Chapter Title: Introduction

Introduction

This study addresses the role played by Feng Menglong (1574–1646) in compiling the famous *Sanyan* collections and his important position in the evolution of the Chinese vernacular short story. I will examine Feng's methods of selecting source materials and demonstrate how, as part of his narrative strategy, he creatively manipulated elements of both popular and literati cultures to elevate this then-underrated literary genre.

The term *Sanyan*, literally meaning "three words," refers to three Ming dynasty collections of *huaben* (vernacular short stories), entitled respectively, *Stories Old and New (Gujin xiaoshuo)* or *Illustrious Words to Instruct the World (Yushi mingyan)*,[1] *Comprehensive Words to Warn the World (Jingshi tongyan)* and *Constant Words to Awaken the World (Xingshi hengyan)*.[2] Scholars generally agree that these collections of forty stories each were published in 1620, 1624, and 1627, and were edited by Feng Menglong, a member of the late Ming literati class recognized as the most knowledgeable connoisseur of popular literature of his time.

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[1] It is generally agreed that when *Gujin xiaoshuo* was reprinted in 1626 or 1627 it was retitled *Yushi mingyan*; see Patrick Hanan, *The Chinese Vernacular Story* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), p. 230 n. 4. For the dissenting view that *Gujin xiaoshuo* was originally meant to be the general title for all three collections, see Lu Shulun, *Feng Menglong yanjiu* (Shanghai: Fudan daxue, 1987), pp. 89–94.

[2] The collection to which an individual story belongs will be indicated by *GJ* (for *Gujin xiaoshuo/Yushi mingyan*), *TY* (for *Jingshi tongyan*), or *HY* (for *Xingshi hengyan*), followed by a number indicating the story's ordinal position in the collection. On the first mention of a story I will give a full translation of its title and use a shortened title thereafter.

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Chapter 1 of this study historicizes Feng Menglong's motivations for promoting the vernacular short story while denying his own "authorship" in the *Sanyan* collections; it also explores Feng's handling of vernacular stories in light of the literati tradition of collecting folk songs. Each of the succeeding three chapters addresses one outstanding feature of the *Sanyan* stories. Chapter 2 examines Feng's various strategies for appropriating the storyteller-narrator to his own ends; this appropriation not only aims at convincing the reader of the oral origins of the text, but more importantly, it sets up the rhetorical and ideological manipulation of the narrator's voice and the values it represents. Chapter 3 discusses how Feng arranged his stories in pairs, particularly his self-conscious use of the second story as an implicit comment on the first. Chapter 4 is primarily concerned with the way women are represented in the *Sanyan* collections. It explains why it is often the heroine, not the hero, who initiates the struggle against the restrictions of conventional morality. It also explores to what extent Feng Menglong was involved in elevating the image of women in these stories and what the elevation of women by this male "author" reveals.

The remainder of this introduction will lay out the theoretical framework for my discussion of Feng's involvement with the *Sanyan* collections. As a point of departure, I will address the elite uses of popular materials by reviewing Robert Redfield's model of "great tradition" (elite culture) versus "little tradition" (popular culture), with special attention to the interflow between these two "traditions." I then propose reading the *Sanyan* stories in light of Mikhail Bakhtin's dialogism and Michael Holquist's ventriloquism: these theories justify my focus on the literati editor Feng Menglong as a conscious manipulator of his literary materials, rather than on the popular sources of the stories. And finally, I will modify Holquist's paradigm of the ownership of meaning/language to describe the evolution of the Chinese vernacular story (from ca. 1550 to 1658) in terms of literati "authorship," and to show the importance of Feng Menglong's *Sanyan* in this belletricizing process.

Elite Uses of Popular Materials

In his classic anthropological study, Robert Redfield points out that certain societies have two cultural traditions, a "great tradition" of the educated few and a "little tradition" of the uneducated masses:

> The great tradition is cultivated in schools or temples; the little tradition works itself out and keeps itself going in the lives of the unlettered in their village communities. The tradition of the philosopher, theologian, and literary man is a tradition consciously cultivated and handed down; that of the little people is for the most part taken for granted and not submitted to much scrutiny or considered refinement and improvement. . . . The two traditions are interdependent. The great tradition and little tradition have long affected each other and continue to do so. . . . Great epics have arisen out of elements of traditional tale-telling by many people, and epics have returned again to the peasantry for modification and incorporation into local cultures.[3]

Of course, more than one great tradition may coexist in a given society— as Islam and Sanskritic Hinduism are both present in India— and there may be several subdivisions of a great tradition, or numerous regional or ethnic little traditions. Redfield himself admits that he speaks of "two" for the sake of simplicity.[4] The notion of cultural stratification that Redfield introduces is important because it draws attention to the cultures of long neglected social strata and gives them value. Even more important is his point about traffic between the two (or more) traditions. This traffic may not be symmetrical; the flow in one direction may be much greater than in the other. But there is always movement or interaction between the two, and a careful study of it may lead to a better understanding of both.

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[3] Robert Redfield, *Peasant Society and Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956, rpt. 1967), pp. 41–42.

[4] Ibid. p. 85.

In recent years, many scholars have applied Redfield's model in their own fields, usually with qualifications or with different emphases.[5] The more recent expressions, "elite culture" and "popular culture," have now largely replaced Redfield's original phrases in discussion. Recent interest also seems to have shifted more to popular culture. Muchembled's *Popular Culture and Elite Culture in France* deals with elite culture in only a limited way, in spite of the comparison implied in its title. Natalie Zemon Davis also focuses mainly on popular culture, while Peter Burke qualifies Redfield's model, claiming,

> There was a group of people who stood in between the great and the little traditions and acted as mediators. A case could be made for describing the culture of early modern Europe as three cultures rather than two. . . . Between learned culture and traditional oral culture came what might be called 'chap-book culture,' the culture of the semi-literate (p. 63).

However, it is interesting that in the study of Chinese history, Redfield's model nicely coincides with the traditional Chinese notions of *ya* and *su*, terms that have been used for more than two millennia to distinguish cultural strata corresponding roughly to two social groups, the literati (*shi*) and the commoners (*min*). Yu Yingshi even argues that during the Qin and Han dynasties (221–207 B.C.; 206 B.C.– A.D. 220) the literati class often took assimilation of the little tradition and dissemination of the great tradition as their social responsibility.[6] In other words, they worked deliberately to stimulate the interchanges between the cultural strata.

Inspired by the writings of Antonio Gramsci, David Johnson advocates a more refined mode of analysis, based on the criteria of an individual's education and his/her position in the "structure of domination." He identifies nine social-cultural groups in late imperial

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[5] See, for example, Robert Muchembled, *Popular Culture and Elite Culture in France: 1400–1750*, trans. Lydia Cochrane (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985); Natalie Zemon Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975); Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (London: Temple Smith, 1978).

[6] Yu Yingshi, *Shi yu Zhongguo wenhua* (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin, 1987), pp. 132–35.

China, starting with the classically educated and legally privileged population, and ending with those who were illiterate and dependent. Still, Johnson thinks the broad terms "popular culture" and "elite culture" are indispensable, so long as we are aware of the complex social realities that they denote.[7]

This distinction between "elite culture" and "popular culture" or *ya* and *su,* serves as a point of departure for this study because the *Sanyan* stories to be discussed represent an important intersection of these cultures. Traditionally, Chinese vernacular fiction— which includes both the vernacular short story, a genre to which the *Sanyan* collections belong, and the full-length vernacular novel— has been regarded as an outgrowth of the popular tradition. Consequently, it is often studied as a major genre of folk literature. On the surface, this academic orientation seems justified. First, most works of these genres are written in *baihua* (vernacular Chinese), a language closer to everyday speech, instead of *wenyan* (classical Chinese), a formal writing system that had always been the trademark of a literati education. Second, most vernacular works contain tales or episodes that were known even among the illiterate. Third, almost all of these stories are related by a "storyteller-narrator,"

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[7] See his "Communication, Class, and Consciousness in Late Imperial China," in *Popular Culture in Late Imperial China,* ed. David Johnson et al. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), pp. 56, 68.

This "popular/elite" conception has been hotly debated in the China field in the past few years. Catherine Bell, in her review article "Religion and Chinese Culture: Toward an Assessment of 'Popular Religion'" explores the relationship of these terms to the issues of Chinese unity and diversity and to theoretical models of culture and society. She has mapped out the three typical positions that have emerged historically in studies of Chinese religion in the last two decades (though with no intent to attach any teleological significance to that sequence). The dichotomies of "elite/folk," "great/little," or "rational religion/superstitious supernaturalism" constituted much of the framework of the first generation of scholarship on Chinese religion; the second-stage position challenged these dichotomies by emphasizing the underlying unities within Chinese culture, and the third-stage approach suggests that culture involves the "internal generation of both distinctions and unities," "the 'production' of meanings," or "the 'construction' of history and community." See *History of Religion* 29 (1989): 35–57, esp. 40–43.

using expressions borrowed from the popular storytelling tradition. That tradition is supposed to be the ultimate provenance from which these works derived.[8]

Recently, however, several important studies have demonstrated that although the source materials and certain narrative techniques of major vernacular works can be closely linked to the popular tradition, "the process through which each of them takes on its mature generic shape in the sixteenth century remains primarily in the hands of sophisticated literati artists, and is only marginally connected with any sort of popular audience."[9] The author of this statement, Andrew Plaks, suggests that

> the great Chinese novels . . . lend themselves to the most meaningful interpretation when they are treated not as examples of a 'popular' counter-culture, but rather as major documents in the mainstream of Ming and Qing literati culture.[10]

Further, in his recent study *The Four Masterworks of the Ming Novel*, Plaks has convincingly demonstrated how literati authors deliberately manipulate and subvert the elements of popular literature, working them into narrative strategies that elevate their works to a higher level of literary sophistication.

How then did Feng Menglong treat the values, both aesthetic and ethical, of popular literature and the other traditions embedded in the *Sanyan* stories? This question might also be turned around: Why did Feng, a member of the literati class, borrow so substantially from folk literature in the first place? I will address these issues below as I compare

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[8] For a brief historical account of the basic motivations for Chinese intellectuals to accept this hypothesis since the turn of this century, see Robert E. Hegel, *The Novel in Seventeenth Century China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), pp. 2–3.

[9] Andrew H. Plaks, "After the Fall: *Hsing-shih yin-yüan chuan* and the Seventeenth-Century Chinese Novel," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 45.2 (1985): 546.

[10] Andrew H. Plaks, "Full-length *Hsiao-shuo* and the Western Novel," in *China and the West: Comparative Literature Studies*, ed. William Tay et al. (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1980), p. 167.

the source materials for the *Sanyan* stories with the versions that Feng edited and published.

To be sure, Feng was not the sole "author" of the one hundred and twenty stories—author in the sense of creating a work from whole cloth—although it is clear that he did substantially rewrite a fair number of them. Most noteworthy in this regard is the extreme care with which Feng selected, rearranged, and altered his source materials, making the three collections unique works of art.[11] Even where the original works were left unamended, Feng the editor gave new meanings to old texts. As Robert E. Hegel observes in his discussion of the fashion for editing and anthologizing in seventeenth-century China, "to the extent that one's view of a work is affected by the context in which it is read . . . editors played a significant role in the interpretation of earlier literature."[12] Of course, scholarship can also shape the interpretation of a work or body of work, and the theoretical framework that I propose in the following section, although derived from a study of European literatures, will hopefully throw new light on old problems in the field of Chinese vernacular fiction. As the Chinese idiom *ta shan gong cuo* suggests, "stones from other mountains may serve to polish the jade from this one."

Theoretical Perspectives: Dialogism and Ventriloquism

In his discussion of Mikhail Bakhtin, Michael Holquist notes that there are three dominant ways language has come to be understood in departments of literature. These may be most succinctly characterized by how each conceives of the ownership of meaning. The first view of language, which Holquist calls "personalist," holds that "*I* own meaning,"

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[11] Cf. Andrew Plaks' concern in reading *Jin Ping Mei* and its source materials, see his *The Four Masterworks of the Ming Novel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), pp. 70–71. See also Patrick Hanan, "Sources of the *Chin P'ing Mei*," *Asia Major* 10.2 (1963): 23–67.

[12] Hegel, *The Novel in Seventeenth Century China*, p. 58.

implying that "a close bond is felt between the sense I have of myself as a unique being and the being of my language." The personalist view assumes that "I can, by *speaking*, appropriate to my own use the impersonal structure of signs, which is always already there." Deeply implicated in the Western humanist tradition, this view is the polar opposite of the second, "deconstructionist" view, which holds that "*No one* owns meaning," and considers the human voice "merely . . . another means for registering differences." Between these two poles is a third view, which Holquist terms "dialogism." It holds that "*We* own meaning," or to be more precise,

> I can mean what I say, but only . . . in words I take and give back to the community according to the protocols it establishes. My voice can mean, but only with others: at times in chorus, but at the best of times in a dialogue.[13]

If personalists maintain that the basis of meaning is the unique individual and deconstructionists locate it in the "structure of difference" outside the realm of the personal voice, then for the dialogists "meaning is rooted in the social, but the social conceived in a particular way."[14]

To give a concrete example of this dialogist view, Holquist turns to Bakhtin's idea of "hybrid construction," and for illustration, cites Bakhtin's comment on a passage from Charles Dickens's *Little Dorritt*. Here we must quote both Dickens and Bakhtin to understand how Holquist reaches his conclusion:

> [Dickens:] That illustrious man and great national ornament, Mr. Merdle, continued his shining course. It began to be widely understood that one who had done society the admirable service *of making so much money out of it,*[15] could not be suffered to remain a commoner. A baronetcy was spoken of with confidence; a peerage was frequently mentioned [book 2, ch. 24].
> [Bakhtin:] [There is first of all the author's] fictive solidarity with the hypocritically ceremonial general opinion [held by most people] of Merdle.

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[13] Michael Holquist, "The Politics of Representation," in *Allegory and Representation*, ed. Stephen J. Greenblatt (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), p. 165.

[14] Holquist, "The Politics of Representation," pp. 163–64.

[15] Bakhtin's italicization.

All epithets referring to Merdle in the first sentences derive from [such a] general opinion, that is, they are the concealed speech of another. The second sentence—"it began to be widely understood" etc.—is kept within the bounds of an emphatically objective style, representing not subjective opinion, but the admission of a . . . completely indisputable fact. [However,] the phrase "who had done society the admirable service" is completely at the level [once again] of common opinion, repeating its official glorification; but the subordinate clause attached to that glorification ("of making so much money out of it") is made up of the author's words (as *if* put into parenthesis) [but actually without any distinguishing punctuation at all]. The last sentence then picks up again at the level of common opinion. [That is] a typical hybrid construction, where the subordinate clause is in an authorial speech that is relatively *direct* [by contrast with] the main clause [which is] in someone else's speech. The main and subordinate clauses are constructed in different semantic and axiological conceptual systems.[16]

This dialogic representation of one voice-idea by another in Holquist's reading of Bakhtin acquires an almost universal significance for human speech:

Dialogism argues that what . . . is often written off as mere irony, actually constitutes a paradigm for all utterances: I can appropriate meaning to my own purposes only by ventriloquating others.

A first implication of this principle is that as speakers we all participate in the rigors of authorship: we bend language to represent *by representing languages.*[17]

One could argue whether Bakhtin's dialogic paradigm is really so universally applicable as Holquist claims. In fact, the other two views in Holquist's schema—the personalist as well as the deconstructionist views—would make the same claim: that each is comprehensive in

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[16] Holquist, "The Politics of Representation," pp. 168–69. Also see Mikhail Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel" in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*, ed. Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), p. 306.

[17] Holquist, "The Politics of Representation," p. 169. Emphasis added.

nature and applies to all literature. In practical application, however, we often find that theories seem more productive with some texts than with others, more capable of accounting for some types of literature than others. Holquist obviously has noticed this gap between theory and practice, for toward the end of his essay he returns to the three views of language and suggests that each view results in its own characteristic genre:

> Personalism has a natural affinity with the *Bildungsroman*; it is full of "Great Expectations." Deconstructivism has an affinity with lyric and fragment. . . . Dialogism has a taste for carnival and comedy, an affinity perhaps best caught in Bakhtin's lifelong affection for the first story of the *Decameron*. . . .[18]

While not all of the *Sanyan* stories are comedies, Bakhtin's dialogic paradigm does appear to be an appropriate mode of analysis for them. For one thing, nearly all of the source materials for the *Sanyan* stories are *literally* from "others," or from "other social groups." For another, Feng Menglong as the finalizer of the texts can be justifiably studied as an "author" who appropriated their meaning to his own purposes, not so much by "creative writing" (in its narrow sense) but by revising pre-existent source materials, by speaking through others' words.[19] Interestingly enough, in seventeenth-century Chinese vernacular narratives, "the reworking and expansion of pre-existent traditional material, and the editorial work of weaving together these sources, may have been as important as any purely creative work undertaken by the individuals responsible for the final versions of the material. . . ."[20]

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[18] Ibid. p. 182.

[19] Cf. André Lévy's concern for the problem of authorship in the study of traditional Chinese vernacular fiction: "... can we deal with the question of authorship as a simple problem of identification with an individual? Can we take as granted that the work is the product of a single mind through the channel of brush and paper? I am afraid we cannot." "On the Question of Authorship in Chinese Traditional Fiction," *Hanxue yanjiu* 6.1 (1988): 259.

[20] David L. Rolston, "Editor's Preface," in *How to Read the Chinese Novel*, ed. David L. Rolston (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. xiv.

The idea that a writer could express his own feelings by using materials from others is crystallized in a famous phrase attributed to Li Zhi (1527–1602), who greatly influenced Feng Menglong and other fiction writers: *duo taren zhi jiubei jiao ziji zhi leikuai* (to borrow the other man's wine glass to assuage one's own troubles).[21] Many similar Chinese phrases suggest something like Bakhtin's notion of "hybrid construction," for example, *jie hua xian Fo* (to present Buddha with borrowed flowers), *jie shi huan hun* (to find reincarnation in another's corpse), and *jie gu feng jin* (to use the past to disparage the present).[22]

With its emphasis on the importance of the "author" in producing the final version of a text,[23] Bakhtin's dialogism also seems to have an affinity with the Chinese literati's way of reading traditional vernacular fiction. An important critical method of traditional fiction commentators was their strategy of identifying with the author in their interpretations. Jin Shengtan (1608–1661), known for taking "the audacious step of making himself responsible for providing a positive explanation for all the features of each of the texts" he commented on,[24] claimed at the beginning of his famous commentary on *The Water Margin* (*Shuihu zhuan*): "When reading a book the first thing to be taken

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[21] Li Zhi, "Zashuo," quoted in *Zhongguo wenxue piping shi*, ed. Wang Yunxi and Gu Yisheng (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1981), 2:425.

[22] The phrase "*jiuping zhuang xinjiu*" (fill the old bottle with new wine), although of biblical origin, began to be widely used by Chinese writers in the May Fourth era, probably because of its affinity with traditional Chinese idioms mentioned above, *Hanyu da cidian*, 12 vols. (Shanghai: Hanyu da cidian, 1986–94), 8:1302. Chang-tai Hung's essay, which deals with the Chinese left-wing writers' use of traditional popular literature in mobilizing the masses against Japanese invasion in the 1930's and 40's, has this revealing phrase in its title: "New Wine in Old Bottles: The Use of Folk Literature in the War of Resistance Against Japan," *Hanxue yanjiu* 8.1 (June 1990): 401–23.

[23] Cf. literary theories that tend to deny the role of the author: "The Intentional Fallacy" in *The Verbal Icon* by W.K. Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley (University of Kentucky Press, 1954), pp. 3–18, and "The Death of the Author" by Roland Barthes, in his *Image-Music-Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), pp. 142–48.

[24] David L. Rolston, introduction to chapter 2, in Rolston, *How to Read*, p. 128.

into account is the state of mind of the author when he wrote it."[25] Zhang Zhupo (1670–1698) also held that "the commentator's job (and the reader's as well) was to retrace the author's steps and reconstruct the completed work by probing and asking searching questions at every bend in the road, no matter how inconspicuous."[26] Zhang commented on *The Golden Lotus* (*Jin Ping Mei*): "If the reader would not read the book as an account of Ximen Qing's [the main character of the novel] affairs, but employ his own literary imagination in the attempt to discover retroactively the secrets of the author's marvelous effects, it would be more valuable to him than reading the *Records of the Grand Historian* (*Shiji*) in its entirety."[27]

In terms of speaking through pre-existing materials, there is an affinity between Bakhtin's dialogism and another Chinese literary practice: the millennia-old strategy of "using antiquity" (*yong gu*). Poets of the Song dynasty (960–1279), particularly those of the Jiangxi School, elevated *yong gu* in reaction against the incremental achievements of the previous dynasty's poets, the Tang masters. Huang Tingjian (1045–1105), for example, advocated a poetics that "recognized and incorporated the textual histories of words in order to create new meanings, meanings with his [Huang's] imprimatur."[28] It was a poetics of appropriation exemplified by Huang's famous metaphors for poetic composition: *duo tai huan gu* (to drive off the soul of the foetus and take its place, or more literally, to evolve from the embryo, changing the bone) and *dian tie cheng jin* (to change iron into gold [through alchemical transformation]).[29] The

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[25] See item 1 of his *dufa* (how to read) essay for the novel, John C. Y. Wang trans., "How to Read *The Fifth Book of Genius*," in Rolston, *How to Read*, p. 131.

[26] David L. Rolston, "Formal Aspects of Fiction Criticism and Commentary in China," in Rolston, *How to Read*, p. 71.

[27] See item 82 of his *dufa* essay for the novel, trans. David T. Roy, "How to Read the *Jin Ping Mei*," in Rolston, *How to Read*, p. 238.

[28] David Palumbo-Liu, *The Poetics of Appropriation: The Literary Theory and Practice of Huang Tingjian* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1993), p. x.

[29] English translation from Adele Austin Rickett, "Method and Intuition: The Poetic Theories of Huang T'ing-chien," in *Chinese Approaches to Literature from Confucius to Liang Ch'i-ch'ao*, ed. Adele Austin Rickett (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1978), pp. 109–10.

Bakhtin/Holquist concepts of dialogism, hybrid construction, and ventriloquism, then, are not only compatible with traditional Chinese critical methods, they have been developed to treat the very issues of voice and authorship that present themselves in the *Sanyan* collections.

Evolution of the Chinese Vernacular Story (ca. 1550–ca.1660)

Although Holquist's paradigm on the ownership of meaning/language is non-teleological, it can with slight modifications be used to describe an important aspect of the evolution of the Chinese vernacular story in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. First, we must change the scheme into a timeline that simultaneously represents the historical appearance of the major story collections and the views of authorship that informed their compilation. At the timeline's starting point (ca. 1550) is the deconstructionist view that "no one owns meaning," or what I would term "the least apparent presence of the 'I' (author/editor)." Since at its other extreme (ca. 1660) is the personalist view or "the most apparent presence of the 'I,'" the dialogist view "I can appropriate meaning by ventriloquating others" remains between the two poles (see Figure 1 below).

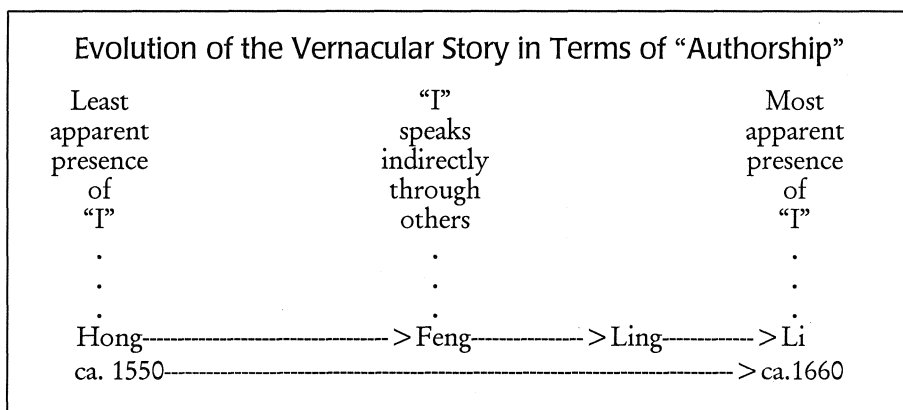| Evolution of the Vernacular Story in Terms of "Authorship"		
Least apparent presence of "I"	"I" speaks indirectly through others	Most apparent presence of "I"
. . .	. . .	. . .
Hong-----------------------------> Feng--------------> Ling-----------> Li		
ca. 1550-->ca.1660		

Figure 1

Near the starting point, appears *Sixty Stories* (*Liushijia xiaoshuo*), the earliest surviving anthology that contains a substantial number of vernacular short stories, published by Hong Pian around 1550. These stories were all written by anonymous writers or writers who cannot be identified, and Hong Pian's editorial work appears to have been minimal. The extent twenty-nine stories (some of them fragmentary) "have the loosest organization imaginable."[30] For example, they are not numbered and the printing format differs even among stories in the same section. With the exception of one section, they seem to have been put together "without any obvious selection or arrangement by author, theme, source, or date."[31] The collection even includes stories written in classical Chinese. Hong Pian may have done some superficial editing, such as providing titles—e.g., "Rainy Window Collection" ("Yuchuang ji"), "Leaning on the Pillow Collection" ("Qizhen ji") and "Relief From Boredom Collection" ("Jiexian ji")—for the six groups of ten stories that comprise the anthology. But even these titles suggest that the stories were indiscriminately collected and were meant for casual reading.

The only exception is the "Pillow Collection," which appears to have been written by a single writer and displays "a distinct authorial personality."[32] Of its seven extant stories, six are thematically arranged in pairs, their titles forming parallel couplets.[33] But it is impossible to know who the author was, and it would be a mistake to identify him or her with the editor Hong Pian.

On the whole, one gets the impression that Hong Pian did not leave much personal imprint in his anthology, although the mere fact of its publication may have greatly inspired Feng Menglong. In contrast, Feng's *Sanyan* may represent the first self-conscious literati effort to rework folk stories and develop the vernacular story into a literary genre. Feng added the storyteller's manner, supplied the texts with marginal and interlinear commentary (see chapter 2 below), and arranged

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[30] Hanan, *The Chinese Vernacular Story*, p. 56.

[31] Ibid. p. 57.

[32] Ibid.

[33] This feature was later to be developed further by Feng Menglong and will be fully discussed below in chapter 3.

the stories consistently in pairs. For reasons to be discussed in chapter 1, Feng preferred to speak indirectly, staying behind his source materials and denying his own "authorship"; he thus occupies the middle position in my paradigm.[34]

Ling Mengchu's (1580–1644) *Slapping the Table in Amazement (Pai'an jingqi)* and *Slapping the Table in Amazement, Second Collection (Erke Pai'an*

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[34] The conspicuous absence of both "Langxian" and "Aina" in my schema for the evolution of the Chinese vernacular story should be addressed here since they have received substantial treatment in Patrick Hanan's *The Chinese Vernacular Story*. Hanan has demonstrated that twenty-two stories in *Constant Words*, the third *Sanyan* collection, were probably written by X, whom he tentatively identifies as the Master of the Ink-Wild Studio (Molang zhuren), the collator of *Constant Words*, and as Langxian, the compiler of *The Rocks Nod Their Heads (Shi dian tou)*, a collection of fourteen stories for which Feng Menglong wrote a preface.

I have left Langxian out for two reasons. First, Hanan's view is still a hypothesis, though a reasonable and persuasive one in general; but even Hanan himself says that it "cannot be regarded as proven." (*The Chinese Vernacular Story*, p. 230 n. 5). Second, even if we agree that Langxian authored twenty-two stories and collated (*jiao*) *Constant Words*, so long as Feng Menglong can be identified as the chief editor and therefore the finalizer of the collection, we can still justify studying it as Feng Menglong "ventriloquating" through others (including Langxian) in the sense suggested by Bakhtin's dialogism or Holquist's ventriloquism.

Further, Pi-ching Hsu argues that Hanan ignores differences between the stories he attributes to Langxian in *Constant Words* and those in *Shi dian tou*, while over-emphasizing the differences between these collections on the one hand and the first two *Sanyan* collections on the other. Hsu also asserts that even if Langxian did write some of the stories in *Constant Words*, Feng Menglong must have rewritten them to a certain degree to make them more compatible with the general ethics and aesthetics of the *Sanyan*. See Hsu, "Celebrating the Emotional Self: Feng Meng-lung and Late Ming Ethics and Aesthetics," Ph.D dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1994, pp. 207–14.

Finally, "Aina," the author of *Idle Talk Under the Bean Arbor (Doupeng xianhua)*, is left out for two reasons. First, his collection was published after 1668, more than ten years after the belletricizing process reached its peak in Li Yu; and second, the new narrative framework explored in this collection was ignored by later writers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. See Hu Shiying, *Huaben xiaoshuo gailun* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1980), p. 649, and Hanan, *The Chinese Vernacular Story*, p. 191.

jingqi) [35] published in 1628 and 1632, respectively, and collectively known as *Liangpai* or *Erpai*—may be rightly placed between Feng and the terminal pole "I own meaning." Unlike Feng, Ling wrote all of the nearly eighty stories himself and made no attempt to hide his authorship. One could take this as a sign that the vernacular story was a firmly established genre by the time Ling started to write, thanks to Feng Menglong's success. In the preface to his first collection of stories, Ling states that since Feng had already exhausted all the old texts, he can only take "those miscellaneous and scattered pieces of the past and present that can refresh one's views and understandings . . . and expand and elaborate them into a number of stories." [36] The narrator in Ling's stories appears to have a single fairly consistent personality, and is often found "equating himself with the author, in the sort of comment we might expect to find in a preface or in the author's own editorial notes." [37]

If Ling Mengchu was still dependent on pre-existing anecdotes for his stories, Li Yu (1611–1680) insisted on the value of originality in literature. Of the stories he published in *Silent Operas* (*Wusheng xi*, 1655/56), in *Silent Operas, Second Collection* (*Wusheng xi erji*, 1656[?]) and in *Twelve Towers* (*Shi'er lou*, 1658), none is clearly based on any previous source material, [38] and all distinctly bear his individual stamp. One of the most outstanding features of his stories is the replacement of the

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[35] The most complete extant edition of the second collection (the *Shangyou tang* edition) contains thirty-nine stories and one play (*juan* 40). Also, the twenty-third story is exactly the same as the twenty-third of the first collection. It is suggested, however, that the *Shangyou tang* edition may not be the first edition. See Zhang Peiheng, "Jiaodian shuoming" (Editorial explanations), in *Erke Pai'an jingqi*, ed. Zhang Peiheng and Wang Gulu (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1983), pp. 1–2.

[36] Ling, "Pai'an jingqi xu," *Chuke Pai'an jingqi*, ed. Zhang Peiheng and Wang Gulu (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1982), p. 1; translation from Liu Wu-chi, *An Introduction to Chinese Literature* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1966), p. 224, with some modifications.

[37] Hanan, *The Chinese Vernacular Story*, p. 150.

[38] This does not mean that he did not make plays out of his *own* stories; see Liu Hongjun, "Li Yu xiaoshuo chuangzuo tong xiju chuangzuo de guanxi," *Xinyang shifan xueyuan xuebao* 1996.2:57–58; reprinted in *Zhongguo gudai jindai wenxue yanjiu* (Renmin daxue fuyin ziliao) 1996.7:98–99.

traditional storyteller with a literati persona who often sounds "like a vernacular version of Li Yu the essayist . . . sly, mocking, ingenious, self-congratulatory—and even self-contradictory."[39]

Li Yu's stories are comedies, and perhaps theoretically it is more appropriate to read them in light of Bakhtin's "hybrid construction." But my point here is that Li, as a writer, seems to have subscribed to a theory very close to the personalist view:

> In half a lifetime's writing, I have not filched a single word from other people. There have been times when I have been ashamed of my shallowness and times when I have invited ridicule for unsound views, but when it comes to following the beaten path, to chewing other men's spittle and claiming it as the fresh blossoms of my own tongue, not only am I confident that I am innocent, but distinguished scholars throughout the land all realize that I would never stoop so low.[40]

I see no contradiction between Li Yu's personalist view of language and the dialogist texts he produced. To Li, inversions of literary stereotypes and reversals of accepted situations and ideas—all stock features of his comedies—were not a matter of one voice-idea manipulating another, but simply innovative, original and new.

Li Yu's firm belief in the writer's ownership of language/meaning and in his total independence in writing fiction marks the completion of an important phase in the belletricizing process of the vernacular story, a process that increased "authorial" presence and decreased dependence on pre-existing materials, popular or elite. Although we cannot know the precise debt the vernacular story owes to folk storytelling, we can at least

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[39] Patrick Hanan, "Introduction," in *Silent Operas*, ed. Patrick Hanan (Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1990), p. vii.

[40] Li Yu, "Fan li qi ze" (Seven general principles), in *Xianqing ouji*, vol. 3 of *Li Yu quanji* (Hangzhou: Zhejiang guji, 1991), p. 3; translation from Patrick Hanan, *The Invention of Li Yu* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), p. 48.

say that by Li Yu's time it had clearly been incorporated into literati culture.[41]

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[41] For a detailed study of Ling Mengchu and Li Yu, see Hanan, *The Chinese Vernacular Story*, chapters. 7 and 8, pp. 140–90; and Hanan, *The Invention of Li Yu, passim.*