

The World of P'u Sung-ling's *Liao-chai chih-i*

Literature and the Intelligentsia during the Ming-Ch'ing Dynastic Transition

CHUN-SHU CHANG* & HSÜEH-LUN CHANG

Among the popular literary works of the early Ch'ing period, P'u Sung-ling's *Liao-chai chih-i* is one of the most widely read. Its main manuscript was completed in 1679,¹ but for many decades this collection of short stories was circulated in manuscript form only. Not until 1766 was it first printed and published.² Within a short period it gained a wide circulation in imperial

* Professor of History, Department of History, The University of Michigan. The present essay is the fourth chapter of the author's forthcoming book, *Literature and Society in Ming-Ch'ing China: The Litterateurs and the Dynastic Transition*, which has been prepared with the assistance of faculty research grants from the Rackham School of Graduate Studies and the Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan.

1 See P'u Sung-ling's preface to his *Liao-chai chih-i* (Shanghai, 1962 ed.), pp.1-3.

2 Based on current research on the transmission of the *Liao-chai chih-i* and all other available primary sources on the problem, particularly Chao Ch'i-kao's "Liao-chai chih-i li-yen," one may conclude that the first printing of the book was made from 1765 to 1766 by Chao Ch'i-kao and Pao T'ing-po and collated by Yü Chi; this edition has been referred to as the "Chao edition" or "Ch'ing-k'o T'ing edition," on which all later popular printings have been based. Misreading a colophon to a hand-copied edition written by P'u's grandson Li-te, Herbert A. Giles maintained that the first printing of the book dated from 1740. This is incorrect. For the problem of editions, see Liu Chieh-p'ing, *P'u Liu-hsien i-chu k'ao-lieh yü Chih-i i-kao* (Taipei, 1950), pp.4a-6b (for other printed editions and related problems, see pp.7a-10a); Lu Chien, "T'an-t'an 'Liao-chai chih-i' te ti-i-tz'u k'o-pen," *Ming-Ch'ing hsiao-shuo yen-chiu lun-wen chi*, ed. by the Editorial Board of the Jen-min wen-hsüeh ch'u-pan she (Peking, 1959), pp.71-82; *Liao-chai chih-i*, edited with collations by Chang Yu-ho (Shanghai, 1962), pp.1-40, ref. 25-28, 32; Chang Ching-ch'iao, *Liao-chai chih-i yuan-kao k'ao-cheng* (Taipei, 1968), pp.29-30; *idem*, "P'u Sung-ling yü *Liao-chai chih-i*," in *Ta-lu tsa-chih yü-wen ts'ung-shu: Wen-hsüeh*, ed. by Ta-lu Tsa-chih She (Taipei, 1963), p.428; Herbert A. Giles, *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio* (Shanghai, 1926), p.xvii. It must be noted that Yang Fu-chi (1747-1820) mentioned in his *Meng-lan suo pi* (in *Chao-tai ts'ung-shu, kwei-chi*, p.53) that at about the same time (1765) the Chao edition was printed, another edition of the *Liao-chai* was printed by a Magistrate Wang in Ch'u (Hunan). But the Ch'u edition has not been found. The reliability of the story has yet to be proven. However, scholars have recently suggested that the edition printed by Wang Chiu-fan in 1767 was possibly the Ch'u edition, and the whole issue deserves further research. For further discussion of these problems, see Fujita Yüken's introduction to *Ryūsai shii* by P'u Sung-ling, translated by Masuda Wataru, Matsueda Shigeo, Fujita Yüken, *et al.* (Tokyo, 1958), pp.433-434; Tsuneishi Shigeru's introduction to *Ryūsai shii*, translated by Masuda Wataru, Matsueda Shigeo, Tsuneishi Shigeru (Tokyo, 1970), pp.547-549; Fujita Yüken, "Ryūsai shii no kenkyū to shiryō," in *Chūgoku no hachidai shōsetsu*, ed. by Osaka Shiritsu Daigaku Chūgoku Bungaku Kenkyūshitsu (Tokyo, 1965), pp.466-476; Ch'en Nai-ch'ien, "T'an Wang Chin-fan k'o shih-pa chüan pen *Liao-chai chih-i*," *Wen-wu*, No. 3 (March 1963), pp.1-6. A comprehensive bibliography of the *Liao-chai chih-i* and its studies is given in Keiō Gijuku Daigaku Chūgoku Bungaku Kenkyūshitsu, comp., "Keiō Gijuku Daigaku shōzō Ryūsai shii kanken shiryō mokuroku," *Geibun kenkyū*, No. 4 (Feb. 1955), pp.127-144. The best comprehensive edition of the *Liao-chai chih-i* available is *Liao-chai chih-i hui-chiao hui-chu hui-p'ing pen* ed. by Chang Yu-ho (3 vols. Shanghai, 1962). For this study we have basically followed this edition, but all other significant editions have also been consulted and compared; also, Fujita Yüken, "Kōhon Ryūsai shii hōkan ki," *Geibun kenkyū*, No. 6 (1956), pp.16-64.

China. Since then, as its English translator Herbert Giles rightly pointed out, it has been as familiar throughout the length and breadth of China as have been the tales of the "Arabian Nights" in all English-speaking communities.³ "Almost in every household there is a volume of this collection," recorded one Chinese writer in the middle of the nineteenth century.⁴ And even Chi Yün (1724-1805), the chief editor of the great *Complete Library of the Four Treasuries* (known as the *Ssu-k'u ch'üan-shu*), recognized the literary power of the *Liao-chai chih-i*, although he did not approve of its writing style.⁵

The *Liao-chai chih-i* is the best-written collection of short stories in the early Ch'ing period.⁶ It includes 431 short stories, of which many are ghost stories, fox-fairies, and other fantasies that make the outlook of the book very much similar to the tales of the "Arabian Nights." However, it is of a much more serious nature. The author makes it rather plain in his preface that he wrote the book merely to vent his excited feelings of distress and frustration. What we gather from reading these stories are the author's strong feelings toward the injustices of his day. Many tales in the book, beneath the cover of ghosts and fairies, actually aim at attacking, exposing, and satirizing the society of his time. Yet, at the same time, other stories conform with the established values of the society. This contradiction in ideas appears throughout the book. To obtain a better understanding of such a book, the author's social and family background should first be taken into consideration.

P'u Sung-ling (1640-1715), a native of Tzu-ch'uan District of Shantung, was born into a once-prosperous landlord-merchant family. Scholars have long suggested non-Chinese origin of P'u's ancestry, possibly of P'u Shou-keng — the famous Arab who served both the Sung and the Yüan dynasties and accumulated an incredible wealth in the thirteenth century, or of Turkish or Mongol peoples. But recent studies have demonstrably proved that P'u's ancestry was Islamic. However, no records of P'u Sung-ling's days indicate that members of the P'u clan were then still Moslems. P'u Sung-ling's own account of his family background reads, in part, as follows:

My father P'u Min-wu showed talent in his youth and was fond of study; he followed T'ao and Teng in his literary style but failed to pass the first-degree examination. As the family was poor, he gave up study and went in for trade; and in about twenty years became well off. But when he was over forty and had no son, he stopped trying to make money and stayed at home to study, never leaving his books, until all well-learned scholars could no longer equal the erudition and depth of his scholarship. He helped the poor, contributed to the building of temples, and neglected his own estates. Then his first wife gave birth to three sons, his second wife to one; and when they reached their teens he taught them himself. Since there were many mouths to feed and little money coming in, however, our family gradually grew poor.⁷

3 Herbert A. Giles, *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio* (4th rev. ed., Shanghai, 1929), p.xi.

4 Lu I-t'ien, *Leng-lu tsa-shih* (1856) in *Pi-chi hsiao-shuo ta-kuan hsi-pien* (Taipei, 1962), p.3296.

5 Chi Yün, *Yüeh-wei ts'ao-t'ang pi-chi* (Shanghai, 1934 ed.), *Chüan* 18, p.24.

6 For discussions of the writing of short stories in the early Ch'ing period, see Lu Hsün, *Chung-kuo hsiao-shuo shih lüeh* (Reprint, Hong Kong, 1965), pp.167ff; Meng Yao, *Chung-kuo hsiao-shuo shih* (4 vols. Taipei, 1969), pp.220-221, 468-484; Pei-ching Shih-ta Chung-wen hsi, *Chung-kuo wen-hsüeh chiang-kao* (Peking, 1958), Vol. 3, p.180; Pei-ching ta-hsüeh Chung-wen hsi, *Chung-kuo wen-hsüeh shih* (Peking, 1959), Vol. 4, pp.135-137; Chung-kuo k'o-hsüeh yüan wen-k'o yen-chiu so, *Chung-kuo wen-hsüeh shih* (Peking, 1962), Vol. 3, p.1020; James R. Hightower, *Topics in Chinese Literature* (Cambridge, 1962), p.79; Herbert Giles, *A History of Chinese Literature* (New York: Evergreen Book Edition), pp.337-355; Tōdō Akiyasu and Itō Shōhei, "Kinsei shōsetsu no bungaku gengo to sono no jidai," in *Chūgoku no hachidai shōsetsu*, ed. by Osaka Shiritsu Daigaku Chūgoku Bungaku Kenkyūshitsu (Tokyo, 1965), p.9.

7 P'u Sung-ling, "Shu Liu-shih hsing-shih," *P'u Sung-ling chi*, ed. by Lu Ta-huang (Shanghai, 1962), Vol. 1, p.252; the English translation is adopted with corrections from Jen Fang-chiu, "P'u Sung-ling and 'Tales of Liao-chai,'" *Chinese Literature*, No. 1 (1956), p.108.

Because P'u's family lived near the eastern coast where commerce was highly developed since ancient times, and his father had engaged in trade, he naturally was influenced by this urban background. Many heroes and heroines in his stories are merchants and prostitutes and he did not show any of the traditional Confucian disrespect for them. On the other hand, when P'u Sung-ling was born, his father had already retired from urban life and was living as a country squire. His father was fond of study; the fact that he failed to obtain any degree must have been a life-long regret for him. And he taught his sons to study. All his life P'u Sung-ling, a holder of an elementary degree, was haunted by the desire to be successful through the imperial civil service examination system.⁸

The combination of merchant and landlord family background and varied ideological orientations is one of the key factors that cause a sharp conflict of ideas in P'u Sung-ling's writing. For example, there is the conflict between free marriages and the traditional marriages arranged by parents through the medium of go-betweens; the conflict between ideas of fatalism and ideas of retribution; the conflict between his hatred for the civil examination system and his helpless longing for position and wealth through this system; the conflict between individualism and conformism; and the conflict between Confucianism and Taoism.⁹

The life of P'u Sung-ling can be summed up with a simple description: He lived as a poor and frustrated man.¹⁰ Many of his poems describe or reflect his extremely poor living conditions.¹¹ As an unsuccessful scholar who obtained only the elementary degree, he made his

8 According to P'u Sung-ling's chronological biography, ed. by Lu Ta-huang. P'u did not give up taking the examination until 1690, when he was fifty-one. Moreover, in later life he constantly expressed in his poems and writings his regret at being unsuccessful in the examination system. See note 13 below.

9 These conflicts will be elaborated on later in this chapter. For a discussion of the last one and its related problems, see Fujita Yūken, "Ryūsai shii kenkyū josetsu," *Geibun kenkyū*, No. 3 (1954), pp.55-56; *idem*, *Introduction to Ryūsai shii* (Tokyo, 1958), pp.450ff.

10 The principal biographical sources about P'u Sung-ling are as follows: Liu Chieh-p'ing, *P'u Liu-hsien chuan* (Taipei, 1970); *idem*, *Liao-chai t'ung-su hsi-ch'ü hsüan-chu* (Taipei, 1970), pp.1-13; Lu Ta-huang (ed.), "P'u Lin-ch'üan hsien-sheng nien-p'u," *P'u Sung-ling chi* (Shanghai, 1962), Vol. 2, pp.1745-1801; Kuo p'ei-chih, "Kuan-yü P'u Liu-ch'üan hsien-sheng nien-p'u te chi-tien pien-cheng," *Wen-shih-che*, No. 4 of 1962, pp.44-46; P'u Sung-ling, "Shu Liu-shih hsing-shih," *P'u Sung-ling chi* (Shanghai, 1962), Vol. 1, pp.252-253; Lo Hsiang-lin, "*Liao-chai chih-i* tso-che P'u Sung-ling chih chia-shih," in *P'u Shou-keng chuan* (Taipei, 1955), pp.150-157; Chang Ching-ch'iao, *P'u Sung-ling nien-p'u* (Taipei, 1970); Arthur W. Hummel (ed.), *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period* (Reprint, Taipei, 1967), pp.628-630; Jaroslav Průšek, "Two Documents relating to the Life of P'u Sung-ling," *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Karl Marx Universität*, 4:4 (1960), pp.657-660; *idem*, "*Liao-chai chih-i* by P'u Sung-ling: An Inquiry into the Circumstances under which the Collection Arose," *Studia Serica Bernhard Karlgren Dedicata*, ed. by Søren Egerod et Else Glahn (Copenhagen, 1959), pp.128-146; Hu Shih, "Pien-wei chü-li," in *Hu Shih wen-ts'un*, Vol. 4 (Taipei, 1961), pp.319-328, also pp.385-395; Fujita Yūken, "Introduction" to *Ryūsai shii*, translated by Masuda Wataru, Matsueda Shigeo, Fujita Yūken, *et al.* (Tokyo, 1958), pp.429-433; Tsuneishi Shigeru, "Introduction" to *Ryūsai shii*, translated by Masuda Wataru, Matsueda Shigeo, and Tsuneishi Shigeru (Tokyo, 1970), pp.540-545; and Imamura Yoshio, "Ryūsai shii no sakusha to jidai," in *Chūgoku no hachūdai shōsetsu*, ed. by Osaka Shiritsu Chūgoku Bungaku Kenkyūshitsu (Tokyo, 1965), pp.438-446. Also see Pei-ching Ta-hsüeh Chung-wen hsi hsiao-shuo kuo-yü-wen hsüeh-hsi yen-chiu pan (comp.), *Chung-kuo hsiao-shuo shih kao* (Peking: Jen-min wen-hsüeh ch'u-pan she, 1960), Chapter 11, esp. pp.325-328; Cheng Chen-to (ed.), *Chung-kuo tuan-p'ien hsiao-shuo chi* (3 parts in 4 volumes; Shanghai, 1933), Vol. 4, pp.1-2; Wolfram Eberhard, *Die chinesische Novelle des 17.-19. Jahrhunderts* (Ascona, Switzerland: Artibus Asiae, 1948), Chapter 2 (pp.19-38); P'ou Song-ling, *Contes extraordinaires du pavillon du loisir*, traduit du chinois sou la direction d'Yves Hervouet, introduction de M. Yves Hervouet (Paris, 1969), pp.9-18; and Jaroslav Průšek, "P'u Sung-ling and his Work," in Průšek's *Chinese History and Literature*, (Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel Publishing Co., 1970), Pt. I, pp.109-138, the last two of which became available only after this manuscript was practically done.

11 P'u Sung-ling, *P'u Sung-ling chi*, ed. by Lu Ta-huang (Shanghai, 1962), Vol. 1, pp.472, 475, 485, 487. See P'u's poems entitled as "Lü-ssu" (p.472); "Ké-chai" (p.475); "Po-man" (p.485); "Jung-huai" (p.487).

living by being a private tutor all his life, except for one period in 1670 when he was an invited guest and private secretary. When he was an old man, his son wrote about him: "My father is now seventy-four years old; only in the recent four years has he not taught as a private tutor."¹² The life of a private tutor was very lonely and boring; the income was small; and he had to be separated from his family most of the time. P'u Sung-ling once wrote a long satirical drum-song (*ku-tz'u*) to describe the life of a private tutor and concluded it with "If I could have any choice, I would not want to be the master of children."¹³ But fortune never fell upon him, and year after year he failed in all higher examinations after the first one he took at the age of nineteen. The lonely life of a private tutor and his frustration at failing in examinations led him to commit his thoughts to writing. His voluminous writings include not only his famous short stories — represented by the celebrated collection *Liao-chai chih-i* — but also a considerable variety of other works: volumes of classical poems and lyrics, and essays of more than sixteen forms; three musical plays; six drum-songs and fourteen narrative folksongs (*li-ch'ü*); extensive popular instructions on almost all basic aspects of daily country life — such as rites, rituals, morality, calendar, wedding customs, popular worship, medicine, plants and animals, agriculture, and silkworm rearing; learned commentaries on religious matters (Taoism, Buddhism, popular beliefs); discussions on the colloquial usage of the Chinese language; and so forth.¹⁴ However, of all these works only the *Liao-chai*

¹² *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, p.1791. In his eulogy upon his mother, P'u Sung-ling's son mentioned his father as being a private tutor all his life except the last four years before his death.

¹³ P'u Sung-ling, *P'u Sung-ling chi* (Shanghai, 1962), Vol. 2, p.1742. One must also note that P'u's material life had been improved somewhat during the thirty years from 1679 to 1709 when he was a private tutor in the household of the wealthy Pi Chi-yu (1623-1693) and his son Pi Sheng-chü. But P'u still remained a man of frustration and spiritual suffering due to his failure — despite repeated tries — to obtain a higher degree in the imperial civil service examination, his failure to become an official, and the usual fear of aging. His poems and other writings during this period fully testify to this point. See Liu Chieh-p'ing, *P'u Liu-hsien chuan* (3 vols., Taipei, 1970), pp.46-48; Lu Ta-huang, "P'u Liu-ch'üan hsien-sheng nien-p'u," in *P'u Sung-ling chi* (Shanghai, 1962), pp.1766-1790. In his excellent study of the circumstances under which the collection *Liao-chai chih-i* arose, "Liao-chai chih-i by P'u Sung-ling," Professor Jaroslav Průšek has mistaken the period of P'u's being tutor in the Pi family as 1680-1710 (esp. pp.136-139). He further maintains (p.136) that during this period P'u Sung-ling had no cause for sadness and bitter disillusionment as displayed in P'u's preface to his *Liao-chai chih-i*. But a check of P'u's writings during this period reveals, as we have mentioned above, just the opposite. Even though P'u's material life changed somewhat for the better, his sadness and disillusionment indeed had continued. Perhaps it is significant to point out that the source of P'u's distress was his failure in official examinations and in obtaining an official post, rather than material considerations, although the latter was a factor. In P'u's time, success in degree examinations and then service to the state were the most revered ideal of life for an intellectual; without them, the life of an intellectual could not be said to be fulfilled. For P'u Sung-ling, this was especially so; it was fully demonstrated by his constant writing of numerous "Pretended Memorials" in the name of high-ranking officials (*P'u Sung-ling Chi*, pp.321-407).

¹⁴ The most complete list of his writings is given in the previously cited "Keiō Gijuku Daigaku shozō Ryūsai shii kanken shiryō mokuroku." This list contains over five hundred entries, including different editions of one title. Also see Lu Ta-huang (ed.), *P'u Sung-ling chi* (2 vols. Shanghai, 1962). For a detailed discussion of P'u Sung-ling's writings, see Hu Shih, "Pa Chang Yüan te Liu-ch'üan P'u Hsien-sheng mu-piao," in *Hu Shih wen-ts'un* (Reprint, Taipei, 1961), Vol. 4, pp.389-395; Hsü Kung-shih, "P'u Sung-ling chu-tso hsün-t'an," *Ming-Ching hsiao-shuo yen-chiu lun-wen chi hsiu-pien* (Hong Kong, 1970), pp.29-33; Liu Chieh-p'ing, *P'u Liu-hsien chuan* (Taipei, 1970), pp.251-284. Finally, there has been controversy over the authorship of the *Hsing-shih yin-yüan*, which was first attributed to P'u Sung-ling by Hu Shih and then by others. This has been seriously challenged by other scholars. Since the authorship of the *Hsing-shih yin-yüan* is still extremely controversial, we have not included this novel in our study. For a detailed discussion of this problem, see Lu Ta-huang, "Liao-chai ch'üan-chi chung te Hsing-shih yin-yüan yü Ku-tz'u chi te tso-che wen-t'i," *Wen-hsüeh i-ch'an hsüan-chi, erh-chi* (Peking, 1957), pp.303-309; Hu Shih, "Hsing-shih yin-yüan chuan K'ao-cheng," *Hu Shih wen-ts'un*, Vol. 4, pp.329-384; Liu Chieh-p'ing, *P'u Liu-hsien i-chu k'ao-lüeh Yü chih-i i-kao mu-tu* (Taipei, 1950), pp.23a-25b.

chih-i has brought P'u Sung-ling fame and popularity. The rest received little attention until recent time. Some of them still remained in hand-copied manuscript form at the time of their discovery; some were represented only by their short prefaces; and some, except for their titles, were completely lost. But the fact that P'u Sung-ling was such a productive, versatile writer and scholar provides us new insight into his mind. He was a man of broad interests and knowledge, a scholar of admirable erudition. An examination of his writings reveals a remarkable range of intellectual pursuits: literature, classics, biographies, politics, history, social customs, folklore, law, language, philosophy, technology, science, medicine, and religion.

Although P'u Sung-ling was ahead of his time in many of his ideas, particularly his conscious use of various types of colloquial literature for expressing his moral, social, and political ideas, he was also conditioned by the prevailing ideals and values of his time. He spent much of his time writing the so-called "Pretended Memorials" (*i-piao*) – memorials to the throne that were written in the name of high-ranking officials but never made known to the emperor or the officials. These memorials, altogether seventy-nine, constitute a noticeable portion of P'u's writings. But, written in stock style, as a whole they demonstrate nothing but his feverish longing for official position and success. Some of P'u's narrative folksongs and short stories also show his constant indulgence in pornographic subjects and details. It seems clear that P'u Sung-ling was typical of the frustrated intellectuals who were searching with all their intellectual resources for the relevance and meaning of their life in a trying age of dynastic transition.

P'u Sung-ling's times made a significant impact upon him and his works. P'u belonged to the first generation under the new Manchu regime. He was born in 1640, four years before the Manchu conquest, and grew up in the turbulent period when the Ming resistance forces were still active in South China. However, in 1659, when the last of the Ming princes, Prince Kuei, escaped to Burma, the hope of restoring the Ming regime was gone forever. It was just the year before that P'u, at nineteen, participated in the county examination and won distinction.¹⁵ Also about this time, P'u started to write the short stories that were to be put into a collection later named *Liao-chai chih-i*. The main manuscript of the *Liao-chai* was completed in 1679. Thus the creative period of the book lies in the twenty years from about 1660 to 1679. The period itself is an important factor in the creation of the *Liao-chai*. It was a period characterized by a tense political atmosphere within the Chinese empire, before the Manchu's high-handed policy changed to one of appeasement of defiant scholars, as expressed by the special *Po-hsüeh hung-tz'u* examination in 1679.¹⁶ The newly established regime still faced various resistance forces and rebellions. Under the circumstances, being much more sensitive to and conscious of its alien rule, the court launched a literary inquisition and persecution of scholars, as in the cases of Chuang T'ing-lung and Chuang T'ing-yüeh in 1661-1663, Chin Sheng-t'an in 1661, Shen T'ien-fu and Lü Chung and Hsia Lin-ch'i in 1667, and the like; as a result, hundreds of scholars were killed.¹⁷ This "reign of terror" over-

15 P'u Sung-ling, *P'u Sung-ling chi* (Shanghai, 1962), Vol. 2, "P'u Liu-ch'üan hsien-sheng nien-p'u" (pp.1745-1801), p.1752.

16 A comprehensive examination of the 1679 *Po-hsüeh hung-tz'u* was given in 1937 in an article, "Chi-wei tz'u-k'o lu wai-lu," by the late Meng Sen; the article is reprinted in the *Ming-Ch'ing shih lun-chu chi-k'an* (Reprint, Taipei, 1961), pp.494-518, esp. pp.517-518. Also see Hellmut Wilhelm, "The Po-hsüeh Hung-ju Examination of 1679," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, LXXI (1951) (pp.60-66), p.62; and Teng Ssu-yü, *Chung-kuo k'ao-shih chih-tu shih* (Reprint, Taipei, 1967), pp.262-263. A brief discussion of the significance of this examination is found in Meng Sen, *Ch'ing-tai shih* (Taipei, 1960), pp.141-142. For a most informative treatment, see Li T'iao-yüan (1734-1805), *Tan-mo lu* (1795), *chüan* 4, in *Ts'ung-shu chi-ch'eng*, Vol. 3997.

17 Hsiao I-shan, *Ch'ing-tai t'ung-shih* (Taipei, 1963), Vol. I, pp.917-918; L. Carrington Goodrich, *The Literary Inquisition of Ch'ien-lung* (Reprint, New York, 1966), pp.75-76; Ch'en Teng-yüan, *Chin Sheng-t'an*

shadowed the academic world for a long, long time. Under such circumstances, it was natural for men of letters to retreat to a world of fantasy to express their realistic feelings through an imaginative world of ghosts and fairies.

Although we are not writing a literary history and do not propose to give an intrinsic treatment in an artistic sense, we should point out that the literary style of the short stories of the *Liao-chai* follows a combination of the styles of *chih-kuai* stories of the Six Dynasties and *ch'uan-ch'i* tales of the T'ang period. Only in the *Liao-chai* did the artistic and thematic achievements reach their maturity, compared with similar attempts of earlier periods – such as the Ming dynasty Ch'ü Yu's (1341-1427) *Chien-teng hsin-hua* (New Anecdotes under the Lamplight), which influenced the writing of the *Liao-chai*.¹⁸ It also should be noted here that the romantic spirit of P'u Sung-ling, as well as those of his contemporary dramatists, Hung Sheng and K'ung Shang-jen, whose works we will discuss later in this book, are influenced by the romantic movement of the late Ming, called the movement of "ardent Zen" (*K'uang-Ch'an yun-tung*).¹⁹ The impact of this movement upon the popular literature as a whole is seen in two characteristics, individualism and sentimentalism. Although the individualism as represented by Li Chih (1527-1602) provoked general reaction among scholars who were strongly opposed to the threat of moral and social anarchy in Li Chih's thought,²⁰ in the world of letters its romantic spirit satisfied the individual writer's yearning for freedom in pursuing a happier life. The sentimentalism, with its emphasis on love as the most essential element in life, is represented by the dramatist T'ang Hsien-tsu (1550-1617) under whose influence the style of Ming drama passed on to Hung Sheng and K'ung Shang-jen in the Ch'ing period.²¹

The outlook of the *Liao-chai* is, as Lu Hsün once pointed out, a collection of strange stories. The strange stories at the end of the Ming dynasty are usually so brief and absurd that they seem incredible. But the stories of the *Liao-chai* contain such detailed descriptions and normal incidents that even flower-spirits and fox-fairies appear humane and approachable. Yet, just as we forget that they are not human beings, the author introduces some peculiar happening to remind us that they are supernatural after all.²²

chuan (1935; reprinted in Hong Kong, 1963), pp.63-77; Chi Liu-ch'i, *Chin-t'an yü-an* in Shen Yun-lung (ed.), *Ming-Ch'ing shih-liao hui-pien*, Vol. 16 (Taipei, 1967), pp.1223-1234; Anonymous, *Hsin-ch'ou chi-wen* in Shen Yun-lung (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp.1235-1267; Anonymous, *K'u-miao chi-lieh* in *T'ung-shih* (1912; Reprint, Taipei, 1968), *ts'e* 11, pp.1-12; Anonymous, *Yen-t'ang chien-wen tsa-chi* in *T'ung-shih*, *ts'e* 10 (pp.1-42), pp.35a-36b; Wu Ch'eng-ch'iao, *Ch'ing-tai li-chih ts'ung-t'an* (1936) in Shen Yun-lung (ed.), *Chin-tai Chung-kuo shih-liao ts'ung-k'an* (Taipei, 1966), Vol. 12, pp.52-58; Meng Sen, *Hsin-shih ts'ung-k'an* (Reprint, Taipei, 1969), pp.321-334, 468, 480; Kuei Ching-hsien, *Ch'ing-tai wen-yen chi-lieh* (Taipei: Chin-tai Chung-kuo shih-liao ts'ung-k'an ed.), pp.4-16; P'eng Kuo-tung, *Ch'ing-shih wen-yen chih* (Taipei, 1969) pp.1-16; Chou Yen-nien, *Chuang-shih shih an k'ao* (Reprint, n.p., n.d.), pp.1-80; *Ta-Ch'ing li-ch'ao shih-lu* (Reprint, Taipei, 1964), Vol. 7, p.313.

18 Tsuneishi Shigeru, "Introduction" in *Ryūsai shii* (Tokyo, 1970), Vol. I, pp.539-540; Fujita Yūken, "Introduction" in *Ryūsai shii* (Tokyo, 1958), p.452; Maeno Nasaki, "Ryūsai shii no gengo," *Chūgoku no hachidai shōsetsu* (Tokyo, 1965), pp.461-463; Makada Makoto, "Ryūsai shii no bungaku," *Chūgoku no hachidai shōsetsu* (Tokyo, 1965), pp.450-451; Lu Hsün, *Chung-kuo hsiao-shuo shih lüeh* (Reprint, Hong Kong, 1965), p.166; Meng Yao, *Chung-kuo hsiao-shuo shih* (4 vols., Taipei, 1969), Vol. 2, pp.220-221 and Vol. 4, pp.468-475; Ch'ü Yu, *Chien-teng hsin-hua*, ed. by Chou I (Shanghai: Ku-tien wen-hsüeh ch'u-pan she, 1957).

19 Chi Wen-fu, *Wan-Ming ssu-hsiang shih lun* (Chungking, 1944), pp.33-47.

20 For a recent discussion of Li Chih's thought, see William Theodore de Bary, "Individualism and Humanitarianism," *Self and Society in Ming Thought* (New York, 1970), pp.188-225.

21 Cheng Chen-to, *Ch'a-t'u pen Chung-kuo wen-hsüeh shih* (Reprint, 4 vols., Hong Kong: Ku-wen shu-chü, n.d.), Vol. 4, p.996.

22 Lu Hsün, *Chung-kuo hsiao-shuo shih lüeh* (Reprint, Hong Kong, 1965), p.167.

Among the 431 short stories in the *Liao-chai*, the largest portion consists of love stories. If we try to group the rest of the collection according to their themes, they can be divided into three major categories: stories that exposed the corruptions of the bureaucracy; stories intended chiefly as a satire upon the civil service examination system and upon the scholarship of the age as a whole; and stories that reflected the anti-Manchu feelings of the Chinese people. Of course, some of the stories are for other purposes or merely for amusement, such as some ghost stories that emphasize only the thrill of horror. Since it is not our intention to give an intrinsic treatment of the writing in an artistic sense, we shall examine in this study the stories according to four major themes that represent the author's thought.

The love stories in the *Liao-chai* are very colorful; they reveal a world of fantasies in which love becomes the symbol of passion and outruns time and space. Some of the love stories deal with the mortals – men and women; others deal with men and ghosts, men and goddesses, men and fox-fairies, or men and the spirits of insects, birds, flowers, and trees. The reason for the existence of this fantastic world is obvious. The author realized that in the real life of the traditional society true love between men and women was so rare and so hard to find that he had to create another world to satisfy his yearning for happiness. However, these stories all have a realistic setting. The author never forgot the reality; he depicted human society through all these incredible romances.

As pointed out before, under the influence of the romantic movement of the late Ming, the author created his heroes and heroines as rebels, somewhat defiant of convention and alienated from their society. They represented the author's protest against the social ethics of his day. One of P'u's characteristic protests is his new concept of femininity. Protesting against the prevailing idea of "A woman without talent is a woman of virtue," the author embodies his heroines with wisdom, courage, talent and wits that sometimes surpassed her counterpart – man. In the story of "Yen Shih" (The Daughter of the Yen Family), the young woman whose husband was frustrated by constant failures in the civil examinations disguised herself as a man and took the civil examination. She succeeded in all examinations and finally won the highest degree, *chin-shih*.²³ There are many talented girls in the world of the *Liao-chai*: the expert surgeon Miss Chiao-no in the story of "Chiao-no,"²⁴ the learned sisters in the story of "Hsien-jen tao" (The Island of Fairies);²⁵ the maiden poet Hsiang-yü in the story of "Hsiang-yü" (The Flower Maiden Hsiang-yü);²⁶ the expert lady fencer in the story of "Hsia-nü" (The Lady Knight-errant),²⁷ to name only a few.

Another aspect of these love stories is the author's emphasis on fidelity. P'u saw nothing wrong with the system of concubinage. As a matter of fact, in some stories he praised the wives who tolerated their husbands' concubines, although he strongly expressed his longing for perfect love. There are many love stories in which the heroes are faithful to their beloved: the honest and devoted scholar, Feng, in the story of "Hsin Shih-ssu niang" (Hsin Shih-ssu niang, the Fox-lady),²⁸ the foolish lover, Sun Tzu-ch'u, in the story of "Ah-pao" (Miss Ah-pao),²⁹ the faithful scholar,

23 P'u Sung-ling, *Liao-chai chih-i* (Shanghai, 1962), *chüan* 6, pp.766-769: "Yen-shih".

24 *Ibid.*, *Chüan* 1, pp.57-65: "Chiao-no"; also Giles' translation, pp.20-28.

25 P'u Sung-ling, *Liao-chai chih-i* (Shanghai, 1962), *chüan* 7, pp.946-955: "Hsien-jen tao".

26 *Ibid.*, *chüan* 11, pp.1548-1555: "Hsiang-yü"; Rose Quong (trans.), *Chinese Ghost and Love Stories: A Selection from the Liao-chai Stories by P'u Sung-ling* (New York, 1946), pp.47-59.

27 P'u Sung-ling, *Liao-chai chih-i* (Shanghai, 1962), *chüan* 2, pp.210-216: "Hsia-nü".

28 *Ibid.*, *chüan* 4, pp.535-547: "Hsin Shih-ssu niang".

29 *Ibid.*, *chüan* 2, pp.233-239: "Ah-Pao"; also Quong's translation, pp.17-26.

Huang, in the story of "Hsiang-yü";³⁰ the bookworm, Lang Yü-chu, in the story of "Shu-ch'ih" (The Bookworm);³¹ the brilliant and affectionate young scholar, Wang Tzu-fu, in the story of "Ying-ning" (Ying-ning, the Laughing Girl);³² and many others.

On the other hand, the heroines in these love stories show not only deep devotion but also courage and endurance. The story of "Ya-t'ou" (Ya-t'ou, the Faithful Girl)³³ is a good example. In the story, a young girl Ya-t'ou falls in love with a poor scholar, Wang Wen, at first sight. But Ya-t'ou's mother is a greedy woman who wants Ya-t'ou to become a prostitute to make money. The two young lovers elope to another town and make an honest living by opening up a small shop, but the mother later finds out where Ya-t'ou lives and forces her home. To separate the two young lovers, the mother moves the family north and demands that Ya-t'ou make new boy friends. Ya-t'ou refuses, and is beaten almost to death. She is asked again and again, and she refuses repeatedly; each time she refuses, she suffers a more severe punishment. But nothing can change her deep devotion for Wang Wen. Finally, her mother gives up and locks her in a hide-out. Only after eighteen years of separation do the two lovers finally have a happy reunion.

Another typical love story is "Hsiang-yü."³⁴ In this story, the heroine is a beautiful maiden transformed from the spirit of a flower, a white peony, that grows in the courtyard of a temple. Her lover, the scholar Huang, happens to live in a nearby cottage. They meet and fall in love. One day the white peony is picked by a traveller who passes by the temple, and as a result, the flower maiden Hsiang-yü also dies. Huang mourns over her death so sincerely that he at last moves the Flower Goddess, who then allows the spirit of the white peony to revive. It takes Huang one year to water and take good care of the peony plant before its spirit finally is embodied again as Hsiang-yü.

The theme of this story is very simple; yet the author recounts it in such an exuberant, concise, and classic style that it delights its readers as a true story. Moreover, it also carries a message to the readers: If one concentrates one's emotion, one can reach the spiritual essence of things; the spirit of flowers can thus be related to the soul of man.

In the story of "Ah-pao," the hero is Ah-pao's foolish lover, Sun.³⁵ Sun is so crazy about Ah-pao that he cuts off one of his fingers when he is told that she wants him to do so. A man of extremely simple nature, Sun always readily believes in people and does what he is told to. After he has done a number of crazy things, he finally wins the girl's heart. The author is so sympathetic with this simple but honest man that at the end of the story he makes the following comment:

Only those who are crazy have both the will and the perseverance that are necessary to succeed in life. Whoever is crazy about writing may become a successful writer; whoever is crazy about art may become a successful artist. Only the unsuccessful are not crazy at all!³⁶

This belief in "craziness" actually represents the force behind the author's drive towards imaginary writing. It exists not only in love stories but also in almost any form of extremity in

30 See above, note no.26.

31 P'u Sung-ling, *Liao-chai chih-i* (Shanghai, 1962), *chüan* 11, pp.1453-1457: "Shu-ch'ih"; English translation is from Quong's, pp.59-67.

32 P'u Sung-ling, *Liao-chai chih-i* (Shanghai, 1962), *chüan* 2, pp.147-159: "Ying-ning"; also "Tales from Liao-chai," translated by Yang Hsien-yi and Gladys Yang in *Chinese Literature*, No. 10, 1962, pp.69-78: "Ying-ning"; also Quong's translation, pp.113-130.

33 P'u Sung-ling, *Liao-chai chih-i* (Shanghai, 1962), *chüan* 5, pp.600-606: "Ya-t'ou".

34 See above, note 26.

35 See above, note 29.

36 Rose Quong, *op. cit.*, p.26.

the world of *Liao-chai*. For example, in the story of the crazy bookworm, "Shu-ch'ih,"³⁷ the poor scholar loves his books to the point of being crazy about them, and then becomes crazy to the point of being bewitched by them. Nevertheless, the author's sympathy with this crazy bookworm is obvious; he arranges a happy development for him by having a beauty from a book conduct an incredible romance with him. Another example of this lies in the story of the stone-lover of "Shih Ch'ing-hsü" (A Stone from Heaven).³⁸ The story is about a man who is so crazy about a piece of strange stone that he chooses to die for it rather than part with it. The strange stone returns its master's affection by crushing itself into a hundred pieces rather than allowing itself to be taken away from its master. Here again, the message is identical to the one in the story of the Flower Maiden.

Not only flowers and stones have "love and affection." Animals, such as birds, also have it. In the story of "Ko-i" (The Strange Dove),³⁹ the man who is fond of doves one day receives a pair of unusually beautiful white doves from the fairy of the doves. After two years, this pair of white doves gives birth to six doves. One day a high-ranking official visits this man and admires his doves. To please this high-ranking official, the man gives him two white doves as a precious present. But the official, who has no fondness for doves, turns them over to the cook and then eats them. As a punishment for this man's betrayal of their trust, the rest of the white doves leave him and fly away. The message is that love should be perfect; anything less than perfect love is unacceptable. The doves stayed with the man only because the man loved them; once they found that the man treated them as less than a devoted friend, they left him forever.

This same principle of perfectionism also appears in many other love stories in which the heroines often leave their lovers once they realized their love is gone. There is a remarkable contrast here between the real and the ideal. In reality, the women in the traditional society were pitiable. Submitted to the ideology of male supremacy, they were weak and incapable of taking care of themselves, both mentally and physically. On the other hand, the women, who were living in a large, compound family, tended to be tricky, jealous, quarrelsome; they fought with each other to win the favor of their men. In the idealistic world the heroines were strong and talented; they were simple, charming, passionate, and courageous; they dared to defy their parents and their society with the great courage to face their fate. In the story of "Ying-ning,"⁴⁰ the sunny character of the irresistible Ying-ning is unforgettable. She is pure and innocent, witty and full of life, and her lovely face that beams with laughter all the time makes people forget about all their worries. In a word, Ying-ning represents everything opposite to the traditional image of a girl.

One may say that in the world of *Liao-chai*, most of the heroines were girls transformed from goddesses, fox-fairies, and ghosts, and thus it was much easier for them to be brave and independent. But is it not exactly because the author was dissatisfied with the real human situation that he himself escaped to the loving world of fantasy?

The second category of stories includes those that expose the corruption and injustice of

37 See above, note 31.

38 P'u Sung-ling, *Liao-chai chih-i* (Shanghai, 1962), *chüan* 11, pp.1575-1579: "Shih Ch'ing-hsü"; for an English version of the story, see "A Stone from Heaven" in Quong's translation, pp.219-225.

39 P'u Sung-ling, *Liao-chai chih-i* (Shanghai, 1962), *chüan* 6, pp.839-843: "Ko-i"; for an English version, see "Tales from Liao-chai," translated by Yang Hsien-yi and Gladys Yang, in *Chinese Literature*, No. 10, 1962, pp.85-88: "A Strange Tale of Pigeons."

40 See above, note 32.

the bureaucracy. The most explicit example is the story of "Meng-lang" (A Dream of Wolves).⁴¹ The story is about an old man who has a bad dream about his older son, a magistrate of a distant district. In his dream, the old father visits his son's *yamen* and finds that it is thronged within and without by wolves, some sitting and some lying, while a great heap of white bones is piled in the courtyard. Then the old man sees his son changed into a tiger hounded by two warriors in gilded mail. Awake and worried, the old man sends his second son to visit his older brother. The younger brother goes to see the magistrate brother and stays with him for a few days; but all he sees in the magistrate's *yamen* is the corruptive runners and the bribe-givers who stream in from morning till night. The younger brother begs the magistrate with tears to mend his way, but is only scoffed at by the latter, who says, "What do you know of official life? Promotion depends upon a man's superiors and not upon the people. If your superiors approve of you, you are a good official; but if you love the people, how can you please those above you?" Unable to persuade the magistrate, the younger brother returns to tell his father about all that has occurred. Soon, news comes that the magistrate has been promoted to a post in the Ministry of Officials. Before long, it is reported that the older brother, the former magistrate, has been killed by robbers on his way to his new post. It is reported that before his head was cut off, the former magistrate begged the robbers for his life but the robbers said: "We are here to avenge the wrongs of the people of the whole district, not just to take your money."

The theme of this story is very clear, as the author commented on it at the end of the story. Many officials in this world are tigers, and their subordinates wolves. Even if an official is not a tiger, his subordinates may be wolves; and some officials are worse than tigers.

If the story of "A Dream of Wolves" symbolizes hatred for corrupt officials, the same theme that officials only try to please their superiors and never care about the people is fully elaborated in a remarkable short satire "Ts'u-chih" (The Cricket).⁴² In this story the crickets become a favorite pet in the palace, for the royal family likes to watch them fighting with each other. To please the royalty, all officials in the empire send their running-dogs to the countryside to look for strong crickets that can fight bravely. Thus the tribute of crickets becomes a ladder to success in the officialdom. In the story, Ch'en Ming's rise from obscurity shows how a cricket can affect a man's destiny. As a poor and unsuccessful scholar, before he finds the right cricket, he is scolded, beaten and extorted by local petty officials. But after he finds the right cricket, fortune smiles on him and everything comes his way. The right cricket makes him a rich and powerful official. Here P'u Sung-ling clearly says that in the eyes of officials, the lives of people are worth less than the life of a cricket.

In the story of "Han Fang," the author satirizes officials who use every pretext to rob the people, just as he narrates how ghosts extort money from the people while on their way to hell. In the story, Han Fang's parents are very sick; as a poor farmer, Han can do nothing but go to a nearby temple to pray for them. Heaven hears his prayer and sends a local deity to help him. The local deity tells Han Fang that the Jade Emperor in Heaven has summoned all evil ghosts to report themselves to Hell; while on their way, some of the evil ghosts cannot help extorting money from the people they meet. Han's parents are among those extorted by these evil ghosts. The only way

41 P'u Sung-ling, *Liao-chai chih-i* (Shanghai, 1962), *chüan* 8, pp.1053-1056; also "A Dream of Wolves," *Chinese Literature*, No. 1, 1956, pp.133-136. An interesting contrast to this story is "I-yüan-kuan." P'u Sung-ling uses different approaches in the two stories, but he conveys the same message in them: Corruption and injustice have become the established practice of the bureaucracy. See *Liao-chai chih-i p'ing-chu*, comments by Tan Ming-lun, annotations by Lü Chan-en (Taipei, 1962 ed.), *chüan* 16, pp.34ab.

42 P'u Sung-ling, *Liao-chai chih-i* (Shanghai, 1962), *chüan* 4, pp.484-490: "Ts'u-chih."

to cure this is to put a yellow paper on the bed and say aloud: "I will report you to the Jade Emperor if you do not stop bothering us." So Han Fang does as he is told, and his parents are immediately cured. At the end of the story, we read the following comment by the author:⁴³

In either the thirty-third or thirty-fourth year of K'ang-hsi, as I recall it, the authorities decreed a new grain tax, which they called the "Voluntary Contribution". The different prefectures and counties also levied additional sums for themselves. Moreover, at that time, as a result of flood, the seven counties of North Shantung had a very poor harvest; so it was exceptionally difficult for the peasants to pay up. Mr. T'ang of our district, who happened to visit Li-chin, saw about a dozen arrested men on the road and stopped to ask what their offense was. "The authorities are taking us to town to make us pay the 'Voluntary Contribution'," they told him. The peasants did not know what the "Voluntary Contribution" meant, and thought it the name for some new form of labor conscription or extortion! This is laughable, but sad too.

There are many other stories in the *Liao-chai* that expose the corruption and tyranny of the officials. In the story of "Hung-yü,"⁴⁴ a discharged censor, Sung, fancies a poor scholar's wife. First, Sung attempts to buy her from her husband; he is refused. Then he sends several scoundrels to the poor scholar's house. Both the scholar and his father are beaten on the floor while the scoundrel takes away the young wife and leaves the baby crying in bed. Badly wounded, the old man dies. The scholar then appeals to the authorities for justice, but is turned down several times, for although discharged from office, Sung still has powerful influence over the local authorities.

In the story of "Mei-nü" (The Daughter of the Mei Family),⁴⁵ an innocent girl is forced to hang herself because a petty official accepts a small amount of cash and lets the girl's reputation be spoiled by a scoundrel. The story begins one night when the girl's father catches a thief and sends him to the authorities. The thief bribes the jail warden with three hundred coins; the warden releases the thief and announces that the accused merely had an affair with the daughter of the accuser. Thus, for the small amount of three hundred coins the greedy jail warden causes the death of an innocent girl. In those days, a girl's chastity was more important than her life.

Perhaps the most forceful satire of all is the story of "K'ao-pi ssu" (The Bureau of Frauds).⁴⁶ The head of the Bureau of Frauds in the world of the dead is portrayed as a greedy, cruel hypocrite called Hsü-tu Kuei-wang (The Empty-stomach Ghost King) who institutes the most evil practice of requiring all dead degree-holders to cut a piece of their rump as tribute in their first meeting. Only those who can make a costly bribe can be excused from this painful exploitation. P'u Sung-ling then describes the details of the cruel torture of cutting rump and the callous cries of the victims. Thus the world of exploitation by cruel, corrupted superiors of helpless scholars was a world of horror. In the story, a scholar finally appeals to the Hades; the latter, who usually represented the opposite of justice in traditional thinking, actually grants justice to the poor scholars by punishing the head of the Bureau. One may raise the question: Why not appeal to the High God, who was the symbol of justice in traditional times? The answer given by the author was a simple one: "The High God of Heaven was far in the blue sky; where can He be found and told about our injustice? Only the Hades in the world of ghosts is near and can be the possible access to justice."⁴⁷ In a word, evil officials can be checked only by evil means; true justice is beyond reach.

43 The English translation of P'u Sung-ling's comment (at the end of the story "Han Fang") is from Jen Fang-chiu, "P'u Sung-ling and 'Tales of Liao-chai,'" *Chinese Literature*, No. 1, Jan. 1956, p.110; for the story of "Han Fang," see P'u Sung-ling's *Liao-chai chih-i* (Shanghai, 1962), *chüan* 12, pp.1664-1665.

44 P'u Sung-ling, *Liao-chai chih-i* (Shanghai, 1962), *chüan* 2, pp.276-283: "Hung-yü."

45 *Ibid.*, *chüan* 7, pp.907-913: "Mei-nü."

46 *Ibid.*, *chüan* 6, pp.822-825: "K'ao-pi ssu."

47 *Ibid.*, p.824.

Relating to the corruption of the bureaucracy was the whole system of imperial civil service examinations. Many stories in the *Liao-chai* reveal the dark side of this system and form the third category of the *Liao-chai* collection. Being a victim of the system, P'u Sung-ling attacked it most vigorously. But he never questioned the existence of this system. He only exposed and ridiculed its many abuses. There are two central themes in this category of stories: the corrupted and incompetent examiners on the one hand and the ill fate of the mass of *hsiu-ts'ai* (holders of the elementary degree) on the other. We shall choose a few stories to elaborate on these themes.

In the story of "Ssu-wen lang,"⁴⁸ the author made up a story of the Hades to satirize the injustice of the examination system. In the world of ghosts a minor office known as a clerk in charge of writings in the office of God of Literature is temporarily filled by a deaf boy. As a result, the real talent in writings cannot be found. In the mortal world, the examiners were even worse. The author uses a blind monk to exaggerate his criticism: "Although I am blind, I still can use my nose to tell the good writing from the bad one; but those [the examiners] are not only blind but also even lose their smell."⁴⁹

In the story of "Chia Feng-chih,"⁵⁰ Chia is a learned scholar, but he fails the examination every time. He is told that his thought is too profound and his writing too smooth and lucid, and that he has to learn the current stale style in order to pass the examination. But he is too honest a scholar to make himself accept this advice. He fails again and again, until one year he is forced by a spirit to write the examination paper in a stale, ridiculous style. Not only does he make it this time, but he passes the examination with the highest honor. He is so ashamed of what he has written that whenever he thinks of it, his face becomes flushed. Burdened by this sense of shame, he eventually leaves home for the seclusion of the mountains.

In the story of "Yü Ch'ü-wo,"⁵¹ the author uses a ghost named Yü Ch'ü-wo to express his criticism of the examination system. The ghost Yü once says to a mortal friend T'ao Sheng-yü: "Those who are successful through all examinations know nothing about historical classics. When they are young, study is only a steppingstone to an official career. Once they pass the examinations and become officials they never study again. After being appointed as officials for more than ten years in taking care of official writing, even the 'men of letters' cannot know anything of real learning at all."⁵² But it is from among these half-educated bureaucrats that examiners are chosen; how could they be expected to advance the talent?

While many stories in the *Liao-chai* ridicule the examiners of the examination system, even more describe the general disposition of the poor scholars as a whole. In this regard, the author obviously had mixed feelings: On the one hand, he praised the honest, self-respected and learned scholars who held on to their beliefs, such as Chia Feng-chih in the story of "Chia Feng-chih"; Wang P'ing-tzu in the story of "Ssu-wen lang"; and T'ao Sheng-yü in the story of "Yü Ch'ü-wo." On the other hand, the author satirized the vanity, money-loving, and self-importance of scholars who were products of the examination system. For example, in the stories of "I-shui hsiu-ts'ai" (A Scholar from I-shui) and "Yü-ch'ien" (The Money-rain),⁵³ the scholars' love for money is sharply deplored. In the story of "Hsien-jen Tao,"⁵⁴ the ignorant but self-esteeming, egoistic

48 *Ibid.*, *chüan* 8, pp.1098-1106: "Ssu-wen lang."

49 *Ibid.*, p.1104.

50 *Ibid.*, *chüan* 10, pp.1359-1366: "Chia Feng-chih."

51 *Ibid.*, *chüan* 9, pp.1166-1173: "Yü Ch'ü-wo."

52 *Ibid.*, p.1167.

53 *Ibid.*, *chüan* 4, pp.505-506: "Yü-ch'ien."

54 *Ibid.*, *chüan* 7, pp.946-955: "Hsien-jen tao."

scholar becomes the laughingstock among the fairies. In the story of "Chia-p'ing kung-tzu" (A Young Gentleman from Chia-p'ing),⁵⁵ the young gentleman is described as handsome and good mannered in his physical appearance, but inside he is empty and ignorant. In the story of "Hsü Huang-liang" (A Continuation of the Huang-liang Story),⁵⁶ the scholar's hunt for fame and wealth is satirized most forcefully. The story describes a scholar, Tseng, who has just passed the examination for the highest degree, *chin-shih*. He is overjoyed at this great success and takes a trip to the suburb with friends. Someone happens to suggest that there is a fortune-teller in a nearby temple. So the group goes to see the fortune-teller. The fortune-teller observes Tseng's joy and wants to please him. He therefore announces that Tseng is going to be a prime minister for twenty years. Overwhelmed by this prediction, Tseng later has a fantastic dream. The whole story is mainly a description of this dream. In the dream, Tseng becomes the prime minister and has all power and wealth at his disposal. First, he grants favors to a friend who once helped him with money; then he revenges an acquaintance who was not nice to him. From then on P'u Sung-ling describes how Tseng abuses his power to the extreme of killing innocents, robbing other people of their properties, taking in young and beautiful girls by force, and so forth. In a word, he uses Tseng's dream to expose the darkness and corruption in the inner soul of a scholar. He reminds the readers of the basic question: What was the examination system for? Is it only for the purpose of seeking power and wealth? If it is so, then the end is very clear: The end of the corruption of power is total self-destruction.

Besides analyzing the scholar's inner soul, P'u Sung-ling also wrote about the state of mind of scholars from their entering the examination hall until leaving; from their handing in their papers until preparing to sit again. In the story of "Wang Tzu-an" (A Scholar named Wang Tzu-an),⁵⁷ P'u gives us a vivid picture of the psychology of scholars in the process of examination. In the story, due to tension, exhaustion, humiliation, and anxiety the *hsiu-ts'ai* candidate Wang Tzu-an falls, after the examination, into a delirium in which he sees himself a successful *chin-shih* (the highest) degree holder and a *han-lin* scholar. Although he eventually woke up to the suffering world, he thinks he has been tricked by the spirit of fox. But such a traumatic ordeal is quite understandable to P'u Sung-ling, a long-time victim of the examination system. Commenting on the story, P'u asserts the insanity of the examination process and describes it and a candidate's state of mind as affected by it in terms of seven analogies. At the time of entering the examination enclosure, the candidate is like a beggar; he is like a felon when his name is called and checked by an examiner; he feels like a bee at the end of autumn when he is in his examination cell, and like a moulting bird leaving its cage when he comes out of the examination enclosure; he is like a chained monkey when he is restlessly waiting for the result of the examination; he feels just like a poisoned fly — drops dead — when he is informed of his failure at the examination; and finally he comes to be like a pigeon whose eggs have been broken and which can only rebuild its nest

55 *Ibid.*, *chüan* 11, pp.1588-1591: "Chia-p'ing kung-tzu."

56 *Ibid.*, *chüan* 4, pp.518-527: "Hsü Huang-liang."

57 *Ibid.*, *chüan* 9, 1238-1240: "Wang Tzu-an." It is interesting to note that Wang Tzu-an's delirium readily finds an echo in the nineteenth-century rebel leader Hung Hsiu-ch'üan (1814-1864), who, after failing four times in the *hsiu-ts'ai* examinations at Canton, fell into a delirium in which he finally found liberation from the cruel experiences of the examinations by claiming himself the son of (the Christian) God and making total denunciation of the evils of Confucius, the man whose attributed works were the subject matters of the examinations in traditional China. It is clear that the traumatic, pathetic experiences of Wang Tzu-an under P'u Sung-ling's pen is a common, real ordeal for all candidates of the imperial examinations. For a psychological analysis of Hung Hsiu-ch'üan's case, see P. M. Yap, "The Mental Illness of Hung Hsiu-ch'üan, Leader of the Taiping Rebellion," *Far Eastern Quarterly*, Vol. 13, No.3 (May 1954), pp.287-304.

anew, after a period of anguish, dispiritedness, and complete hostility towards the examination. P'u's pathetic picture of the scholars' humiliation and degradation is the sharpest and most penetrating criticism of the evils of the examination system and of its effects on the character and personality of the candidate-scholars who were elites and leaders of traditional Chinese society.

The last category of stories in the *Liao-chai* are those that reflect the racial hatred of the Chinese people for their Manchu rulers. Here we should first point out that P'u Sung-ling was not a Ming loyalist of the caliber of the great thinkers of his time, like Ku Yen-wu (1613-1682) and Huang Tsung-hsi (1610-1695). He was not even close to it. In his collection of works, we find many distasteful pretended memorials⁵⁸ that a Ming loyalist would never write. Nevertheless, as a writer he shared the general anti-Manchus emotion of his day. The fact that a considerable number of the stories in the *Liao-chai* were adopted by P'u from the folktales makes him more or less a spokesman of his day.⁵⁹ It is naturally for this reason that the anti-Manchu emotions exist in the *Liao-chai*.⁶⁰ Thus one may reasonably assume that P'u Sung-ling's anti-Manchu feeling is more a reflection of the flavor of his age than a deliberate, sophisticated, well-engineered effort.

Generally speaking, these anti-Manchu feelings are expressed by P'u in a subtle and indirect style. For example, in the famous story of "Lo-ch'a hai-shih" (The Rākṣasas and the Sea Market),⁶¹ he imagined an appallingly ugly race and named its country the Rākṣasas – a Buddhist term meaning both *barbarians* and man-devouring demons. The hero of this story is a travelling young Chinese merchant whom all the people of the Rākṣasa view as the most extraordinary-looking

58 P'u Sung-ling, *P'u Sung-ling chi* (Shanghai, 1962), Vol. I, pp.321-406.

59 For the process of composition and the extensive use of the folktales of the *Liao-chai chih-i*, see Tsou T'ao, *San-chieh-lu pi-t'an* (Shanghai: Kuo-ts'ui t'u-shu she, 1913 ed.), *chüan* 6, p.12b; Yü Yüeh, *Ch'un-tsai t'ang sui-pi* (Reprint, Taipei: Wen-hai ch'u-pan she, 1969 ed.), pp.329-330; I Tsung-k'uei, *Hsin shih-shuo* (Reprint, Taipei: Wen-hai ch'u-pan she, 1968 ed.), pp.468-469; Chiang Jui-tsao, *Hsiao-shuo k'ao-cheng, hsü-pien, shih-i* (Shanghai: Ku-tien wen-hsüeh ch'u-pan she, 1957 ed.), pp.170-176, 558-561; Yang Liu, *Liao-chai chih-i yen-chiu* (Nanking, 1958), pp.21-28; Liu Chieh-p'ing, *P'u Liu-hsien chuan* (3 vols., Taipei, 1970), pp.69-71; Wang Wen-shen, "Liao-chai chih-i chi ch'i tso-che P'u Sung-ling," *Ming-Ch'ing hsiao-shuo yen-chiu lun-wen chi hsü-pien* (Hong Kong, 1970), pp.17-22; Fujita Yūken, "Ryūsai shii kenkyū josetsu," *Geibun kenkyū*, No. 3 (1954), pp.49-54; Maeno Naoki, "Ryūsai shii no gengo," *Chūgoku no hachūdai shōsetsu* (Tokyo, 1965), p.461.

60 There was a debate over P'u Sung-ling's *Liao-chai chih-i* in Mainland China in the 1950's. The debate centered over whether the theme of nationalism exists in P'u's *Liao-chai*. Those who held negative opinions are Lan Ling, "Liao-chai chih-i te min-tsu ssu-hsiang tsai na-li?" *Wen-hsüeh i-ch'an*, No. 91 (*Kuang-ming jih-pao*, Feb. 5, 1956); and Wang Wen-shen, "Liao-chai chih-i chi ch'i tso-che P'u Sung-ling," *Wen-hsüeh i-ch'an hsüan-chi, i-chi* (Peking, 1956), pp.292-306. Those who held affirmative opinions are as follows: Chang Pei, "Liao-chai chih-i ko-pieh tso-p'in chung te min-tsu ssu-hsiang," *Wen-hsüeh i-ch'an tseng-k'an, liu-chi* (Peking, 1958), pp.269-280; Ho Man-tzu, *P'u Sung-ling yü Liao-chai chih-i* (Shanghai, 1955), pp.22-25; Hsü Shih-nien, "Shih t'an Liao-chai chih-i te ssu-hsiang," *Chung-kuo ku-tien hsiao-shuo p'ing-lun chi* (Peking, 1957), pp.104-127; Jen Fang-ch'iu, "Liao-chai chih-i te ssu-hsiang ho i-shu," *Chung-kuo ku-tien wen-hsüeh yen-chiu lun-chi* (Wu-han, 1956), pp.46-71; Lin Ning-chün, "Liao-chai chih-i so piao-hsien te min-tsu ssu-hsiang," *Ming Ch'ing hsiao-shuo yen-chiu lun-wen chi* (Peking, 1959), pp.39-70; Yang Jen-k'ai, *Liao-chai chih-i yüan-kao yen-chiu* (Shen-yang, 1958), pp.65-81; and Yang Liu, *Liao-chai chih-i yen-chiu* (Nanking, 1958), pp.61-80. Scholars in Nationalist China generally hold that P'u Sung-ling expressed strong nationalist feelings in his *Liao-chai chih-i*. See Chang Ching-ch'iao, "P'u Sung-ling yü 'Liao-chai chih-i,'" *Ta-lu tsa-chih wen-hsüeh ts'ung-shu: Wen-hsüeh*, ed. by Ta-lu tsa-chih she (Taipei, 1963), p.426; Liu Chieh-p'ing, *P'u Liu-hsien chuan* (3 vols., Taipei, 1970), p.69; and Li Shu-t'ung, "Liao-chai chih-i so-yü te cheng-ch'i," *Chung-hsing p'ing-lun*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (March 1954), pp.24-35.

61 P'u Sung-ling, *Liao-chai chih-i* (Shanghai, 1962), *chüan* 4, pp.454-465: "Lo-ch'a hai-shih"; for English versions, see Hsien-yi and Gladys Yang (trans.), "The Rākṣasas and the Sea Market," *Chinese Literature*, No. 1, 1956, pp.125-133; Rose Quong, "The Land of Locha and the Sea Market," *Chinese Ghost and Love Stories* (New York, 1946), pp.181-197; and Herbert Giles (trans.), *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio* (Reprint, Hong Kong, 1968), pp.265-275 ("The Lo-ch'a Country and the Sea Market").

man they have ever seen. The author implies that the Rākṣasas represent the Manchus, for he describes the dresses of Rākṣasa women in terms of the Manchus style, which was different from that of the Han Chinese. Moreover, in the story the author has the young Chinese put on a false ugly face everytime he goes to the Rākṣasa court, where his disguise wins him tremendous praise. This reflects the fact that the Manchus also wore their hair differently from the Han Chinese, and when they came to China they demanded that all Chinese should braid their hair the way the Manchus did. This was a big, bitter issue of the day and the Chinese, although revolted at seeing men with braided hair and Manchu clothes, were forced to accept this custom after bloody struggles.⁶² So it is also possible that the author expressed his disgusted feeling by describing how ugly those Rākṣasas were without mentioning their hair-style, because that would be too obvious and too dangerous. Besides, at the end of the story, the author comments rather explicitly:

Men must put on false, ugly faces to please their superiors – such is the hypocritical way of the world. The foul and hideous are prized the world over. Something of which you feel a little ashamed may win praise; while something you feel exceedingly ashamed of may win much higher praise. But any man who dares to reveal his true self in public is almost certain to shock the multitude and make them shun him.⁶³

A part of these comments and criticisms is evidently directed to the Ming officials who served the new alien Manchu court by putting on a new mask to spiritually and physically please the new master.

Along the same line of approach, in the story of “Yeh-ch’a kuo” (The Land of Yaksas),⁶⁴ the author seems to use the ugly Yaksas (Man-devouring demons) to express his disgust of the Manchus. For he not only described the female Yaksas dressed in Manchu styles, but also repeatedly mentioned the custom of wearing a bead necklace when the Yaksas greeted their king. This is exactly the custom of the Manchu court: the high-ranking officials (grade 5 and above) in the Manchu court have to wear a bead necklace.

If the above two tales are too subtle to represent the author’s anti-Manchu feelings, other stories are more expressive. Using ghost stories as a form of narration, the author reveals the terror of the Manchu massacres. In the story of “Kung-sun Chiu-niang” (The Lady Ghost Kung-sun Chiu-niang), the author plainly states the fact at the very beginning.

In the case of Yü Ch’i [Revolt, in 1661], most of the people who were involved with this case and got killed were from the two districts of Ch’i-hsia and Lai-yang. There were so many people killed – several hundreds a day – in the field of military training that the field was all soaked up by blood and the white bones of corpses were piled up to the sky.⁶⁵

Again, at the very beginning of another story, “Yeh-kou” (The Wild Dog), the author repeats:

⁶² Hsü Tuan-fu, *Ming-Ch’ing shih-shih sui-pi* (Taipei: Shang-wu yin-shu kuan, 1969), pp.42-62; Inaba Iwakichi, *Shinchō zenchi*, trans. by Tan T’ao (Reprint, Taipei: Chung-hua shu-chū, 1960), Ch. 25, pp.6-10; Hsiao I-shan, *Ch’ing-tai t’ung-shih* (Vol. I, 1963), pp.314-315. For an account of a contemporary Westerner’s observation of the conflict, see F. Alvarez Semedo, *The History of that Great and Renowned Monarchy of China* (London: E. Tyler, 1655), pp.262, 279, 283.

⁶³ P’u Sung-ling, *Liao-chai chih-i* (Shanghai, 1962), *chüan* 4, p.464; the English translation of this quotation is from Gladys and Hsien-yi Yang (see above, note 61), p.133.

⁶⁴ P’u Sung-ling, *Liao-chai chih-i* (Shanghai, 1962), *chüan* 3, pp.348-354: “Yeh-ch’a kuo.”

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, *chüan* 4, pp.477-483: “Kung-sun Chiu-niang,” esp. p.477. For a systematic picture of the Yü Ch’i revolt and the killings administered by the Manchu forces, see Hsieh Kuo-cheng, *Ch’ing-ch’u nung-ming ch’i-i tzu-liao chi-lu* (Shanghai: Hsin-chih-shih ch’u-pan she, 1956), pp.113-116.

"In the case of Yü Ch'i [Revolt], there was a frightful mass slaughter."⁶⁶ In the story of "Kuei-li" (The Ghost Clerks), P'u Sung-ling mentions the massacre of Chi-nan of Shantung in plain language: "Shortly after the northern army (the Manchus) came, there was a massacre in Chi-nan and corpses were counted up to a million."⁶⁷

Another story in the *Liao-chai* directly exposes how the Manchu soldiers debauched women and girls. It is the story of "Chang-shih fu" (The Wife of a Man from the Chang Family) that begins with the following statement:

In the year of *Chia-yin* [1674], the rebellion of the Three Feudatories took place. The southern expeditionary armies reached Yen-Chou [in present Shantung province]. The soldiers looted the area and debauched the women folks.⁶⁸

Besides exposing the terror of war and disorder, the author reveals the universal disgusted feeling toward those who ranked high but betrayed their loyalties. Using the notorious Ch'in Kuei (1090-1155) as a symbol (the Southern Sung prime minister who was traditionally regarded as a symbol of a Chinese traitor and who was responsible for executing the national hero Yüeh Fei in 1141), P'u Sung-ling applied the Buddhist theory of karma to the story of "Ch'in Kuei"⁶⁹ to illustrate the punishment of those who betrayed their loyalties. In the story, Ch'in Kuei is reincarnated as a pig and is butchered. But even as a pig, the meat of Ch'in Kuei is so rotten that nobody wants to eat it.

In the story of "San-ch'ao yüan-lao" (The Elder Statesman of Three Reigns),⁷⁰ P'u Sung-ling satirized Hung Ch'eng-ch'ou (1593-1665) who served as an elder statesman in both the Ming and the Ch'ing dynasties. He did not directly blame Hung, who surrendered to the Manchus when defeated, but made up a story based on the ironic event that the last Ming Emperor Ch'ung-chen received a false report of Hung's death in the battle and decreed a temple to be built in Peking in honor of Hung. In the story, a former student goes to see Hung who has just reached Nanking after his victorious southern expedition for the Manchus. The former student tells Hung that he has a paper in hand and wishes Hung to see it. Hung refuses, with the excuse that he cannot see well. Then the student insists on reading it aloud, and does.

The paper is the eulogy that Emperor Ch'ung-chen of the Ming wrote in honor of Hung upon hearing the false report of Hung's death.

In another story, "She Chiang-chün" (General She),⁷¹ the same theme of loyalty is repeated. General She is a military officer under the command of Tsu Shu-shun, who is very kind to She and promotes him several times until he becomes a Brigade General. Later on, when She feels that Tsu is fighting a losing war, he rebels against Tsu and captures him in order to surrender to the

66 *Ibid.*, *chüan* 1, p.70: "Yeh-kou." See also the story of "Yao-chai" (A Mansion of Spirits) in *Liao-chai chih-i* (Taipei: Shih-chieh shu-chü, 1952), pp.664-665, which tells the revolt of Hsieh Ch'ien in 1646-1647 and the mass slaughter of the Chinese in Tzu-ch'uan by the Manchu soldiers.

67 *Ibid.*, *chüan* 11, p.1558: "Kuei-li."

68 *Ibid.*, *chüan* 11, pp.1527-1528: "Chang-shih fu."

69 *Ibid.*, *chüan* 12, pp.1699-1700: "Ch'in Kuei."

70 *Ibid.*, *chüan* 8, pp.1047-1048. This story is a satire aiming at Hung Ch'eng-ch'ou, who served as an elder statesman in both the Ming and the Ch'ing dynasties; the three reigns refer to the last reign of the Ming and the first two reigns of the Ch'ing. For Hung's biography and the incident on which this story was based, see Arthur W. Hummel, *op. cit.*, pp.358-360, esp. p.359. For a story of similar nature, see "Ta-li Chiang-chün" (A Man of Muscle), which tells the story of General Wu Liu-ch'i (d. 1665), in *Liao-chai chih-i* (Taipei: Shih-chieh shu-chü ed.), pp.269-270.

71 P'u Sung-ling, *Liao-chai chih-i* (Shanghai, 1962), *chüan* 6, p.738: "She Chiang-chün."

new regime. Bothered by his conscience, one night General She dreams that he has gone to Hell. The Hades is so furious over She's treachery that he orders the ghosts to pour boiling oil over She's feet. When General She awakes, he feels a fiery burning pain over his feet. His health grows worse and worse, and he finally dies. In his dying bed, his last words are: "It is indeed very treacherous of me to betray my loyalty!"

In contrast to his deploring disloyalty in these stories, P'u has high praise for the loyal hero General Huang Te-kung, of the Hung-kuang reign of the Southern Ming, in the story "Huang Chiang-chün." Huang is painted as a brave man to fight the robbers with his bare hands and win, while his traveling companions – two *chü-jen* degree holders – kneel down in front of the robbers and present their money to them.⁷²

When one considers all of these stories – fables, tales depicting the terror of massacres, stories satirizing the disloyal high-ranking official or praising loyalty – it is clear that anti-Manchu feelings do exist in the *Liao-chai*. The fact that some stories are very subtle and some are very expressive reflects their different time background, for P'u Sung-ling wrote these short stories over a span of more than twenty years. During this long period, the new regime's policy alternated between high pressure and appeasement. It is understandable that P'u Sung-ling was sometimes especially cautious and at other times more relaxed. Moreover, this collection was circulated in manuscript form for many decades. The first printed edition, which also was the most current edition until the 1950's, was published in 1766. In this edition, most of the anti-Manchu wordings were modified and some expressive stories were missing.⁷³ These omissions and changes for the sake of political considerations can be shown only by a thorough comparison of the 1766 popular printed edition and the various existing hand-copied manuscripts of the *Liao-chai*, one of which is the recently discovered incomplete original manuscript of P'u Sung-ling.⁷⁴ Our conclusions are based on such research.

To conclude our study of P'u Sung-ling's short stories, it is important to point out what they mean to our study of ideas. As pointed out earlier, in his preface to the collection of *Liao-chai chih-i*, P'u Sung-ling made it very plain that he wrote the book to vent his feelings of distress and frustration. To the modern reader, this statement is nothing new; it merely conforms to the established modern concept that literature describes human experiences. But to a student of Chinese intellectual history, the statement is highly significant. P'u's preface was written in 1679, at a time when literature was still viewed as "vehicle of the *tao*." To announce to the world that his writing is "venting his excited feelings" is rather unusual. It represents not only a deep sense of pessimistic protest, but also a spirit that was searching for a new meaning in life. Only when we keep this basic sentiment in mind can we obtain a better understanding of P'u Sung-ling and his work.

To understand P'u Sung-ling's thought, it is necessary to discern the intellectual influences and ethical values which lie behind his writing. In this regard, we are very fortunate, because in

72 Liu Chieh-p'ing, *P'u Liu-hsien i-chu k'ao-lüeh yü chih-i i-kao* (Taipei, 1950), pp.43-44. The life and historical place of Huang Te-kung will be discussed at length in chapter six of this book. Huang became a legend and a symbol of loyalty after he died for the Hung-kuang court in 1645.

73 For a detailed discussion of the different editions of *Liao-chai chih-i*, see Yeh Yü, "Lüeh-t'an *Liao-chai chih-i* te chi-chung pen-tzu," *Wen-hsüeh i-ch'an hsü-an-chi, san-chi* (Peking, 1960), pp.366-373; Lu Chien, "T'an-t'an *Liao-chai chih-i* te ti-i tz'u k'e-pen," *Ming-Ch'ing hsiao-shuo yen-chiu lun-wen chi* (Peking, 1959), pp.71-82. Also see above, note 2.

74 For a detailed discussion of the methods of synthesizing all existing editions of the *Liao-chai chih-i*, see the editor's postscript in *Liao-chai chih-i* (Shanghai, 1962), Vol. 3, pp.1721-1735.

P'u Sung-ling's own preface to the collection of *Liao-chai chih-i*, he candidly admits the influences on his writing:

"Clad in wisteria, girdled with ivy," thus sang San-lü [Ch'ü Yüan, ca. 343-277 B.C.] in his *On Encountering Sorrow*; of ox-headed devils and serpent Gods, he of the long nails [Li Ho, a T'ang poet, A.D. 791-817, noted for his long nails] never wearied to tell. Each interprets in his own way the music of heaven; and whether it be discord or not, depends upon antecedent causes. As for me, [following Hsi K'ang, A.D. 223-262] I cannot, with my poor autumn fire-fly's light, match myself against the hobgoblins of the age. I am but the dust in the sunbeam, a fit laughing-stock for devils. For my talents are not those of Kan Pao [fl. 323 A.D., author of the famous *Sou-shen chi* (Records of the Supernatural)], elegant explorer of the *Records of the Supernatural*; I am rather animated by the spirit of Huang-chou [Su Tung-p'o, the famous Sung statesman, poet, and essayist, A.D. 1036-1101], who loved to hear men speak of the supernatural. I get people to commit what they tell me to writing, and subsequently I dress it up in the form of a story; thus in the lapse of time my friends from all quarters have supplied me with quantities of material, which, from my habit of collecting, has grown into a vast pile.

Human beings, I would point out, are not beyond the pale of fixed laws, and yet there are more unbelievable phenomena in their midst than in the country of those who crop their hair [southern savages of early ages]; and even before our very own eyes, many tales are to be found therein stranger than that of the nation of Flying Heads [a fabulous race mentioned in Tuan Ch'eng-shih's (d. 863 A.D.) *Yu-yang tsa-tsu* (Yu-yang Miscellany)]. [As the poet Wang Po (648-675) rightly says,] "Irrepressible bursts and refreshing ease," I was indeed but wild! "Forever indulging in far-reaching thought," [as did Li Po (701-762)], I did not try to hide my foolishness. Were men like these to open my book, I should be a laughing-stock to them indeed. However, although the stories heard at the cross road might, like the story about [Confucius burying his mother at] Wu-fu Crossroad [in modern Shantung],⁷⁵ be nonsense, yet they might make sense if one views them through the Buddhist theory of the three states of human existence [– the present, the past, and the future]. Furthermore, [as Confucius once cautions us,] never set aside words because of the man who utters them.

When the bow [a small towel announces the birth of a boy] was hung at my father's door, he dreamed that a sickly-looking [Buddha], Ch'ü-t'an [Gautama], but half-covered by his stole, entered the chamber. On one of his breasts was a piece of plaster like a coin; and my father, waking from sleep, found that I, just born, had a similar black patch on my body. As a child, I was thin and constantly ailing, and unable to hold my own in the battle of life. Our home was chill and desolate as a monastery; and working there for my livelihood with my pen, I was as poor as a priest with his alms-bowl. Often and often I put my hand to my head and exclaimed, "Surely he who sat with his face to the wall [referring to the Buddhist patriarch Bodhidharma who came as a missionary to China in the late fifth century] was myself in a previous incarnation"; and thus I referred to my non-success in this life to the influence of a destiny surviving from the last.

I have been tossed hither and thither in the direction of the ruling wind, like a flower falling in filthy places; but the [Buddhist] six paths of transmigrations [i.e., the paths of heaven, men, demons, hell (tortured sinners), hungry devils, and brute beasts] are inscrutable indeed, and I have no right to complain. As it is, midnight finds me with an expiring lamp, while the wind whistles mournfully without; and over my cheerless table I piece together my tales, vainly hoping to produce a sequel to the *Yu-ming lu* (The Infernal Regions) [written by Liu I-ch'ing (A.D. 403-444)]. With a bumper I stimulate my pen, yet I only succeed thereby in "venting my excited feelings," [as expressed by the philosopher Han Fei (ca. 281-233 B.C.) in his "Ku-fen" (Solitary Indignation)]. If I am obliged to vent my feelings in this way alone, it is sad enough. Alas! I am but the bird that, dreading the winter frost, finds no shelter in the tree; the autumn insect that chirps to the moon, and hugs the door for warmth. For where are they who know me? They are

75 Ch'en Hao (1261-1341), *Li-chi chi-shuo* (Taipei: *Wu-ching tu-pen* ed. 1962; 2 vols.), Vol. 1, p.29. Giles' translation (see note 76 below) of this line is not correct because he fails to identify Wu-fu *ch'ü* as a place name in a story in the *Li-chi*.

[as Tu Fu (A.D. 712-770) once said in a poem to Li Po] "in the basky grove and at the dark frontier pass" – wrapped in an impenetrable gloom!⁷⁶

The melancholy and emotional tone of the preface reveals the inner soul of a lonely man who sees himself as one of the great writers in history who were unsuccessful in life but had achieved immortality after death. Four significant points are worthy of notice.

First, it seems that P'u Sung-ling identified himself as a spiritual brother among the great poets and essayists in Chinese history; Ch'ü Yüan, Wang Po, Li Po, Tu Fu, Li Ho and Su Tung-p'o are the great poets he cherished. It is especially notable that the preface begins with a quotation from the ancient Ch'u poet and statesman Ch'ü Yüan, who drowned himself in the Mi-lo River after having been unjustly dismissed from favor of the Ch'u Court, and ends with comparing the *Liao-chai chih-i* to the chapter "Ku-fen" of the *Han Fei Tzu* by Han Fei who, after rising to distinction, was unjustly thrown into prison in the State of Ch'in, where he was forced to commit suicide in 233 B.C. All of these tell P'u Sung-ling's strong feeling of being deserted and unappreciated and, above all, his sorrows and frustrations.

Second, it is interesting to note that while P'u Sung-ling admits that his tales are "wild" and "foolish," he reminds his reader: "Never set aside words because of the man who utters them" – because no matter how absurd they seem, we might still learn something from them. It is obvious that P'u Sung-ling wants his reader to learn something from his tales.

The third notable aspect of the preface is P'u Sung-ling's sense of predestination. He refers his "non-success" in his life to "the influence of a destiny surviving from the last." It seems that he really believes this when he tells about the possibility of his previous incarnation as a Buddhist monk. P'u Sung-ling's belief in a previous state of existence reveals the tremendous religious – mainly Buddhist and Taoist – influence on his life. This explains the many superstitious fears, customs, and beliefs that fill up the pages of his *Liao-chai chih-i*. P'u Sung-ling was living in a superstitious rural society in seventeenth-century China. No matter that his ideas were in many ways ahead of his time, he was still the child of his age, conditioned by the social, political, and cultural environment of that age. He wrote on a variety of subjects, not because he consciously attempted to serve his people and society, as portrayed by an eminent Western scholar,⁷⁷ but because he felt the urge to express his ideas and feelings in writing. It is especially significant that, as already pointed out, he wrote in classical as well as vernacular languages and also in every style and form: poems, essays, short stories, popular dramas, drum-songs, narrative folksongs, and popular didactic works, and so forth. He wrote in classical language because that was the estab-

76 P'u Sung-ling, "Liao-chai chih-i tzu-hsü," in *P'u Sung-ling chi* (Shanghai, 1962) Vol. 1, p.58. This is a complete and new translation of this extremely difficult piece. For other complete or partial English translations, see Herbert Giles' "Author's Own Record," in *Gems of Chinese Literature* (Reprint, Taipei, 1964), pp.235-237; also Jaroslav Průšek, "Liao-chai chih-i by P'u Sung-ling," in *Studia Serica, Bernhard Karlgren Dedicata, op. cit.*, pp.128-129.

77 In his articles, "P'u Sung-ling and His Work" (*Chinese Histories and Literature*, Prague, 1970, pp.109-138) and "Subjectivism and Individualism in Modern Chinese Literature" (*Archiv Orientální*, Vol. 25, No. 2, 1957, pp.261-286), Professor Jaroslav Průšek lauds P'u Sung-ling's work as opening "a new epoch in Chinese literature." He emphasizes P'u's genuine affection for the common people and portrays him as a progressive thinker who was interested in raising the educational and cultural standards of the masses. On the other hand, he failed to point out P'u Sung-ling's numerous "i-piao", which we have previously mentioned, and P'u's many ideas in the *Liao-chai chih-i* that are quite contradictory to such an interpretation. This attitude and approach of Professor Průšek's gives one the impression that he is probably over-eager to portray P'u Sung-ling as a consciously progressive writer and thinker. For views similar to Průšek's, see Hsü Hsiao-t'ien, *Hsiao-t'ien tu-shu chi* (4 vols., Shanghai: Ch'ün-hsüeh she, 1931), pp.136-141.

lished written language of his day; scholars seeking literary success wrote either classical essays (mostly for imperial examinations) and traditional poems, or devoted themselves to learning the interpretations of the Classics. Yet the fact that he wrote not only classical essays and poems but also classical stories shows that he had already found the orthodox literature — essays and poetry — no longer the only effective, useful vehicle of literary expression for him. Furthermore, he also wrote various pieces in vernacular language because it was the spoken language of the day, and he desired his works to be widely read. That he attempted to use all possible literary media to express himself shows not only his original mind but also the new spirit of his age. The rising demand for popular literature among the people demonstrated its strength in the styles of P'u Sung-ling's writings. Without realizing its true historical significance, P'u wrote popular literature of every sort, according to wherever his fancies led him.

The last but not the least notable impression one gathers from reading P'u Sung-ling's preface to the *Liao-chai chih-i* is its strong personal note of irony and disillusionment. This glum view of life is in sharp contrast to the generally lively and colorful outlook of the world of the *Liao-chai chih-i*. The *Liao-chai* stories, with all their popularity, had been generally viewed by their traditional readers as a form of entertainment and aesthetic enjoyment. The famous early Ch'ing scholar, writer, and critic, Wang Shih-chen (1634-1711) exhibits the contemporaneous and traditional view of the *Liao-chai chih-i*. In a poem commenting on the book, he humorously referred to P'u's stories as "those that are told light-heartedly should be received with the same light spirit."⁷⁸ Responding to this comment, P'u Sung-ling himself even admitted: "When the book *Liao-chai* was completed, people who read it have indeed felt it amusing."⁷⁹ But P'u Sung-ling did not write the book merely for the sake of amusement. In a poem dated 1671, the year he went home from the South, ending his brief connection with the government as a secretary to Sun Hui (1632-1686), the district magistrate of Pao Ying and Kao-yu (in modern Kiangsu), he described his book as his only hope for fame and success in life after all hopes of an official career were gone.⁸⁰

As we pointed out earlier, recent studies have also concluded that the greater part of the *Liao-chai chih-i* took form in the gloomiest period of P'u Sung-ling's life. Thus P'u wrote the stories to vent his excited feelings, and to compensate, by expressing profound ideas through popular literary means, for his sad failure in the examinations and his official career. Both of these motives were clearly revealed in his preface. But, to contemporary and later traditional scholars and readers, both intentions seem to have been lost. We may take the previously-mentioned views of Wang Shih-chen and Chi Yün to illustrate this point. Both scholars were fascinated by the literary power and imagination of P'u Sung-ling's *Liao-chai chih-i* as a piece of amusement, but they did not consider it an expression of deep-grounded ideas and personal feelings. To the general reader, the *Liao-chai chih-i* was only a collection of fantastic, amusing tales, although readers were strongly influenced subconsciously by the ideas behind the stories. P'u Sung-ling's reputation as a truly great writer in Chinese history was, in general, not recognized until modern times — particularly recent decades. It is his ideas and thought, more than anything else, that have won him the respect and sympathy of modern readers.

In short, P'u Sung-ling's ideas and thought, and his means of expressing them as fiction, generally transcended his time and eluded most readers of the traditional period. Electrified by

78 Lu Ta-huang (ed.), "P'u Liu-ch'üan hsien-sheng nien-p'u," in *P'u Sung-ling chi*, Vol. 2, p.1778; both Wang Shih-chen's poem and P'u Sung-ling's reply are recorded under the year 1689 in this *nien-p'u*.

79 *Ibid.*

80 P'u Sung-ling, *P'u Sung-ling shih-chi, chüan 1* in *P'u Sung-ling chi*, Vol. 1, p.483.

his fantastic tales, his readers gradually and subconsciously accepted his vivid and penetrating analysis of the comedies and tragedies of the human condition during a great dynastic transition, his revealing description of the intolerable tensions between the intellectuals and the government and the devastating consequences of these tensions, his views and criticisms of his time and his society, and his ideals of life and government. P'u Sung-ling's traditional readers thus unconsciously appreciated his work without recognizing its true literary merits.

Glossary

Ah-pao	阿寶	Huang Te-kung	黃得功	Shen T'ien-fu	沈天甫
Chang-shih fu	張氏婦	Huang Tsung-hsi	黃宗羲	Shih Ch'ing-hsi	石清虛
Ch'eng Ming	成名	Hung Ch'eng-ch'ou	洪承疇	Shu-ch'ih	書癡
Chi-nan	濟南	Hung-kuang	弘光	Sou-shen chi	搜神記
Chi Yün	紀昀	Hung Sheng	洪昇	Ssu-k'u ch'üan-shu	四庫全書
Ch'i-hsia	棲霞	Hung-yü	紅玉	Ssu-wen lang	司文郎
Chia Feng-chih	賈奉雉	i-piao	擬表	Su Tung-p'o	蘇東坡
Chia-p'ing Kung-tzu	嘉平公子	I-shui hsiu-ts'ai	沂水秀才	Sun Hui	孫蕙
Chia-yin	甲寅	Kan Pao	干寶	Sun Tzu-ch'u	孫子楚
Chiao-no	嬌娜	K'ang-hsi	康熙	Sung	宋
Chien-teng hsin-hua	剪燈新話	K'ao-pi Ssu	考弊司	T'ang	唐
chih-kuai	志怪	Ko-i	鴿異	T'ang Hsien-tsu	湯顯祖
Chin Sheng-t'an	金聖歎	Ku-fen	孤憤	T'ao	陶
chin-shih	進士	ku-tz'u	鼓詞	T'ao Sheng-yü	陶聖俞
Ch'in	秦	Ku Yen-wu	顧炎武	Teng	滕
Ch'in Kuei	秦檜	K'uang-Ch'an yun-tung	狂禪運動	Tseng	曾
Ch'ing	清	Kuei-li	鬼吏	Tsu Shu-shun	祖述舜
Ch'u	楚	Kuei-wang (Prince Kuei)	桂王	Ts'u-chih	促織
Chü-jen	舉人	Kung-sun Chiu-niang	公孫九娘	Tu Fu	杜甫
Ch'ü-t'an	瞿曇	K'ung Shang-jen	孔尚任	Tuan Ch'eng-shih	段成式
Ch'ü Yu	瞿佑	Lai-yang	萊陽	Tzu-ch'uan	淄川
Ch'ü Yüan	屈原	Lang Yü-chu	郎玉柱	Wang P'ing-tzu	王平子
Ch'uan-ch'i	傳奇	Li Chih	李贄	Wang Po	王勃
Chuang T'ing-lung	莊廷龍	Li-chin	利津	Wang Shih-chen	王士禛
Chuang T'ing-yüeh	莊廷鉞	li-ch'ü	俚曲	Wang Tzu-an	王子安
Ch'ung-chen	崇禎	Li Ho	李賀	Wang Tzu-fu	王子服
Feng	馮	Li Po	李白	Wang Wen	王文
Han Fang	韓方	Liao-chai chih-i	聊齋志異	Wu-fu	五父
Han Fei	韓非	Liu I-ch'ing	劉義慶	ya-men (yamen)	衙門
Han Fei Tzu	韓非子	Lo-ch'a (Räksasa)	羅利	Ya-t'ou	鴉頭
han-lin	翰林	Lu Hsün	魯迅	Yeh-ch'a (Yaksa)	
Hsi K'ang	嵇康	Lü Chung	呂中	kuo	夜叉國
Hsia Lin-ch'i	夏麟奇	Mei-nü	梅女	Yeh-kou	野狗
Hsia-nü	俠女	Meng-lang	夢狼	Yen-chou	兗州
Hsiang-yü	香玉	Mi-lo	汨羅	Yen Shih	顏氏
Hsien-jen tao	仙人島	Ming	明	Ying-ning	嬰寧
Hsin Shih-ssu niang	辛十四娘	Po-hsüeh hung-tz'u	博學鴻詞	Yu-ming lu	幽冥錄
hsiu-ts'ai	秀才	P'u Min-wu	蒲敏吾	Yu-yang tsa-tsu	酉陽雜俎
Hsü Huang-liang	續黃梁	P'u Shou-keng	蒲壽庚	Yü Ch'i	于七
Hsü-tu Kuei-wang	虛肚鬼王	P'u Sung-ling	蒲松齡	Yü-ch'ien	雨錢
Huang	黃	San-ch'ao yüan-lao	三朝元老	Yü Ch'ü-wo	于去惡
Huang Chiang-chün	黃將軍	San-lü	三閩	Yüan	元
Huang-chou	黃州	She Chiang-chün	庫將軍		

蒲松齡聊齋志異中的思想境界

對明清朝代轉換中的知識份子與文學表現的一個觀察

(中文摘要)

張春樹 駱雪倫

在中國歷史上朝代的轉換常是中國文化發展的扭轉與關鍵點，因為在這轉變期間新的政治制度與統治階級，新的經濟政策，新的社會方針，新的軍事組織方式，新的思想種子，與新的道德規範等都逐漸蛻變而出。新舊制度、思想之替換常需很長的時間去調節與適應。在這一段調整時期，最受影響的無過於知識份子，因為他們不但在政治與物質環境方面需要調節適應，在思想方面——尤其是「忠」的歸屬問題——更面臨極為複雜與多變的諸多挑戰；另外，他們還要檢討前朝亡因與本朝興由以盡他們所崇信的歷史責任與指出當朝應走的道途。正因如此，知識份子在這段時期內多透過史學上的、文學上的、一般隨筆性的著作來描述、分析他們所感受和經驗到的問題與抒想的議論；這些著作在一方面是研究中國歷史的最豐富的文獻之一，在另一方面更是研究某一朝代轉換時期內思想發展與一般問題的最有價值的材料。

十七世紀間之明清朝代轉換是上述這類朝代轉換情況的一個最具代表性者之一。它的一般歷史重要性與其關係中國近代一切之發展者已是眾皆熟知，但它在思想上也是關係中國傳統思想方法與範疇的演變的一個扭轉點，而在文獻資料方面又是一個最豐富的時期。基於這諸多原因，我們撰述了一部明清朝代轉換期間（約為一六三〇至一七〇〇）的思想與社會，全書共三冊，其中第一冊分析這一時期中文學作品——特別是通俗文學作品——內所紀錄、表現、和論述的思想上、社會上、政治上、與個人際遇上的各種問題。全冊共六章，另加導論與結語，本文便是本冊中的第四章。

本文之研論中心為清初文學家蒲松齡（山東淄川人）與其最負盛名的短篇小說集聊齋志異（主要部分寫於一六六〇至一六七九年間）。首先簡論蒲氏之家庭背景、思想與

文體淵源及一生經歷和著作，其次詳論聊齋志異之寫作動機、故事類型、與其在思想上、社會史上之特殊意義。就最後兩項來說，我們將聊齋故事分為五大類，分別詳論其所具意義。這五類為：（一）男女關係與愛情故事類；（二）描述批評官場黑暗作受害者類；（三）評擊諷刺科舉制度之膚淺與為害士人類；（四）表現民族思想與反滿清情懷類；（五）雜記類。以前四類材料為主，我們不但分析作為一個明清朝代轉換中長成的知識份子的蒲松齡個人的人生經驗、思想視野、與對一般當時政治、社會、人生觀諸問題的看法，並且也探索他的故事中所描述的這個時代中一般士人的際遇、思想和對人生及一般現實問題的看法。我們之所以用這樣的分析方法與研究角度是有其特別理由的。

蒲松齡生於明末崇禎十三年（一六四〇），卒於清康熙五十四年（一七一五）。雖然他不能算是明遺民，但因他長成於明清轉換時期，聊齋志異又是寫於順治十七年（一六六〇）至康熙十八年（一六七九）間，他取用的材料又為親經、親見、親聞之事與民間流傳之明清間故事，所以明清之際的各種問題與時代特徵便在蒲氏文筆下全都表現出來。同時，蒲松齡又相信命運，認為他自己一生不得意於科場仕途皆為命定；因此也相信命定他要把一生才華集中於文學著作以傳之千古，以彌補他在功名方面之厄運；他自認其不幸之命運正同於歷史上之其他偉大文學家——屈原、王勃、李白、杜甫、李賀、蘇東坡、……；他自比其寫聊齋志異正如韓非之著述之心情與立意。所以，由於蒲松齡自己認為他的聊齋志異是一生嘔心吐血慘淡經營含義至深的傳世之作，我們可以在這部小說中找到他對人生和社會的深刻觀察和敏銳的批評。

另外就文學表現與思想塑造和傳播二者來說，蒲松齡更有獨特的貢獻。在其聊齋志異寫作的過程中，他是把各種民間思想、信仰、傳說等等用無限的智慧編織起來，用淺易生動的古文寫出來，而這些故事中的思想與信仰和看法，又經廣大民衆之閱讀、口傳、和其他傳播媒介而散播於無限的民衆的心腦中，而成爲塑造中國思想模型的最有力因子之一。這便是蒲松齡短篇小說的最大貢獻。

蒲松齡之著作甚爲博雜，他除了以古文寫小說外，還用白話韻文來寫鼓詞和俚曲，又用淺易的古文針對民間需要來寫各種造福鄉民的雜著，如懷刑錄、農桑經、省身語錄、婚嫁全書、藥崇書、小學節要、日用俗字、家政內編、家政外編、……，以期對一般農村居民發生更大效用。本文只是以其精華聊齋志異作分析，至於對其全部著作——其中甚多早已佚失——作綜合研究則有待於其他有志之士。