

RGC Ref. No.: <u>UGC/FDS11/H03/17</u> (please insert ref. above)
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**RESEARCH GRANTS COUNCIL
COMPETITIVE RESEARCH FUNDING SCHEMES FOR
THE LOCAL SELF-FINANCING DEGREE SECTOR**

FACULTY DEVELOPMENT SCHEME (FDS)

Completion Report
(for completed projects only)

<p><u>Submission Deadlines:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Auditor's report with unspent balance, if any: within six months of the approved project completion date. 2. Completion report: within 12 months of the approved project completion date.
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Part A: The Project and Investigator(s)

1. Project Title

A Research on the Four Masterworks of the Ming Novel under the Perspective of Literary Philosophy: Subversion and Reconstruction of Values

哲學視域下的四大奇書：價值的顛覆及重建

2. Investigator(s) and Academic Department(s) / Unit(s) Involved

Research Team	Name / Post	Unit / Department / Institution
Principal Investigator	HSU King-chiu / Associate Professor	School of Humanities and Languages / Caritas Institute of Higher Education
Co-Investigator(s)	CHOW Chiu-tuen / Head of Department of General Education and Language Studies cum Senior Lecturer	Department of General Education and Language Studies / Caritas Bianchi College of Careers
Others	N/A	N/A

3. Project Duration

	Original	Revised	Date of RGC / Institution Approval (must be quoted)
Project Start Date	1/1/2018	N/A	N/A
Project Completion Date	31/12/2019	N/A	N/A
Duration (in month)	24	N/A	N/A
Deadline for Submission of Completion Report	31/12/2020	N/A	N/A

Part B: The Final Report

(For the English version, please see **15. Supporting documents on P.10**)

5. Project Objectives

5.1 Objectives as per original application

1. Penetrating the axis of “exploration of human desire and its moral signification” through the Four Masterworks to establish a full-scale and systematic understanding;
以「人之情欲道德意義的探索」的主題貫穿四大奇書，對之作一全幅、系統的理解；
2. Associating with objective 1, to deconstruct philosophical thought of the Four Masterworks and its questioning, challenge and subversion of traditional values;
結合目標1，解構四大奇書當中深刻的哲學思想與及其對傳統觀念的質疑、挑戰及顛覆；
3. Further associating with objectives 1 and 2, to examine the significance of the times of thought variation, in particular to show the limited nature of philosophical thought in history;
進一步結合目標1及2，檢視思想變異的時代意義，特別是顯示哲學思想於歷史中的有限性；
4. Through the realization of objectives 1, 2 and 3, to establish a paradigm of “philosophical literature” in classical Chinese novels, showing the interpretation of philosophy in those novels.
通過實現目標1, 2及3，建立一「哲學的文學」的範式，展示對小說中的哲學的解讀與闡釋。

5.2 Revised objectives

Date of approval from the RGC: N/A

Reasons for the change: N/A

1. N/A

2. N/A

3. N/A

5.3 Realisation of the objectives

(Maximum 1 page; please state how and to what extent the project objectives have been achieved; give reasons for under-achievements and outline attempts to overcome problems, if any)

English version is printed in P. 11

1. 本研究發現四大奇書皆善於通過人物、情節及主題，探討「人之情欲道德意義的探索」，即情欲與倫理道德(或傳統價值觀)的關係。從倫理道德與情欲之間的相輔相成到矛盾衝突，作者既為人物形象帶來複雜性，同時也突顯了他們對傳統價值觀念的質疑以及情欲的肯定，甚至表現了情欲的張揚；既深化了作品主題，同時也反映了小說作者與時代思潮的互動關係。我們發現作者並非純粹借小說主要人物反映傳統道德，而是重新思考、探索以至重新建構了一些新的價值觀念，包括「遂欲達情」的情欲滿足，是一種道德/價值。
2. 四大奇書的作者藉不同的主題及通過不同的人物帶來了反思和探索，研究所得現簡釋如下：(1)《三國演義》：劉備個人的帝王之志質疑「正統觀」；劉備、關羽的私義顛覆了國家大義；諸葛亮的個人情欲需要壓倒了道德理性。(2)《水滸傳》：「盜魁」宋江的情欲之於忠義觀的矛盾、守法與犯法的對立、反抗與招安的抉擇，顛覆了傳統儒家主導的道德世界。(3)《西遊記》：以凡之「情欲」對應聖之束縛，情欲成為了取西經的重要方法，重建了凡聖顛倒的新道德並質疑了宗教信仰。(4)《金瓶梅》：「大惡人」西門慶對妻妾的情深及濃厚的家庭觀念，深刻地探索情欲的道德意義，並反思正面道德的根源。
3. 正如我們的研究計劃中假定了四大奇書出現的先後次序：《三國演義》、《水滸傳》、《西遊記》、《金瓶梅》，而書中對於情欲與道德價值衝突的表述亦越益明顯；以至到《金瓶梅》的時候，通篇都有大篇幅對「性」的直接描寫，甚至廣義而言是人欲橫流貫穿整個小說，是「我/私」與「欲」最深層次的展現。相應於小說的出現，在思想史上，中國的儒家思想在宋、元、明、清的發展亦經歷了極為相似又微妙的轉化，由「性即理」、「性其情」(程朱)到「心即理」(陽明)，又由「以性治情」到「即性即情」，超越的道德情感滑落為一般人的情欲需要。此一滑落使「性情」淪為「情性」，終成就一套「遂欲達情」(戴震《孟子字義疏證》)之道德哲學。由之可見，思想史的發展與小說的核心思想互為表裏，互相激蕩，但小說相對地更能擺脫禮教的枷鎖，在創作的世界中所顯現出來的思想實驗就更為顛覆和徹底。
4. 在我們的研究過程中，四大奇書所包含的哲學思想遠較我們想像的複雜和深刻，由對劉備、諸葛亮、宋江到唐僧三師徒的研究，我們都可以見到這些人物身上的思想並不單純是二元對立(仁君對偽君子、賢相對妖道、孝義對草莽)的結果，相對在小說中不斷的矛盾和衝突中，小說人性的形象更為立體，思想性格也更為複雜。通過小說情節，使哲學思想及其討論不但變得具體，也進一步深化了哲學思想的深度，就以諸葛亮點七星燈續命求壽的情節為例，當中牽涉到「宿命論」的問題，一方面是安於天命，另一方面是逆天抗命，這場討論的結果不在於那個選擇更為合理，而在於人在面對命運安排的時候，選擇背後的合理性(包括理性及情感的)基礎為何。同樣，因為小說加入了情感、欲望、道義和倫理等哲學議題，也使其文學性和可觀性更上一層樓。

5.4 Summary of objectives addressed to date

English version is printed in P. 12

Objectives <i>(as per 5.1/5.2 above)</i>	Addressed <i>(please tick)</i>	Percentage Achieved <i>(please estimate)</i>
1. 以「人之情欲道德意義的探索」的主題貫穿四大奇書，對之作一全幅、系統的理解；	✓	100%
2. 結合目標1，解構四大奇書當中深刻的哲學思想與及其對傳統觀念的質疑、挑戰及顛覆；	✓	100%
3. 進一步結合目標1及2，檢視思想變異的時代意義，特別是顯示哲學思想於歷史中的有限性；	✓	100%
4. 通過實現目標1,2及3，建立一「哲學的文學」的範式，展示對小說中的哲學的解讀與闡釋。	✓	100%

6. Research Outcome

6.1 Major findings and research outcome

(Maximum 1 page; please make reference to Part C where necessary)

English version is printed in P. 13

通過是次研究，我們發現四大奇書的作者並非純粹借小說人物的形象性格反映傳統意義上的倫理道德(誨淫誨盜)，而是重新思考、探索以及重新建構了一些不同的價值觀念。這些人物最終揭示的是：每個人(無論是聖人或凡俗)行善或是作惡，並非單純是個人意志的抉擇，或是情欲的體現，或是道德理性的呈現，每個人終須面對自己作為一複雜的存在主體：這不只是無間斷的理性與情欲交戰，當中除了矛盾、掙扎與妥協，更是充滿了動盪與不安。這無疑是人生命中一直重複思考的永恆主題，而此一主題亦於東西方不同的文學與哲學作品中一次又一次被論述。

以《三國演義》的劉備為例，作品透過敘述及探討其帝王之志、兄弟之情，對比於正統觀、倫理道德，顯示出作者並非完全接受這些傳統的價值觀念，突顯了有別於傳統的詮釋。帝王之志令人質疑劉備維護漢室正統的真正決心；兄弟之情則表達出兄弟之義較之仁德之道、國家大義更為重要，這裏已經嘗試以個人的情性顛覆傳統的義和天道。至於諸葛亮的形象，則從前期的傳統儒家道德為核心的象徵——「賢相忠臣」特質，通過劉備稱帝、六出祁山及北伐失敗等事件，逐漸轉變為個人的私、情(情欲)的表現，一步一步壓倒了傳統的道德理性。

至於《水滸傳》宋江形象的複雜性，源於其情欲與道德的矛盾衝突，即江湖文化與儒家教化所形成的衝突矛盾。兩者之間的張力，是來自於宋江「不平衡」的情欲需求：他嚮往並享受江湖生活，以至於成為其人生的追求；相反，在遵從儒家道德規範(忠、孝)的過程中，則常常需要外人提點，然後才被動地實行，道德意志顯得十分薄弱。宋江的情欲張揚壓倒道德理性，無論招安前或招安後，情欲都佔主導位置。招安前，宋江造反意味濃厚；而招安決策靠的不是道德理性，反而是靠神秘色彩的道教力量以及功利考量，極大顛覆了傳統儒家主導的道德世界。

《西遊記》以西天取經為主要框架，講述唐僧三師徒超凡入聖，修成正果的故事。作者以抗爭的精神顛覆了傳統的道德價值，質疑純粹的宗教/道德蹊徑能否修成正果，一步一步趨向肯定情欲的價值。情欲本身應是取西經的大敵，但在《西遊記》中卻成為重要的方法。達成目標的方式，表面上是道德理性的修養功夫，實質上卻是來自「非理性情欲力量」，包括唐僧五師徒共患難過程中的艱辛以及以孫悟空為首的神通力量等。在修成正果的方法上，顛覆了傳統的「凡」「聖」觀念。

《金瓶梅》將人的性欲都赤裸展露於作品之中。幾乎與「淫賤惡人」畫上等號的西門慶，在愛妾李瓶兒病亡一刻，顯露出他深情的一面。可見作者所欲探究者在於人性那充滿矛盾而又最幽暗的一面。通過小說中人物對於金錢、色慾和權力的追求，反思長久以來我們相信的傳統道德道德，根源是什麼？情慾自身是否也有其不可否定的正面價值？在嘗試探索情欲的道德意義的同時，作者跨出了前人未敢創作的世界，在一個以情慾本體為中心的世界究竟是怎樣的呢？

縱觀以上所述，四大奇書包含了不同的重要主題：(1)《三國演義》是仁、義；(2)《水滸傳》是忠、義；(3)《西遊記》則是反抗精神，由「凡」對「聖」、妖對仙；(4)《金瓶梅》則在於揭示人性最底層、也是最幽暗的一面——金錢、色慾和權力等三欲。雖然其主題各異，然而其旨卻一以貫之，就是顛覆傳統的價值觀念，由情欲與道德的衝突和矛盾而展開。兩者包含了高低、內外、明暗、本末各種不同的面相，表現得隱而諷之、明而攻之、錯而誨之。從廣處說，其所思所想都是在人的道德與情欲糾結之中，沒有跳出這個範疇；但是從深處說，就是虛擬情欲價值每進一步，直至佔有主導的地位，看看是否可以成就一「遂欲達情」的人倫世界？此一主線之驗證，亦證立了我們寫此研究計畫時的立論和觀點。

6.2 Potential for further development of the research and the proposed course of action (Maximum half a page)

English version is printed in P. 14

本研究尚有進一步延伸拓擴的空間。

從歷史縱向看，如與小說作品息息相關的評點(評論)。四大奇書面世後，相關的評點也陸續出現，從明代中晚期到清末，代有重要評點出現，一直歷久不衰。從情欲與倫理道德的關係出發，研究評點家如何闡述小說作品的相關主題，除了能夠掌握四大奇書的接受史及影響，也能了解重要評點家的價值觀以及其時代的思潮變化，相信是饒有意義的。

從歷史橫向看，與四大奇書屬同一時代的通俗文學家馮夢龍及其情教觀念，也是值得研究的課題。馮氏所編著的作品十分豐富，影響力甚大。他認為「情」乃倫理道德之中至關重要的元素，因此提倡情教；「情」並無疆界場域之分，因此他又打破學科範疇，專以「情」注入經史子集之中。這些「情」，到底與傳統觀念的關係如何？是保守的、進步的，還是嶄新的？與四大奇書相比，其程度差距又如何？我們認為這些都是是值得研究的課題。

7. Layman's Summary

(Describe in layman's language the nature, significance and value of the research project, in no more than 200 words)

English version is printed in P. 14

明代四大奇書，即《三國演義》、《水滸傳》、《西遊記》及《金瓶梅》，探討了情欲與倫理道德的關係。通過情欲與道德衝突的深層次矛盾，作者藉此表現、探討複雜的人性和內心的矛盾爭扎。作者用情欲為切入點，在肯定人的情欲、自然情感與欲望的同時，質疑、顛覆了傳統價值觀念，包括傳統儒家(包括先秦孔孟、宋明學者)所提倡的道德理性，如正統、仁、義、禮、孝、忠等觀念以及佛道二教之修身理論及方法、超凡入聖、禁欲等。

Part C: Research Output**8. Peer-Reviewed Journal Publication(s) Arising Directly From This Research Project**

(Please attach a copy of the publication and/or the letter of acceptance if not yet submitted in the previous progress report(s). All listed publications must acknowledge RGC's funding support by quoting the specific grant reference.)

The Full-text of papers please refer to the PDF file: Attachment for Research Output

The Latest Status of Publications				Author(s) (denote the corresponding author with an asterisk*)	Title and Journal / Book (with the volume, pages and other necessary publishing details specified)	Submitted to RGC (indicate the year ending of the relevant progress report)	Attached to this Report (Yes or No)	Acknowledged the Support of RGC (Yes or No)	Accessible from the Institutional Repository (Yes or No)
Year of Publication	Year of Acceptance (For paper accepted but not yet published)	Under Review	Under Preparation (optional)						
2020	2019	Yes		許景昭 周昭端	〈對立與矛盾？——《三國演義》中諸葛亮之二元精神引論〉(香港公開大學人文社會科學院《承傳與流播：全球脈絡與中國文化論集》，待刊。)	2020	Yes	Yes	No
2019		Yes		許景昭 周昭端	〈人性的矛盾：《三國演義》中的劉備新議〉(南京大學文學院《文學研究》，第5卷第2期，2019年10月，頁139-151。)	2020	Yes	Yes	No

9. Recognized International Conference(s) In Which Paper(s) Related To This Research Project Was / Were Delivered

(Please attach a copy of each conference abstract)

The conference abstract please refer to the PDF file: Attachment for Research Output

Month / Year / Place	Title	Conference Name	Submitted to RGC <i>(indicate the year ending of the relevant progress report)</i>	Attached to this Report <i>(Yes or No)</i>	Acknowledged the Support of RGC <i>(Yes or No)</i>	Accessible from the Institutional Repository <i>(Yes or No)</i>
11/2019 Shen Zhen	〈替天行道的幽靈：宋江的情欲與道德衝突〉	中國明代文學學會(籌)及深圳大學人文學院聯合主辦：「2019年明代文學國際學術研討會暨中國明代文學學會(籌)第十二屆年會」	2020	Yes	Yes	No
03/2019 Hong Kong	〈對立與矛盾？——《三國演義》中諸葛亮之二元精神引論〉	香港公開大學人文社會科學院主辦：「全球背景下的中國文化」國際學術會議	2020	Yes	Yes	No

10. Whether Research Experience And New Knowledge Has Been Transferred / Has Contributed To Teaching And Learning

(Please elaborate)

The seminar abstract, interview report and teaching material please refer to the PDF file: Attachment for Research Output

1. 明愛專上學院研究講座系列#5「《三國演義》中的劉備形象再議」(2018年12月20日)
2. 明報「通識導賞」專訪：「四大奇書研究」(2019年2月10日-副刊)
3. 「中國古典文學：《三國演義》」課程(2018-2019年度上學期)

11. Student(s) Trained*(Please attach a copy of the title page of the thesis)*

Name	Degree Registered for	Date of Registration	Date of Thesis Submission / Graduation
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

12. Other Impact*(e.g. award of patents or prizes, collaboration with other research institutions, technology transfer, teaching enhancement, etc.)*

N/A

13. Statistics on Research Outputs

	Peer-reviewed Journal Publications	Conference Papers	Scholarly Books, Monographs and Chapters	Patents Awarded	Other Research Outputs (please specify)	
No. of outputs arising directly from this research project	2	2	0	0	Type	No.
					Seminar	1
					Interview of newspaper supplement	1
					Teaching course	1

14. Public Access Of Completion Report

(Please specify the information, if any, that cannot be provided for public access and give the reasons.)

Information that Cannot Be Provided for Public Access	Reasons
Nil	Nil

15. Supporting documents: English version for Part B: The Final Report**Part B: The Final Report****5. Project Objectives**

5.1 Objectives as per original application

1. Penetrating the axis of “exploration of human desire and its moral signification” through the Four Masterworks to establish a full-scale and systematic understanding;
2. Associating with objective 1, to deconstruct philosophical thought of the Four Masterworks and its questioning, challenge and subversion of traditional values;
3. Further associating with objectives 1 and 2, to examine the significance of the times of thought variation, in particular to show the limited nature of philosophical thought in history;
4. Through the realization of objectives 1, 2 and 3, to establish a paradigm of “philosophical literature” in classical Chinese novels, showing the interpretation of philosophy in those novels.

5.2 Revised objectives

Date of approval from the RGC: N/A

Reasons for the change: N/A

1. N/A

2. N/A

3. N/A

5.3 Realisation of the objectives

(Maximum 1 page; please state how and to what extent the project objectives have been achieved; give reasons for under-achievements and outline attempts to overcome problems, if any)

1. This study found that the Four Masterworks of the Ming Novels are proficient in exploring the relationship between desire and morality (or traditional values), which can be defined as the “exploration of human desire and its moral signification” through characters, plots and themes. From complementarity between morality and desire to their contradictions and conflicts, the authors of the Four Masterworks not only reveals complexity to the character's image, but also highlights their questioning of traditional values and affirmation of desire, and even manifests value of desire. The authors not only deepen the theme of the Four Masterworks, but also reflect the interactive relationship between themselves and the trend of the times. the authors not only reflect the traditional morality through the main characters of the novel, but also rethinking, exploring and even reconstructing some new values, including “satisfaction of human desire”.
2. The Four Masterworks reveal reflection and exploration of human desire and its moral signification through different themes and characters. The research results are briefly explained as follows: (1) “*Romance of the Three Kingdoms*”: Liu Bei's personal ambition questioned the orthodoxy; Liu Bei and Guan Yu's private righteousness subverted national righteousness and benefits; Zhuge Liang's desire overwhelmed moral rationality. (2) “*Outlaws of the Marsh*”: In contrast to the contradiction of desire and loyalty, the opposition of law-abiding and criminal violations as well as the choice of rebellion and recruitment, Song Jiang subverted the traditional Confucian moral world. (3) “*Journey to the West*”: Corresponding mortal desire with sage's bondage, mortal desire became an important method of obtaining the West Scriptures. Moreover, overturning the concept of mortal and sage, desire rebuilt new morality and questioning religious belief. (4) “*Golden Lotus*”: “Great Evil Man” Xi Menqing, who showed his affection for his wife and concubines with strong family concept, deeply explored the moral meaning of desire and reflected on the origin of positive morality.
3. According to our research proposal, we assume that the order of appearance of the Four Masterworks is “*The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*”, “*Outlaws of the Marsh*”, “*Journey to the West*”, “*Golden Lotus*”. The narration of conflicts between desire and moral values are progressively becoming more explicit. In “*Golden Lotus*”, there were direct descriptions of sex behaviours which is the deepest demonstration of “selfness” and “desire” with sexual content in the novel. Corresponding to the sequential appearance of the Four Masterworks, there was new development of Confucianism in Song, Yuan, Ming and Qing Dynasties in which had a very similar and subtle transformation from the perspective of intellectual history. It was begun from “Hsing is based on the principle of Li”, “Hsing is the director of ch’ing” to “Hsin is the director of Li”. Then from “Hsing controls ch’ing” to “Hsin is the director of ch’ing and hsing”. The transcending moral values fall down to the desire of ordinary people which, makes “Hsing-ch’ing” to “Ch’ing-hsing”. Finally, the authors tried to achieve the state of “satisfaction of desire and emotion” in which human desire could be fulfilled is a moral/value. It has shown that the development of related thoughts and the themes in the novels are mutually influenced.
4. We found that the philosophical ideas contained in the Four Masterworks are far more complicated and profound than we imagined. We can conclude that the thoughts of Liu Bei, Zhuge Liang, Song Jiang, Tripitaka and his disciples are not simply contradiction or antagonistic (Benevolent ruler vs hypocrite, sage vs evil spirit, Xiaoyi vs outlaws). The image of the characters become more vivid and more complicated through the continuous contradictions and conflicts inside human nature. The addition of philosophical thoughts made it becoming more concrete and also deepened the depth of philosophical ideas. For example, in the story of Zhuge Liang’s Seven-Star Lamp Ritual for life, this was a main theme on fatalism or determinism. We can either choose to accept the happening of necessity or against the fate. But the discussion is not that which choice is more reasonable or acceptable, but the foundation (including rationality and desires) behind the choice when people face the fate. Similarly, literary works would reach a more complicated, profound or unity of relatively high-level with philosophical ideas in literature.

5.4 Summary of objectives addressed to date

Objectives <i>(as per 5.1/5.2 above)</i>	Addressed <i>(please tick)</i>	Percentage Achieved <i>(please estimate)</i>
1. Penetrating the axis of “exploration of human desire and its moral signification” through the Four Masterworks to establish a full-scale and systematic understanding.	✓	100%
2. Associating with objective 1, to deconstruct philosophical thought of the Four Masterworks and its questioning, challenge and subversion of traditional values.	✓	100%
3. Further associating with objectives 1 and 2, to examine the significance of the times of thought variation, in particular to show the limited nature of philosophical thought in history.	✓	100%
4. Through the realization of objectives 1, 2 and 3, to establish a paradigm of “philosophical literature” in classical Chinese novels, showing the interpretation of philosophy in those novels.	✓	100%

6. Research Outcome

6.1 Major findings and research outcome

(Maximum 1 page; please make reference to Part C where necessary)

Through this study, we found that the authors of the Four Masterworks of the Ming Novels not only reflected the morality in the traditional sense by characters of the novels, but also endeavoured to rethink, explore and reconstruct some values. Everyone might be affected by an embodiment of desire or moral rationality to be a complex existence. This was not only an uninterrupted struggle between rationality and desire, but also was full of turmoil and unrest. This eternal theme has been repeatedly discussed in different literary and philosophical works between East and West.

Taking Liu Bei in *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* as an example, the Novel showed that the author did not fully accept the traditional values of Liu Bei's ambition and brotherhood relative to the orthodoxy and morality. The ambition of being an emperor questioned Liu Bei's sincerity to maintain the orthodoxy of the Han dynasty. The brotherhood expressed that the affectiveness overwhelmed morality also subverting the traditional values. As for Zhuge Liang, his "virtuous and loyal minister" as a symbol of traditional Confucian morality was shown apparent changes in the later period, reflecting that his ambition or talent driven by personal desire overwhelmed moral rationality.

The complexity of the image of Song Jiang in "*Outlaws of the Marsh*": stemmed from the conflict between desire and morality, which was the conflict between culture of underworld (or brotherhood) and Confucian education. Song Jiang's desire has always overwhelmed morality. Before amnesty and enlistment, Song Jiang yearned for brotherhood life in comparison to his weak moral practice. He also had intention of rebellion. Instead of basing on moral rationality, his decision-making relied on mysterious Taoist power and utilitarian consideration, which greatly subverted the traditional Confucian-dominated moral world.

"*Journey to the West*" pursued the extraordinary life into the saint and positive outcome after sustained efforts. The author has affirmed the value of desire and subverted the traditional moral values, questioning if positive outcome could be obtained by pure religious/moral approaches. The way to achieve the goal is actually came from the irrational desire force, including all sorts of joys and sorrows from their encounter of suffering and the magical power of Sun Wukong. In this method of cultivating positive results, it subverted the traditional concept of "mortal" and "holy".

"*Golden Lotus*" nakedly exposed human sexual desire. "Great Evil Man" Xi Menqing showed his affectionate moment when his concubine Li Ping'er died which was explored as a contradiction of human nature. The author intended to explore and reflect on the root causes of the positive morals through the characters' pursuit of money, lust and power in the novel. Does desire itself have the positive value which is different from the thoughts of Confucianism? While exploring the moral significance of desire, the author tried to create and imagine what the world is when desire becomes the essence of human nature.

We can conclude that the Four Masterworks contain those different themes: (1) "*Romance of the Three Kingdoms*": benevolence and justice; (2) "*Outlaws of the Marsh*": loyalty and justice; (3) "*Journey to the West*": the spirit of resistance: "mortal" against "holy" and "demons" against "immortal"; (4) "*Golden Lotus*": revealed the darkest side of human nature-money, lust and power (all are desires of human). Although the themes in the four novels seem different, the foundation or root can be found that is the essence of "anti-tradition" in which is "exploration of human desire and its moral signification (/justification)" by creating and constructing new meanings. From a broad perspective, all our thoughts and behaviours are included in this category, but from the depth, is it possible to achieve a harmony among rationality and desires if desire is the essence of human nature? The verification of this main theme also confirmed the arguments in our research proposal.

6.2 Potential for further development of the research and the proposed course of action
(Maximum half a page)

This research still has room for further extension.

From vertical perspective of history, such as comments closely related to novels. After the writing and circulation of the Four Masterworks, related comments also appeared from the middle and late Ming Dynasty to the late Qing Dynasty. A study of how critics elaborate the relevant themes of novels from the relationship between desire and morality is meaningful, which we will be able to grasp the reception history and influence of the Four Masterworks will be able to grasp as well as the value of important criticism and the changes in the trend of their times will be understood.

From horizontal perspective of history, Feng Menglong, a popular writer of the same era as the Four Masterworks, his concept of Qing (情) and Teachings are also worthy of research. Feng's literary works are very abundant and influential. He believed that "Qing" was a vital element in ethics, so he tried to advocate Qing teachings. In regard to boundless nature of Qing, Feng broke disciplinary scope and exclusively employed Qing into all categories of academic and literary works (經史子集). What is the relationship between these Qing and traditional values? Is it conservative, progressive, or brand new? Compared with the Four Masterworks, what is the gap between them? All of those topics are worth studying in details.

7. Layman's Summary

(Describe *in layman's language* the nature, significance and value of the research project, in no more than 200 words)

The Four Masterworks of the Ming Novel, "Romance of the Three Kingdoms", "Outlaws of the Marsh", "Journey to the West" and "Golden Lotus" explored the relationship between desire and morality (or traditional values). The authors expressed and discussed the complexity of human nature and inner conflicts through the conflict between desire and morality. Employing desire as a point of penetration, the authors affirmed human desire and natural emotions as well as to question and subvert traditional values, for instance, the principles and rationality advocated by traditional Confucians of Confucius, Mencius and Song and Ming scholars. Those concepts were broadly elaborated as orthodoxy, benevolence, righteousness, rites, filial piety, loyalty and so on as well as self-cultivation theories and methods for transcendent sainthood and abstinence cultivated by Buddhism and Taoism.