Parody, as a modern encyclopedia on poetics has it, is as old as poetry itself. It can be close to the burlesque and therefore comic, or it can be critical parody, the “exaggerated imitation of a work of art”. Another distinction frequently made in poetical theory is that between parody, the use of serious literary forms for a jocular purpose, and travesty, the treatment of originally serious contents in an inadequate trivial language or genre. To compose a poem on the Virgin Islands in the style of the Shih-ching would be parody, to make Confucius speak like a Southern Baptist Sunday-school teacher travesty. The humorous and amusing element is common to both parody and travesty. This does, however, not exclude satirical and even ultimately very serious social criticism, or malice (particularly if a fashionable author is parodied). A common feature is that both parody and travesty are meant to amuse, and, as a by-product sometimes, to educate, ridendo dicere verum. If parody is directed against works of arts, certain styles or fashions, it contains invariably an element of literary criticism. There is a subtle relationship between the classical models which we may find parodied, and the parody itself. More than once in the history of world literature the parody has become a classic in its own right, such as Cervantes’ Don Quixote. Chinese literature seems, in this respect as in some others, to be different. It remains, however, true in my opinion, that the place of parody within the total framework of Chinese traditional literature has yet to be defined. That parodies existed at all should already be evident from the fact that the Chinese had an ancient and sophisticated literature and that humor or a sense for humor has always been a charming and attractive characteristic of the Chinese as a people. This is obscured by the sometimes oppressive seriousness of so many genres in Chinese literature — wen treated as a vehicle for tao. The following observations will, however, be limited to
parodies in literary language, leaving out of account the whole of vernacular literature. It is obvious that a novel like Hsi-yu chi is full of parodistic elements, particularly of what one might term the mock-heroic type. This paper is exclusively concerned with parodies in wen-yen, being the result of rather unsystematic reading in the course of my studies of play-forms in Chinese literature. The subject of parodies is moreover one of those which can be expanded almost indefinitely, and any friend of Chinese literature will be in a position to furnish many more examples once he begins to read with the discovery of parodies in mind.

The Greek word "parody" (verbatim "a song sung beside") has no direct counterpart in Chinese; maybe because parody was not an accepted genre. Chinese or Sino-japanese expressions such as p'ai-hsieh (jap. hankai), p'ai-hsieh wen, p'ai-hsieh i, yu-hsi shih-wen, k'uei-hsieh chih shih-wen (the last two having been culled from the German-Chinese Dictionary, Peking 1959) denote humorous, jocular or playful literary productions in general rather than parodies in the strict sense. None of the Chinese equivalents seems to have the exclusive connotation of imitative composition which by definition is an inherent characteristic of parodies. The key-word p'ai means "to play, to joke", a basic meaning which is not primarily concerned with literary productions. Another difficulty in dealing with parodies (this word always taken in its usual Western connotation) in China is that they are sometimes so hard to find. There have been compiled, at least since the Sung period, anthologies of literary play-forms where we could expect to find parodies, but is seems that these works are quite rare and they certainly were never popular outside a small circle of literary connoisseurs. On the other hand parodistic writings occur sometimes in the Collected Works of individual authors but without being labelled as semi-serious. In some cases the jocular character is obvious from the contents, in other cases the humorous or parodistic character is hidden under the cloak of a serious genre and the Western reader is easily tempted into regarding as serious what might be in fact written with the tongue in the cheek. I have a strong suspicion that, for example, Han Yü's famous Letter to the Crocodile, belongs to the jocular category.

II.

In the following I shall try to survey forms which have undoubtedly been parodied. All this is more impressionistic than systematic, and the only excuse is that a thorough coverage could only be achieved after having read through Chinese literature as such, a clearly impossible task. Our necessarily incomplete survey will also perhaps show that in Chinese literature in wen-yen it is mostly a genre that is parodied by giving it a humorous content, and rather seldom the style of a single individual author. Parody as a vehicle for literary invective against the idiosyncrasies of a certain author seems to have been the exception rather than the rule.
Technically, of course, all the innumerable poems written in the rhyme-pattern of somebody else (ho^[6] XY, or ho XY yün^[7]) are parodies in a broad sense, but rarely if ever the content matter shows a jocular twist. Genuine parody is primarily meant to amuse, which can hardly be said of all those compositions where only a rhyme-pattern has been taken over from another piece of poetry.

A mild example of parody concerns a henpecked husband who, whenever he had incurred his wife's displeasure, was made to kneel in the middle of the night by her bed. At one of these occasions she promised him release from his humiliating position if he could adapt a poem to his present situation. He chose a poem by CH'ENG HAO (1032—1085):

* When clouds are thin, and the wind is light, toward noon of a spring-like day,
  I walk mid flowers and willow trees, and over the stream I stray;
  My heart-felt joy is little known to those who think, forsooth,
  That I am stealing time to imitate idle youth."
*

The parodied version which obtained the husband's release from his kneeling position reads:

* The clouds are thin, the wind is light
  And the hour is just the middle of the night;
  The objects which the poet descried,
  Those flowers and willows are all outside;
  And little they know of my good Spouse [lit. "heart's grief", H.F.]
  Who think I'm practicing New Year's bows^[1]*
*

A coarser piece of parody is furnished by the same Chinese source^[3]. Two scholars taking a walk noticed a big-footed servant girl whose sandals made a loud flapping sound. The scholars decided to parody a T'ang poem in order to make fun of the rustic country girl, namely, MENG Hao-jan's (689—740) Poem on a Spring Morning:

* The clouds are thin, the wind is light
  And the hour is just the middle of the night;
  The objects which the poet descried,
  Those flowers and willows are all outside;
  And little they know of my good Spouse [lit. "heart's grief", H.F.]
  Who think I'm practicing New Year's bows^[2]*
*

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"Asleep in the springtime one is not aware of the dawn
Till everywhere the birds are heard calling,
But last night I heard the sounds of wind and rain,
I wonder how many blossoms have broken away?"
The two scholars changed this poem to:

春梅腳不小
處處聞他跑
夜來雲雨聲
攀落知多少

"Spring Plum's feet are not small,
Everywhere you will hear her running.
Last night I heard the sounds of Clouds and Rain (sexual intercourse),
I wonder how many times she went up and down."

Su Tung-p'o (1036-1101) once made a rather cruel joke on his friend Liu Pin (1022-1088) who was suffering from leprosy and had lost his hairs, his eyebrows and the bridge of his nose. At a party Su made a poem:

大風起兮眉飛揚
安得猛士兮守鼻梁

"A great wind (homophone with feng-leprosy) raged and has blown the eyebrows away;
How may I secure valiant knights to defend the bridge of his nose?

This is a parody of the famous song which Han Kao-tsu sang when he visited his native place in 196 B.C.:

大風起兮雲飛揚...
安得猛士兮守四方

"A great wind raged and the clouds flew and rose...
How may I secure valiant men to defend the four quarters (of my empire)?"

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4 Translation by Soame Jenyns, Poems of the T'ang Dynasty (London 1946) p. 26
5 Hsiao-hsiao lu [10], ed. PC, ch. 2.12a.
6 Translation by H. H. Duss, History of the Former Han Dynasty vol. 1 (Baltimore 1938), p. 136-137. I am gratefully indebted to Professor Chou Tse-tsun for this identification. My previous assumption that the parody was based on the famous song of Ching K'o was erroneous. — It could be added here that the Ching K'o story has been imitated and elaborated by a Ch'in writer, Ts'ao Tsung-fan in his Chu-yü [11] (ed. Shuo-k'u) p. 1a-2a. This Story of Ching K'o's Guest [12] is a play with the style of the relevant Shih-chi chapters and a patchwork of famous incidents mentioned in Ssu-Ma Ch'ien's work. The Ching K'o K'o is more a stylistic imitation than a parody because the humorous and burlesque element seems to be absent.
One of the more famous pieces of T'ang prose is Lü Yü-hsi's \([13]\) (772—842) "Inscription for a Lowly Dwelling" (Lou-shih ming\(^{[14]}\))\(^7\). In the 18th century, the salt-monopoly officials of Yang-chou, mostly nouveaux riches, were notorious for their luxury and idle way of life\(^8\). An anonymous satirist, by changing a few characters here and there, produced a clever parody which he called "Inscription for a Lowly Clerk" (Lou-li ming\(^{[15]}\))\(^9\), of which we shall quote only the opening passage as an illustration of his method.

Liu Yü-hsi (parody in brackets)

山（官）不在高，有仙（塲）則名。水（才）不在深，有龍（鹽）則靈。

A mountain is not to be judged according to its height; it will be famous if there are genii. A water is not to be judged according to its depth; it will be efficacious if there is a dragon.

Parody:

An office is not to be judged according to its high (rank); it will be famous if there is a (salt) factory. A talent is not to be judged according to its profundity; it will be efficacious if there is salt.

The genre of chi\(^{[17]}\), descriptive essay, has frequently served as a vehicle for satire and parody, particularly when describing a visit to a land of fantasy and thus being "a parody of the real world"\(^{10}\). The earliest example of this fanciful adaption of the essay form seems to be the "Description of the Land of Intoxication" (Tsui-hsiang chi) by the early T'ang writer WANG Chi\(^{[18]}\) (585—644)\(^11\). Su Tung-p'o wrote a "Description of the Land of Sleep" (Shui-hsiang chi\(^{[19]}\))\(^12\), and LAN Ting-yüan\(^{[20]}\) (1680—1733) composed in 1710 a "Description of the Land of Hunger" (O-hsiang chi\(^{[21]}\))\(^13\), a brilliant piece in parallel prose which became so famous that the scholar CHIA P'eng\(^{[22]}\) (1702—1778) tried to pass it off as his own work to CHANG Hsüeh-ch'eng (1738—1801), who apparently did not know Lan's original text\(^14\). All these pieces may be described as semi-serious, whereas the jocular element is obvious in the "Description of the Warm-Soft Land" (Wen-jou hsiang chi\(^{[23]}\)) by the late Ch'ing writer LIANG Kuo-cheng\(^{[24]}\)\(^15\). It is a poetic account of the

\(^{7}\) For an English translation see Herbert A. Giles, Gems of Chinese Literature (reprint New York 1965) p. 148 "My Humble Home".


\(^{9}\) Lü-yüan ts'ung-hua \([16]\) ed. Po-hua an 1908-1909, eh. 21. 8a—b.

\(^{10}\) Tung-kao-tzu chi \([17]\) ed. Ssu-pu ts'ung-k'an (SPTK) eh. hsia 8a—9a.

\(^{11}\) Tung-p'o hsü-chi \([18]\), ed. Pao-hua an 1908—1909, eh. 12. 18b—19b. Su is also the author of a Tsui-hsiang chi, ib. 17b—18b.

\(^{12}\) Text see e.g. Chiu hsiao-shuo \([19]\) vol. 17, pp. 37—39.

\(^{13}\) Cf. Nirvson, op. cit. p. 84.

\(^{14}\) Hsiang-yen ts'ung-shu \([20]\) IX, ch. 1. 17a—21b.
joys of heterosexual love couched in the descriptive terms of a gazetteer or geographical treatise and not recognizable at first sight as a parodistic description.

Sex was also at least once the subject of a piece in an originally rather serious genre, the lu [30], of which we have so many pompous and heavy-handed examples since the Han. To Po Hsing-chien [30] (+826), the younger brother of Po Chü-i, is attributed the Ta-lo lu [31] "Poetical Essay on the Supreme Joy", discovered by Paul Pelliot in Tun-huang. It is a straightforward composition full of undiluted eroticism, amusing because of the contrast between the grandiloquent lu style and the subject matter.  

III.

If we turn now to parodies of funerary and sacrificial texts we are faced with an abundance of material. A well-known example is the necrolog on Hsi-men Ch'ing in ch. 80 of the Chin-p'ing mei, where the stilted language of the funerary text serves to deplore the passing away of a gambler and whoremonger. A similarly suggestive text is the funerary invocation on a prefect known for his homosexuality. The book where this piece of satirical invective is to be found has a preface dated 1905 so that the parody was perhaps written somewhere in the second half of the 19th century. Another satire in the form of a parodied funerary text is directed against Mohammedans. This cremation text (hsia-huo wen) was composed in the 14th century by Wang Mei-ku [34], a resident of Hangchow otherwise unknown, and is found in the Cho-keng lu by T'ao Tsung-i [35] published in 1366. This parody has woven Islamic names very cleverly into the text which makes fun of a tragic incident in 14th century Hangchow: to a Mohammedan wedding-party came so many guests that the house collapsed and many people, including bride and groom, were killed.

The Cho-keng lu has also examples of parodied funerary texts which are more harmless than the rather cruel literary joke by Wang Mei-ku. In Hangchow lived a Taoist by the name of Hung Tan-ku who later in life had taken up with a prostitute and finally married her. When she fell ill she asked her husband to compose a funerary song for her. Hung indeed wrote a seven-word poem as a necrolog and recited it to his wife who was greatly amused.

For a summary of the content see R. H. Van Gulik, Sexual Life in Ancient China (Leiden 1961), pp. 203—207.


Ying-ch'uang i-ts'ao erh-pien, ed. PC, ch. 4. 16b—17a.

The text contains many allusions to the life in the gay quarters and is called "Cremation Ode for a Prostitute", yü chi hsia-huo wen [37]. T'ao Tsung-i has included in his article dealing with Hung Tan-ku another similar funerary ode on a prostitute, equally of a semi-serious character and written by the Sung author CHANG Chiu-ch'eng [43] (T., 1092—1159) [21]. To compose jocular texts on matters concerning the red-light districts seems to have been a quite common pastime of literati. We find, for example a short of prayer or invocation addressed to a bawdy-house, chi-chia chu-hsien wen, attributed to LI Chih [46] (1527—1602), the famous late Ming nonconformist. This text has a rather funny description of ten different girls belonging to the establishment [22].

Semi-serious funerary texts were sometimes written for animals. CHANG Ch’ao [42] (T. Shan-lai), a 17th century scholar composed a sacrificial ode on his gold-fish [23], and SHEN Ch’i-feng [45] (18th cent.) felt so guilty after having exterminated book-worms in his library that he wrote a sacrificial invocation to set the souls of the tiny creatures at rest [24]. Quite a charming parody of a cremation text was written by CHOU Chih-han [45] (T. Shen-fu), a Yuan poet. In a cold night prunus flowers in a vase had suffered from the frost and before he burned the withered branches he composed a hsia-huo wen for the prunus flowers, mei-hua hsia-huo wen [46], in the form of seven-word poem [25].

IV.

Official documents and proclamations were parodied frequently. There are many proclamations (hsi [47]) and victory announcements (lu-pu [48]) where the pompous style of official prose is used for a mildly funny or even ludicrous subject-matter. An 18th century scholar, HUANG Chih-hsün [49] had a cat called Fo-nu [50] — it had been given that name because its purring resembled the mumbling recitation of Buddhist prayers. This cat — a calico cat, we are told — was however of a contemplative nature. It used to lie placidly on the book-shelf and did not hunt mice. The mice became more and more of a nuisance in the house so that HUANG finally felt compelled to read to his incompetent cat a stern Proclamation on Punishing the Cat, t’ao mao hsi [51] [26]. In this proclamation the lazy animal is addressed by the grand-

The text is also included in the Mao-yüan [49], ed. PC, ch. hsia 21a-b. [28]
iloquent title of Mouse-catching General, pu-shu chiang\(^{53}\). In another case of feline misdemeanor a cat had chased a white cock and killed it. The Ming author Hu Shih\(^{54}\) and owner of the cock wrote a Condemnation of the Cat, ma-mao wen\(^{55}\) where the cat is warned to catch mice instead of chasing other members of the household\(^{37}\). But cats, it seems, sometimes had realized where their duties lay. They, or rather Mao Tsung-kang\(^{56}\) (T. Hsü-shih) for them, wrote an Accusation of Mice by Cats, mao tan shu\(^{57}\) in which cats plead for a bloody extermination war against mice\(^{28}\). Chang Ch'ao whom we just mentioned as author of the prayer for the book-worms also had to face a Proclamation against the Fighting Cocks (tou-chi hsi\(^{58}\))\(^{30}\).

Before the invention of insecticides many Chinese seem to have had reason to complain about various pests. Scholars in their impotent rage were reduced to writing impeachments and proclamations. Already Yang Shen\(^{51}\) (1488—1559) wrote a Proclamation on the Punishment of Mosquitoes, and was imitated e.g. by Tung I-ning\(^{52}\) (T. Wen-you)\(^{31}\). A boy once wrote a similar text\(^{32}\), and there is even a Proclamation against bees which according to Ts'ao Chui-li\(^{53}\), the author of that piece, do damage to the flowers\(^{38}\). The successful extermination of book-worms is proudly proclaimed in a victory announcement, ch'u lu-yü lu-pu\(^{64}\)\(^{34}\).

Lice complained about the constant persecution that they had to face in a memorandum (piao\(^{65}\)) composed by Tung I-ning on their behalf\(^{35}\). Kung T'ing-kou\(^{66}\) (T. Chao-chüan) once wrote a Complaint of Lice against the enfeoffment of Mosquitoes, ssu tan min lang shih\(^{67}\), which begins, in the usual way of official memorandums "I your coarseclothed little servant the Louse respectfully bow my head and submit these words"\(^{36}\). It is improbable that this piece as well as some others in this group of parodies may have a satirical meaning. A very early parody in this genre, the Eel's Memorandum (shan piao\(^{68}\)) by the 6th century author Wei Lin\(^{69}\) has always been regarded as a satire directed against contemporary courtiers\(^{37}\).

\(^{27}\) Mao-yüan, ch. hsia 19b—20a.
\(^{28}\) Chien-hu pu-chi\(^{58}\) ch. 1. 4b—5a.
\(^{29}\) Chien-hu chiu-chi\(^{50}\) ch. 3. 5a—6a.
\(^{30}\) Chien-hu pu-chi ch. 5. 13b—14a.
\(^{31}\) Chien-hu chiu-chi ch. 3. 4a—b.
\(^{32}\) Hsiao-hsiao lu ch. 5. 12b.
\(^{33}\) Chien-hu chiu-chi ch. 3. 3b.
\(^{34}\) ib. 4b—5a.
\(^{35}\) ib. 6b.
\(^{36}\) ib. 6a—b.
\(^{37}\) ib. 7a—b.
Not even imperial decrees were safe from being imitated by light-hearted scholars. Chang Ch’ao once wrote an Imperial Decree Enfeoffing the Peony, *ts’e leng mu-tan chao*[^79] where the peony receives investiture as Queen of Flowers (*hua-wang*)[^71].[^38]

V.

Closely related to the parodistic use of official documents are parodies of legal codes and other items from the sphere of law. A rather famous piece is the *Tu-lü* attributed to Ch’en Yian-lung[^72] (1652—1736). It is a parody of a penal code, providing punishments for jealous wives; each article (*lü*) is followed by reasons for the decisions (*p’an*)[^73]. The various articles of this code are grouped according to the Six Ministries. The text may be found in various *ts’ung-shu*[^59] and has been translated into English by Howard S. Levy under the title "How to Regulate Jealousy"[^40]. This title, however, does not do justice to the parodistic character. "A Penal Code against Jealousy" would perhaps be more appropriate. Dr. Levy has not translated the *p’an* sections which are quite difficult and heavily loaded with learned allusions. The writers who have composed prefaces to this parody are unanimous in praising the style and wit of these *p’an* sections; however, a translation would require a copious annotation in order to make the allusions translucent.

If the *Tu-lü* is a witty composition stressing the right of a husband to have affairs with concubines, the *Kuei-lü*[^79] "A Penal Code for the Bedroom"[^41] is feministic by its insistence on the husband’s duties towards his wife. The text has been composed in 1845 by the "Hibiscus Unofficial Historian", Fu-jung wai-shih[^77]. This pseudonym is rendered by Dr. Levy as "Miss Hibiscus" but to me it does not seem certain that this anti-*Tu-lü* has actually been written by a woman. It is, like the *Tu-lü* itself, couched in the terms of a penal code. In both texts the designation of the crime and the actual punishments are genuine and taken from the existing Ch’ing code, but the "punishable actions" are ludicrous, such as the husband’s exchanging amorous glances with the chamber-maid.

There is a whole genre of pseudo-legal and semiserious compositions in Chinese literature, the so-called *hua-p’an*[^78], "flowery verdicts". These are decisions on trivial and sometimes funny cases that purport to have come to the attention of magistrates. Their parodistic character is clear from the fact

[^38]: Chien-hu shih-chi ch. 4. 1a—b.
[^41]: For the text see *San-ch’ieh lu pi-t’an*[^76] ed. PC, ch. 7. 3b—9a and Hsiang-yen *ts’ung-shu* IV, ch. 3. 17a—27b. It has been translated by Howard S. Levy, op. cit. pp. 49—61.
that sometimes the verdict is in form of a poem, and it must be doubted that a poem was an appropriate or even permitted form for a magistrate's verdict. The *hua-p' an* occur at least as early as under the Sung. The *Tsui-weng t'an-lu* by Lo Hua[^79][^42] has a whole chapter of *hua-p' an* dealing with such cases as a prostitute's application for marriage, monks fighting each other, or a man who posed as a *chin-shih* without having passed the degree. It might also be pointed out that such decisions of real or fictitious cases have an almost exact parallel in European literature. To the venomous pen of Pietro Aretino we owe the obscene and witty *Dubbi amorosi e Risoluzioni*. They are poems where a sexual behavior or action is described in a few verses and the doubt (*dubbio*) expressed whether that action is punishable according to secular or ecclesiastic law. The decision (*risoluzione*) follows, sometimes using legal terms, even Latin ones. These forty-eight pseudo-legal cases and their solutions invented by Aretino are excellent pornography and certainly masterpieces in this field.

The famous *T'ung-yüeh "Contract with a Bondservant"* by Wang Pao[^80] (1st century B.C.) is considered by some authors as a parody of the legal style[^43]. Another piece by Wang Pao, *"Criticizing the Bearded Slave"*[^81] is also a burlesque, as I have learned from J. R. Hightower[^44]. This would show that legal parodies are even as old as the Han dynasty. To the category of pseudo-legal documents and parodies we might also add the "Confessions of a Wife-fearer" (*Ch'ü-nei kung-chuang*[^82]), a very formal written deposition, full of literary allusions, where the sufferings of a henpecked husband are complained of in moving terms[^45]. The anonymous author, who apparently had never read the anthropological literature on China where he could have discovered that he lived in a patriarchal society, belongs, as it seems, to the late 19th or even early 20th century.

**VI.**

A particularly interesting and widespread genre are parodistic pseudobiographies. Here the *lieh-chuan* genre is used to describe non-human beings or even inanimate objects. These parodies of *lieh-chuan* are essays in personification. Personification itself is a literary device which does not easily lend itself to the Chinese language because of the absence of grammatical gender. Anthropomorphism is quite rare in Chinese literature and its function mostly taken over by reference to real or fictitious paragons of certain virtues or vices. But all Chinese personal and family names have inevitably also a meaning, which produced a tendency to play with names. Here, then,

[^79]: 羅煥：醉翁談錄
[^80]: 王褒：童約
[^81]: 貴韋髯奴辭
[^82]: 懼內侷狀

[^42]: Tsui-weng t'an-lu (Shanghai 1957) pp. 75--82.
[^43]: For the text and an annotated translation see C. Martin Wilbur, *Slavery in China During the Former Han Dynasty* (Chicago 1943) pp. 382--392.
[^45]: For the text see Hsiang-yen ts'ung-shu VII, ch. 2. 27a--28a, for an English translation Howard S. Levy, op. cit. pp. 5--9.
was a means to personify ideas and things, and already the fancy names in Chuang-tzu are early examples of this tendency. But to write a whole biography of a non-human object was a late development. I have elsewhere dealt with the genre of descriptive pseudo-biography and shall therefore give here only a short extract from my paper, where also full references to the texts may be found.

The first author who seems to have written a descriptive pseudo-biography is Han Yü (768—824). His Mao Ying chuan [86] "Biography of Mao Ying" reads at first glance like a normal biography of a real person but it is in reality a description of the writing-brush — Mao Ying means "Point of the Hair", an expression which in later times even became a metonymy for the brush. The text is a literary tour de force, crammed with learned allusions which have to be taken up piece by piece in order to elucidate the hidden meanings and ambiguities. Such a text was therefore not only a way to show off the author's erudition but also to test the readers' abilities to decode the meaning. In other words, it was a kind of literary riddle. I think it fairly safe to assume that Han Yü has written the Mao Ying chuan originally with no other purpose in mind than to amuse the educated reader. But later authors could apparently not bear the idea that a staunch Confucian like Han Yü could have written this for amusement only, and therefore saw in the Mao Ying chuan a satire against inefficient officials. This allegoric interpretation existed as early as the 12th century and is quite in harmony with the age-old tendency of Chinese literati to read a moral meaning into literary productions. The Mao Ying chuan was so famous that it was several times imitated, e.g. by Shen Han-kuang [84] (1620—1677) who wrote a Mao Ying hou-chuan.

A great number of pseudo-biographies has been written on the writing instruments brush, ink, ink-slab and paper [87]. It would be easy to fill a whole volume with these parodistic texts, belonging to a genre for which, it seems, Han Yü was responsible. To Han Yü is also attributed the Hsia-p'i hou Ko Hua chuan [85] "Biography of Mr. Ko Hua, Earl of Hsia-p'i". Here, Ko Hua is a rather obvious pun because the characters ko and hua together form the character hsüeh [88], "boots". In many other cases, however, the decoding of the biographee is not so easy, for example in Ssu-k'ung T'ü's (837—908) Jung-ch'eng hou chuan [87] "Biography of the Earl of Jung-ch'eng" — which means the mirror.

Under the Sung quite a number of pseudo-biographies were written by Su Tung-p'o. They are conveniently grouped together in his Collected Works.

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[83] 毛德傳  [84] 申涵光  [85] 下邳候華傳
[86] 華華  [87] 司空圖：空城傳
in some editions and cover such widely divergent parodistic biographies as those on the ink-slab, on tea, sweet and sour oranges, dumplings, scallops and the *tu-chung*[^88] tree the bark of which was used as a medicine. Chang Lei[^89] (1054—1114), a younger contemporary of Su, wrote a "biography" of the "Dutch Wife", that is, the bamboo cushion used during hot summer nights. This *Chu lu-jen chuan*[^90] was imitated by Yang Wei-chen[^91] (1296—1370) and by a 19th century scholar by the name of Chu Pan-hsiang[^92]. Yang Wei-chen is also the author of pseudo-biographies of the onion, of wine and of ink. A Yüan parody where the satirical and moralistic element is strong was composed by the famous playwright Kao Ming[^93] (1310—1380). His *Wu Pao chuan*[^94] "Biography of Mr. Black Treasure" is not a biography of a real person as my students thought when we were reading the *Cho-keng lu* where Kao's text appears, but a descriptive biography of paper money, by which Kao Ming deplores the demoralizing effects of money and money-making[^48].

A Ming author to whom we owe some humorous texts of that sort was Wu K'uan[^95] (1435—1504). Among other pieces he wrote a "biography" of the hot-water bottle, the *T'ang Wen chuan*[^96] ("Biography of Mrs. Hot Water"). And as Su Tung-p'o wrote a biography of dumplings, we should not be too surprised to find that the *Fu-hou chuan*[^97] by a Ch'ing anony rnisus is a description of bean-curd. There is even a whole book of pseudo-biographies of flowers and plants with illustrations, the *Ch'ün-tang Jieh-chuan*[^98] in 4 chüan, dated 1883[^49].

The genre of descriptive pseudo-biographies also spread from China to Korea[^50] where we find it from the 12th century on, and of course also to Japan. We might appropriately close this summary survey by asking ourselves what Ssu-Ma Ch'ien, the inventor of the *lieh-chuan*, would have thought had he known that this form of a biography has served later generations of writers for facetious and jocular purposes.

VII.

Not even the Confucian classics were safe from the parodistic writers — but this should not surprise us too much if we learn that God's own word, the *Bible*, and the liturgy of the Holy Mass have been parodied in the Middle Ages in Europe. Monastic humor made fun of holy texts without qualms, of papal *decretalia*, of Biblical passages and of every conceivable religious literary form. In the Christian Middle Ages we find satirical catechisms, a

[^88]: The article mentioned in note 46 will also contain a translation of this parodic biography with explanations.
[^48]: I saw a copy of this book in the library of the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto (Canada) but could not find the work in the bibliographies I consulted.
Gambler’s Mass, even a Venus Mass\textsuperscript{41}, so that the sinologue will not be shocked to learn that the number one classic, the \textit{Book of Changes} has been parodied frequently. P’an Shun\textsuperscript{49} (T. Tzu-su, fl. ca. 1325) wrote a satire against careerists by adding to the 64 \textit{kua} of the \textit{I-ching} the hexagram \textit{kun}\textsuperscript{100}, “versatility”. Ts’ai Wei\textsuperscript{101} (T. Ch’uan-lu) composed another \textit{kua}, namely, \textit{lin}\textsuperscript{102} “greed”, and the author, painter and calligrapher Ma Yuan\textsuperscript{103} (T. Wen-p’i, fl. ca. 1360), at one time prefect of Fu-chou\textsuperscript{104}, invented the hexagram \textit{pien}\textsuperscript{105} “flattery”. These three parodies are serious insofar as they have a moralistic purpose, which might excuse their authors in the eyes of the orthodox\textsuperscript{52}. But this excuse could not hold for the 19th century author Huang Chun-tsai\textsuperscript{106} (H. T’ien-ho hsien-sheng\textsuperscript{107}) who composed an \textit{I-ching} parody with the hexagram “crabs”, \textit{hsieh}\textsuperscript{108}, a facetious description of the delicious taste of suitably prepared crabs\textsuperscript{53}. Huang, however, was not the first to write a hexagram on crabs in the archaic language of the \textit{I-ching}. His parody with the hexagram “crabs”, \textit{hsieh}\textsuperscript{108}, a facetious description of the century by Ch’u Chia-hsien\textsuperscript{54}. A semi-serious \textit{I-ching} parody was composed by the Ming author Chou Pu-ts’un\textsuperscript{111}. He wanted to celebrate the birthday of a rich old man named Chia Chü-t’ing and wrote a text in \textit{I-ching} style on the hexagram \textit{shou}, “longevity” as a congratulatory address\textsuperscript{55}.

The Four Books have equally served for parodistic purposes. A rather famous humorous text in the form of a classical eight-legged essay is the “Dissertation on a Henpecked Husband”, \textit{Ch’ü-nei lun}\textsuperscript{112}. It is, moreover, a cento (chi-chü\textsuperscript{113}), a patchwork of phrases culled from the Four Books and rearranged to form an essay on wife-fearing husbands\textsuperscript{56}. An interesting variety of parody is conscious misinterpretation of the classics. In the 19th century there existed a sect called Sect of the Purifying Pill (lien-tan men\textsuperscript{114}) which used to adapt classical Confucian texts by twisting the original meaning so that is suited their purpose. A particularly strange example is this sect’s reinterpretation of \textit{Lun-yü} I, 1: “Is it not pleasant to learn with a constant perseverance and application\textsuperscript{115}?” (trsl. Legge). The sectarians used to practice the return of the vital essence by letting the breath pass

\textsuperscript{41} The authoritative work on Latin parody in the Middle Ages is Paul Lehmann, \textit{Die Parodie im Mittelalter} (2nd ed. Stuttgart 1963).

\textsuperscript{49} For the texts see Cho-keng lu ch. 10, p. 159—160.

\textsuperscript{52} Chin-hu hsi-mo ch. 1. 1a.

\textsuperscript{54} Chien-hu erh -chi\textsuperscript{110} 1. 11a.

\textsuperscript{55} ib. 9b—10a.

\textsuperscript{56} For text, translation and identification of the original passages see Arthur H. Smith, op. cit. (note 2), pp. 166—168. The cento is quite a frequent literary tour de force which occurs as early as the Liu-ch’ao period.
against the roof of the mouth. When the tongue was pressed against the palate something like the sound erh was produced if the vocalized breath was emitted. This technique was regarded as a secret which should never be mentioned to outsiders. The sectarians therefore took the Lun-yü phrase as meaning “To learn erh and to practice it constantly is a thing never to be spoken of” 57.

A related phenomenon is the humorous or even obscene use of quotations from the classics. This kind of jokes has been extremely common in China throughout the ages but it is, though related to parody, something different because the creative element inherent in genuine parody is lacking. It is nevertheless a certain consolation to know that even the Confucian classics can be funny, for example when a young homosexual quotes Lun-yü XII.5 “Within the four seas all men are brothers” 59, or when a mistress who has been separated from her lover greets him after three months of absence with Lun-yü VII.13 “The Master for three months did not know the taste of flesh” 60.

VIII. 61

A few general remarks on wen-yen parodies in Chinese literature might be made in closing. There is hardly a genre that has not been parodied, from Confucian classics to funerary texts, official and legal documents, and literary forms such as poems, essays and prose-poetry (fu). Although some major authors like Su Tung-p'o were great parodists it seems that the majority of them must be classed among the poetae minores. Maybe this playful pastime was not considered quite respectable, and only persons of the social and scholarly standing of a Su Tung-p'o could unashamedly indulge in humorous parody. Although some parodies are outright moralistic and serve the objective of social or political criticism there remains a great number which were certainly written with no other purpose in mind than to amuse the educated reader. It seems also that parodies of an individual author have been comparatively rare. In Chinese literary criticism the genre was perhaps more important than personal style — we Western sinologists at least have to admit that it is sometimes difficult if not impossible to distinguish a poem

57 Smith, op. cit. p. 190.
58 We should remind ourselves that according to the literary theory of the Greeks and Romans and also during the Middle Ages the erotic element belongs to the genre of comedy. Sex was considered funny. See Ernst Robert Curtius, Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter (Bern 1948) p. 435 note 3.
59 Yeh-l’an sul-lü [118] ed. PC, ch. 1. 27a—b.
60 In an early Ming short story, see Chien-teng yü-hua by Li Ch’ang-ch’i [117], Chien-teng hsin-hua, wai erh-chung [118], (Shanghai 1951) p. 183. — I had some time ago started to collect material on the humorous and obscene use of classical quotations but was driven to something near despair when I found how abundant the material is.
61 Considering the subject of this paper it has perhaps to be pointed out that any similarity with the Eight-legged Essay is purely coincidental.
written yesterday from one written one thousand years ago. There are, apart from indications based on the content matter, very few clues to ascribe a certain piece of literature at first sight to a certain author. If there were ever eccentric authors in China (eccentric by their style and not by their way of life), do we find that they were parodied? I can, at the moment, not answer this question.

Parody presupposes that the reader is familiar with the original. It therefore has a conservative and even classical touch. The more powerful a tradition, the greater may be the temptation for parody once the tradition itself is no more accepted with unquestioning belief. To parody innovations which seem absurd to the literary elite is a phenomenon, as it seems, quite rare in China, whereas parody by exaggeration is extremely frequent in modern Europe. Traditional genres were parodied in China, not so much the (few) literary innovators or individual writers. All this has, of course, changed when the traditional culture with its set of values disappeared from the scene. Parody in general flourishes as long as there exists a homogenous elite where the familiarity with the classics, in its broadest sense, can be assumed. "A compact cultural group that felt itself, with some reason, at the center of things" 62 was the social background where parodies could be appreciated best, and certainly the Chinese scholar-official class has been such a group, a group where from time to time the homo ludens produced parodies for the chuckling delight of the connoisseur.

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62 This phrase is taken from the Appendix *Some Notes on Parody* in Parodies. An Anthology from Chaucer to Beerbohm — and After, compiled by Dwight Mac-Donald (New York 1965) p. 567.