications growing out of post-Wang Yang-ming intellectual currents.<sup>96</sup>

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Chapter 2, n. 8); and Barbara Krafft, "Wang Shih-chen," pp. 185ff. T'ang Shun-chih's well-known essay, "Hsin-ling chün chiu Chao lun" 信陵君救趙論, focusing on the danger of factional connections (*p'eng-tang* 朋黨), seems to make a transparent allusion to the anti-Yen Sung forces. See also Ts'ao Chü- jen, "Ming-tai ch'ien-hou ch'i-tzu ti fu-ku yün-tung yu- che tzen-yang ti she-hui pei-ching," pp. 381–85.

<sup>93</sup>For an excellent survey of the various literary groups, see Kuo Shao-yü, "Ming-tai ti wen-jen chi-t'uan," pp. 86–128.

<sup>94</sup>Hence the emphasis on the term *fa* to the exclusion of *li* 理 and *tao*.

<sup>95</sup>We should note, however, that among the major Wan-li literary figures, the majority have origins in the Yangtze delta or adjacent areas. See biographies for T'ang Hsien-tsu (in Arthur Hummell, ed. *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period*, pp. 708f.), Hsü Wei 徐渭 (*DMB*, pp. 609–12), Yüan Hung-tao (*DMB*, pp. 1635–38), Chung Hsing 鍾惺 (*DMB*, pp. 408f.), Li Chih 李贄 (*DMB*, pp. 807–18), Ch'en Chi-ju 陳繼儒 (Hummell, *Eminent Chinese*, pp. 83–85), Feng Meng-lung 馮夢龍 (*DMB*, pp. 450–53), Tung Ch'i-ch'ang 董其昌 (Hummell, *Eminent Chinese*, pp. 987ff.).

<sup>96</sup>For discussions of these terms, see Kuo Shao-yü, *P'i-p'ing shih*, pp. 316ff., 324ff., 333ff., 337, 340, 353f., 359, 362, 376f., 381ff.; Jonathan Chaves, "The Panoply of Images," pp. 4–15; Richard Lynn, "Orthodoxy and Enlightenment," pp. 237, 239, 247ff.; Chou Chih-p'ing, "Poetry and Poetic Theory," pp. 94ff., and his "P'ing Kung-an p'ai chih shih-lun," pp. 82ff. See, for example, Yüan Hung-tao's famous discourse on *ch'ü* in "Hsü Ch'en Cheng-fu Hui-hsin chi" 敘陳正甫會心集, in *Yüan Hung-tao chi-chien chiao*, pp. 463f.; and Li Chih's well-known essay on *t'ung-hsin* (童心說) in his *Fen shu*, pp. 97–99.

As we have seen, when taken out of the context of their social and political milieu, the debates of sixteenth-century literary theory often present a bewildering array of contradictions and inconsistencies. Several aspects of these debates, however, have a special relevance for the development of the aesthetics of fictional narrative in this period. One of these factors is a heightened interest in the technical side of prose composition. When the literary theorists of this period invoke the term *fa*, for example, they more often than not have in mind a loose conception of the underlying spirit of classical models for imitation. But in certain contexts the point at issue in discussions of *fa* is more one of concrete literary devices.<sup>97</sup> At least, we see increased attention in this period to critical analysis of structural patterns, prose rhythms, and particularly the design of parallel constructions based on the complementarity of paired qualities. The various terms used to discuss these literary patterns (e.g., *chao-ying* 照應, *ch'eng-shang ch'i-hsia* 承上起下, *tun-tso* 頓挫, *shun-ni* 順逆)<sup>98</sup> appear frequently in both theoretical statements and in exercises in practical criticism in interlinear commentary editions of major texts. These terms are by no means new here, but they do gain a wider application at this point to all types of poetry and prose, including *pa-ku* essays and drama. From here, it is just one more step to the incorporation of this vocabulary directly into the emerging aesthetics of prose fiction that began to blossom into full-fledged fiction criticism by the end of the century and into the next.<sup>99</sup>

A second type of influence these developments in prose theory have on the novel form arises out of the greater range of rhetorical strategies and devices now available. For example, nearly all of the sixteenth-century critics, regardless of their positions, opt for language closer to the rhythms of actual speech in the composition of *ku-wen*. In each case, the theoretical justification for this is different. For example, *fu-ku* proponents generally advocate the quality of spare directness associated with pre-T'ang writing,

<sup>97</sup> On the varying uses of the term *fa*, see Kuo Shao-yü, *P'ing-p'ing shih*, pp. 301, 306ff., 312, 340f., 347; and Richard Lynn, "Orthodoxy and Enlightenment," pp. 222, 235, 242.

<sup>98</sup> Most of these terms derive from earlier prose criticism, or are borrowings from poetic or art theory. See, for example, Sung critical works on prose composition such as Lü Tsu-ch'ien's *Ku-wen kuan-chien*; and Chen Te-hsiu's *Wen-chang cheng-tsung*. The most complete compendium of such terms in the sixteenth century is Kuei Yu-kuang's *Wen-chang chih-nan*, especially his introductory analytic schemes under the headings *tsung-lun*, *k'an wen-tzu fa*, and *lun wen-chang f'i-tse* 總論看文字法, 論文章體則, as well as marginal commentaries appended to actual texts presented in the collection. It is perhaps not accidental that Kuei Yu-kuang was known as a master of the technical aspects of prose composition, particularly the crafting of complex parallel constructions.

<sup>99</sup> For background on the development of fiction criticism in China, see David Rolston, ed., *How to Read the Chinese Novel*, Introduction. I will return to this point later in this chapter.

especially that of Ch'in and Han expository style, before the beginnings of more ornate kinds of patterned prose in the Six Dynasties. The critics of the T'ang-Sung School also prize Ssu-ma Ch'ien 司馬遷 and Pan Ku 班固, but they hold that the language of the Sung masters, being closer to contemporary speech, is therefore more smooth and natural (*shun* 順) for them to imitate.<sup>100</sup> In the Wan-li period, Yüan Tsung-tao 袁宗道 takes the argument one step further to suggest that the changing patterns of spoken language require a continuous evolution of prose style as well.<sup>101</sup>

Perhaps the most important point of Ming prose theory for our understanding of the great sixteenth-century novels is the strong sense we get of self-conscious writers trying to forge new relationships to the great models of the past (this is the other meaning of the term *fa*).<sup>102</sup> Despite the apparent controversy on this issue, all the leading prose theorists agree on the crucial role of learning from the old masters. The changing objects of imitation selected as models through the course of the century would seem to belie this, but in practice all turn around and insist that the true greatness of their respective models, that which constitutes the real quality to be imitated, is actually the attainment of a degree of spontaneous expressivity. Consequently, nearly all of the prose critics of the time stress the development of a personal voice, whether that be associated with the affecting conviction of a Ssu-ma Ch'ien, a Han Yü 韓愈, a Su Shih, or an Ou-yang Hsiu 歐陽修.<sup>103</sup>

<sup>100</sup> Cf. Ch'ien Chi-po's characterization of the power and lucidity of Wang Shih-ch'en's style, derived from his assimilation of Ch'in-Han prose, in *Ming-tai wen-hsiieh*, pp. 35ff. For a description of Sung prose style as "smooth," see for example Kuo Shao-yü, *P'i-p'ing shih*, p. 308. In certain pieces we see not just a loose imitation, but a direct appropriation of Ssu-ma Ch'ien's language, as for example in Wang Shen-chung's "Hai-shang p'ing-k'ou chi" 海上平寇記.

<sup>101</sup> Yüan Tsung-tao, "Lun wen," pp. 66–70. See translation of this piece by André Lévy in "Un document sur la querelle des anciens et des modernes *more sinico*," pp. 251–74.

<sup>102</sup> For the understanding of *fa* in this sense of following the inner spirit of the compositions of the great masters, see T'ang Shun-chih, cited in Kuo Shao-yü, *P'i-p'ing shih*, pp. 310ff.; Ho Ching-ming, among others, draws explicitly on the Buddhist sense of the term *fa*, using the perennial play on words by which structured reality ("dharma," *fa*) is likened to a raft (*fa* 筏), which is discarded as just so much driftwood after it has ferried one to the "other shore."

<sup>103</sup> For examples of rhetorical variety, even originality, in late Ming *ku-wen* compositions, see T'ang Shun-chih's adumbration of the word *hsin* 心 in "Hsin-ling chün chiu Chao lun" (see above, n. 92), Tsung Ch'en's use of a fictionalized dialogue in "Pao Liu I-chang shu" 報劉一丈書, Kuei Yu-kuang's use of emotive detail in "Hsien-pi shih-lüeh" 先妣事略, Kao P'an-lung's play on the word *k'e* 可 in his "K'e-lou chi" 可樓記, Mao K'un's use of irony in his "Ch'ing-hsia hsien-sheng wen-chi hsü" 青霞先生文集序, Wang Shih-ch'en's exercise in reversal of earlier arguments (*fan-an wen-chang* 翻案文章) in his "Lin Hsiang-ju wan pi kuei Chao lun" 蘭相如完壁歸趙論. See also Iriya Yoshitaka's discussion of Kuei Yu-kuang's "T'ao chieh-fu chuan" 陶節婦傳, in his *Mindai shibun*, pp. 68–92.

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