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Cover illustration Detail from Chinese *Anti-opium poster*, c. 1895. “*Quan shi jieshi dayan wen*” [Essay Urging the World to Give Up Opium]



West Lake from Wang Villa (Wang Zhuang), Lois Conner, 2008

The editor and editorial board of *East Asian History* would like to acknowledge the contribution made to the journal by Professor Geremie Barmé.

Geremie has been editor of *East Asian History* since it began under this title in 1991, and was editor of its predecessor *Papers on Far Eastern History* from 1989. In this period, he has sustained and promoted the importance of the journal as a forum for rigorous and original historical scholarship on China, Korea and Japan. Encouraging and exacting in equal measures, he has been generous to scholars taking their first steps in learned publication. During Geremie's tenure, *East Asian History* has become a major journal in the field, noted for its consistently high standards of scholarship and the care taken in its production. His editorship stands as an example and a challenge to the new editorial team.

Sometimes words flow easily
As soon as he grasps the brush;
Sometimes he sits vacantly,
Nibbling at it.

Lu Ji, from *Literature: A Rhapsody*

Translated by Achilles Fang, "Rhymeprose on Literature: The Wen-Fu of Lu Chi (A.D. 261-303)", *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 14, 3/4 (Dec., 1951): 527-66, p.534

或操觚以率爾或含毫而邈然
陸機文賦

The editor and editorial board of *East Asian History* would like to acknowledge the contribution made to the journal by Marion Weeks.

Marion joined what was then the Department of Far Eastern History in 1977. From that time, she was involved in various capacities with, first, *Papers on Far Eastern History*, and then *East Asian History*, for which she served as business manager from its inception. By the time of her retirement from the Division of Pacific and Asian History in November 2007, Marion had become the heart and soul of the journal.

Over the years she worked with many editors—Andrew Fraser, John Fincher, Sydney Crawcour, Ian McComas Taylor, Jennifer Holmgren, Geremie Barmé, Benjamin Penny—as well as numerous associate editors, copy editors, printers and, of course, countless authors and manuscript readers. All owe her an immense debt of gratitude.

East Asian History would certainly not have been the same without Marion—at times, without her, *East Asian History* may not have been at all.



Imperial Summer Retreat, Chengde, Lois Conner, 2000

CHINESE CONTEXTS, KOREAN REALITIES: THE POLITICS OF LITERARY GENRE IN LATE-CHOSŎN (1725–1863) KOREA

 Gregory N. Evon

One of the most remarkable developments in Korea in the twentieth century was the development of fiction as a genre that could stand side by side with poetry in a broadened conception of literature. In this respect, Korean literature as it is now conceived was a twentieth-century creation that was conceptual and categorical.

When Kim T'aejun 金台俊 (1905–49) published his pioneering *History of Korean Fiction* (Chosŏn sosŏlsa 朝鮮小說史) in 1933, a mere century had passed since Chŏng Yagyong 丁若鏞 (1762–1836), one of the leading intellectual figures of late Chosŏn, wrote a poem declaring his fidelity to core Confucian concepts that justified poetry.¹ For Kim, Korean (or to be precise, Chosŏn 朝鮮) literature encompassed all eras,² Sino-Korean (that is, classical or literary Chinese 漢文) and the vernacular, as well as a broad variety of verse and prose genres in those two distinct literary media. Importantly, his lengthy *History of Korean Fiction* redressed the longstanding Confucian antipathy against fiction.³ For Chŏng, by contrast, Confucian ideals were of the greatest importance, and poetry and fiction did not comprise a broader category of literature. Indeed, the politics of literary genre came to the fore during the reign of King Chŏngjo 正祖 (r. 1776–1800) when fiction became a point of specific political contention and debate in Korea. Chŏng was involved in this debate from the outset

¹ Here I follow the division of Chosŏn 朝鮮 (1392–1910) commonplace in Korean historiography, namely, into the early (1392–1469), middle (1470–1724), late (1725–1863), and final (1864–1910) stages.

² As indicated here, Kim T'aejun's use of "Chosŏn" was often inclusive, referring to not only the Chosŏn dynasty *per se* but also the dynasties and kingdoms that preceded it.

³ *History of Korean Fiction* has been reprinted in modern orthography with annotations in Kim T'aejun, *Kim T'aejun munbaksaron sŏngip* [Kim T'aejun's Selected Writings on Literary History], ed. Chŏng Haeryŏm (Seoul: Hyŏndae sirhaksa, 1997), pp.13–213. This text preserves many of Kim's other literary-historical writings. These are characterized by a conception of Korean literature that is immediately recognizable, including, among other things, Sino-Korean poetry (*Hansi* 漢詩) and Korean vernacular verse forms such as *sijo* 時調 and *kasa* 歌辭 (or 歌詞), the classical Sino-Korean short prose fiction by Kim Sisŭp 金時習 (1435–93) as well as longer vernacular prose fiction by Kim Manjung 金萬重 (1637–92), traditional poetry criticism (*sibwa* 詩話) as well as what were, in Kim T'aejun's day, modern novels.

The research for this paper was made possible by a grant from the Korea-Australasia Research Centre (KAREC) at The University of New South Wales. Completion of the

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⁴ For "On Literary Style", see Chŏng Yagyong, *Tasan nonsŏl sŏnjip* [Selected Essays of Tasan (that is, Chŏng Yagyong)], ed., annot., and trans. Pak Sŏngmu and Chŏng Haeryŏm (Seoul: Hyŏndae sirhaksa, 2001), pp.257–64, 447–50. This piece and the context in which it was written will be discussed below in detail.

⁵ For a brief overview of this broadened conception of literature in Qing China, see Stephen Owen, ed. and trans., *An Anthology of Chinese Literature: Beginnings to 1911* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1996), pp.910–11. For detailed studies on printing and literature in China, see Cynthia J. Brokaw and Kai-wing Chow, eds, *Printing and Book Culture in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), especially Anne E. McLaren, "Constructing New Reading Publics in Late Ming China," pp.152–83, Cynthia J. Brokaw, "Reading the Best-Sellers of the Nineteenth Century: Commercial Publishing in Sibao," pp.184–231, and Katherine Carlitz, "Printing as Performance: Literati Playwright-Publishers of the Late Ming," pp.267–303.

when he submitted "On Literary Style" (Munch'e ch'aek 文體策) to the king.⁴ In it, Chŏng argued that fiction posed dangers to the state itself, and shortly thereafter, King Chŏngjo commenced his political program for the Rectification of Literary Styles (*Munch'e panjŏng* 文體反正).

But for Chŏng, even poetry was not important in and of itself and was acceptable only if it embodied Confucian moral and political ideals by demonstrating the poet's loyalty to the sovereign and concern for the people, thereby aiding the poet's moral cultivation. This led Chŏng to consider the relationship between form and content, and he concluded that Sino-Korean poetry was not good because, in his view, Korean poets emphasized form over content. The literary-political basis upon which he made that judgment was nonetheless fundamental to the Chinese Confucian tradition of poetry and hence the Korean poetic tradition as well. In this respect, Chŏng's thought represented a radical distillation and sharp articulation of ideas that for over one thousand years had formed basic conceptions of literary activity among the literati in Korea. Where he differed, he did so in terms of degree, emphasis and application of ideas, not in terms of the basic ideas themselves. Nor was his conception of literature—that is to say, theory of poetry—necessarily sterile, for in emphasizing the importance of the full range of human emotions and feelings in poetry as well as their political function, he underscored the notion that poetry must embody a poet's intent, a core classical concept that justified his own focus on the local and the real as opposed to the abstract.

Agreement on fundamental principles did not preclude differences in application, however, and so it was in both China and in Korea from the thirteenth until the nineteenth century. As discussed below, the differences that arose during those six hundred years represent a mass of contradictions, paradoxes and ironies, and the numerous uses of the word paradox throughout this study are no mere stylistic tic. Indeed, the paradoxes are far more numerous than even suggested here, but most—and perhaps all—of these can be seen as originating in two facts which distinguished China from Korea: in China, commercial publishing and its three constitutive elements—printing, commerce, and the use of the vernacular—all of which implied readership; and in Korea, the creation of a little-used alphabet for writing the vernacular.

By the time Chŏng lived, commercial publishing in China had resulted in a broadened conception of literature that included plays, drama, poetry, lyrics, songs, and classical as well as vernacular fiction—in other words, a conception virtually identical to Kim T'aejun's.⁵ By contrast, Chŏng could not accept such a broadened conception of literature, and the paradox here is significant: Chŏng's emphasis on poetry's political function ignored the use of the Korean alphabet for the vernacular despite the fact that the importance of the spoken word was conceived in classical terms as fundamental to poetry's political function.

The foundations and implications of this contradiction have largely been ignored in the scholarship on Chŏng, and in part, this oversight is explicable in light of Chŏng's varied activities. A lifelong committed Confucian, he was also one of the important figures involved in Catholicism in its early stages in Korea (though he would later at least formally renounce his beliefs as inconsistent with Confucianism).⁶ At the same time he maintained a close relationship with Ch'ōui Ŭisun 草衣意恂 (1786–1866), one of the most important Buddhist masters during the late years of the Chosŏn dynasty (1392–1910),⁷ and left a voluminous body of writings on a vast array of topics, including one of the largest collections of poetry in Korean history. As a consequence, the range and depth of Chŏng's writings and activities have allowed for a variety of approaches for understanding the complexities of late Chosŏn as well as Chŏng's position within that political and intellectual milieu.

In addition, Chŏng's reputation has benefited from the fact that he was involved in Practical Learning (*Sirhak* 實學), a scholarly trend, discussed below, that in the twentieth century came to be seen in a nationalist light since it represented a willingness to attempt new approaches to problems facing Chosŏn. Similarly, as emphasized throughout scholarship on Chŏng's literary thought, his writings about poetry and poetic theory stressed Confucian notions of loyalty to the sovereign, service to the state, and concern for the people as fundamental to poetry. They were therefore in broad agreement with conceptions of literature that would exert great appeal in the twentieth century due to Korean nationalism.⁸ Moreover, late in life Chŏng wrote a poem in which he described himself in one couplet as a poet of Chosŏn. In the late 1970s that poem—or couplet, to be precise—began to attract interest, and Chŏng's "Proclamation of Chosŏn Poetry" (*Chosŏn si sŏnŏn* 朝鮮詩宣言), as it has come to be known, has therefore helped to secure Chŏng's position in a broader nationalist conception of Korean literary history.⁹

Yet if there is much overlap between the values espoused by Chŏng and twentieth-century Korean nationalist views of literature, there is nonetheless an all-important point on which a core assumption of modern Korean nationalism runs aground in relation to Chŏng, namely the Korean language as the embodiment of the Korean nation. Theoretically, Chŏng could have written in the Korean vernacular, but this poem was instead written in Sino-Korean (as were virtually all his writings, with only a few partial, curious, and important exceptions discussed below). In addition, it was explicitly modeled on a poem by the great Tang 唐 dynasty (618–907) poet Bai Juyi 白居易 (772–846), and in it Chŏng also implicitly praised the poetry of Bai's great contemporary, Han Yu 韓愈 (768–824). Chŏng mentioned no other Korean poet apart from himself, however, and instead situated himself in the tradition of Bai and Han rather than any Korean tradition, no matter how conceived.

⁶ For a nuanced study of this issue, see Don Baker, "A Different Thread: Orthodoxy, Heterodoxy, and Catholicism in a Confucian World," in *Culture and the State in Late Chosŏn Korea*, eds JaHyun Kim Haboush and Martina Deuchler (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), pp.199–230.

⁷ For a detailed study in English on this important figure, see Young Ho Lee, *Ch'ōui Ŭisun: A Liberal Sŏn Master and an Engaged Artist in Late Chosŏn Korea* (Fremont: Asian Humanities Press, 2002).

⁸ There is a considerable body of scholarship on Chŏng. Sustained interest in his literary thought commenced in the 1970s along with a more general interest in Korean classical literary theory. Now it is recognized that any overview of Korean classical literary theory must take Chŏng into account. For general studies, see Song Chaeso, "Tasan Chŏng Yagyong-ŭi munhangnon" [The Literary Theory of Tasan Chŏng Yagyong], *Taedong munhwa yŏn'gu* [Researches on Korean Culture] 18 (1984): 139–50 and Kim Hŭnggyu, *Han'guk kojŏn-munhak-kwa pip'yŏng-ŭi sŏngch'al* [Reflections on Korean Classical Literature and Criticism] (Seoul: Koryŏ taehakkyo ch'ulp'anbu, 2002), pp.213–40. For more detailed treatments—and among the finest medium-length studies—see Chŏng Taerim, *Han'guk kojŏn-munhak pip'yŏng-ŭi ibae* [Understanding Korean Classical Literary Criticism] (Seoul: T'aehaksa, 1991), pp.151–67, 223–53 and Chŏng Taerim, *Han'guk kojŏn pip'yŏngsa* [The History of Korean Classical Criticism] (Seoul: T'aehaksa, 2001), pp.509–48. The best full-length treatment is Kim Sanghong, *Tasan Chŏng Yagyong munhak yŏn'gu* [Researches on the Literature of Tasan Chŏng Yagyong] (Seoul: Tan'guk taehakkyo ch'ulp'anbu, 1991).

⁹ For this date, see Chŏng, *Han'guk kojŏn pip'yŏngsa*, p.525. It is unclear who first used this expression and when, but it is now commonplace. See, for instance, Sim Kyŏnggho, *Han'guk Hansi-ŭi ibae* [Understanding Sino-Korean poetry] (Seoul: T'aehaksa, 2000), p.104; Kim, *Tasan Chŏng Yagyong munhak yŏn'gu*, p.55; and Chŏng, *Han'guk kojŏn-munhak pip'yŏng-ŭi ibae*, p.225.

¹⁰ See, for example, Chin Chaegyo, "Yŏksa-ŭi killajabi, kŭ arŭmdaun piga—Tasan Chŏng Yagyong" [Guide of History, the Beautiful Elegies—Tasan Chŏng Yagyong], in *Han'guk kojŏn-munhak chakka-rŏn* [Essays on Authors of Korean Classical Literature], ed. Minjok munhaksa yŏn'guso kojŏn-munhak pun'gwa (Seoul: Somyŏng ch'ulp'an, 2003), pp. 464–65; Kim Sanghong, "Tasan-ŭi munhak-sasang" [The Literary Thought of Tasan (Chŏng Yagyong)], in *Kojŏn pip'yŏng yŏn'gu 2* [Research in Classical Criticism 2], ed. Kugŏ-gungmunhak-hoe (Seoul: Taehaksa, 1998), pp. 424–25; Chŏng, *Han'guk kojŏn pip'yŏngsa*, p. 524; and Cho Dongil, *Han'guk munhak t'ongsa* [Comprehensive History of Korean Literature] (Seoul: Chisik sanŏpsa, 2003), Vol. 3, p. 156.

The condensed overview of literary trends in Ming 明 (1368–1644) and Qing 清 China (1644–1911) contained in the poem provides a convincing explanation for this apparent anomaly, and this poem in turn must be read against the broader background of Chŏng's own literary experiments and literary-theoretical writings. Seen in this way, it becomes clear that there is no anomaly (as argued in greater detail below) and instead the tendency to view this poem in nationalistic terms effectively distorts it by suggesting that it marked a break from Chinese poetic conventions and represented a sense of racial/national consciousness.¹⁰

First, it is demonstrably false to describe this poem as inaugurating a new form of poetics that distinguished Korea from China. The poem followed the basic rules of Chinese prosody, and in this way, embodied fundamental ideas on the relationship between form and function that Chŏng emphasized in letters to his sons. Second, Chŏng's reference to himself as a Chosŏn poet represented his recognition of his time and place in history. Without such recognition, poetry would be meaningless, according to Confucian views on poetry's sociopolitical functions which were predicated on the assumption that poetry derived from and dealt with actual events. Chŏng's poem thus was not a proclamation of racial or national consciousness as typically conceived, but rather, as made clear in his references to Bai and Han, an affirmation of Confucian literary values to which he was committed both as a poet and as a Confucian.

The critical question is why Chŏng felt compelled in 1832 to articulate so forcefully and clearly his commitment to Confucian literary values? The answer to this question is found in changes in literary culture that developed in China during the Ming and Qing dynasties, leading to Chŏng's sense that Confucian literary values were being lost and must be protected. Yet Chŏng's understanding and application of these values were circumscribed by and reflected realities of late Chosŏn with respect to how literature could be conceived. Central to this was the idea of language itself. Equally important was the degree to which the state regarded literature as political and therefore something to be controlled. Although King Chŏngjo's Rectification of Literary Styles bore a superficial resemblance to events in Qing China, the differences ultimately were more important.

In order to address these tangled issues coherently and efficiently, this article commences with an overview of the problems posed by fiction in relation to fundamental ideas on literature's moral purpose drawn from the Confucian poetic tradition. The examples cited are Korean to contextualize the specific argument over fiction that erupted during the reign of King Chŏngjo. Sharp differences between China and Korea are examined in order to underscore the causes and consequences of the divergent attitudes towards literature that developed through their shared understanding of literature's functions—a paradox reflected in Practical Learning

and attitudes towards language. This in turn allows Chŏng's "Proclamation of Chosŏn Poetry" to be seen from a fuller literary, historical, and philosophical perspective that shows how and why he reacted to trends in China, how the Confucian conception of literature he embodied would persist into the twentieth century, and how it was transformed by commercial publication and changing attitudes towards language.

Poetics, Morality, and the Problem of Fiction

By the late nineteenth century, writing had existed in Korea for over one thousand years. Despite the development of a Korean script in the middle of the fifteenth century to record the vernacular, the majority of writings were in Sino-Korean and by the educated elite. As important, conceptions of writing were drawn from the Chinese tradition. During the Chosŏn dynasty, these conceptions—essentially Confucian or Neo-Confucian—constituted the formal, acceptable, and political frameworks to judge writing or literature. Moreover, with few notable exceptions, literature meant first, poetry and second, writings by scholar-officials. To the limited extent that one can speak of literary criticism in Korea during Chosŏn, one means poetry criticism and—with few major exceptions—specifically criticism of poems by either Chinese poets or the Korean literati (*yangban* 兩班).

This is understandable insofar as the *yangban* had the necessary education and leisure for both reading and composing poetry, but such activities also had the longstanding imprimatur of the Confucian tradition due to the belief that Confucius himself compiled the *Classic of Poetry* (*Shijing* 詩經) for the purpose of what Owen has called "moral education".¹¹ Poetry was thus conceived in moral and political terms due to its ability to influence, to educate and, ultimately, to instill goodness in oneself and others. To be sure, not all poetry was moral or political in any obvious sense—indeed, it seems fair to say that blatant moral or political characteristics were the exception—but poetry in general was nevertheless conceived in those terms and was therefore an acceptable activity among the *yangban*. As a consequence, it was possible to criticize poets for failing to fulfill those functions by which poetry was justified. Indeed, as will be seen below, Chŏng Yagyong wrote a letter to his two sons in which these classical Confucian ideas surrounding poetry are articulated in detail with perfect clarity.

By contrast, the attitude of the *yangban* towards fiction in Korea can best be summarized as one of general distrust and disregard, so that by and large they ignored fiction. This is not to say, however, that no *yangban* wrote or commented on fiction, nor is it to suggest that there was no fiction in Korea. While space does not permit a full and properly nuanced explo-

¹¹ Stephen Owen, *Readings in Chinese Literary Thought* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), p.39.

¹² Peter H. Lee, *Explorations in Korean Literary History* (Seoul: Institute for Modern Korean Studies, 1998), pp.15–16.

¹³ Owen, *Readings in Chinese Literary Thought*, pp.26–7.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.88–9, 465–66, 473.

¹⁵ For a detailed examination of this, see Daniel Bouchez, “A Neo-Confucian View of Literature: Kim Ch’unt’aek’s Comments on the *Namjŏng-ki*,” *Korea Journal* 19.5 (1979): 27–32.

ration of this complex historical question, this is a fair characterization of the dominant attitude, and it stemmed from three interrelated factors.

First, as Peter H. Lee has noted, fiction might depict reality at variance with what was officially sanctioned.¹² Second, there simply was no classical authority for fiction in the Confucian and Neo-Confucian canon, and if fiction was not necessarily subversive in content, it was nonetheless subversive as a genre simply because one could not appeal to the authority of tradition to justify it. Third, since general ideas associated with literature were founded on those ideas that justified poetry as discussed above, fiction fell short in one specific and important respect.

That is to say, poetry’s functions were conceived in relation to the idea that a poem arose as a response to something real and could convey truth, specifically the truth of what the poet intended to express. Encapsulated in the often-quoted statement that “the poem articulates what is on the mind intently” (詩言志), this idea was, as Owen has emphasized, “the canonical statement of what poetry ‘is’ and remained “the given assumption under which all later poetic theory [developed] or with which it [had to be] reconciled”.¹³ This was the case in the Korean context as well, and it also applied to fiction. But because by definition fiction is untrue, it was impossible wholly to reconcile it with this fundamental conception of poetry.¹⁴

On the other hand, one might resort to Confucian ideas in an attempt to justify a certain piece of fiction in certain circumstances, and in the Korean tradition, this possibility is most clearly exemplified in comments on *A Nine Cloud Dream* (Kuunmong 九雲夢) and *The Record of Lady Sa’s Journey to the South* (Sassi namjŏnggi 謝氏南征記), both by Kim Manjung 金萬重 (1637–92). In the case of *A Nine Cloud Dream*, the Confucian notion of filial piety could be brought to bear on this Buddhist-influenced work by saying (probably correctly) that Kim wrote it in order to comfort his ailing mother. The defense of *The Record*, however, is more complex and interesting, and ultimately, more significant. Kim Ch’unt’aek 金春澤 (1670–1717), the author’s grandnephew, argued that the work fully conformed to the Confucian conception that literature must serve moral and political ends because it was educational, fostered moral goodness, and was written in the spirit of a loyal Confucian minister admonishing his sovereign—a point of particular relevance since the action of the story in many respects closely resembled events at the court of King Sukchong 肅宗 (r. 1674–1720) in which Kim Manjung had become embroiled. In arguing this case, Kim Ch’unt’aek relied on the Confucian poetic tradition.¹⁵ This was not, however, a defense of fiction as a genre, but rather a defense of a specific piece of fiction which necessarily appealed to core ideas properly associated with poetry in general.

A specific piece of fiction thus might be defended through ideas associated with poetry, whereas poetry in general required no defense at all. But additional difficulties which had become highlighted in interpretations of the *Classic of Poetry* provide another perspective through which to appreciate the problems posed by fiction, namely, the complex question of judging the intent of a piece of writing and understanding the conditions in which it was written. A related question concerned an individual reader's proper moral response to it, by recognizing either its morality or immorality.¹⁶

These problems were typified in the short fiction of Pak Chiwŏn 朴趾源 (1737–1805), and although a fraught topic, there is enough information to make two specific claims. First, Pak's short fiction demonstrated the potential use of fiction as a vehicle of moral and political criticism by addressing the difference between lived reality and the ideals espoused by Chosŏn Neo-Confucians.¹⁷ Second, seen against the broader context of late-Chosŏn literary history, there is good evidence to suggest that Pak conceived of his fiction precisely in this way—as an extension or application of the idea that poetry/writing was to serve moral and political ends.¹⁸

Yet even so, such writings—whatever their intentions—were open to the charge that they might incite immorality. More important, the use of fiction even for moral and political ends meant that poetry's function was at best being usurped by a genre which was not sanctioned by the Confucian tradition. In turn, this could be seen as a potential challenge to the authority of the state itself, and in late eighteenth-century Chosŏn, this is exactly what happened.

The Conflict over Fiction and Chŏng Yagyong's Advice to the Throne

During the reign of King Chŏngjo, fiction as a genre became a political issue. As noted at the beginning of this article, towards the end of 1789 Chŏng Yagyong submitted a lengthy opinion-piece—apparently at the king's request—entitled “On Literary Style” advising that the king impose a ban on fiction.¹⁹ Central to Chŏng's views—and the core reason for his advice that fiction be banned—was his conviction that a restoration of classical conceptions and categories of literary genres was of paramount importance to the regulation of the state. The section on fiction, which Chŏng refers to as “storytellers' miscellanies” (*p'aegwan chapsŏ* 稗官雜書), reads as follows:

¹⁶ Owen, *Readings in Chinese Literary Thought*, pp.454–56.

¹⁷ Pak's fictions were largely satires of the hypocrisy of the elite class, and since two of these, “The Biography of Master Hŏ” (Hŏsaeng jŏn 許生傳) and “The Tiger's Rebuke” (Ho jil 虎叱), were written while he was part of an embassy to China in 1780, it seems likely he was inspired by *The Unofficial History of Confucian Scholars* (Rulin waishi 儒林外史), a long series of loosely related stories by Wu Jingzi 吳敬梓 (1701–54) which satirized the pretensions of the ruling class. *The Unofficial History* was finished around 1750 and published between 1770 and 1780. For the dates of Pak's two stories, see Pak Chiwŏn, *Yŏnam Pak Chiwŏn sosŏl-chip* [Collected Fiction of Yŏnam Pak Chiwŏn], eds and trans Yi Kawŏn and Hŏ Kyŏngjin (Seoul: Hanyang ch'ulp'an, 1994), pp.173–75. For *Rulin waishi*, see Hsien-yi Yang and Gladys Yang, trans., *The Scholars* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992).

¹⁸ See Chŏng, *Han'guk kojŏn-munhak pip'yŏng-ŭi ihae*, pp.134–51, 439–42.

¹⁹ See Chŏng, *Tasan nonsŏl sŏnjip*, pp.257–64, 447–50. For a discussion of Chŏng's attack on fiction, see Kim, *Tasan Chŏng Yagyong munhak yŏn'gu*, pp.76–82.

²⁰ Chŏng, *Tasan nonsŏl sŏnjip*, p.449.

²¹ Kim, *Tasan Chŏng Yagyong munhak yŏn'gu*, p.78.

²² Although the context in which King Chŏngjo undertook his Rectification of Literary Styles defies any neat characterization due to its overwhelming complexity, two points must be stressed. First, the program itself was a radical response to a web of interconnected social, political, economic, and philosophical/religious problems that were at least partly rooted in factional disputes among the ruling and educated elites, which were not necessarily one and the same. Second, these problems developed partly under foreign influence—specifically, commercial trade, which facilitated the flow of ideas, and Catholicism, which brought awareness of Western science and thought—and therefore, the origins and implications of these problems were not simply domestic. For a detailed analysis of Chŏngjo's Rectification of Literary Styles as well as his more general cultural policies, see Chŏng Okcha, *Chosŏn-bugi munhak-sasangsa* [The History of Late Chosŏn Literary Thought] (Seoul: Sŏul taehakkyo ch'ulp'an-bu, 1997), pp.85–113.

²³ Kim, *Tasan Chŏng Yagyong munhak yŏn'gu*, p.78. For a description of these events given in the chronology of Pak's life, see Pak, *Yŏnam Pak Chiwŏn sosŏl-chip*, pp.198–99.

Storytellers' miscellanies are major human calamities. Their licentious words and nasty stories disorder people's spirits, and their wicked emotions and eerie traces confuse people's knowledge. Through fanciful and strange talk, they [storytellers and their miscellanies] thereby encourage people's arrogance, and through charming and fragmented writings, they dispel people's vigorous energy. If boys engage in this, they will treat their work on the classics and histories as a bamboo fence [that is, as unimportant]. If prime ministers engage in this, they will treat the business of the king's court as useless. If women engage in this, their good works in weaving hemp and plaiting cord eventually will come to naught. Of the calamities of heaven and earth, what is more severe than this? Your royal subject thinks that if starting now [the king has] that which is prevalent in the country [that is, storytellers' miscellanies] completely gathered up and burned and those who return [to Chosŏn] having bought [storytellers' miscellanies] at Beijing markets judged with the laws of the death penalty, then probably heresy will weaken and perish and literary style will once and for all be renowned.²⁰

King Chŏngjo agreed with this assessment, and within the month, he imposed a ban on fiction and ordered that any candidate sitting the civil service exam whose compositions suggested that he had read fiction was to be punished and barred from retaking the exam for a set period.²¹ In addition, he soon launched his Rectification of Literary Styles, a comprehensive program of literary-cum-political reform which he spearheaded throughout the 1790s until to his death in 1800.²² When it was finally discovered in 1793 that Pak Chiwŏn's fictions were at least partly to blame for the decreasing quality of literary style (one must assume due to their popularity), Pak was forced to forfeit property and become a copyist in lieu of a harsher penalty.²³

Although Pak and Chŏng were to all appearances in complete agreement on the Confucian theory that literature was to serve moral and political ends, they nevertheless differed with respect to the practical application of that theory. On that point, however, Chŏng had the upper hand simply because there was nothing in the classical Confucian tradition to justify fiction. As a consequence, it seems that for Chŏng, anything short of outright denunciation of fiction as a genre represented the thin edge of the wedge that risked rendering the philosophical foundations of governance incoherent. This was so because it was tantamount to admitting a shortcoming in the existing conceptual and literary tools. In short, one might employ fiction according to ideas drawn from the Confucian poetic tradition, but fiction nevertheless was not poetry.

Moreover, it seems reasonable to think that the fact that fiction was not regulated and strictly defined in form in the way that poetry was, further underscored its irregularity, ambiguity, and amorphousness—qualities that sat in direct opposition to the Neo-Confucian emphasis on order

in all things. In this respect, there is a remarkable and generally overlooked symmetry between Chŏng and Pak inasmuch as both looked to literary forms that allowed them to articulate as freely as possible what they wished to say.²⁴ As will be discussed below, the specific source of Chŏng's dissatisfaction was the limitations imposed by regulated verse (S.K. *yulsi*; Chin. *lǜshi* 律詩), but he could look to classical precedent to justify his dissatisfaction and contextualize his solutions to the problem itself. By contrast, there simply was no such classical precedent for fiction.

Although Chŏng and Pak can be grouped together as kindred intellectual spirits under the rubric of Practical Learning, a contemporary trend in scholarship discussed below, the opposition in their attitudes towards fiction suggests that such a generality can easily lead to overly simplistic conclusions. This underscores an important point made in a related context by Setton, who has argued that scholarly methodology anchored in philology was the defining feature common among the disparate figures now identified as exponents of Practical Learning.²⁵ Shared principles did not preclude differences in application, however, nor did they axiomatically lead to agreement on all specifics.²⁶

This holds true in relation not only to Chŏng and Pak, but Korea and China in general. Indeed, the sharp difference between Chŏng and Pak must be seen in light of the multiple contexts of Chinese literary theory and intellectual history since it was in those contexts that they partly situated themselves. However, the fact that fiction as a genre became a political issue occupying the attention of King Chŏngjo points to particular socio-cultural realities in Korea that differentiated it from China, so that points of theory common to both nonetheless were ultimately influenced by different forces and had different consequences. This complex topic, largely ignored in Korean literary scholarship, is worthy of specific attention and cannot be addressed in detail here. What follows instead is a sketch of the main differences in order to understand the broader historical and intellectual significance of Chŏng's attack on fiction as well as his own literary activities.

China and Korea: Points of Divergence and Their Impact on Fiction

It is a commonplace in both Chinese and Korean literary scholarship to emphasize Confucianism's hostility to fiction.²⁷ Yet despite this shared attitude, fiction existed in both China and Korea, and although the Korean tradition was clearly influenced by the Chinese, a full understanding of the nature of that influence seems set to remain out of reach for the foreseeable future. On one hand, this difficulty arises from a disparity in the

²⁴ Cf. Ko Misuk, "Chosŏn-hugi pip'yŏng-damnon-ŭi tu kaji hŭrŭm" [Two Currents of Late Chosŏn Critical Discourse], *Taedong munhwa yŏn'gu* [Researches on Korean culture] 41 (2002):1-25. The general distinctions Ko draws between Chŏng and Pak are convincing in broad terms, yet some of the explanations based on literary theory and philosophy offered for these distinctions are less convincing precisely because it is not clear that the fundamental issue was philosophical or theoretical. Instead, they seem to have differed most clearly in their practices of literature—differences that could exist despite shared philosophical and theoretical conceptions of literature.

²⁵ Mark Setton, *Chŏng Yagyong: Korea's Challenge to Orthodox Neo-Confucianism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), p.11.

²⁶ If Chŏng and Pak can be most clearly distinguished in terms of their application of literary ideas rather than the ideas themselves, it is therefore not surprising that they also differed in their approaches to Practical Learning. Kim Haksŏng's detailed study of Pak's "The Biography of Master Hŏ" provides much to underscore this point, implicitly suggesting that differences in the application of ideas existed despite shared philosophical and ethical convictions and further, that for Pak, fiction itself provided a medium for exploring the ethics and aims of Practical Learning. See Kim Haksŏng, "Yŏnam-ŭi sirhak-sasang-gwa 'Hŏsaeng-jŏn'-ŭi chakka-ŭisik" [The Practical Learning Thought of Yŏnam (Pak Chiwŏn) and Authorial Consciousness of "The Biography of Master Hŏ"], in *Han'guk kŭndae munbaks-a-ŭi chaengjŏm* [Disputed Points in Korea's Recent Literary History], [no editor given] (Seoul: Ch'angjak-kwa pip'yŏngsa, 1990), pp.135-60.

²⁷ See, for example, Y.W. Ma, "Fiction," in *The Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature*, ed. and comp. William H. Nienhauser, Jr. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), Vol.1, pp.31-48, at p.45, and in the Korean context, Kim Kwangsun, *Han'guk kososŏsa* [History of Korean Classical Fiction] (Seoul: Kukhak charyowŏn, 2001), p.42.

²⁸ In Chosŏn, knowledge of foreign vernacular languages was the responsibility of translator-interpreters (*yŏkkwan* 譯官). What is unclear is the degree to which the *yangban* during Chosŏn could understand written vernacular Chinese, and this question is generally overlooked in Korean literary scholarship in part, it seems, due to a pervasive and implicit tendency to conflate script with language. There are, to be sure, instances of colloquial Chinese grammatical forms in Sino-Korean writings, and one grammatical structure clearly derived from colloquial Chinese occurs, in fact, in the poem by Chŏng Yagyong quoted below, namely, the use of *shi* 是 as a copulative verb (that is, “A 是 B” meaning “A is B”) instead of the literary Chinese structure (that is, “A B 也” meaning “A is B”). [For the significance of this distinction, see Victor H. Mair, “Buddhism and the Rise of the Written Vernacular in East Asia: The Making of National Languages,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 53.3 (1994): 707–51, at p. 710.] This is, of course, a relatively straightforward example, but even assuming that the Korean literati’s training in classical Chinese enabled them to make sense of all colloquial grammatical forms—which is by no means self-evident—there is also the question of the colloquial lexicon, and there is good evidence to suggest that this would have posed difficulties. This question and the role of translator-interpreters is discussed further below.

²⁹ Prior to the invention of the Korean alphabet in the fifteenth century, Koreans had used Chinese characters partly for their sound value in two additional forms of writing, now generally called *hyangch'al* 鄉札 and *idu* 吏讀, although finer distinctions can be drawn. Neither, however, represented a viable long-term alternative for literature. In the first, which appears to have fallen into disuse during the Koryŏ dynasty (918–1392), the core lexicon was Korean, albeit transcribed in characters, and the purpose was to record native Korean songs (that is, *hyangga* 鄉歌). This function, of course, was rendered obsolete by the creation of the Korean vernacular alphabet. By contrast, *idu* and its derivatives were primarily—though not entirely—used until 1894 in adminis-

trative contexts by clerks or scribes for the purpose of parsing literary Chinese texts, hence the interpretation of *idu* as “clerk readings”. For an overview of *hyangch'al* and *idu*, see Gari K. Ledyard, *The Korean Language Reform of 1446* (Seoul: /Sin'gu munhwasa, 1998), pp. 31–69; for the background to the disuse of *hyangch'al*, see Chang Hyohyŏn, *Han'guk kojŏn sosŏlsa yŏn'gu* [Research on Korean Classical Fiction] (Seoul: Koryŏ taehakkyo ch'ulp'an-bu, 2004), p. 635.

amount of scholarship on the two traditions, so that tentative conclusions on each side become ever more tenuous for the purposes of comparison. But in another important respect, this points to the interrelationship of fundamental linguistic, intellectual, and sociocultural differences between China and Korea.

The question of language was central to these differences in terms of what could be read, what could be written, and therefore how language and, by extension, literature could be conceived. The significance of this question will be treated below, but what must be emphasized here is that compared to the Korean *yangban* during Chosŏn, China’s elite had access to a greater variety of literature in Chinese—classical and vernacular fiction, drama and songs. This crucial difference arose from the fact that the Chinese used by the Korean elite until the twentieth century was literary Chinese, not vernacular Chinese.²⁸ As a consequence, the *yangban* elite during Chosŏn had two options: literary Chinese and also, from the fifteenth century onwards, vernacular Korean, which the *yangban* elite overwhelmingly rejected.²⁹

Since the Korean elite had a vested interest in literary Chinese, mastery of which was their social prerogative and justified their sociopolitical power, it is easy to overlook a crucial element in their deference for it. That is, it was that language that connected them to all the texts—and the ideas embodied in those texts—that provided the conceptual foundations for governance and morality which literature was to serve. They saw literature, politics, and morality as interconnected, and their general disdain for the Korean vernacular must be seen in this light. To write in literary Chinese was to participate in a culture built on adherence to political and moral ideals that transcended the narrow confines of geography and time. To put the point more sharply, the culture represented by the Korean vernacular was not the culture of Korea’s ruling elite throughout virtually all of the Chosŏn dynasty. Moreover, sociocultural developments in Korea and China from the fourteenth century (that is, Chosŏn Korea and China’s Ming and Qing dynasties) generally moved in opposite directions. Korea grew more regulated at the hands of a small number scholar-bureaucrats—that is, the *yangban*—who, in the broadest terms, sought to control imaginative possibilities and create a static culture that would, they

hoped, replicate itself in perpetuity. China, by contrast, grew relatively freer with respect to people's ability to participate in various aspects of cultural life. There were no doubt many reasons for this divergence, and though it is difficult to distinguish causes and effects, two important points can be isolated.

First, from the fifteenth century onwards, the dominant influence on the Korean elite was the teachings of the Cheng brothers—Cheng Hao 程顥 (1032–85) and Cheng Yi 程頤 (1033–1107)—and particularly Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200).³⁰ The unrivalled position of Zhu Xi's teachings in Korea obviated any persuasive alternative vision of life, whereas in China, other teachings—principally those of Wang Yangming 王陽明 (1472–1529) and his followers—provided a counterbalance. The mere fact that there was an alternative to Zhu Xi was itself important, but an additional significant point was Wang's affirmation of the individual's ability to make moral distinctions, something that generally struck Chosŏn dynasty Neo-Confucians as the harbinger of moral chaos.³¹ Second, printing in China had profound and far-reaching cultural consequences, particularly in combination with commerce.³² The interplay of these forces led to the commercial printing of both canon-based educational texts (that is, the classics and authoritative exegetical works) and performance literature such as various song forms, drama, and plays that were largely products of an urban culture in which both the upper and lower classes participated. Ultimately, such oral-based stories intended for performance were committed to print. The key to this was money: commerce created affluence, and people had money to spend; publishers wanted their money, and the commercial publication of vernacular literature provided a means to obtain it.³³

As a consequence, there was in China, by the fifteenth century, complex interaction among high and low cultural forms (educational and literary) and among people themselves (in terms of occupation and class). This is seen most clearly in the teachings of a salt-maker's son, Wang Gen 王艮 (1483–1541), a disciple of Wang Yangming. Central to Wang Gen's activities was the belief that anyone might become a sage. Although this notion was not wholly absent from Zhu Xi and had been emphasized by Wang Yangming and then given a mystic-religious bent in the teachings of his disciple Wang Ji 王畿 (1498–1583), it was Wang Gen who painstakingly pursued the idea to its logical and practical conclusion in educating commoners. Another equally important reflection of that belief was found in the increasing and widespread popularity of morality books (*shanshu* 善書) and in particular, a specific type of morality book known as ledgers of merit and demerit (*gongguoge* 功過格). These books, used by scholars and commoners, men and women, rich and poor, represented a common morality based on Confucianism that was expanded by Buddhist and Daoist beliefs. The central idea contained in these books was

³⁰ Though often called the Cheng-Zhu school, for simplicity's sake in the Korean context, hereafter I refer to Zhu Xi alone.

³¹ Baker, "A Different Thread," pp.199–200, 207–8.

³² For a detailed study of this shift to print, see Susan Cherniack, "Book Culture and Textual Transmission in Sung China," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 54.1 (1994): 5–125. See also Wm Theodore DeBary and Irene Bloom, comps, *Sources of Chinese Tradition, Second Edition: Volume I, From Earliest Times to 1600* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), pp.587, 801.

³³ For a brief overview of the background to and consequences of commercial printing in relation to literature, see Owen, *An Anthology of Chinese Literature*, pp.556–58, 723–27, and for a more detailed study of the relationship between storytelling and fiction, see W.L. Idema, *Chinese Vernacular Fiction: The Formative Period* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1974).

³⁴ See DeBary and Bloom, *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, pp.855–64, 899–916. The question of morality books and ledgers of merit and demerit in Korea is both intriguing and frustrating. Without question, *The Record of Lady Sa's Journey to the South* by Kim Manjung, discussed above, easily can be classified as a morality book precisely according to the qualities described by DeBary and Bloom (p.899), despite the fact that it is generally accepted that it was written in response to actual political events. First, it teaches that evil is punished and virtue is rewarded. Second, Buddhism plays a pivotal role in the story by supporting Confucian morality. However, it seems fair to say that there is no established context for discussing morality books in the Korean tradition. Moreover, Kim is an unusual figure in the context of the Chosŏn dynasty, and is in some respects reminiscent of Ming Chinese thinkers such as Li Zhi, discussed below. Though a *yangban*, he was interested in Buddhism—then considered a heterodox religion by Neo-Confucians—and not only wrote two pieces of fiction as noted above, but moreover wrote *The Record* in the Korean vernacular. What remains unclear is whether or not Kim was influenced by Chinese morality books. All these issues in the Korean context require much further research. For a detailed study of the situation in China, see Cynthia J. Brokaw, *The Ledgers of Merit and Demerit: Social Change and Moral Order in Late Imperial China* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

³⁵ See Martina Deuchler, *The Confucian Transformation of Korea: A Study of Society and Ideology* (Cambridge: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1992), pp.12–14, 126–28.

³⁶ See An Ch'un'gŭn, *Han'guk ch'ulp'an munhwasa taeyo* [An Outline of the Cultural History of Publishing in Korea] (Seoul: Ch'ŏngnim ch'ulp'an, 1987), pp.201–5.

³⁷ For a detailed study of Li Zhi, see Jean-François Billeter, *Li Zhi, philosophe maudit (1527–1602)* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1979); for his thought and its philosophical and historical background, see W.M. Theodore DeBary, “Individualism and Humanitarianism in Late Ming Thought,” in *Self and Society in Ming Thought*, ed. W.M. Theodore DeBary (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), pp.145–247; and for a short

that an individual was responsible for *his* or *her* own fate.³⁴ Such an idea of individualism reflected a complex set of interacting forces—social, economic, educational, religious—that had no clear parallel for most (in fact, probably all) of the Chosŏn dynasty.³⁵ A crucial difference was the availability of books and people's ability to purchase and read them, a point specifically commented upon by Pak Chega 朴齊家 (1750–1805), who concluded that Qing China was a place of civilization, culture, and learning *contra* Chosŏn.³⁶

Perhaps the most dramatic example of such individualism is in the person of Li Zhi 李贄 (1527–1602), a Ming provincial official whose iconoclastic views eventually landed him in prison where he slit his own throat.³⁷ Li found the tendency to cloak personal self-interest in the garb of moral righteousness particularly odious. Instead, he counseled that the common good was truly that which is common to all, namely, the desire for wealth, sex, learning, and for individual accomplishment and status—in other words, the very things that might serve as topics for stories.³⁸ It is therefore not surprising that Li was an advocate of vernacular narrative fiction and drama, which he considered literature no less than the officially valued forms. Li thus embodied characteristics and views that Chŏng Yagyong regarded as not merely contemptible, but as dangerous to the individual, family, and state, and, therefore, worthy of severe state-imposed punishment.³⁹ Whether Chŏng knew of Li is uncertain, but it is clear that he located the source of such dangerous ideas in China itself, specifically Beijing, as he made clear in his submission to King Chŏngjo.

It is, however, uncertain to what degree Chŏng and his counterparts could comprehend such works of fiction or drama as advocated by Li, since knowledge of vernacular Chinese was rather the job of translator-interpreters, functionaries of lesser position, who accompanied officials on trips to Beijing.⁴⁰ Roughly half a century later, during the Enlighten-

/biographical overview, see K.C. Hsiao, “Li Chih,” in *Dictionary of Ming Biography 1368–1644*, eds L. Carrington Goodrich and Chaoying Fang (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), Vol.1, pp.807–18.

³⁸ DeBary and Bloom, *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, p.872.

³⁹ Li expressed these views in an essay, “On the Child-Mind” (Tongxinshuo 童心說) discussed further below, as well as in other comments and through his efforts editing popular works. For “On the Child-Mind,” see Li Zhi, *Fenshu/Xu fenshu* [A Book to Burn/Continuation of A Book to Burn] (Taipei: Hanjing wenhua shiye youxian gongsi, 1984), pp.98–99; for a discussion of Li's attitude towards vernacular

/language and literature, see Billeter, *Li Zhi*, pp.88–98, 250–62.

⁴⁰ In a postscript dated 1564 to an annotated edition of *New Tales (to Read while) Trimming the Wick* (Jiandeng xinhua 剪燈新話), a Ming Chinese collection of fiction by Qu You 瞿佑 (1341–1427) in the classical language, Yun Ch'unnyŏn 尹春年 (1514–67) noted that this collection was read by both Confucian scholars (that is, the *yangban* elite) as well as low-level, petty functionaries in Korea. The distinction Yun drew was between the grammar (that is, classical Chinese), which was understandable, and the lexicon, much of which was hard to grasp. Hence the need for his *Annotated Jiandeng Xinhua* (Chŏndŭng sinhwa kuhae 剪燈新話句解) which /OVER

ment era (*kaehwa* 開化, not to be confused with the Chinese Enlightenment of the seventeenth century), such men would become proponents of sociocultural and economic change. It therefore seems possible one element of Chŏng's distress over fiction was the apprehension that such functionaries might question the status quo and that their ability to do so was based largely on their ability to read what men such as Chŏng could not.⁴¹

This is not to suggest, however, that Chŏng did not question the status quo. Indeed, he emphasized that all were born with the same moral endowments so that anyone might become a sage. In this respect, his moral and political philosophy meshed with that body of practical and scholastic activities now generally known as Practical Learning inasmuch as this emphasis on innate moral potential was set against a range of prejudicial practices in the recruitment of government officials that at once entrenched inequality and excluded the talents of many otherwise able candidates.⁴² And though Practical Learning is an amorphous term that is easily misleading, Chŏng's association with it nonetheless suggests an additional point that distinguished the situations in China and Korea and ultimately exerted influence over ideas surrounding fiction.⁴³

When one speaks of Practical Learning in Korea, one means a form or forms of scholarship and activity influenced by an intellectual trend in China. Generally known as "evidential learning" or "textual criticism" (*kaozheng* 考證), this form of scholarship developed during the Qing dynasty and was, in part, a reaction to the possibilities of unbridled imagination and individualism exemplified in Li Zhi.⁴⁴ And compared to the writings of one such as Li, evidential learning/textual criticism was relatively cautious and can be characterized as "myopic", as David Faure has noted.⁴⁵

/at least were able to grow rich. Third, some were quite learned and as Ledyard has emphasized, made remarkable intellectual contributions. For a general overview, see Ki-baik Lee, *A New History of Korea*, trans. Edward W. Wagner with Edward J. Shultz (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), pp.174–75, 230, 250–51, 267–68 and Ledyard, *The Korean Language Reform*, pp.101–2, 382–89. Yet as Kang Sinhang has shown, the *yangban* typically regarded the study of colloquial languages with contempt, so much so that attempts even by the court to have *yangban* undertake limited study of colloquial Chinese proved futile. Given their attitude and the fact that knowledge of colloquial Chinese had no effect on their careers, it is not surprising that as Kang notes, they expended little to no effort studying it. For this, see Kang Sinhang, *Yijo sidae-ŭi yŏkbak-chŏngch'aek-kwa yŏkbakcha* [Translator-Interpreters and Translation-Interpretation Policies in the Chosŏn Dynasty] (Seoul: T'ap ch'ulp'ansa, 1978), pp.69–70.

⁴² See Chung Chai-Sik, *A Korean Confucian Encounter with the Modern World: Yi Hwang and the West* (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, Center for Korean Studies, 1995), pp.193–94.

⁴³ For a critical overview of the term Practical Learning in Korean historiography, see Setton, *Chŏng Yagyong: Korea's Challenge to Orthodox Neo-Confucianism*, pp.10–17.

⁴⁴ Owen, *An Anthology of Chinese Literature*, p.910.

⁴⁵ David Faure, "A Slice of Imperial History," review of Jonathan Spence, *Treason by the Book*, in *The Times Literary Supplement*, February 15, 2002: 27. Although this myopia reflected evidential learning's apolitical character which was influenced by Qing censorship, discussed further below, it nonetheless led to a greater understanding of China's intellectual heritage precisely because it emphasized exact scholarship. See Benjamin A. Elman, *From Philosophy to Philology: Intellectual and Social Aspects of Change in Late Imperial China* (Cambridge: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1984). For Elman's brief but interesting comments on the relationships among Chinese and Korean scholars, including Pak Chega, see pp.155–56.

/he prepared with Imgi 林芑 (fl. sixteenth century), who went to Ming China at least twice and once as a translator-interpreter in 1567. Another excellent example of this difficulty was cited by Ō Sukkwŏn 魚叔權 (fl. 1525–54), also an interpreter, who noted how Sŏ Kō-jŏng 徐居正 (1420–88)—one of early Chosŏn's most important literary, intellectual, and political figures—incorrectly glossed a Song-dynasty poem due to his ignorance of colloquial Chinese. For Yun's preface, see An Taehoe, *Yun Ch'unnyŏn-gwa sibwa-munhwa* [Yun Ch'unnyŏn and (his) Remarks on Poetry and Literature] (Seoul: Somyŏng ch'ulp'an, 2001), pp.24–5; for Imgi's position, see Chŏng Yongsu, ed. and trans., *Chŏn-dŭng sinbwa kubae* [includes reprint of original text] (Seoul: P'urŭn sasangsa, 2003), pp.390–91; for Ō, see Peter H. Lee, *A Korean*

Storyteller's Miscellany (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), pp.22, 213–14; and, for additional comments on the Korean literati's difficulties with understanding written colloquial Chinese, see Chang, *Han'guk kojŏn sosŏlsa yŏn'gu*, p.614.

⁴¹ The significance of translator-interpreters is well recognized in Korean historiography, and several points must be emphasized here. First, although they belonged to an hereditary class known as *chungin* 中人 (lit., "middle people") and were subordinate to the *yangban*, their knowledge of colloquial languages meant that they interacted with foreigners and thus, as Ledyard has noted, were extremely well informed—indeed, better informed than many of their social superiors. Second, despite their subordinate status, their skills and responsibilities meant that some of them

⁴⁶ Wm Theodore DeBary, "Neo-Confucian Cultivation and the Seventeenth-Century 'Enlightenment,'" in *The Unfolding of Neo-Confucianism*, ed. Wm Theodore DeBary (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975), pp. 141–216.

⁴⁷ See Martina Deuchler, "Despoilers of the Way—Insulters of the Sages: Controversies over the Classics in Seventeenth-Century Korea," in *Culture and the State in Late Chosŏn Korea*, eds JaHyun Kim Haboush and Martina Deuchler (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 1999), pp. 91–133. Here I have used "critical scholarship" because it is uncertain whether or not the figures discussed by Deuchler were aware of Qing evidential learning/textual criticism. But as Deuchler notes, these figures "anticipated scholarly trends that in the eighteenth century came to be known as 'evidential research'" and also paved the way for the scholarship of Yi Ik 李穡 (1681–1763) (p. 133). Yi did not take office, however.

⁴⁸ Ibid., pp. 92–3.

⁴⁹ Owen, *An Anthology of Chinese Literature*, pp. 910–12.

⁵⁰ On the question of censorship, see Elman, *From Philosophy to Philology*, pp. 14–17, and for the classification of fiction as a discrete category of knowledge, see pp. 164, 167.

DeBary has persuasively argued, however, that the range of thought in Neo-Confucianism allowed for two distinct interpretations of its possibilities: while it and Zhu Xi could be seen as amenable to the development of a critical, scientific outlook on the part of some Chinese, it was also possible for some Japanese to regard Neo-Confucianism as something that had to be abandoned for the Japanese Enlightenment to take place.⁴⁶ But if Faure's reference to that form of scholarship as "myopic" highlights a central paradox with respect to other attempts to see such intellectual activity as indicating a Chinese Enlightenment, the paradoxes are compounded in Korea where, in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, bitter scholastic controversies over exegetical and hermeneutic approaches to the Confucian classics became overtly political. This resulted in a sharpening and hardening of the conception of orthodoxy (and in some sense, even the creation of that conception) as defined not only in Zhu Xi's interpretations of the classics but as certain approaches to Zhu Xi's interpretations—in effect, the hermeneutics of hermeneutics. As Deuchler's study of these events shows, the principal sources of tension were critical scholarship and the question of such scholarship's freedom from state interference.⁴⁷

On this point, however, apparent similarities between Qing China and Chosŏn Korea masked profound differences while apparent differences masked profound similarities. The clearest example of this is found in the fact that whereas orthodoxy in Korea symbolized opposition to China's Qing (that is, Manchu) rulers,⁴⁸ the Qing rulers themselves became stern Confucians who, as Owen has emphasized, implemented a program which championed good morals and guarded against expressions of racial prejudice—a form of political correctness directly enforced by censorship at the state level and indirectly, by individuals' self-censorship. Yet in the same context, the conception of literature itself grew more complex. Editions of song lyrics, ghost stories, plays, and vernacular novels as well as tales in the classical language were published with critical commentaries, leading to a situation in which people pursued their own particular interests. And just as important, the Qing government itself sponsored many such scholarly activities.⁴⁹

Although it is true that the Qing government's sponsorship of scholarship in the late eighteenth century also enabled its "literary inquisition"—since by collecting writings, it was possible to censor what was politically dangerous, largely meaning anti-Manchu—serious attention was nonetheless paid to literature in a fashion unparalleled in Chosŏn Korea. In Qing evidential learning, fiction itself came to be seen as a discrete area of knowledge, so that in 1800 Sun Xingyan 孫星衍 (1753–1818) classified it alongside the classics and poetry as one of twelve categories of scholarship.⁵⁰ By contrast, scholarship coupled with anti-Qing sentiment led to Chosŏn's own literary inquisition in the late seventeenth and early

eighteenth centuries. Although this prefigured what would happen later in Qing China, it did so in a highly attenuated form focusing exclusively on points of philosophical interpretation of Neo-Confucianism. It was therefore, despite superficial similarities, radically different than the literary inquisition of the Qing which, as Elman emphasizes, “rarely entered into the realm of doctrines and ideas” and instead intended to “weed out anti-Manchu sentiments in books and manuscripts”.⁵¹

This final point leads directly to Chosŏn’s subsequent literary inquisition, namely, the reaction against fiction as a genre in which Pak Chiwŏn was implicated. At the conclusion of “The Biography of Master Hŏ”, one of the pieces of fiction Pak wrote prior to his punishment in 1793, the story’s protagonist outlines a plan to overthrow the barbarian Qing and restore the Ming. In this respect, the anti-Manchu sentiments expressed by Pak’s protagonist reflected those of other Chosŏn intellectuals who felt as if they and they alone were the inheritors to the true Neo-Confucian teachings of Zhu Xi. But in Pak’s hands, the notion of loyalty to the Ming and the Chosŏn political elite’s sense of superior virtue appear ludicrous. First, this sense of superiority was, in fact, already in place from when the Ming government had canonized Wang Yangming.⁵² Second, as Pak’s protagonist emphasizes, Chosŏn had capitulated to the Manchus and enabled the overthrow of the Ming, thereby breaching Confucianism’s cardinal tenet of loyalty. Pak’s protagonist thus mocks the effete, hidebound *yangban* who focus only on minutiae, failing to recognize that, in geographic and historical terms, they too are barbarians and far worse, are hypocrites and cowards. And it is here that the satire is most biting. As Pak’s protagonist articulates his plan to overthrow the Manchu Qing rulers, his interlocutor rejects the plan’s feasibility for one reason only—because it would require any participating *yangban* to abandon his white clothes and hairdo and adopt the Manchu style.⁵³

Pak’s depiction of the hypocrisy, self-absorption, and paralysis of Chosŏn’s ruling elite was provocative but wrong in at least one crucial respect. The state could act, as he discovered in 1793. Whether or not “[The Biography of] Master Hŏ” played any role in this, it is nevertheless ironic that the state punished one who had dared to articulate plainly that disdain for the Qing which was on the minds of so many in the Chosŏn elite. By design or accident, the Chosŏn state in this instance acted as proxy for the Qing. Although this appears to sit in sharp contrast to that sense of opposition to the Manchu barbarians *qua* the maintenance of Neo-Confucian orthodoxy which animated Chosŏn’s previous literary inquisition, it also reveals a significant continuity in the state’s ability to exert control over intellectual life.

On this point, Li Zhi provides a useful comparison. The fact that two of his books were titled *A Book to Burn* (*Fenshu* 焚書) and *A Book to Be*

⁵¹ Ibid., p.15.

⁵² Setton, *Chŏng Yag-yong: Korea’s Challenge to Orthodox Neo-Confucianism*, p.31.

⁵³ For “The Biography of Master Hŏ”, see Pak, *Yŏnam Pak Chiwŏn sosŏl-chip*, pp. 126–42, and in English, Peter H. Lee, ed., *Anthology of Korean Literature* (Honolulu, University of Hawai’i Press, 1981), pp. 213–21.

⁵⁴ Timothy Brook, *The Confusions of Pleasure: Commerce and Culture in Ming China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), p.171.

⁵⁵ For the reaction to Yun and an overview of the works in question, see An, *Yun Ch'unnyŏn-gwa sibwa-munbwa*, pp.11–96; for Kim, see Bouchez, "A Neo-Confucian View of Literature."

⁵⁶ See Idema, *Chinese Vernacular Fiction: The Formative Period*, pp.30–56 and for his judgment, p.32; also, Y.W. Ma, "Feng Menglung," in *The Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature*, Vol.1, pp.380–84.

Hidden (Cangshu 藏書) clearly indicates that he was aware his views were provocative. In spite of this—or more likely, due to it—his writings were popular, and indeed were popular enough among young elites to cause alarm even during the late Ming, forcing the government to impose a ban on bookstores selling them. But as Brook has observed, such policies were virtually impossible to enforce in the face of readers' tastes and commercial publication which catered to those tastes.⁵⁴

In Chosŏn, by contrast, the state's approach was far simpler and ultimately, more radical, and this reflected a remarkably different set of circumstances which gave the state far greater control. Indeed, Chŏng's discussion of fiction in "On Literary Style" made no mention of bookstores and instead focused exclusively on the purchase of fiction in Qing China by visitors from Chosŏn, something possible only for that tiny minority of people—which included translator-interpreters—who had the opportunity to travel to Beijing in the first place. Likewise, King Chŏngjo's Rectification of Literary Styles was marked by elegant simplicity which was *prima facie* enforceable: since those literate few capable of writing fiction in Chosŏn were predominantly *yangban* who aimed at taking civil service exams in order to attain government positions, the government could use the exams to control directly how the *yangban* wrote and indirectly, moreover, what they read. This was clearly reflected in the penalties prescribed by King Chŏngjo as discussed above.

Yet the difference that most sharply distinguished Chosŏn Korea, on the one hand, and Ming and Qing China, on the other, was not the means of state control but rather what the state aimed to control. In this respect, Chosŏn was again far more radical. During mid-Chosŏn the efforts of Yun Ch'unnyŏn 尹春年 (1514–67) to publish a modest number of seemingly innocuous titles provoked a backlash which outlived him. Later, Kim Ch'unt'aek 金春澤 (1670–1717) defensively argued the merits of *Lady Sa's Journey to the South* and sought to make it more acceptable by translating it from the original Korean vernacular into literary Chinese (if only for circulation in manuscript).⁵⁵ Feng Menglong 馮夢龍 (1574–1646?) provides a useful contrast. A respected historian and scholar of the classics who was also an admirer of Li Zhi, he engaged in a variety of literary activities as author, editor, compiler, and publisher of popular vernacular and classical language fiction, short tales and novels, as well as various types of drama and song, including folksongs in their regional dialect. Notwithstanding this, Feng became a government official, and far from hurting his prospects, Idema concludes that his literary activities might very well have benefited his career.⁵⁶

Despite a shared intellectual heritage in Confucianism, by the early nineteenth century, intellectual life in Chosŏn Korea and Qing China nevertheless had diverged so greatly that although the "Confucian

rejection of fiction as a legitimate literary genre”⁵⁷ might reasonably be cited as a generalization applicable to both and meaningful in relative terms in the individual context of each, it means very little for the purposes of comparing the two. Chosŏn Korea and Qing China were drastically different worlds, and this is exemplified in Chŏng’s own writings which affirmed what he saw as proper literary values.

The Localization of Poetry, the Problem of Language, and the Affirmation of Confucian Literary Values

Although Chŏng’s attitude towards fiction and literature in general was essentially conservative and represented his belief that the value of accepted literary categories needed to be reaffirmed for political stability, he nonetheless can be credited with having views on poetry that in some respects were not too far removed in theoretical terms from the individualism of Li Zhi, specifically as reflected in the poetics of Li’s friend, Yuan Hongdao 袁宏道 (1568–1610).⁵⁸ Chŏng no doubt would have recoiled in horror from any such comparison, and it is clear through two references that he knew of Yuan. Moreover, it seems possible that he himself recognized the appropriateness of such a comparison and was quick to distance himself from it, as seen in a record of a fishing expedition in which he compared his approach to fishing with that of Yuan’s, noting that Yuan’s approach was crazy and debauched.⁵⁹ But in spite of that, there are remarkable points of commonality between the two. Here I will limit myself to the three most important.

First, both Yuan and Chŏng recognized that conventional poetics (that is, the formal stylistic rules) were constraints that could be seen as limiting freedom of expression and spontaneity. Second, both Yuan and Chŏng emphasized sentiment or feeling (Chin. *qing*; S.K. *chŏng* 情) as central to poetry. Third, both Yuan and Chŏng looked to classical political foundations of poetry as models worth emulating.⁶⁰ So the question is, if Chŏng agreed with Yuan (and Li Zhi, as well) on such fundamental theoretical points, how can we account for the vast differences between them with respect to broader questions of literature and literary values?

Barring the possibility that Chŏng or Yuan were simply inconsistent, the most persuasive explanation seems to be that whereas Li and Yuan could discern a gap between fundamental theories of poetry and practice, Chŏng was constrained by language itself. That is to say, the starting point of Confucian poetic theory was poetry’s oral basis, that it spoke what was on a poet’s mind. That theory was known to Chŏng, just as it had been to any Korean literate in classical Chinese for well over a thousand years, and it was central to his emphases on freedom of expres-

⁵⁷ Ma, “Fiction,” in *The Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature*, Vol.1, p.45.

⁵⁸ For the relationship of Li and Yuan, see Billeter, *Li Zhi*, pp.249–50 and Owen, *An Anthology of Chinese Literature*, pp.726–27.

⁵⁹ Chŏng Yagyong, *Tasan munhak sŏnjip* [Selected Literature of Tasan], eds, annot., and trans Pak Sŏngmu and Chŏng Haeryŏm (Seoul: Hyŏndae sirhaksa, 1997), pp.125–26. Chŏng’s other reference to Yuan will be addressed below.

⁶⁰ Yuan particularly admired Qu Yuan 屈原 [c. fourth to third centuries BCE] and the lyrics attributed to him, whereas Chŏng admired Qu Yuan, but was more interested in the *Classic of Poetry*. For Yuan, see Owen, *An Anthology of Chinese Literature*, pp.726–27. For the question of sentiment with respect to Chŏng, see Kim, *Tasan Chŏng Yagyong munhak yŏn’gu*, pp.194–263, 323. For Chŏng’s views on Qu Yuan, see Chŏng, *Tasan nonsŏl sŏnjip*, pp. 343–44, 474–75 and Chŏng, *Tasan munhak sŏnjip*, pp.82–3, 173–83.

⁶¹ Owen, *An Anthology of Chinese Literature*, pp.807–10.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p.727.

⁶³ For a complete translation of “Tongxinsuo,” see *ibid.*, pp.808–10.

sion, sentiment, and the sociopolitical functions of poetry. Li and Yuan, however, recognized that the language they spoke was far removed from conventional literary language. The theoretical basis of poetry in oral expression seems to have provided the underpinning for their support of vernacular literature.⁶¹ This is well illustrated in the fact that Yuan regarded unpolished village songs as the finest literature of his time,⁶² a point of view which was at once provocative and yet perfectly sensible in light of the fundamentals of poetic theory and the Confucian emphasis on verse. Similarly, Li’s (in)famous essay, “On the Child-Mind”, clearly discussed how literary forms changed and developed. He saw in such historical changes a justification for fiction’s authenticity as a literary form as well as a reason to denounce the authoritative interpretations of the Confucian classics in what amounted to a full-frontal attack on Neo-Confucians’ self-conceived guardianship of culture.⁶³

By contrast, it was not possible for Chǒng to conceive of the Chinese language in precisely the same fashion as Yuan and Li. They could recognize diachronic changes and synchronic variations through what they read and what they heard and, in turn, relate such changes and variations to basic ideas of literature. To be sure, Chǒng knew by reading, for instance, that the compositional style of the *Classic of Poetry*—a product of long evolution which, according to tradition, was compiled by Confucius in roughly the sixth century BCE—was not the same as the various types of “music bureau” (Chin. *yuefu*; S.K. *akbu* 樂府) poems, a category that originated under the auspices of the Han 漢 government in the second century BCE. He also knew that these were different from regulated verse, a form that had come to fruition during the Tang 唐 dynasty (618–907) and was the style that by his time had been most favored by Koreans for over one thousand years. But such issues were for him largely matters of compositional style—words written on pages in texts. The problem that this caused Chǒng can be seen in what is perhaps the single oddest aspect of his own copious writings.

Commencing in 1802, while in exile, he turned his attention to the *yuefu* form, which by then was an extremely broad category with a history in Korea as well. It is clear, however, that Chǒng invoked the designation *yuefu* to highlight the sort of poems he was writing, poems focusing on local topics of a sociopolitical nature. In this localization of his own poetry, the designation referred less to stylistics than concepts, specifically two from the category’s long and complex history: first, its association with folksongs and second, its association with sociopolitical commentary, particularly as employed by the Tang poet Bai Juyi and others in what they regarded as “new *yuefu*” (*xin yuefu* 新樂府).

In writing these poems conceived as *yuefu*, Chǒng experimented with using Chinese characters as rebuses and phonograms to record vernacular

Korean expressions which he embedded into what otherwise were, in terms of language, classical Chinese poems.⁶⁴ Given that he had recourse to an alphabet invented for the Korean vernacular some three and a half centuries earlier, this appears strange. Yet it underscores an unavoidable problem: the literary language in which he wrote was for him the only vehicle capable of dealing with important matters, paradoxically even when such matters were related to the everyday language of the people. Reliance on literary Chinese cannot be dissociated from the fact that the framework for conceiving of literature was fundamentally Confucian. More importantly, such reliance was by Chŏng's time a refined Korean conception which was at once a violation of the core principle of oral priority and paradoxically an affirmation of the traditional emphasis on the sociopolitical functions of such oral articulation.

That is to say, it was technically possible for Chŏng to write in the Korean vernacular (for example, in *kasa* or *sijo* verse forms), but to have done so would have clipped the conceptual thread to the broader historical and sociopolitical implications of what he was writing, implications he was keen to emphasize. In effect, the complexity of developments in China over at least the preceding nine centuries had rendered the conception of literature exemplified in Chŏng as something at once recognizable in theoretical terms and overly inflexible and restrictive in its practical demands. There is good reason to think that Chŏng himself recognized the chasm that separated his own conceptions and practices of literature from what had developed in China.

The evidence for this is found in a long poem Chŏng wrote in 1832, when he was 70 years old. This piece is justly famous among scholars of Korean literary history and thought, and though written in classical Chinese, it is regarded as a proclamation of Korean poetry due to a single couplet that reads "I am a person from Chosŏn / Happily writing Chosŏn poetry".⁶⁵ Yet praise for this couplet as denoting Korean consciousness obscures rather than clarifies the importance of the couplet in the poem and in turn, the significance of the poem in the history of Korean literature. In order to understand this significance, it is necessary to understand the context, content, and form of the poem itself.

By 1832, Chŏng had already been engaged in "localizing" his poetry—focusing on Korea and things near to him. He was not so much announcing a new sense of purpose as reviewing what he had already done. Indeed, he wrote some poems the following year, then none in the two subsequent years, and finally, when he was 74 years old in 1836—the year of his and his wife's 60th wedding anniversary and the year he died—he wrote a single beautiful poem celebrating their joyful married life. In it, he recalled the day they married, noting that even after 60 years it seemed as if it were their wedding day. He lamented the swift passage of time,

⁶⁴ For examples, see Kim, *Tasan Chŏng Yagyong munhak yŏn'gu*, pp.163–93.

⁶⁵ See for example Kim, *Tasan Chŏng Yagyong munhak yŏn'gu*, p.57 and Hŏ Kyong-jin's "Introduction" (*Mŏrimal*) in Chŏng Yagyong, *Tasan Chŏng Yagyong sisŏn* [Selected poetry of Tasan Chŏng Yagyong], ed. and trans. Hŏ Kyŏngjin (Seoul: P'yŏngminsa, 1992), no page numbers.

⁶⁶ For this poem, see Chŏng, *Tasan Chŏng Yagyongsisŏn*, pp.148–49. For Chŏng's poetic output in these years, see Kim, *Tasan Chŏng Yagyong munhak yŏn'gu*, p.439.

⁶⁷ Chŏng, *Tasan munhak sŏnjip*, pp.301–23, 479–85.

⁶⁸ For this letter, see *ibid.*, pp.311–13 and pp.482–83 for Sino-Korean.

⁶⁹ This is a literary term and the one that Chŏng employs. See *ibid.*, p.482.

acknowledged their debt to the Lord (S.K. *chuŭn*; Chin. *zhuēn* 主恩; possibly in reference to the king, but more likely to the Christian, specifically Catholic, God), and looked forward to more happy conversations with his wife.⁶⁶

That such a poem should be his last was appropriate to the principles outlined in letters he sent to his two sons, Chŏng Hagyoŏn 丁學淵 (1783–1859) and Chŏng Hagyu 丁學游 (1786–1855), some of which can be positively dated to the first decade of the nineteenth century, when he was in his forties.⁶⁷ In these, he was much concerned with impressing upon them a proper understanding of poetry. His various conceptual and theoretical emphases were expressed in a letter dated the winter of 1808 and sent to Hagyoŏn due to some apparent tension between father and son over how to write poetry.⁶⁸ Hagyoŏn was himself an adept writer and poet, and at the outset of the letter, Chŏng noted that though Hagyu was less talented, he was nonetheless working hard and making progress in his studies. Chŏng then turned to the specific question of Hagyoŏn's poetry and suggested that he follow the advice offered by Yi Hakkyu 李學達 (1770–1835).

Chŏng also offered his own advice, and it centered on two interrelated points. First, in writing poetry one ought to be concerned with the country. Second, poetry ought to be concerned with and elucidate the moral and ethical principles of the relationships between father and son, sovereign and subject, and husband and wife. In so doing, poetry should express the full range of human feelings—joy, anger, and love—required also for compassion for the people and the country. As a logical consequence, it follows that poetry ought to be localized—focused on where one is—and indeed this occupies Chŏng for the remainder of the letter.

In making his case, he refers to the Tang dynasty poets Du Fu 杜甫 (712–70) and Han Yu and the Song 宋 dynasty (960–1279) poet Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037–1101). He counsels that the greatness of these Chinese masters is not to be found in imitating what they wrote, but in following the principles upon which they wrote. The clearest example of what he meant centers on the question of references to historical events (literally: using things: S.K. *yongsŏ*, Chin. *yongshi* 用事).⁶⁹ Although Chŏng gives no specific examples, one will suffice to make the point: according to Chŏng's conception, we can say, for instance, that it was proper for Du Fu to write a poem in response to the An Lushan 安祿山 rebellion of 755, but for a Korean to do so in imitation of Du Fu would be not merely silly, but a contravention of the principle embodied in Du Fu's reference to An Lushan. Rather, a Korean properly inspired by Du Fu should instead write a poem on a local problem—such as the Japanese invasions of the late sixteenth century—and to do so would demonstrate a proper understanding of Du Fu.

Chŏng explicitly based these ideas on traditional conceptions surrounding the *Classic of Poetry*, and in another letter—addressed to both sons—he returned to these concerns.⁷⁰ This letter is undated, but seems to have been written after 1808, marking a culmination and refinement of advice on poetry he had been sending in letters starting in 1802. Here, however, he also turns his attention to the question of poetic forms in connection with the broader philosophical issues outlined above, linking nitty-gritty questions of composition (line lengths, tonal structures, etc.) with broad philosophical questions on the meaning and function of poetry.

Here he notes that regulated verse has been the only form employed among Koreans (*Tongin* 東人; literally: “People of the East”, referring to Chosŏn and all the preceding dynasties to which it was heir). Although regulated verse is, in terms of rules, a more demanding form than ancient-style verse (S.K. *kosŭ*; Chin. *gushi* 古詩), he is not praising Korean poetry. Instead, he is troubled by the fact Koreans do not employ the ancient style (this observation is not unique in the tradition of Korean poetry criticism). However, in Chŏng, this claim also serves as a moral critique of the tradition of Korean poetry. For him, the vitality and proper function of poetry sit in sharp contrast to mere aesthetics and skillfulness in creating a pastiche of fine expressions taken from other poets (what Chŏng refers to as “quickly cut words”). In full, Chŏng’s letter reads:

Although poetry is not the principal work, it cultivates and gives voice to [literally: sings] one’s character and is not without benefit, but as to the vigorous and extraordinary, powerful and profound, and clear and moving spirit [氣] [of a poem], [if one] completely does not fix one’s mind [to such attributes] and only regards narrow and fragmented, and frivolous and quickly-cut words to be the task [in composing poetry], this certainly is worthy of regret. Writing only regulated verse is a vulgar custom among us Koreans, and as for five or seven syllable ancient [style] poetry, I do not see a single poem [in the ancient style by a Korean]. Their [Korean poets’] base vulgarity of inclination and foolish coarseness of disposition are fit to be rectified. I recently have thought about this. For describing what weighs heavily on the mind and chanting innermost thoughts, nothing is as good as [poems composed of lines with] four syllables [per line]. Subsequent poets [that is, after the time when four syllable lines were used] disliked having anxiety over imitation and eventually abandoned four syllable [verse]. But in my current situation, it is fitting to write four syllable [verse]. If you too are thoroughly to investigate the roots of the literary arts [that is, the *Classic of Poetry*] and bend down to pluck the flower buds of Tao [Tao Qian 陶潛, 365–427] and Xie [Xie Lingyun 謝靈運, 385–433], you ought to compose four syllable [verse]. In general, the roots of poetry are in the moral principles of father and son, sovereign and official, and husband and wife. Sometimes one makes one’s joy

⁷⁰ Chŏng, *Tasan munbak sŏnjip*, pp.320–21 and p.485 for Sino-Korean.

⁷¹ Chŏng, *Tasan munbak sŏnjip*, p.485.

⁷² See Kim, *Tasan Chŏng Yagyong munbak yŏn'gu*, pp.345–75, 435.

⁷³ The translation below is mine from the Sino-Korean in consultation with Kim, *Tasan Chŏng Yagyong munbak yŏn'gu*, pp.56–9, 56n51 and Sim, *Han'guk Hansi-ŭi ibae*, pp.104–11.

resound throughout the world [through poetry], and sometimes one insinuates one's loving reproach felt towards a father or king who has been unjust. Then one worries over the affairs of the world and the safety of the country, and takes pity on the people. There is always the desire to help without having the power [to do so] and the desire to relieve the impoverished without having the wealth [to do so]. Pacing about and grieving [over these unfulfilled desires], and not enduring thoughts of suddenly giving up [that is, abandoning helping the people]—after that, then this is poetry. If one is only concerned with one's own interests [that is, what is personally advantageous or not], then it is not poetry.⁷¹

In this letter, Chŏng is going backwards, to the very beginning of Chinese poetry, from regulated verse that matured during the Tang dynasty, to the ancient style associated with the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE), to the pre-Han four syllabic verse found in the *Classic of Poetry*. Implicit in this are also the notions associated with Qu Yuan, specifically fidelity to the sovereign even when one has been treated unjustly and exiled—a point of personal significance for Chŏng who wrote this letter while he himself was in exile. Writing in this fashion, he further emphasizes that poetry's function for the individual poet cannot exist apart from the moral, social, and political ideals poetry must embody. Indeed, without those ideals, as he suggests at the end, poetry serves neither the poet nor society and is therefore not worthy of being called poetry.

Another indispensable element to understanding this advice is its larger context: in 1802, the year in which Chŏng wrote in the *yuefu* form, he also wrote a fairly long letter to his sons that partly dealt with questions of poetry. In 1806 he was composing in the lyric (*ci* 詞) and dramatic lyric (*sanqu* 散曲) styles—Chinese verse forms that were far more structurally and tonally complicated than regulated verse.⁷² Precisely when he began doing so and when he stopped is unclear, but it seems reasonable to conclude that the increasingly sharp judgments in his letters—his emphasis on the foundations and functions of poetry—coincided with his compositions in those complicated verse forms.

The ideas outlined in Chŏng's letters as well as their context are critical to grasping the significance of Chŏng's famous couplet proclaiming “I am a person from Chosŏn / Happily writing Chosŏn poetry”. It is found in one of a series of poems under the title “One happy thing for an old man, modeled after the Xiangshan [Bai Juyi] style” (*noin il k'waesa hyo byangsan ch'e* 老人一快事效香山體).⁷³ In this poem, Chŏng also refers to formal stylistic issues as well as people—Yuan Hongdao and two other important literary figures from the Ming and Qing dynasties, Li Panlong 李攀龍 (1514–70) and You Tong 尤侗 (1618–1704), who will be discussed below. In full the poem reads:

One happy thing for this old man is to
 Compose as I want, writing words without rules.
 No need to get caught up in uncommon rhymes;
 No need to take time over polishing and revision.
 My mind is stirred [literally: stirring comes], and I think;
 A thought comes, and I write it out.

I am a person from Chosŏn,
 Happily writing Chosŏn poetry.
 You appropriately employ your methods;
 Errors? Who is to judge?⁷⁴
 Intricate structures and regulations—
 How can distant people know these?

Coldly Li Panlong
 Mocked us as Eastern Barbarians.
 Yuan and You struck against the snowy tower;⁷⁵
 Throughout the realm, there is no dissent.
 If behind you there are those carrying cannon shot,
 Can you leisurely look at a cicada's cast-off shell?

I esteem the lines of "Mountain Stones,"
 And fear the laughter of young girls.⁷⁶
 How can you concoct sorrow,
 Making up suffering and unsurpassable grief?
 A pear and an orange each has its own taste:
 A particular liking only is suitability [that is, to one's taste].

老人一快事，縱筆寫狂詞。
 競病不必拘，推敲不必遲。
 興到即運意，意到即寫之。

我是朝鮮人，甘作朝鮮詩。
 卿當用卿法，迂哉議者誰。
 區區格與律，遠人何得知。
 凌凌李攀龍，嘲我爲東夷。
 袁尤槌雪樓，海內無異辭。
 背有挾彈子，奚暇枯蟬窺。

我慕山石句，恐受女郎嗤。
 焉能飾淒黯，辛苦斷腸爲。
 梨橘各殊味，嗜好唯其宜。

⁷⁴ It seems possible that *chae* 哉 is a misprint of *hok* 或, in which case the line would be "Who are those who err and those who pass judgment?"

⁷⁵ Kim (*Tasan Chŏng Yagyong munhak yŏn'gu*, p.56) and Sim (*Han'guk Hansi-ŭi ibae*, p.106) concur that "snow tower" (雪樓) refers to Li Panlong, and Sim gives an additional poem that explains this (*ibid.*, p.105).

⁷⁶ Han Yu's "Mountain Stones" was unembellished, and Kim notes (*Tasan Chŏng Yagyong munhak yŏn'gu*, p.56 note 51) that Chŏng esteemed its plain naturalness. Sim agrees with this and also explains the reference to the "laughter of young girls", tracing it to a story in which the work of another poet was criticized in comparison to Han Yu's "Mountain Stones". Seen thus, Chŏng fears being compared unfavorably with Han Yu. Sim strongly emphasizes, however, an additional implication, namely, that it is a sly dig at Wang Shizhen 王士禎 (1634–1711) who adopted a feminine voice in poems about grief. This conclusion is all the more reasonable in light of the following couplet as well as Sim's discussion of opinions on Wang in Chosŏn and in particular, Chŏng's reaction to Wang's poetics (Sim, *Han'guk Hansi-ŭi ibae*, pp. 104, 107, 132, 143, 149–50, 554–55).

This piece commences as poetry on writing poetry, with Chŏng clearly articulating the core classical conception of how poetry is to be written and how its function is to convey intention through meaning. Here the

⁷⁷ This is particularly evident in Li's views on old-style poetry; see Owen, *Readings in Chinese Literary Thought*, pp.468, 540. For an overview of Li and Ming archaism, see Daniel Bryant, "Li P'an-lung" and "Li Meng-yang," in *The Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature*, Vol.1, pp.543-47. A critical difference between Ming archaists such as Li and the Qing proponents of evidential learning/textual criticism centered on the question of prose, and the latter favored the parallel prose style (S.K. *pyŏllyŏch'e*, Ch. *pianliti* 駢體). The complexity of this question is suggested in Chŏng's "On Literary Style" in which his attack on fiction is followed by a critique of the parallel prose style which resembled regulated poetry inasmuch as it required balance in terms of tones and syntax (Chŏng, *Tasan nonsŏl sŏnŭp*, pp.262-63, 449). For parallel prose, see C. Bradford Langley, "P'ien-wen," in *The Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature*, Vol.1, pp.656-60.

⁷⁸ See Clara Yü Cuadrado, "Yu Tung," in *ibid.*, pp.939-40.

⁷⁹ See the comments in Owen, *Readings in Chinese Literary Thought*, p.525, and for the source of this allusion, see Sim, *Han'guk hansŏ-ŭi ibae*, pp.106-7.

word *ŭi* 意 means both intention and meaning, with meaning apprehensible once the internal intention has been externalized in song or, in this case, written in a poem. Hence the question of errors, because Chŏng's essential concern is to put on paper what he wants to say, and to do so as freely as possible, something limited by regulated verse and even more so by those other more structurally and tonally complex forms at which he had tried his hand.

Chŏng then provides a condensed yet accurate overview of literary trends in Ming and Qing China which distinguished each from the other and in turn, both from Chosŏn. One detects a complex note of bitterness in Chŏng's reference to Li Panlong, who was an archaist and in many respects held views on literature close to Chŏng's, though it is uncertain whether he actually said anything disparaging about Korean poetry.⁷⁷ Yet Li was overtaken by others, and the relevant dates for the names selected by Chŏng form a neat trajectory: Li (1514-70), Yuan (1568-1610) and You (1618-1704). That the third person should be You is significant, for he was, apart from many other things, a playwright who enjoyed the favor of the emperor himself and whose various works included plays based on Qu Yuan and the *Lyrics of Chu* (Chu Ci 楚辭, a text associated with Qu to which Confucians attached deep importance) as well as on imaginative rewrites of history incorporating supernatural elements.⁷⁸ Thus the archaist Li was displaced by men such as Yuan and You. In China there was no dissent, but rather a cycle in which one literary group overtook another, so that for those involved, it was like being chased by "those carrying cannon shot".⁷⁹ But for Chŏng, looking in from the outside, those changes had rendered unrecognizable what he valued above all else, namely, Confucian literary theory and its moral and political emphasis.

In this respect, Chŏng's proclamation of himself as a composer of Chosŏn poetry was a statement of core values, values that for him were essentially moral and political rather than merely literary. In seeing himself as a poet of Chosŏn, he affirmed his adherence to the core classical Confucian notion that poetry must be a means for the expression of true thoughts. That notion and its political implications were not considered by him as foreign, however, and were founded on what he regarded as timeless, universal principles, as applicable to him as they had been to Bai Juyi and Han Yu centuries earlier in China. In the context of Korean literary and intellectual history, the significance of Chŏng's poem was not that it was "a proclamation of Chosŏn poetry", quite simply because it was not a proclamation of Chosŏn poetry. It was instead Chŏng's statement that he was a Confucian poet who therefore took Chosŏn as his subject, and in writing this, he underscored a fundamental element of the Confucian literary heritage as well as his capacity and confidence for making judgments about that heritage and its applications to his own time and place.

Chǒng thus distinguished himself from those various changes that had taken place in China, that is, those changes that had broadened the conception of literature to a point that he could no longer recognize the core principles. But in this poem, Chǒng also distinguished himself in yet another equally important respect. Although Cho Dongil has accurately observed that the ideas expressed in Chǒng's poem must be read against the political-poetic ideas associated with the *Classic of Poetry*, Cho's assertion that this poem ignores the rules of versification at once highlights the degree to which Sino-Korean poetry was synonymous with regulated verse, as Chǒng himself had lamented, and misses a critical feature of the poem itself.⁸⁰ That is, Chǒng's poem follows the most basic of all established rules governing Chinese and Sino-Korean poetry: it rimes and in fact, Chǒng's use of rime was far stricter than necessary.⁸¹ It was a perfectly executed ancient-style poem. In writing thus in the Korean tradition, which Chǒng had criticized for ignoring the ancient style, he also distinguished himself from the Korean poetic tradition as a whole.

Conclusion

Within one hundred years of Chǒng's death, the ideas espoused by Li Zhi and Yuan Hongdao would come to be seen by Chinese intellectuals as foundations for new literary values amenable to the creation of modern Chinese literature, and the views of late-Qing Chinese intellectuals, principally Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873–1929), one of the early exponents of those new literary values, would come to exert a preponderant influence in Korea. This can be seen in the writings of Sin Ch'aeho 申采浩 (1880–1936), who was classically educated but sought foundations for new literary values to support the creation of modern Korean literature and likewise reexamined the tradition he had inherited.⁸² Korean intellectuals would thus come to see the vernacular as politically important—indeed every bit as important as Chǒng had seen the proper writing of Sino-Korean poetry. In that sense, the politics of writing continued, and along with an emphasis on the vernacular, fiction also gained credibility as an educational tool.

Such credibility, however, was not at the outset taken for granted. The vernacular and fiction did not simply displace the old categories, but were conceived in relation to the Confucian tradition as typified in Chǒng Yagyong. Through this process of adaptation—and in many instances, straightforward and virtually unaltered adoption—Sin looked at Korea's literary heritage through the lens of Chinese intellectuals' critiques on their own literary heritage. In retrospect, it was as if he had borrowed a pair of prescription eyeglasses that turned out to be better suited to his

⁸⁰ See Cho, *Han'guk munhak t'ongsa*, Vol.3, p.156.

⁸¹ Though Chǒng could have used a total of six different rimes, he instead used characters belonging to the same rime category [that is, 支] at every second line. His degree of rigor on this point is not particularly important in and of itself. It does correspond, however, to a significant issue that Sim Kyŏngho has addressed, namely, his interest in tonal euphony in ancient-style verse, something generally associated only with regulated verse. Wang Shizhen was also interested in this question, but Chǒng's conclusions differed from those of Wang. Whether this specific poem embodies Chǒng's ideas on tonal euphony in ancient-style verse is too complex to treat here. It is clear, however, that Chǒng's emphasis on ancient-style verse was conceived in relation to the history of Chinese poetics broadly construed, that is, theories of poetry's sociopolitical functions as well as the principles of versification, specifically tonal prosody. For an overview, see Sim, *Han'guk hansŏ-ŭi ibŏn*, pp.131–50, esp. pp.149–50.

⁸² For an excellent study, see U Lim-gŏl, *Han'guk kaehwagi munhak kwa Yang Kyech'o* [Korean Enlightenment Era Literature and Liang Qichao] (Seoul: Pagi-jŏng, 2002).

⁸³ See Chow Tse-tsung, *The May 4th Movement: Intellectual Revolution in Modern China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960 [5th printing, 1980]), pp.269–313 and Keiko Kockum, *Japanese Achievement, Chinese Aspiration: A Study of the Japanese Influence on the Modernisation of the Late Qing Novel* (Stockholm: Plus Ultra, 1990). The issues covered in both help clarify and contextualize the broader questions surrounding literary reform faced by Koreans in the late nineteenth through early twentieth centuries.

⁸⁴ These titles are taken from a list of new books advertised by Pangmun Sŏgwan publishing company in 1925. Unfortunately, none appears to be extant. For this advertisement, see Cho Dongil, ed., *Cho Dongil sojang kungmunhak yŏn'gu charyo* [Cho Dongil's Collected Research Materials for National Literary Studies] (Seoul: Pagijŏng, 1999), Vol.21, p.344.

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eyes than theirs, for in opposing Confucian values and championing the vernacular, Chinese intellectuals depicted their literary heritage as something that looked like nothing so much as the Korean literary tradition.

Yet fundamental Confucian ideas proved to be nothing if not malleable. Among the intellectual elite in both China and Korea—such as Liang and Sin—Confucian ideas of literature would reappear in different guises. This was for the very simple reason that thinkers such as Liang and Sin conceived of literature in fundamentally political terms. As a consequence, the political uses of vernacular fiction were recognized, and in putting fiction to work on behalf of their sociopolitical goals, their basic conception of literature bore a striking resemblance to the Confucian conception characterized by Chŏng.

Along with this, some Chinese intellectuals began advocating the abandonment of the Chinese script for an alphabetic script to further a total shift to the vernacular. They failed, however, and although the shift to the vernacular in Korea came in fits and starts, it nonetheless came with a greater degree of ease than was possible in China for the obvious reason that Korea had an alphabet well suited to its spoken language.⁸⁵ Not surprisingly, the shift to the vernacular in Korea occurred along with the growth of commercial publishing, much as it had long before in China. By the 1920s, Korea had done in a few decades what had occurred in China over several centuries: publishers published and people bought books.

What they bought, of course, was not necessarily what intellectuals such as Liang or Sin had in mind when advocating the vernacular. Even in the mid-1920s, under the control of the Japanese colonial authorities, Korean readers could buy a collection of patriotic songs under the title *The Collected Songs of the Turtle Boat* (Kŏbuksŏn Ch'angga-jip 거북선唱歌集), an unambiguous reference to the iron-clad ships constructed by Yi Sunsin (李舜臣, 1545–98) which enabled the Koreans to counter the Japanese invasions of 1592–98. But it seems that these readers had other interests as well, in works such as *Automobile Love* (Chadongch'a Yŏnae 自動車戀愛), *The Millionaire* (Paengman Changja 百萬長者), and *The Love Triangle* (Samgak Yŏnae 三角戀愛).⁸⁶ And if one listens carefully enough, one can hear Li Zhi and Chŏng Yagyong saying together, though with different meanings, “I told you so”.