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Investigating Readerships in Late-Imperial China

A Reflection on Methodologies

ANNE E. MCLAREN

This image of two peasants treading on a chain pump (*fanche*) over a channel in a paddy field (see figure 1B) appeared in a giant compendium of agricultural techniques in the first half of the seventeenth century. Texts of this sort, agricultural books (*nongshu*), had appeared for over a millennium in China.¹ By the Ming period, *nongshu* commonly were illustrated.² What is new about this illustration is that the peasant man with the bamboo hat has an open book in his hand, which he studies as he pedals assiduously on the chain-pump irrigation device. Next to him, a second peasant also pedals, wielding a parasol, in place of his companion's broad bamboo hat. It is an incongruous and unexpected image.³

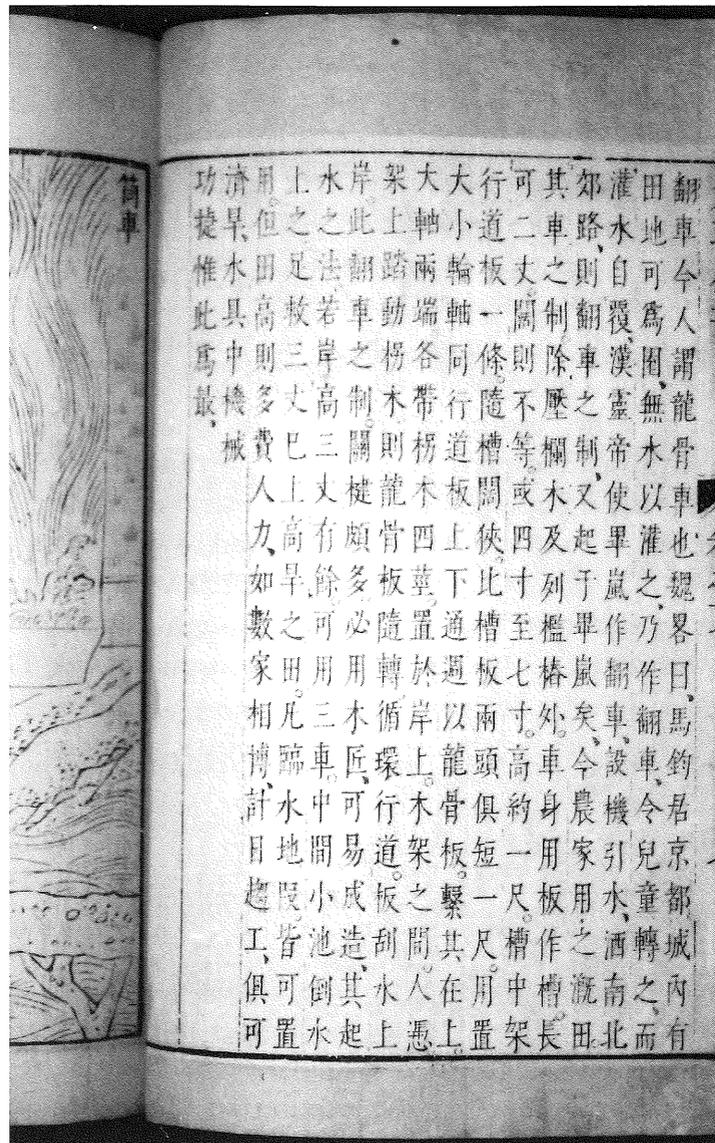
This illustration comes from the *Nongzheng quanshu* (Complete Compendium of Agricultural Practices), sixty *juan*, compiled by Xu Guangqi (1562–1633), the famous Christian convert who became a senior official in the Ministry of Rites.⁴ Xu studied Western science, including hydraulics, with Matteo Ricci and sought to put these ideas into practice, most notably on his private farm in Tianjin and also in his home region of Shanghai county.⁵

The *Nongzheng quanshu*, a huge opus compiled from 1625 to 1628 on the basis of over two hundred sources, was not completed at the time of Xu's death. His friend the writer and poet Chen Zilong (1608–1647) edited it and published the work in his own printing house, the Pinglutang, in 1639.⁶ Official Zhang Guowei (1595–1646), who is listed as scrutineer, is also responsible for another reprinting of this work.⁷ Both, as well as later editions, are extant today and held in libraries across China and overseas.⁸ The *Nongzheng quanshu* was presented to the throne by one of Xu's grandsons in 1643, just before the fall of the Ming dynasty.⁹

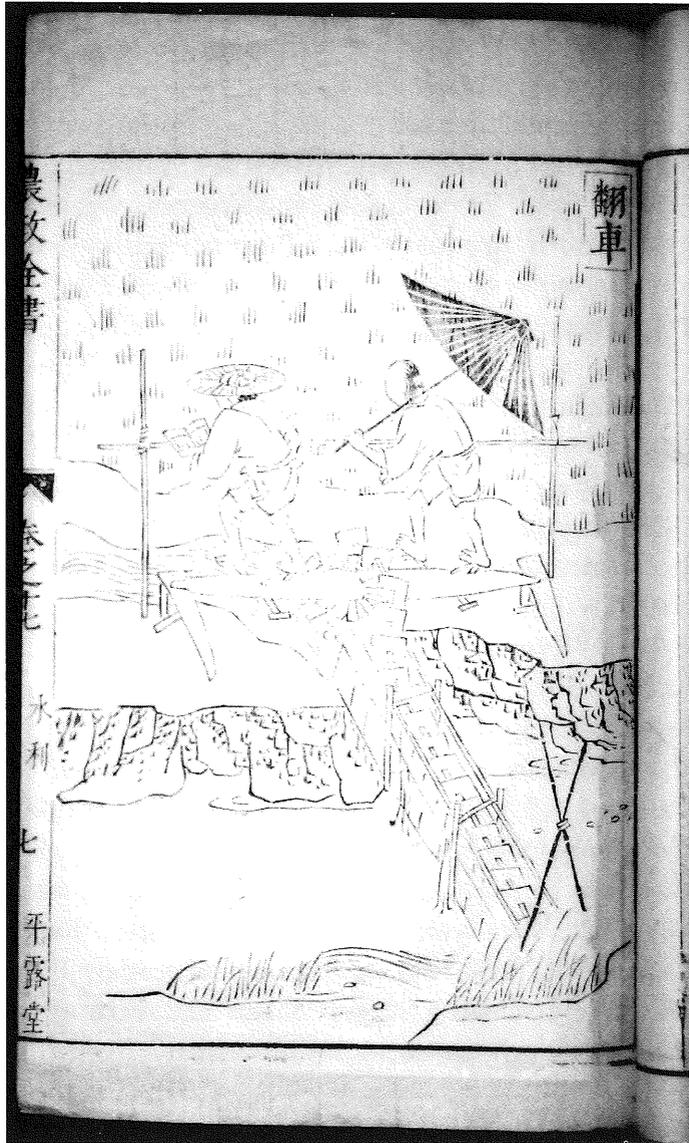
What does this somewhat improbable image say about the history of books and reading in China? How is the peasant actually reading this text? Is he reading it silently, leaving the second man to toil alone with his thoughts, or is he reading it aloud? What is he reading: the *nongshu* in question, or a basic primer? How are we, at this distance, to interpret this puzzling image? Should we see it as a literal depiction of what the forward-looking peasant should be encouraged to do, that is, to read the latest *nongshu* and put the ideas into practice? Is it really likely that Xu believed that peasant laborers were literate enough to read his work? The text accompanying the illustrations provides some clues. The opening goes:

The chain pump (*fanche*) is called “the dragon bone wheel” in the present day.¹⁰ According to the *Weilüe*, Ma Jun (fl. 227–230) resided in the capital [Luoyang]. Within the city, there were fields that could be converted to gardens but there was no water. In order to irrigate the fields he constructed a chain pump and had youths pedal it. [In this way] water for irrigation gushed forth.¹¹

At the simplest level, the text suggests the water wheel is so easy to use it is child's play, a Chinese version of “Look, Ma, no hands.” Perhaps this is the point of the accompanying illustration.¹² However, this does not account for why a man (or youth?) reading was chosen to create this effect. At a deeper level, we could see this image as a symbolic statement of the intense urge of some members of officialdom and the literati to popularize knowledge in the late-Ming period. As Francesca Bray has noted, the major innovation of the *Nongzheng quanshu* lay in its



1A. Agricultural text with illustration of a chain pump (*fanche*) from Xu Guangqi, *Nongzheng quanshu*, 60 *juan* (Pinglutang, 1639), *juan* 17, p. 7b. Original in the Harvard-Yenching Library, T8037/2003.



1B. Illustration of a chain pump.

stress on agricultural administration and the dissemination of information.¹³ Xu was deeply concerned with the deepening political crisis and the rise of the Manchus in the underpopulated north. He advocated irrigation systems be set up to allow for paddy rice cultivation in northern provinces and the movement of people from the overpopulated south.¹⁴ One can assume that for Xu Guangqi, the open book as an aid to learning had an important place. Even the humble bamboo parasol presumably had a place. It was among the sorts of commercial products Xu wished peasants to produce from their crops, together with such things as ink, brushes, and glue.¹⁵

In his apparent intention to popularize knowledge among less-learned groups, Xu Guangqi was hardly alone in the late-Ming period. A significant theme in the history of the Chinese book is the broadening of readerships that apparently occurred at this time. My intention here is to discuss how one can approach the amorphous topic of the popular reader in the late-imperial period and, in particular, what methods might be appropriate to the Chinese experience of the history of reading.

In the West the history of reading, that is, a history of reading practices, the hows, whys, and wheres of reading, or what one could call the social history of reading, has an established place in studies of the history of the book and of social and intellectual history generally. It is now a commonplace to state, in the words of Robert Darnton, that "reading has a history."¹⁶ The history of the Western book has emerged as a significant subdiscipline of social and literary history. Darnton, in his discussion of scholarship on the history of the European book distinguished between macroanalytical, that is, quantitative social history and microanalytical, that is, the history of individual readers.¹⁷ Scholars of the Western book have benefited hugely from the vast array of primary sources that one can draw from, including registers of publishing rights granted to publishers (that is, French *privilèges*), annual bibliographies of publications from government offices (France), the history of book fairs (Frankfurt and Leipzig), the archives of publishing companies (for example, the London Stationers' Company), probate inventories from estates, court cases from the Inquisition such as Carlo Ginzburg's study of the fifteenth-century miller in Italy,¹⁸ preserved annotated copies of

texts, diaries by individuals detailing what they read (for example, Samuel Pepys in London), private library holdings, records of book loans in lending libraries, book subscriptions with publishers, fictional representations and visual images of books and reading, and various social commentaries of the era. The furniture of reading has also been studied, from the pulpits that held massive bibles in medieval churches to the armchairs and footstools in genteel parlors of later ages.¹⁹ As a result of decades of study, a great deal is known about the impact of publishing and growing readerships on significant social developments in the West such as the Reformation, the Enlightenment, and even the movement toward sentimentalism in the Romantic period, and the emergence of the concept of privacy.²⁰

The study of the history of the Chinese book made great strides in the second half of the twentieth century. The publication of Tsien Tsuen-hsuei's *Paper and Printing in China* in 1985 was a landmark that summarized decades of study by Chinese and Western scholars on the history of Chinese book publishing and offered fresh insights into the particular trajectory of print technology in China.²¹ Substantial empirical studies on particular regions of China, such as Sören Edgren's on Hangzhou printing in the Southern Song (1127–1279) period, Cynthia Brokaw's on family publishers in Fujian province in the late-imperial period, Lucille Chia's on the history of printing in Fujian province and Nanjing, and Ellen Widmer's on the Huanduzhai publishing house of Hangzhou and Suzhou, alert us to the wealth of empirical data that can be found in libraries around the world, in archives, gazetteers, and family histories, or even discovered on field trips to former publishing centers in remote village areas.²² Robert E. Hegel's recent *Reading Illustrated Fiction in Late Imperial China* is a landmark study of the material form of the illustrated book and its likely readership.²³ A conference on the history of Chinese print culture held at Mount Hood, Oregon, in 1998 drew together scholars in fields ranging from sociohistory to literature and the fine arts.²⁴ Studies dealing with the reception of literary works have also appeared in recent decades. Isobe Akira and Ōki Yasushi have debated the likely readership of late-Ming novels such as the *Xiyou ji* (Journey to the West).²⁵ The famous play *Mudanting* (The Peony Pavilion) became

the focus of romantic discourse among a circle of women in the Jiangnan area, a phenomenon discussed in the work of Ellen Widmer, Judith Zeitlin, and Dorothy Ko.²⁶

Nonetheless, there is still much truth in the statement of Michela Bussotti (1998) that “in China, studies on the history of books and of publishing have always been important, but in general, the emphasis is concentrated on the history and the techniques of printing, the material characteristics, and the transmission of rare books with little interest for those who conceived and ‘consumed’ the books in question.”²⁷ In other words, we are still grappling with the more intangible aspects of the history of the Chinese book—what does it all signify for Chinese cultural, intellectual, and socioeconomic history? What impact did the growing volume of printed books have on society? Can we assume that just because there were more books (as there certainly were by the late-sixteenth century) there were more readers and that reading spread to increasingly broader social groups? The use of comparative perspectives drawn from Western studies is in itself problematic. While decrying the Eurocentric bias of “studies of the book” (implicitly taken to be the European book), critics caution against a too ready acceptance of Western-based assumptions and hypotheses in the case of Chinese print history.²⁸ These questions bring us directly to the problem of methods. What primary sources and what techniques are available to scholars who wish to investigate the social context of reading in China? What sorts of methodologies can be developed to understand puzzling images such as this one of a peasant reading while treading the chain pump?

My intention here is to discuss methods aimed at investigating what authors, editors, and publishers intended in the way they shaped, formatted, and produced their books. In line with the image of the peasant reader, I focus in particular on attempts made to popularize printed texts in the mid- to late-Ming period (ca. 1490–1644).²⁹ The methods discussed here belong to what has been termed “the sociology of texts,” that is, a study of the text as a material form within changing social contexts.³⁰ Lucille Chia, in her contribution to this issue of the *East Asian Library Journal*, discusses the use of paratextual features in establishing the likely provenance of texts (region, printer, and so on).³¹ Here I discuss the typography, formats, and publishing styles of different edi-

tions (that is, the *mise en texte*),³² likely reading practices for these texts, and what these can tell us about target reading publics. I also look at what prefaces and postscripts can tell us about constructed readerships, targeted by authors and editors and how one can historicize these terms to trace an emerging lexicon involving authors, editors, publishers, and readers. Finally, I draw on normative images of reading from a range of textual and visual sources and show how these can assist us in the study of changing notions of reading and reading practices. My intention is to discuss methodologies for analyzing possible readerships, not to make a particular case about types of readership for this period. However, a broadening of readerships and greater popularization of published material are dominant themes of Chinese print culture in the late-imperial period. Readers interested in this topic are invited to read items listed in endnotes to this section and to my forthcoming publications on the theme of popularization.³³

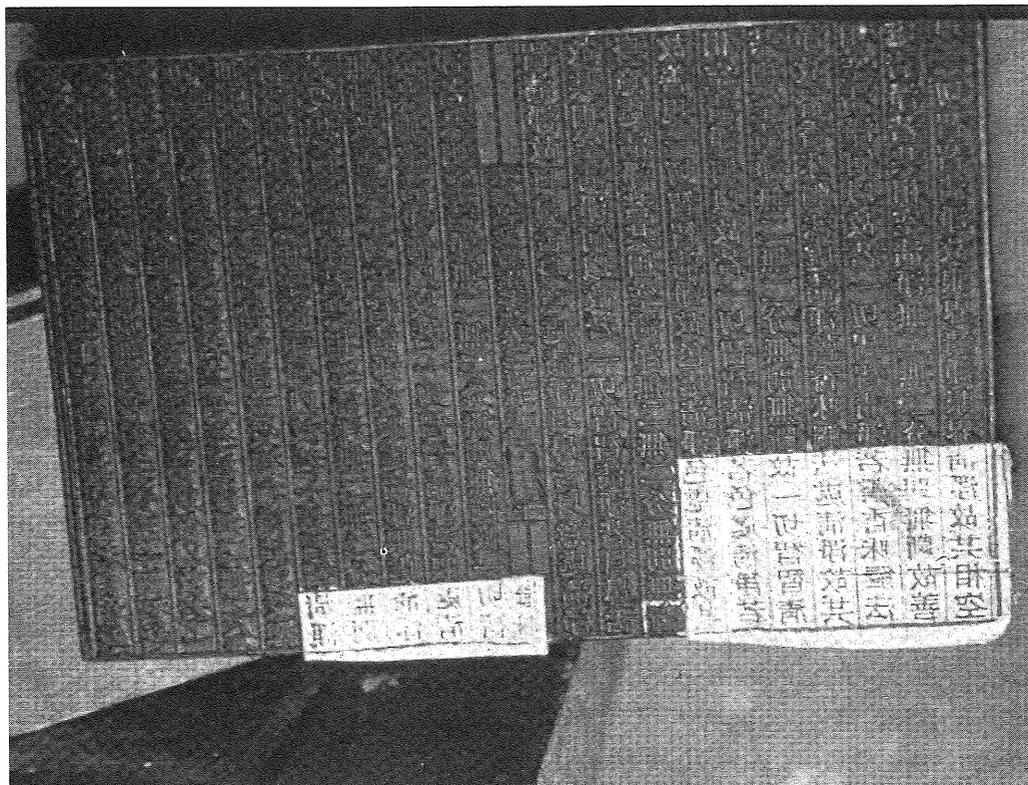
THE MATERIAL FORM OF THE PRINTED TEXT

When discussing readerships, a vital factor is the material form of the book, especially the way the “same” text can be repackaged in different ways to suit different reading publics. As many scholars have discussed in recent decades, the study of the multiple representations of the “same” text belongs not only to bibliographic study but to social and literary history as well. It is also of great significance to the study of changing readerships. Before the advent of printing, each copy of a book was necessarily unique. The social context in which different manuscript copies of the “same” text were produced offers valuable insights into the uses made of these texts and their likely readership.³⁴ With the introduction of print technology, the reader came to expect that, in a single edition, texts would be identical. This aspect of print technology has led some theorists to talk about the “fixity” and “preservative power” of print, of the “standardization” apparently brought about by the exact reproduction of a large number of multiple copies of the same text.³⁵ This “fixity” and “standardization” of print, which allow for the exact duplication of texts, are regarded as attributes of Western “print culture.”

These seminal ideas have come under attack from those aware of

the mutability of the printed text across generations of editions.³⁶ Recently the argument that print technology necessarily brings about “fixity” and “standardization” has been critiqued by Adrian Johns, who argues that these features are not intrinsic to print but emerged as the result of a tortuous historical process, where conventions and legal protocols were developed over time to establish the authority and reliability of texts.³⁷

The notion of the “preservative powers” and “fixity” of print is even harder to establish in the case of woodblock publishing in East Asia. As Peter Kornicki has explained in *The Book in Japan*, woodblock printing was “replete with instability.”³⁸ The complexity of the situation can be judged from the range of terms used by Chinese bibliographers to indicate the printed woodblock text. A *yankeben* (original text) or *zuben* (ancestral text) denoted an original edition of a text. A reprint of the original was called in general a *chongkeben* or *fankeben* (both terms indicate reprinting), but there were different sorts of reprints. The *fangkeben*, *fukeben*, and *yingkeben* were regarded as virtual replicas of the original text.³⁹ However, replica reprints, as Kornicki has pointed out, were never exactly identical to the original text because of the difficulty of emulating precisely the original carving style and differences in the binding, paper, and packaging of subsequent editions of the book.⁴⁰ There were more complex cases in which a mixture of original blocks and freshly cut blocks was used. This could happen when some of the original blocks were damaged, lost, or worn, or when some updating of information was required. There were also cases when a fresh plug of wood was used to alter one of the original woodblocks, because of damage, to emend errors, or to update information (see figure 2).⁴¹ Printing blocks could be repaired in this way for centuries, and the resulting imprints were known in the trade as *xiububen* (restored texts) or *dixiuben* (supplemented texts). In the worst examples the formats were irregular and the print illegible; these were known disparagingly as *lataben* (“sloppy” or carelessly produced texts).⁴² Even greater variations occurred when publishers took a text in circulation and either abridged it (*shanjieben*) or added to it (*zengkeben*).⁴³ Commercial publishers often took advantage of the flexibility inherent in woodblock technology to alter titles, frontispieces, colophons, and other paratextual features to present a “new” text for the market. This was particularly common at the



2. Repair to a damaged Chinese book-printing block. Damaged sections along the lower margin have been cut out and new pieces of wood inserted. A copy of the missing text printed on thin paper has been pasted text side down on the new wood, ready for carving. Photograph taken by Nancy Norton Tomasko at Jinling kejingchu in Nanjing, May 1999.

more popular end of the market.⁴⁴ These practices are well known, but the implications of this lack of standardization and fixity have been little explored in the context of growing readerships in East Asia.⁴⁵

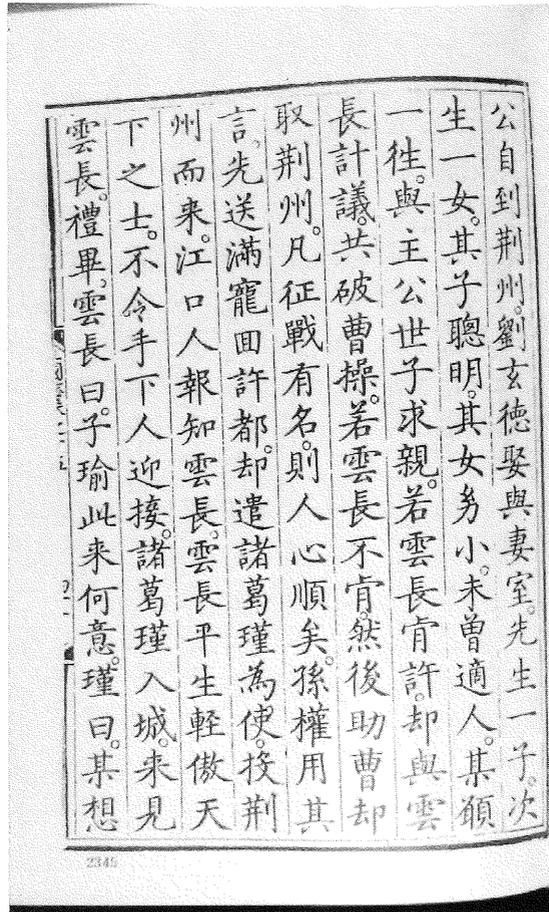
The following case study demonstrates the complexities of the use of woodblock technology in printing texts of a relatively popular nature in sixteenth-century China. Figure 3 depicts four editions of the text known today as the *Sanguo yanyi* (Narrative of the Three Kingdoms), attributed to Luo Guanzhong (fl. 1364) and published between ca. 1522 and ca. 1592. The *Sanguo yanyi* offers a particularly good example of the way in which publishers used the flexibility inherent in woodblock publishing to create different texts for niche markets. All these editions

were perceived by contemporaries to belong to the category of *tongsu xiaoshuo*, which one could translate loosely as “popular fiction.” But they are packaged in diverse ways. Note that the same section of the story has been chosen for figures 3A, 3B, and 3D. (In the case of 3C, this chapter no longer exists.)⁴⁶ Liu Bei, leader of one of the three contending states of the era, has just established himself as king of Hanzhong in the western state of Shu. His rival, Cao Cao, of the state of Wei, vows to exterminate him. It is at this pivotal moment that the camp of Shu considers forming an alliance with the third kingdom of Wu by arranging a betrothal between the daughter of Liu Bei’s sworn brother, Guan Yu, and the heir to the state of Wu. However, it is a proposal that the hot-headed Guan Yu arrogantly refuses.

Three of the texts, with their pictorial format of illustrations above and text below (*shangtu xiawen*), look quite similar, but figure 3A, the earliest text, is strikingly different. Figure 3A is an example of the manuscript-look text (*xiekeben*) favored before the mid-Ming period when it was overtaken by the dominant artisan style (*jiangti*, also known as imitation Song, *fang Song*).⁴⁷ The *xiekeben* style makes the printed text look as much like a manuscript as possible, an effect accentuated by the lack of illustrations. The artisan style found in figures 3B, 3C, and 3D was simpler, more standardized, and cheaper to produce but lacked individuality and the aesthetic appeal of the manuscript-look style.

There are also slight differences in content among the four editions. For example, the text of figure 3A contains a greater number of official documents (letters, petitions, depositions, literary set pieces, and the like), all in classical Chinese (*wenyan*). Examples in figures 3A, 3C, and 3D were printed with punctuation marks (circles at breath pauses or the ends of meaningful units). In prefaces or other paratextual material in the first three of these editions, the publishers have referred to their target readership. For 3A it is *shi* or *shi junzi* (literati or more politely, gentlemen literati). Example 3B is said to be destined for the more inclusive *tianxia zhi ren* (people of the empire). Item 3C (Shuangfengtang edition) is claimed to be directed at *shizi* (literati). We lack a frontispiece and preface for example 3D (*pinglin* or commentarial edition), which comes from the same publishing house as 3C.

Both editions 3A and 3B contain sparse commentary concerning



3A. *Sanguo zhi tongsu yanyi* (Popular Elaboration of the Three Kingdoms Record), 24 *juan*, publishers unknown, preface dated 1494 attributed to Yongyu Zi (the pen name of Jiang Daqi [dates unknown]) and another preface dated 1522 attributed to Xiuran Zi (the pen name of Zhang Shangde [dates unknown]). Photocopy from the facsimile edition in *Guben xiaoshuo jicheng*, ser. 3 (Shanghai: Guji chubanshe, 1990), vol. 31, part 4, *juan* 15, p. 41a. This edition is known generally as “the Jiaping-period edition.” Printed Chinese characters are in manuscript style; there are no illustrations and only occasional commentary, and the target readership is aficionados from the literati (*shi junzi zhi haoshizhe*).



土上與國家除克下雪自己之恨清平之後
 自以江南接連西川盡屬於公漢中襄陽孤
 當自取善不相侵求結為好書不盡言專祈
 照察
 徐權觀書畢設宴待消龍送君官舍連夜與謀士議
 論碩雍曰雖是說詞其中有理一邊送消龍回會約
 曹公首尾相擊一境使人過荊州探視關公動靜方
 可行事諸葛瑾曰其聞雲長自到荊州劉玄德與娶
 妻子先生一女次生一子名與其女婚年幼未可適
 人某願一往與主公世子求親若雲長肯許到東吳
 為童養兒婦却與雲長共議破曹若雲長不許此親
 然後助曹取荊州凡征戰有名則人心皆順矣孫權
 用其謀先遣消龍回西都後遣諸葛瑾為使投荊州
 來江口報知雲長雲長平生輕傲士大夫不令人出
 接諸葛瑾至刑衙見雲長禮畢雲長曰子瑜此來何
 意瑾曰想弟孔明久事漢天故有此行求結兩家之

3B. *Xinkan tongsu yanyi Sanguo zhi shi zhuan* (New Edition of the Popularized Elaboration of the Historical Record of the Three Kingdoms), 10 *juan*, preface by Yuan Fengzi dated 1548, published by Ye Fengchun (dates unknown), *juan* 7, p. 6a. Photocopy of facsimile published as *Sanguo zhi tongsu yanyi shi zhuan* by Taizan Inoue (Osaka: Kansai University Publishers, 1998), 2 vols. Original held in the Escorial Library in Madrid. The printed characters are artisan style, there are pictorial illustrations (*shangtu xiawen*) and occasional commentary, and the target readership is “people of the empire.”

伯氏孔明
知亮之難殺
而希之風
嗚矣



孔明已去
前已到而
亮先順流而
夫可見亮之
明睿而公理
空有妨礙之
計矣

下船而去

孔明被髮

手邊開棹不到上馬一百子箭各各誇精巧南屏山離愁足
 里路兩路來殺孔明於路正迎東南風起有詩為証詩曰
 七星壇上正嚴疑 奴擊東南項刺興 萬里雲烟皆動蕩
 三江波裡及掀騰 還卿解使在吳諫 得道須教列子登
 當孔明施妙計 致令公瑾顯才能

又詩曰
 東風一夜起江干 百萬曹兵喪膽寒
 誰易身亡千載後 更無人上七星壇

又詩曰
 奸雄曹操起戈矛 志欲平將天下收
 一夜東風壇上起 精兵百萬等閑休

當日徐盛平奉飛舟地前下寨馬軍先到見壇上執旗將士各口重
 却才下壇了徐盛來尋尋奉船已到二人來趕孔明忽見江
 曰昨晚一隻快船泊在面前江口見披髮先生下船那船使
 水去了丁奉徐盛水陸兩路追來徐盛交攔起滿帆搶風而
 前船不遂徐盛立於船頭高聲大叫軍師休去爾將有請

3c. *Yinshi buyi an Jian yanyi quanxiang piping Sanguo zhi* (Commentarial Edition of the Three Kingdoms according to the *Zizhi tongjian* with Complete Illustrations, Pronunciation, and Supplementary Notes), preface by Yu Xiangwu, 20 *juan* (Shuangfengtang, 1592), *juan* 9, p. 3a. Photocopy from the facsimile copy reproduced by Harmut Walravens, *Two Recently Discovered Fragments of the Chinese Novels San-Kuo-chih Yen-I and Shui-hu-chuan* (Hamburg: C. Bell, 1982). The printed characters are artisan style, there are pictorial illustrations, commentary is primarily about strategy, and the target readership is the literati (*shizi*).



謀乃東吳之至尊而受制於劉備此可恥一也備少
 燕小童素無行已天下共知一旦以賢妹妻之此可
 二也荆州九郡公父兄皆以此土養身向輕如敵獲
 劉備而不取此可恥三也夫備恃頑賴數有輕侮
 諾寡信素懷不仁先背主而後叛呂布棄袁紹之義
 劉表之恩併吞蜀川卓居漢上負明公與狐之德雖
 牧亦切齒也今遣滿寵前米陌有舊怨一切勿言可
 與仁義之師速取荆襄之土上與國家除克下雪自
 之恨清平之後自以江南接連西川盡屬於公漢中
 陽孤當自取誓不相侵求結為好書不盡言專祈
 孫權觀書畢設宴待滿寵送居官舍連夜與謀士商議
 雍曰雖是說詞其中有理一邊送滿寵回會約曹公首
 相擊一邊使人過荆州探視關公動靜方可行事諸葛
 曰其聞雲長前有一妻生一子名閉索自到荆州喪子
 妻劉玄德與娶一妻先生一女次生一女其子聰明能

3D. Xinkan jingben jiaozheng yanyi quanxiang Sanguo zhizhuan pinglin (New Edition of the Capital Text: Revised Elaboration of the Record of the Three Kingdoms with Complete Illustrations and Commentary), 20 juan (Yu Xiangdou, Shuangfengtang, post-1592), juan 13, p. 5b. This image is reproduced from a microfilm held in the British Library, London, produced from the original, which is held at Waseda University. The printed characters are in artisan style, there are pictorial illustrations, the commentary is on basic cultural knowledge, and the target readership is unknown because the preface is not extant.

place names and the like. Examples 3C and 3D have innovative commentary. That in example 3C contains a large number of references to various strategic plans (*ji*) put forward by characters in the narrative and evaluates their success or failure.⁴⁸ Example 3D, however, has commentary on basic items of cultural knowledge. In the example here we see in the top margin a definition of the word *qi* (wife). Elsewhere one finds a definition of the term *huangguan* (eunuch) and other relatively simple terms.⁴⁹

There is a further point of interest. Example 3A is extant today in incomplete form in various locations in China.⁵⁰ It may have been published by the Censorate (Duchayuan) in the mid-sixteenth century, in which case it would presumably have circulated among the court and officialdom.⁵¹ Examples 3B, 3C, and 3D, in company with most other pictorial texts of this famous narrative dating from the Ming to early-Qing periods, are not to be found in China.⁵² We can view example 3B today only because a Portuguese missionary, who resided in China in the mid-sixteenth century, wished to curry favor with the court of Spain. He made a gift of this book and other “exotic” Chinese texts to Phillip II on the occasion of the Spanish conquest of the Philippines.⁵³ This unique example is held today in the Escorial Library in Madrid. Editions 3C and 3D exist today only because they were taken to Europe and Japan, respectively. Of the thirty-odd Ming- and early-Qing editions of this novel extant, about fourteen pictorial-style editions survive today. Only two are held in China. What was the fate of these pictorial editions, which must have been abundant in the late-Ming period? Were they simply passed around and read to pieces? Did some of them meet the fate of much waste paper in China? Were they used to cover lattice windows or jars of pickles, or even put into service in the privy? These are all relevant factors in our analysis of how valuable and rare or, conversely, how cheap and common a text was perceived to be.

At any rate, if one accepts that these texts are all examples of popular fiction (*tongsu xiaoshuo*), then clearly some are more *tongsu* than others. What one needs here are nuanced gradations of what *tongsu* actually means. We also need to be careful in our use of the English word “popular” to describe these sorts of books. In English “popular” generally means that a work has found favor with a broad audience (or is likely to do so) and, by implication, that it is written in a form designed to attract a broad audience (easy language, simple content, and so on). For

scholars of popular culture, the term “popular” is also used to explicate theories of power and dominance in a particular society (for example, elite attempts to eradicate popular culture or popular resistance to elite culture).⁵⁴

The Chinese word *tongsu* has a different set of connotations. *Tongsu* combines two ideas. *Tong* means “comprehensible,” that is, capable of getting through, and *su* means vulgar or common as opposed to refined and literary. In Ming prefaces to fictional texts, the term is often used to mean “to get through [to communicate] to the vulgar [unlearned].”⁵⁵ In other words, it denotes a work designed in such a way that even unlearned people can understand it. Although it implies that such a work is capable of attracting a broad audience, it does not suggest as strongly as the English word “popular” that it has or even will attract a broad audience, or even that this is necessarily the goal of the publisher.⁵⁶ For many Ming preface writers, the claim that a work is *tong* and *su* (easily comprehensible and using *su* or “vulgar” language) is simply a valorization of the work in question and justifies its existence in print.⁵⁷ In other words, a claim to be *tongsu* does not necessarily mean the work in question actually had a broad readership, at least in that particular textual manifestation. It is entirely possible, for instance, that the *tongsu* edition 3A had a readership confined to court and official circles, but it still remains *tongsu* because of the content, format, and language style per se, not because of the social status or breadth of its readership. As I have argued elsewhere, texts 3B, 3C, and 3D were targeted at broader types of readership than text 3A.⁵⁸ A final point: although the word *tongsu* is always seen in implicit distinction to official, refined, or literary works, and can be used as a term of either praise or disparagement, depending on the speaker, in the Ming period it does not refer to a code of dominance of one culture over another but rather to the attempt to make public knowledge systems that would ordinarily fall within a more restricted domain.⁵⁹

It appears that it was not necessary for a text to be popular with unlearned people to be declared *tongsu*. Further, claims made in paratextual material need to be understood with a degree of skepticism. Even texts that are clearly adapted to a less-learned readership are addressed to the literati. One cannot make judgments about probable readership from

format and presentation alone, although these provide useful clues. Another useful approach is to look at the notion of literary competence,⁶⁰ or at a more basic level, the standard of literacy of the constructed reader of these texts, that is, the prospective readership targeted by the author or editor in prefaces and other paratextual material. Just as readerships changed historically, so did reading practices, or methods of reading. I suggest that in the Ming period the proliferation of relatively new print genres, such as historical fiction and plays, was accompanied by changes in reading practices.

LITERACY OR LITERARY COMPETENCE AND READING PRACTICES

Reading was a relatively arduous activity during much of the imperial period in China, as recognized in the common term for study, *qindu* (diligent reading).⁶¹ Before the advent of print in China, reading a text often involved writing it down, memorizing it, reciting it aloud, or breaking up the text with pause marks for ease of comprehension. Some of the earliest manuscripts extant in China, those found in the caves at Dunhuang, appear to have been the work of students at various stages of acquiring literacy.⁶² In these examples, discussed by Victor Mair, copying was done to transmit a text and to practice writing, and also as an act of devotion to properly master the contents of the text (which was often religious in nature). In imperial and even modern educational systems in China, reading involved, at the minimum, reciting a text, often from memory. In the late-imperial period, for the more literate (those over the age of about fifteen engaged in full-time education), “reading” also meant punctuating a text. At a later stage, “reading” included writing it out, and, for those with advanced literacy, collating, editing, and annotating a text. These stages were all taught sequentially in the curriculum in the late-imperial period.

Cheng Duanli’s (*zi* Jingshu, 1271–1345) *Cheng shi dushu fennian richeng* (Daily Schedule of Study in the Cheng Family School, Graded According to Age), published in 1315, had a wide influence in the late-imperial period.⁶³ The *Schedule of Study* sets out a lengthy process of transition from elementary to advanced literacy. Between the ages of eight and fifteen, the student read, recited, and memorized the classics

taught at elementary level, such as the *Daxue* (The Great Learning), minus their commentary.⁶⁴ He would also practice writing the one thousand characters taught at elementary level. From the ages of fifteen to twenty-two the student read these texts with the annotations of Zhu Xi (1130–1200). At this stage reading now included copying out the relevant classic. The student learned how to correct texts for punctuation and pronunciation and wrote his personal understandings of some sections.⁶⁵ It was only when the student was twenty-two to twenty-five years old that he was encouraged to write for himself such things as model examination essays, documents, and literary pieces. At this stage the student also “marked notable pieces with circles and dots and made deletions and cuts,” that is, learned the art of editing.⁶⁶

At an elementary level, the punctuation, phrasing, and pronunciation of the text were prepared by the teacher for the beginning student. Gradually the student would be taught to take on these tasks himself. For those with more advanced literacy, writing a text out was an important way of “reading” it. The copying of prestigious texts in an appropriate hand remained an important activity even after the burgeoning of the printed text. Publisher and bibliophile Mao Jin (1599–1659) was famous for his careful tracing of Song (960–1270) manuscript books for the admiration of his friends.⁶⁷ When writing out a text, educated readers would often insert their own punctuation, correct mistakes (and probably add errors of their own), and, perhaps, include the odd postscript or annotation.

A revolution in reading practices took place in the late-Ming period when commercial publishers took it on themselves to produce a text that was “readable” without needing strenuous efforts on the part of the less-educated reader. They did this by taking over the tasks of the teacher in the elementary stages of education and of the more advanced student in postelementary stages. One can trace the process of this revolution in textual “packaging” in the texts presented in figure 3.

The first example of the *Sanguo* (figure 3A) was said to have circulated among “literati aficionados” (*shi junzi zhi haoshizhe*) who “strived to copy it” (see the preface of Yongyu Zi, 1494).⁶⁸ Clearly these late-fifteenth-century “readers” of the original or an early *Sanguo yanyi* text (whether this text was in manuscript or printed form) were also copiers of the text. The text of figure 3A was punctuated, a concession

to the reader, but included a lot of documents in relatively difficult language.⁶⁹ Twenty-six years later, a pictorial edition (figure 3B) was designed for the reader who wished to look at the pictures as an aid to reading the contents. There are fewer difficult documents, and one finds simpler verse than in figure 3A. More than forty years later even more assistance was given the readers of figures 3C and 3D, which include not only punctuation but also commentary focused on the application of strategic notions or basic cultural knowledge. The readers of the three pictorial editions would find the story summarized in illustrations with punchy rhyming captions. Memorable jingles, familiar from storytelling and drama, added to the readability of the text and aided vocalization of the text either to oneself or to a circle of family and friends. The readers of examples 3C and 3D were further invited to consider the text as either a manual of strategy or a primer of cultural and historical knowledge. The “same” text was subject to different target readerships and reading practices.

Each of the elements discussed here (punctuation, commentary, pictorial style) had long been features of manuscript and print culture in China.⁷⁰ What is new by the Wanli period (1573–1620) is that commercial publishers began to apply these features comprehensively to material that was easy to understand, fictional, and attractive (that is, *tongsu*). The broadening group of youths acquiring literacy (the aspirant *shi*) would have provided a ready market. We do have a handful of examples to indicate that young aspiring *shi*, including some in relatively straitened circumstances, did read pictorial-type editions of the *Sanguo* and similar texts in the mid-sixteenth century, generally away from the prying eyes of their family. Wu Cheng'en (1506–ca.1582), the likely author of the full-length fiction *Journey to the West*, whose father worked in a silk shop, confessed to reading “unorthodox histories” in his youth. Official Chen Jitai (1567–1641), who came from a relatively poor family in Fujian, enjoyed a pictorial edition of the *Sanguo* in his youth. This was a gift from his uncle. Editor, author, and social critic Jin Shengtian (1608–1661) also admitted to enjoying a so-called vulgar edition of the novel *Shuihu* (Water Margin) in his youth.⁷¹ Ming prefaces of fiction often mention (disparagingly) the involvement of “village pedants” (*cunxuejiu*) in the editing of the crudest of the *tongsu* editions.⁷² It is tempting to speculate that the production of many of the “vulgar” (*suben*) editions is the result

of the conjunction of commercial publishers with minor literati, such as examination candidates and school teachers, of a given locality.

It seems that bibliographical analysis can take us a certain distance in pursuing the elusive “common reader.” One can use the *mise en texte* to delineate gradations of *tongsu*-type texts and to assess the likely literacy and literary competence of the target readership. Coupled with empirical data (usually sadly limited) one can make informed guesses about likely readerships. However, one suspects that the readership of texts like these would not have been limited to young aspiring literati (*shi*).⁷³ Once in the marketplace, pictorial editions could have appealed to less-learned male readers of the merchant, shop-owner, and minor-gentry classes, as well as to women with a certain level of literacy and affluence, although empirical evidence about both groups is harder to come by.⁷⁴ It is also possible that texts of this sort, marketed in line with a popular formula, did not merely *reflect* the demands of an existing group of readers but helped to *create* a broadening readership and to stimulate an ever increasing demand for *tongsu* books in the late-Ming era. In the next section I discuss the role of commercial publishers in seeking actively to create this new market.

THE EMERGING LEXICON OF AUTHORSHIP, READERSHIP, AND PUBLISHING

Another technique by which to assess changes in the history of reading, especially “popular” reading, is to examine closely paratextual material such as prefaces, postscripts, and advertising announcements. A survey of paratextual material in plays, fiction, and composition manuals from the Yuan and Ming periods provides a wealth of information about developing notions of authorship, reading, and publishing. One can take an item in the lexicon referring to authors, editors, and readers and trace its change in meaning and usage over the centuries. In this way one can note changes to older items in the lexicon, such as *haoshizhe* (aficionado), and the emergence of new categories of readership (unlearned men and women, *yufu yufu*) or “the people of the empire.” The term *haoshizhe* acquired a range of meanings over the centuries. It frequently refers to men who are admirers of a particular text, often one circulating in manuscript. In *xiaoshuo* (fictional texts) of the sixteenth and seventeenth

centuries *haoshizhe* are said to compose, write, and edit texts or reshape transmitted texts. By the mid-seventeenth century *haoshizhe* were also referred to, somewhat disparagingly, as book collectors. They were the type who purchased fine, attractive libraries as a signifier of social status and were to be distinguished from the true bibliophiles, who lived the lives of hermits and actually read their books.⁷⁵

An intriguing constructed readership is “unlearned men and women,” *yufu yufu*. The term itself is of great antiquity,⁷⁶ but in the lexicon of readerships its earliest appearance (at least in texts I have surveyed so far) is in the Yuan period, where it refers to the audience of the storyteller. The *Zuiweng tanlu* (Notes from Conversations of the Old Drunkard) by Luo Ye (dates unknown), an early-Yuan manual for storytellers, refers to “ignorant people and their kind” (*yufu deng bei*) who can be moved to anger by a storyteller’s tale about traitors.⁷⁷ Some of the earliest historical fiction is said be targeted at this group.⁷⁸ Related terms are “the people of the empire” (*tianxia zhi ren*), “people of the four classes” (*simin*), “ordinary people” (*liusu*), and other similar designations. It is often hard to give this term a referential status, given the sheer cost of production of the lengthy *yanyi*-style texts, that is, texts that are elaborations on historical records; the presumably low literacy of “unlearned men and women”; and the relative difficulty of this type of historical narrative, which relied more or less on historical material written in simplified classical Chinese.

However, eventually, editorial packaging and reshaping of *tongsu* texts, together with rising literacy levels, intersected to produce “the common reader.” This is not the place to trace this lengthy historical process; however “the common reader” may have appeared in considerable numbers some time after the emergence of these “popular” genres in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. By the late-Qing period, social reformers noted the prevalence of traditional *tongsu* texts among the less learned. It was observed that shop assistants commonly had historical novels in their hands as they worked,⁷⁹ and that an illiterate man, assisted by his workmates, acquired literacy through constant reading of the *Sanguo yanyi*.⁸⁰ It is ironic that this historical moment, when *tongsu* fiction was read by actual “ordinary folk,” as distinct from rhetorically constructed “ordinary folk,” is exactly the time when reformers like Liang Qichao (1873–1929) bemoaned that this underclass could *only* read

the old-fashioned, stereotypical *xiaoshuo*, so inappropriate in a rapidly modernizing and westernizing society.⁸¹

An examination of prefaces also allows us to trace associations among authors, readers, and publishers; to establish the existence of coterie readerships; and to discover the lucrative conjunction between the literary specialist and the commercial publisher.

Coterie Publication

Here I show some examples to illustrate the richness of the material. The first example deals with what I call “coterie publication.” The *Zhongyuan yinyun* (Sounds and Rhymes of the Central Plains), compiled by Zhou Deqing (1277–1365) and completed in 1324, was a highly influential book used in the composition of dramatic arias in the Yuan and Ming periods.⁸² The work contains four prefaces and a postscript by the author.⁸³ The first preface (undated) is also by the author. He notes that the target readers for his work range from composers of arias to scholar officials (*jinshen*) to “lyricists of the alleyways,” that is, commoners (*lüyan geyong zhe*). In spite of this broad target audience, Zhou is careful to distinguish his work from those composers who seek merely to please the vulgar herd (*shijing zhi tu*). He has written this book at the request of his friend Xiao Cuncun (fl. early 14th century).⁸⁴

Another preface (undated) by Hanlin academician Ouyang Xuan (1238–1357) places the author in a long line of those who have sought to correct the prosody of the empire, beginning with Zhou Gongjin (Zhou Yu, 175–210).⁸⁵ The third preface is by Luo Zongxin (dates unknown), presumably a friend of Zhou Deqing, who provided financial sponsorship for its publication. Luo claims that publication of the work will serve to broaden its circulation (then in manuscript form) to benefit a larger range of readers (called *zhiyin*, admirers or connoisseurs). He notes that Zhou has sought to correct errors in previous works, such as confusion over names and false attributions of authorship.⁸⁶

One additional preface (undated) by Soqui Fuchu (from the Western Regions, dates unknown), who is presumably another friend of the author, expresses admiration for Zhou Deqing. He notes that this work will benefit not just the Central Plain but the whole world. He also expresses appreciation for Luo Zongxin’s efforts in publishing the work and thus benefiting later generations of song composers (*houbei xueci*).

Because of Zhou's modesty, Luo has taken it upon himself to commission printers to make the engraved blocks.⁸⁷

The author, in a postscript (undated), provides a more intimate view of the association among himself, his sponsor Luo, and his admiring reader Soqui. He describes a drinking party held with Luo and Soqui to celebrate the publication of the *Zhongyuan yinyun*. Zhou Deqing reconstructs his elaborate dialogue with Luo Zongxin in which each praises and toasts the other as a true connoisseur of the prosody of the Central Plain. According to Zhou, the toasting continued until all present were thoroughly drunk.⁸⁸

Such delightfully detailed pictures of the process of composition and publication are rare in prefaces to *xiaoshuo* and dramas from the Yuan to the Ming.⁸⁹ But already in the Yuan period one finds notions that appear time and again in prefaces of plays and dramas from the Ming period. A work will first circulate among a coterie circle in manuscript form. The modest but talented author will not suggest publication, but his friends, who know talent when they see it, will devise a way to get it published. In other cases, a farsighted publisher will commission a work. An official with an imposing title will be asked to write a preface for the work. He will mention the high principles of the author, the benefits of the work, and its superiority to its rivals. The work is claimed to be designed for a broad readership, but this should certainly not be construed to mean that it is designed for "the vulgar herd." In the case above, the sponsor and another reader or admirer cannot resist adding contributions of their own. This allows everyone to be thoroughly flattered and congratulated for their perspicacity in facilitating the publication of this wonderful book. The commercial motive of the publisher is implicit in the attempt to draw a wide readership, but it is not signaled in a dramatic way.

Book-Merchant-Directed Publications

In this type of work the focus is on the initiative of the book merchant (usually the book printer as well as its distributor) in searching for or commissioning suitable texts for publication. The commercial motive is uppermost. However, even this type never entirely sheds elements of the "coterie publication" model.

One example is the case of Fujianese publisher Xiong Damu (fl.

mid-sixteenth century). In his 1552 preface to *Da Song yanyi zhongxing yinglie zhuan* (Tales of Valor in the Elaboration of the History of the Restoration of the Great Song Dynasty), Xiong explains how his relative by marriage and fellow publisher, Yang Yongquan, came to see him, bearing a book about the famed Song loyalist general Yue Fei (1103–1142).⁹⁰ Yang declares this book, the *Jingzhong lu* (The Record of Pure Loyalty), is so literary that no one who was not a *shidai fu* (literati) could read it. He asks Xiong to expand this into a *cihua* (verse-prose narrative) so that even “unlearned men and women” could understand it. Xiong says that he agreed to do this, relying on Zhu Xi’s *Zizhi tongjian gangmu* (Outline of the Comprehensive Mirror for Government) as his basis. He also affirms the value of *xiaoshuo* and unorthodox histories, which relate matters left out by the official histories. Now that it is to be made public to all under heaven (*gong zhu tianxia*), he wonders whether those who peruse this text (*lanzhe*) will regard it with disapprobation as an “unorthodox” (*xie*) work?

Xiong’s historical narrative was very popular at that time and was reprinted under three different titles several times over the next fifty years.⁹¹ It is believed that a fine handwritten copy with colored illustrations was sent to the Jiajing-period emperor (1522–1566) and placed in the Palace Treasury (*neifu*) library.⁹² In this case we have a text commissioned by a commercial publisher that is apparently directed toward “unlearned men and women.” Should we take this claim at face value or regard it as a rhetorical construct?⁹³ *The Restoration of the Great Song Dynasty*, in emulation of its famous predecessor the *Three Kingdoms Narrative*, contains many documents and aims at a style of historical verisimilitude. This could be related to the fact that, from the evidence of the Palace Treasury manuscript cited above, its intended readership included court circles. In later manifestations, the text was reproduced in pictorial form and may, at this stage, have enjoyed a broader readership.⁹⁴ However, Xiong’s desire to make a text that could be read by “unlearned men and women” is probably best understood as a description of the genre he was writing, that is, the *yanyi* genre, a “writing down” of official history to make it simple to read (so simple it could even be read by the hypothetical “ordinary folk”).

One could assume a commercial motivation in the publication of both *Sounds and Rhymes of the Central Plains* and *The Restoration of the*

Great Song Dynasty. The commercial intention is implicit in the first case and explicit in the second. Later prefaces draw time and again on notions expressed in both of the above paradigms, that is, a manuscript circulates amongst a coterie readership, a publisher hears of it, the text is said to be *tongsu*, and so on. In the first half of the seventeenth century, the relationship between book merchant and author is particularly striking in short-story publications, such as Ling Mengchu's (1580–1644) *Erke pai'an jingqi* (Second Set of Stories to Amaze You) and others. However, “the coterie model” is rarely entirely absent. Paratextual material continues to indicate that the work in question is the product of a member of the literati who has put his stamp on the material, and that the work has circulated to others of his social circle.

NORMATIVE CONCEPTS OF READING

Another way of understanding the history of reading and readership in China is to trace changes in what one could call normative concepts of reading, that is, how one should read or study. One can draw here on a vast array of materials, including literary representations of reading and visual images of reading. Here I mention a few possibilities.

Books about How to Read and Study

From Zhu Xi's famous *Dushu fa* (Ways to Study Writings), one can turn to the plethora of books comprising anecdotes about how famous people of the past achieved official rank through prolonged study.⁹⁵ Stories of *qindu* (diligent study) had been told from antiquity. Two of the most famous stories tell of Sun Jing of the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE), who used string to tie his hair to the rafters to keep himself from nodding off and Su Qin, who jabbed himself with an awl till the blood ran to keep himself awake while studying. These stories are encapsulated in the well-known proverb *xuanliang cigu* (“tying one's hair to a beam and jabbing oneself [with an awl]”).⁹⁶ In spite of the stereotypical nature of these tales, one can learn much about reading practices ascribed to historical personages from instructional books on how to study. A book by Ming official and bibliophile Qi Chenghan (1565–1628) contains a large number of anecdotes representing the desperate strategies of aspirants to the *shi* class.⁹⁷ It is replete with stories of poor young men who overcome

excruciating odds to study, such as rationalist philosopher Wang Chong (27–ca. 97), author of the *Lunheng* (Authoritative Expositions), who could not afford books but would go to booksellers and memorize their books on the spot,⁹⁸ or writer Liu Jun (463–522), who was too poor to buy a lamp and burnt hempen stalks to see at night. Once his hair caught fire, but he kept on reading.⁹⁹ There are stories about those who copied texts extensively or annotated their texts with colored inks, and so on.¹⁰⁰ In the *Dushu zhiguan lu* (A Record of How to Read for Meditation and Enlightenment), five *juan*, by Wu Yingji (1594–1645),¹⁰¹ advice is given on such reading practices as correcting one's pronunciation when reading and pausing at the right place for emphasis,¹⁰² copying a text to understand it better, and avoiding plagiarism in copying the words of someone else.¹⁰³ The instructional texts lay most emphasis on studying to win high office. However, one can also discover those who read books for pleasure, such as leading radical thinker Li Zhi (1527–1602), who rejoiced in his quiet hermitlike existence, immersed in his favorite books.¹⁰⁴ Instructional texts give injunctions concerning what one should not do with books, such as not using pages from books to cover jars or window panes,¹⁰⁵ and also concerning what one should do, such as adjusting one's attire and setting up incense on the table before reading the classics.¹⁰⁶

Books about how to read or study (*dushu*), of course, present norms of reading as a form of study and self-cultivation to which the educated man should aspire. One could interpret some of them as a vulgarization of the Neo-Confucian emphasis on the achievement of self-cultivation (and material reward) through study. To understand more about historical practices one must turn to graphic and material images, which present a significantly broader range of the symbolic attributes of the book and reading than one finds in instructional texts. Some of these images mark a decisive break with the “normative” guides concerning how one should read or study.

Graphic and Material Images of Reading

In graphic and material representations, the site in which reading takes place is paramount. The ancients are associated in legend or historical works with particular places where they read, thought, or composed their great works. Many of these sites were reconstructed, or built for the

first time, during the Ming period. The mythical Fu Xi and Cang Jie, together with Confucius, are honored by association with a platform (*tai*).¹⁰⁷ Poet and statesman Qu Yuan (ca. BCE 339–ca. 278) and historian Sima Xiangru (BCE 179–118) are associated with caves.¹⁰⁸ Men of later ages (and lesser fame) were associated with towers (*lou*), reading rooms (*guan*), or more simply, “places” (*chu*).¹⁰⁹ The infamous first emperor of a unified China, Qin Shihuang (r. BCE 221–210), is associated with a pit (the one where he allegedly burnt the books).¹¹⁰ In many cases such records of historical or legendary sites of reading are “confirmed” by an actual site that one can visit.

In book illustrations of the Ming period, one finds a wide range of locations for reading, divided along the lines of class, gender, and function. Male literati are found communing with nature and reading in bamboo huts in a natural setting. A magistrate sits at his desk, with his books and writing tools laid out as symbols of his authority. The scholar is found in his studio. A man ushers a woman into his bedroom. We know he is a member of the literati from his furnishings and from the books placed on his desk.¹¹¹ Books here are a signal of social class and occupation.

Boys from affluent classes read in well-furnished studies, but poor boys, determined to get an education, studied while sitting on an ox in a field (in a topos known as “the ox-horn student” [*niujiao shusheng*]; see figure 4).¹¹² The image of the ox-horn student reminds one of the figure of the peasant reading while pedaling the chain pump from the *Nongzheng quanshu* referred to at the beginning of this paper. Within the context of instructional texts and graphic images that applauded youths who rose above poverty and lifelong manual labor through diligent study, the chain-pump pedaler now appears less anomalous. One can perhaps understand this illustration as the extension of a familiar idea (the poor peasant striving for a better future by studying as he toils) to a new context, namely, a manual on agricultural techniques.

An illustration of the future Judge Bao (the “Chinese Solomon”), born to a farming family, attending his village school, represents another example of someone rising from obscurity through study. This plate (see figure 5) comes from a chantefable (song and prose narrative) of the late-fifteenth century.¹¹³ For a much later example, note the New Year print depicting Su Xun (1009–1066), who ignored learning when he was



4. Young boy reader in the rural countryside. “Ox-horn student” (*niujiao shusheng*). Image from Wang Yuguang and Xu Yan, *Zhongguo dushu da cidian* (1993; Nanjing: Nanjing daxue, 1995), opposite p. 1.

young but later developed a passion for study. He is show teaching his two sons, Su Shi (1037–1101) and Su Zhe (1039–1112), who later became famous writers and officials.¹¹⁴

The most interesting illustrations create a social situation that virtually serves as an instruction on how to read the book. In a mixed compilation of plays and *xiaoshuo*, this frontispiece from a fiction miscellany, *Wanjin qinglin* (Compendium of the Quintessence of Passion), produced by the well-known publisher of popular works Yu Xiangdou (fl. ca. 1550–1637), shows Yu himself reading in his studio with two maids in attendance.¹¹⁵ We understand this is where one should read this work. The commendation to the reader on this frontispiece tells him (but not her) that the book contains so many poems, songs, and stories that they cannot all be enumerated on the front page. The text then continues “Literati (*shizi*) within the four oceans [that is, the known world] who



5. Reader in a school setting. *Sao song sanlang qu dushu* (Mother Takes Her Third Son to School), *Xinkan quanxiang shuochang Bao daizhi chushen zhuan* (New Edition of the Fully Illustrated Chantefable of the Childhood of Judge Bao), [illustrations], p. 5a, reproduced in *Ming Chenghua shuochang congcan* (Shanghai: Shanghai bowuguan, 1979), vol. 4, p. 5a. Original in the collection of the Shanghai Museum.

buy this will realize this in a glance.” Here, reading is for the male connoisseur of arias, fictional romances, and the like, and designed for private enjoyment in one’s home.

The same work contains an image that shows another potential use for this compilation of mainly romantic tales, the art of seduction. In an illustration from *Zhongqing li ji* (Story of Ardent Lovers) young scholar Gu Lu sits with his arm around his lover Li Yuniang, as they read love stories (see figure 6).¹¹⁶ The caption runs “Gu sheng and Yu Sit Shoulder to Shoulder Reading Tales” (Gu sheng gong Yu bingjian guan zhuan). From the narrative preceding the illustration, the reader realizes that what the pair is reading are likely to be the *Xixiang ji* (The Western Chamber) by Wang Shifu (fl. 1295–1307), a play about Yingying who fell in love with a young scholar, and a romance *Jiao Hong ji* (The Story of Wang Jiaoniang and Fei Hong) by Song Yuan (fl. late-thirteenth century).¹¹⁷



6. Readers in the boudoir.
Zhongqing li ji (Story of Ardent
 Lovers) in Yu Xiangdou, comp.,
Wanjin qinglin, reproduced in
 Guben xiaoshuo congkan (Shang-
 hai: Guji chubanshe, 1990), ser. 4,
 vol. 152, *juan* 1, p. 23b (p. 46).
 Facsimile of the original in Tokyo
 University.

Readers of the *Wanjin qinglin* may well have been aware that a whiff of scandal pertained to this particular story. An unfounded, but often repeated, rumor had it that Qiu Jun (1420–1495), Hanlin academician and leading political thinker, was the author of the *Story of Ardent Lovers* and that it was based on a love affair of his youth. This false supposition was apparently based on the fact that Gu Lu, the young scholar of the story, was said to hail from Qiongsan in Guangdong, the hometown of Qiu Jun.¹¹⁸

Another example is from the *Saizheng geji* (Compilation of Songs from Saizheng), a compilation of play arias in a small-sized edition (*jinxiangben*) of the Wanli era. This depicts a man in a pavilion strumming

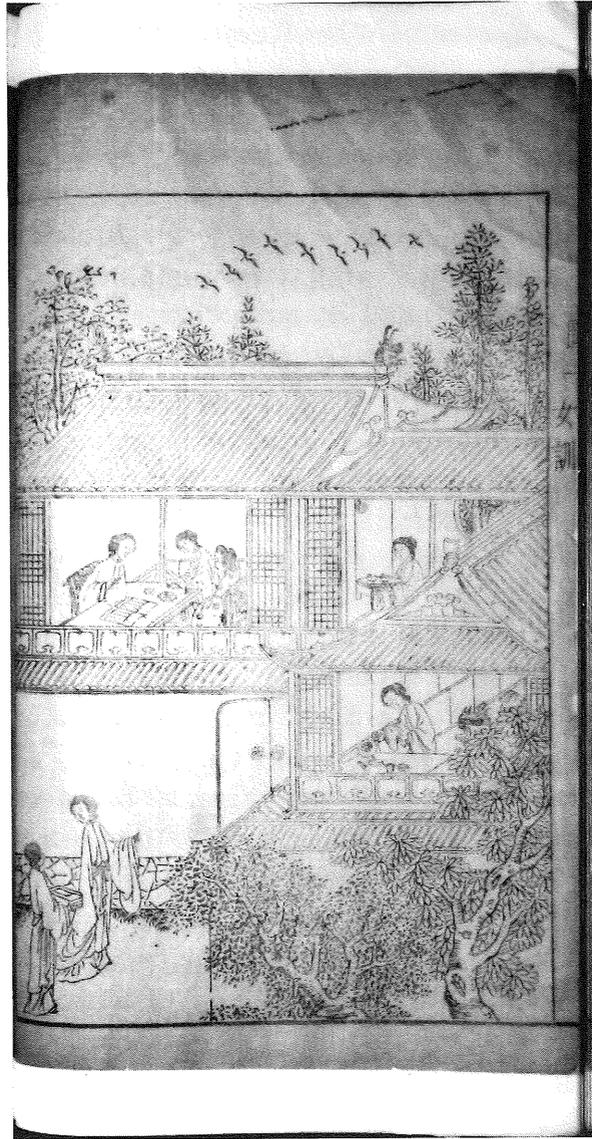
a zither, books strewn over a bench, watched by admiring maids with fans and drinks. His wife lingers, smiling, by the doorway.¹¹⁹ The illustration is captioned “Enjoying summer in the cool pavilion” and depicts the pleasures of summer for a gentleman of leisure (see figure 7).¹²⁰ A further illustration in the same compilation depicts a more intense state of pleasure. A gentleman in a lady’s boudoir seeks to awaken a sleeping beauty. He has a scroll in his hand, perhaps something he has just written. Behind her bed some books rest on a bench.¹²¹ Perhaps writing and reading were part of this courtship?

In these Ming illustrations one commonly finds women reading. One of the most famous examples is that of Cui Yingying, heroine of Wang Shifu’s drama *Xixiang ji*, who is depicted reading a billet-doux from her frustrated lover Zhang.¹²² This image became vulgarized in numerous representations, including some on brush holders and the like.¹²³ In spite of the dangers of allowing women to read, books are an important accessory for the well-bred young lady. One example comes from the *Lüchuang nüshi* (Women Scholars of the Green Windows), a miscellany of texts for women comprising moral texts, biographies, and fictional tales.¹²⁴ The second half-folio illustration, under the heading “Nüxun” (Womanly Deportment), depicts the ladies of the house engaged in conversation about what is presumably an instructional text. Two other ladies, one bearing books, are about to enter the house (see figure 8).¹²⁵ By the late-Ming period, drama, fiction, and didactic literature typically depicted the virtuous woman as one who read books. Katherine Carlitz draws our attention to the way these highly literate women could be depicted in masculine images, such as the pose of a magistrate.¹²⁶

Visual and fictional representations of reading are important because they offer tantalizing insights into the little-known area of the use of literacy, reading, and writing in private life. The visual images discussed above can be combined with literary representations to open up the emergence of a private domain involving books and a whole new line of questions. For example, why in poetry written during the Ming period, are the women poets depicted reading in sorrowful solitude? Solitary reading is now a trope in the standard theme of sorrow at separation. Shang Jinglan (1604–1680), in a poem entitled “Sitting in the



7. Gentleman reader in his garden. *Saizheng geji* (Compilation of Songs from Saizheng), Wanli era, reprinted in Fu Xihua, *Zhongguo gudian wenxue banhua xuanji* (Shanghai: Renmin meishu chubanshe, 1981), vol. 1, p. 73. Image of Cai Yong, his second wife, Niu, and three attendants, to accompany act 21 of the late-Yuan play *Pipa ji* (Song of the Lute), by Gao Ming (ca. 1307–ca. 1371).



8. Women readers in their home. Qinhui yuke [pseud.], "Nüxun" (Womanly Department), *Lüchuang nüshi* (Women Scholars of the Green Windows), late-Ming, "Tu" (picture) 1b. This image is reproduced from a microfilm of the original held in the Harvard-Yenching Library, T4176/2934. It is the second half-folio-size illustration in a series appended to the table of contents placed before the first *juan*.

Book Room at the Garden of What Remains,” says, “Bird songs accompany me as I read alone.”¹²⁷ Xu Can (ca. 1610–1677) writes: “Perhaps in the dying watch I’ll read a book in silence / And drink a sad cup alone.”¹²⁸ Other poems, however, testify that reading and writing can be a shared activity with other women. Wu Qi (mid-seventeenth century) declares: “Paintings and history texts are our friends in the women’s quarters. / Our modest skill at poetry composition takes us beyond worldly affairs.”¹²⁹ Graphic and literary representations can be particularly useful in the case of social groups, such as women, where other evidence is scarce.

CONCLUSION

In this article I have sought to explore methodologies for investigating readerships in late-imperial China, particularly for fictional and dramatic works. Since the type of empirical evidence of literacy and readership obtainable in studies of the European experience is less accessible or simply unavailable in the case of China, I have considered a range of alternative methods. Western studies of the history of the book have provided the stimulus for this research agenda, but strategies adapted to the particularity of the Chinese context shape the research methodology. Direct empirical evidence of readerships may well be hard to find, but imaginative use of China’s sophisticated textual culture can yield some interesting results. For example, the Chinese practice of multiple representations, aided by the inherent flexibility of woodblock publication, offers an obvious site of exploration. The different “packaging” applied to the “same” text, even within the same era, implies different sorts of readerships and reading practices. The intense interest on the part of Chinese males in study techniques, a consequence of the centrality of the imperial examination system, led to the production of numerous guides on study for the aspirant official. *Dushu* texts (that is, books about how to read or study), which are mainly collections of anecdotes about men who succeeded in their study in the face of overwhelming odds, provide a wealth of material concerning normative concepts of how to read. At the same time, the burgeoning of illustrated texts in fiction and drama

from the late-Ming period, offers vivid depictions of the kinds of private, secret, and even subversive types of reading one could find in the domestic quarters. The transposition to popular texts of the kind of textual “packaging” found in primers and examination cribs, such as commentary, punctuation, and easy formatting, when considered together with the standard sequence in literacy training, can give us an indication of the kind of literacy level or literary competence required to read certain types of texts. The rich Chinese tradition of paratextual material allows one to record changes in the lexicon for readership, authorship, and publication over the centuries and to raise questions about possible emerging readerships. Taken singly, each of these items offers us only a limited angle on an amorphous subject. Taken in conjunction, compared and considered historically, these shifting representations have the potential to offer fresh insights into the social impact of print in China’s late-imperial period.

NOTES

This article was first presented as part of a panel entitled “How to Study the History of the Chinese Book: Practical Tips and Wishful Thinking” at the annual meeting of the Association for Asian Studies in Chicago, April 2001. I wish to thank my fellow panelists, Cynthia Brokaw and Lucille Chia, for organizing this panel and for their encouragement and insights. I have also benefited from helpful comments made by members of the audience. Anonymous readers for the *East Asian Library Journal* challenged me to clarify my ideas and provided useful references. I thank them for their careful reading. I am also indebted to Nancy Tomasko, of the *East Asian Library Journal*, for her diligent editing and thoughtful insights. The research for this paper was funded by the Australian Research Council. Thanks are due Wu Cuncun, for her work as research assistant in compiling and analyzing data from paratextual material. A visit to the University of California-Berkeley and to the Harvard-Yenching Library allowed me to view rare editions and microfilms. Many thanks to James Cheng, Shen Jin, and Hilde de Weerd of the Harvard-Yenching Library for their assistance and advice.

1. The most comprehensive study of Chinese agriculture and *nongshu* is that of Francesca Bray, “Agriculture,” *Biology and Biological Technology*, pt. 2, *Science and Civilisation in China*, ed. Joseph Needham, vol. 6 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 1984. Bray (p. 64) hails the *Nongzheng quanshu* as “the last of the great traditional agricultural treatises.” See also Gang Deng,

- Development versus Stagnation: Technological Continuity and Agricultural Progress in Pre-modern China*, (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1993). Deng describes the *Nongzheng quanshu* as “the most extensive private work on agriculture in pre-modern China,” pp. 43, 85–91.
2. On illustrations in *nongshu* see Deng, *Development*, pp. 84–86. Deng notes that the *Nongzheng quanshu* had an “unprecedented” number of illustrations (717), p. 86.
 3. Compare this illustration with images of figures operating the chain pump in the *Yuan Liaofan quan nongshu* (Yuan Liaofan’s Encouragement to Agriculture), 5 *juan*, comp. Yuan Huang (1533–1606, *zi* Liaofan). This illustration can be conveniently viewed in Zhou Xinhui’s compilation of illustrations, *Zhongguo gu banhua tongshi* (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 2000), Appendix “Tuban,” p. 60; for discussion see p. 134 (text proper). The 1605 edition of this work was published by the Shuangfengtang publishers of Yu Xiangdou, *ibid.* (Yu is discussed below in “The Material Form of the Printed Text” and by Lucille Chia in her article in this issue of the *East Asian Library Journal*). In Yuan’s *Quan nongshu* the chain pump has a thatched awning, and the two men pedal while hanging on to parallel bars for support. There is no sign of book or parasol. For a similar illustration (although this time the same irrigation device is called a *renche* or *tache*), see the *Tiangong kaiwu* (The Exploitation of the Works of Nature, preface 1637) by Song Yingxing (d. ca. 1660) (modern edition annotated by Pan Jixing, *Tiangong kaiwu jiaozhu ji yanjiu* [Ba Shu shushe, 1989]), p. 228. The relevant section is translated in E-Tu Zen Sun and Shiou-Chuan Sun, *T’ien-kung K’ai-wu: Chinese Technology in the Seventeenth Century* (University Park and London: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1966), pp. 12–14. One could note further that there are no similar images of farmers using their tools elsewhere in the *Nongzheng quanshu*. I thank the *East Asian Library Journal* editor for pointing this out.
 4. The illustration discussed here is reproduced from an original of the 1639 edition held in the Harvard-Yenching Library (T8037/2003). For details on this edition, see Shen Jin (Chun Shum), *Meiguo Hafo daxue Hafo Yanjing tushuguan zhongwen shanben shushi* (Shanghai: Cishu chubanshe, 1999), p. 311. My thanks to Antonia Finnane, of the University of Melbourne, who first pointed out this illustration to me in Monique Cohen and Nathalie Monnet, *Impressions de Chine* (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale, 1992), p. 85.
 5. For details on Xu Guangqi, see the biography by J. C. Yang in Arthur W. Hummel, ed., *Eminent Chinese of the Qing Period (1644–1911)* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1943–1944), pp. 316–319; see also Bray, *Agriculture*, pp. 64–70 and Deng, *Development*, pp. 42–43, 85–91. For Xu Guangqi’s experiments with Western irrigation technology in Shanghai county and his pioneering of wet-rice cultivation in Tianjin, see Bray, *Agriculture*, pp. 65–67 and Deng, *Development*, p. 43.
 6. Shen, *Meiguo Hafo daxue*, p. 311.
 7. *Ibid.*
 8. For details of the holdings of the Chongzhen-era edition (1628–1644), ed.

- Chen Zilong, see Du Xinfu, *Mingdai banke zonglu* (Yangzhou: Jiangsu Guangling guji keyinshe, 1983), vol. 1, p. 66a. The edition produced by Zhang Guowei is listed in *ibid.*, vol. 5, p. 63b.
9. See the biography of Xu Guangqi, in Hummel, *Eminent Chinese*, p. 318.
 10. Joseph Needham translates *fanche* as “square-pallet chain-pump”; *Mechanical Engineering, Science and Civilisation in China*, vol. 4, pt. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965); see p. 339, and figs. 577 and 578. It is also known as the “water machine” (*shuiche*) and the “dragon-bone machine” (*longguche*), *ibid.* As mentioned in note 3, the same irrigation device is termed a “human-operated machine” (*renche*) or a “treadle machine” (*tache*) in the *Tiangong kaiwu*.
 11. *Nongzheng quanshu*, *juan* 17, p. 7b. This translation is adapted from the translation by Needham of the relevant section in the *Sanguo zhi*; *Science and Civilisation in China*, vol. 4, pt. 2, p. 346. He dates this event to between 227 and 239 CE. The section from the *Nongzheng quanshu* above is an abbreviated version of that in the *Weilüe* and the *Sanguo zhi*. The original *Weilüe*, by Yu Huan (fl. 3d century CE), is listed with a variable number of *juan* in Tang (618–907) sources; see the preface to the *Weilüe jiben* in 25 *juan* by Zhang Pengyi, in the modern compilation of Yang Jialuo, *Zhongguo xueshu leibian: Sanguo zhi fubian* (Taipei: Dingwen shuju, 1979), “Fanli,” p. 1a. For this passage about Ma Jun, see the *Weilüe jiben*, *juan* 8, p. 8b (p. 37). For the same passage in the *Sanguo zhi* by Chen Shou (233–297), see the modern edition of the *Sanguo zhi* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1971), vol. 4, p. 807.
 12. I am suggesting here that the illustration is making a rhetorical point about the relative ease of use of this irrigation device. This was not necessarily the case in practice, especially when the gap between the water channel and the irrigated field was large. Needham cites one fourteenth-century source describing girls working chain pumps (*Science and Civilisation in China*, vol. 4, pt. 2, p. 347). On the other hand, the illustration of this device in the *Tiangong kaiwu* depicts two men operating the machine. However, in that text it is noted that one man could operate it. In the latter case one man could irrigate five *mu* of land a day; see modern edition of Pan, *Tiangong kaiwu jiaozhu ji yanjiu*, p. 226. For a translation of this passage see Sun and Sun, *T'ien-kung K'ai-wu*, p. 12. Rudolf P. Hommel in his study of early-twentieth-century agricultural practices in China describes a case in which three men use their combined strength to operate a chain pump draining water from a deep clay pit; see *China at Work; An Illustrated Record of the Primitive Industries of China's Masses, Whose Life Is Toil, and Thus an Account of Chinese Civilization* (New York: John Day Company for the Bucks County Historical Society, Doylestown, Pa., [ca. 1937]), pp. 54, 56 and fig. 81. Mark Elvin, in his discussion of agriculture in the Song and Yuan periods, notes that in the Yangtze River delta region “the treadle pallet pump predominated—mobile, adaptable, but requiring a prolonged input of hard labor.” See his *The Pattern of the Chinese Past* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1973), p. 126.
 13. Bray, *Agriculture*, p. 66.

14. Xu advocated setting up military and civilian agricultural colonies in these underpopulated northern provinces. To sustain these populations he argued for the use of innovative techniques to cultivate rice in traditional dry-land farming areas. See the lengthy discussion by Bray, *Agriculture*, p. 67. Zhang Guowei, who is mentioned in the preface to the first edition of the *Nongzheng quanshu* and who later reprinted this work (see note 8 above), was also active in the encouragement of agriculture, particularly cotton growing in the Wu area; see Chen Fukang, "Zhang Guowei yu Mingmo de jibu qishu," *Chubanshi yanjiu*, no. 3, 1995, p. 208.
15. Xu advocated the production of economic crops including bamboo and timber products; see Bray, *Agriculture*, p. 70. Cohen and Monnet, in their discussion of this illustration, point out that among the commercial crops advocated by Xu for small farm holdings were glue, ink, brushes, and parasols; *Impressions de Chine*, p. 84.
16. Robert Darnton, "History of Reading," in Peter Burke, ed., *New Perspectives on Historical Writing* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), p. 141.
17. *Ibid.*, pp. 142-143.
18. Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller*, trans. Anne and John Tedeschi (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980).
19. Darnton, "History of Reading," gives a good survey of the type of primary sources available in the West. For a comprehensive recent study see Guglielmo Cavallo and Roger Chartier, *A History of Reading in the West*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995). The bibliography provides a useful guide to the vast number of works on this topic.
20. Key studies on the impact of print include the seminal study of Elizabeth Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformations in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979). For a critical assessment of Eisenstein's leading hypotheses, see Harvey J. Graff, *The Legacies of Literacy: Continuities and Contradictions in Western Culture and Society* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987). On issues of readership, see particularly the work of Roger Chartier, *The Order of Books: Readers, Authors, and Libraries in Europe between the Fourteenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), and also his *Forms and Meanings: Texts, Performances, and Audiences from Codex to Computer* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995). Chartier discusses the impact of reading on private life in "The Practical Impact of Writing," *A History of Private Life*, ed. Roger Chartier, in *Passions of the Renaissance*, vol. 3, ed. Philippe Ariès and George Duby (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1989), pp. 111-160.
21. Tsien Tsuen-hsuen, *Paper and Printing*, in Joseph Needham, ed., *Science and Civilisation in China*, vol. 5, pt. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

22. Sören Edgren, "Southern Song Printing at Hangzhou," *Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities*, Bulletin No. 61, 1989. Cynthia Brokaw, "Commercial Publishing in Late Imperial China: The Zou and Ma Family Businesses," *Late Imperial China* 17.1 (June 1996), pp. 49–92; also her "On the History of the Book in China" and "Reading the Bestsellers of the Nineteenth Century: Commercial Publishing in Sibao" in Cynthia Brokaw and Kai-wing Chow, eds., *Printing and Book Culture in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003). Lucille Chia, "The Development of the Jianyang Book Trade, Song–Yuan," *Late Imperial China* 17.1 (June 1996), pp. 10–48; "Printing for Profit" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1996); "Commercial Publishing in Jianyang from the Late Song to the Late Ming" in Richard von Glahn and Paul Smith, eds., *The Song-Yuan-Ming Transition: Theoretical and Historical Perspectives* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, in press); and "Of Three Mountains Street: Commercial Publishers in Ming Nanjing," in Brokaw and Chow, *Printing and Book Culture*. Ellen Widmer, "The Huanduzhai of Hangzhou and Suzhou: A Study in Seventeenth-Century Publishing," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 56.1 (June 1996), pp. 77–122.
23. Robert E. Hegel, *Reading Illustrated Fiction in Late Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).
24. The conference volume is to appear as Brokaw and Chow, *Printing and Book Culture*.
25. Isobe Akira, "Minmatsu ni okeru 'Saiyūki' no shūtaiteki jūyōsō ni kansuru kenkyū-Mindai 'koten teki hakuwa shōsetsu' no kokusha sō o meguru mondai ni tsuite," *Shūkan Tōyōgaku* 44 (1980), pp. 50–63; Ōki Yasushi, "Minmatsu ni okeru hakuwa shōsetsu no sakusha to dokusha ni tsuite-Isobe Akira shi no shōsetsu ni yosete," *Mindai shi kenkyū* 12 (1984), pp. 1–16.
26. Ellen Widmer, "Xiaoqing's Literary Legacy and the Place of the Woman Writer in Late Imperial China," *Late Imperial China* 13.1 (1989), pp. 1–43. Judith Zeitlin, "Shared Dreams: The Story of Three Wives' Commentary on the Peony Pavilion," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 54 (June 1994), pp. 127–179. Dorothy Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers: Women and Culture in Seventeenth-Century China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), pp. 68–112.
27. Michela Bussoti, "General Survey of the Latest Studies in Western Languages on the History of Publishing in China," *Revue bibliographique de sinologie*, n.s., vol. 16 (1998), pp. 53–68.
28. Concerning Eurocentric theories of the history of the book, Roger Chartier has written, "For too long, Western historians have judged this manner of reproduction of texts and book publication against the standard of Gutenberg's invention." See his "Gutenberg Revisited from the East," *Late Imperial China* 17.1 (June 1996), p. 2. Craig Clunas critiques Eurocentric theories concerning the impact of print technology on Europe that do not take into account the fact that printing was actually invented in China, *Pictures and Visuality in Early Modern China* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997), pp. 29–32. Concerning East-West differences in the trajectory of print, Jean-Pierre Drège notes that the much greater use of xylography in China meant there was less

- rupture with manuscript forms than in the West; see his “Des effets de l'imprimerie in Chine sous la dynastie des Song,” *Journal Asiatique* 282.2 (1994), pp. 391–408. Chartier states many parallels between East and West in his article “Gutenberg Revisited.” Cynthia Brokaw stresses “the very real differences that inform the history of the book in the West and the history of the book in China” in her “On the History of the Book in China,” in Brokaw and Chow, *Printing and Book Culture*, chap. 3. She goes on to discuss differences in technology, particularly the dominance of woodblock printing, which involved a different “set of economic considerations” than those applicable to movable-type technology in the West.
29. I also include some discussion of Yuan-period texts to provide a comparative context within which developments in the Ming period can be better understood.
 30. The term is that of D. F. McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts: The Panizzi Lectures* (London: British Library, 1985). McKenzie notes (p. 19) that “bibliography as a sociology of texts has an unrivalled power to resurrect authors in their own time, and their readers at any time.”
 31. Paratextual features refer to textual devices that frame the text proper, such as prefaces, postfaces, commentaries, running titles, and format. For a study of paratextual features see Gerard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).
 32. For examples of parallel studies in the West, see D. F. McKenzie’s analysis of how the dramatist Congreve restyled texts of his plays along neoclassical lines to meet the perceived needs of readers of theatrical texts as distinct from professional actors, in his article “Typography and Meaning: The Case of William Congreve,” in G. Barber and B. Fabian, eds., *Buch und Buchhandel in Europa in Achtzehnten Jahrhundert* (1981), pp. 81–125. See also his *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts*. For an introduction to these issues see Darnton’s “History of Reading,” pp. 159–161. In the past decade many studies have appeared dealing with the materiality of the book and its social context and interpretation. See particularly Jerome J. McGann, *The Textual Condition* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991) and Roger Chartier, *Forms and Meanings*.
 33. See my “Constructing New Reading Publics in Late-Ming China” in Brokaw and Chow, *Printing and Book Culture*, and “Print Culture in China and the Emergence of the Common Reader,” in *Proceedings of the International Scientific Conference on Publishing Culture in East Asia December 2001* (Tokyo), 2003.
 34. For an authoritative study of manuscripts and handwriting styles as a tool for studying the sociology of manuscript texts, see Armando Petrucci, *Writers and Readers in Medieval Italy: Studies in the History of Written Culture*, ed. and trans. Charles M. Radding (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995).
 35. For the leading study on printing and standardization, see Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983). See particularly “Some Features of Print Culture,” pp. 42–91.
 36. See, for example, McKenzie, “Typography and Meaning.”

37. Adrian Johns, *The Nature of the Book: Print and Knowledge in the Making* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 6.
38. Peter Kornicki, *The Book in Japan: A Cultural History from the Beginnings to the Nineteenth Century* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1998), p. 49.
39. For a survey of terms, see Cheng Qianfan and Xu Youfu, *Jiaochou guangyi: banben pian*, Nanjing daxue gudian wenxian yanjiusuo zhuankan (1991; Jinan: Qi Lu shushe, 1998), pp. 260 ff.; and Huang Yansheng and Lin Yan, *Banben guji jianshang yu shoucang* (Jilin: Kexue jishu chubanshe, 1996), pp. 33–57.
40. Kornicki, *The Book in Japan*, pp. 49–51.
41. *Ibid.*, pp. 51–52.
42. Cheng and Xu, *Jiaochou guangyi*, pp. 263–264; Huang and Lin, *Banben guji*, p. 42.
43. For discussion of revisions, abridgments, expanded texts, and rewritten ones, see Zhang Wenzhi, *Gushu xiuci li* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1996).
44. For a discussion of these unscrupulous practices as they applied to Ming and Qing fiction, see Liu Ts'un-yan, *Chinese Popular Fiction in Two London Libraries* (Hong Kong: Lungmen Booksellers, 1967), pp. 29–35.
45. An exception is Stephen H. West's fine study of the editing of Yuan dramas with particular attention to "the inscription of ideology"; see his "Text and Ideology: Ming Editors and Northern Drama," in Hua Wei and Wang Ailing, *Ming Qing xiqu guoji yantaohui lunwenji* (Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan Zhongguo wenzhe yanjiusuo choubeichu, 1998), pp. 237–249, esp. p. 237. Robert Hegel has demonstrated how a standard typeface and format came to dominate publishing in the late-Ming period; see his *Reading Illustrated Fiction*, pp. 112–113. He also notes that this standardization led to a fall in the price of books and a probable rise in the speed of reading, now that type was more uniform; see p. 123. However, the trend toward standardization of typeface and format in general does not detract from the fact that different editions of the "same" text were often published in quite distinct formats.
46. The editions and relevant page numbers are as follows. The story is narrated in chapter 73 of the standard edition of *Sanguo yanyi*, with commentary by Mao Zonggang (ca. 1632–1709):
 - a. *Sanguo zhi tongsu yanyi* (Popular Elaboration of the Three Kingdoms Record), 24 *juan*, publishers unknown, prefaces attributed to Yongyu Zi (the pen name of Jiang Daqi [dates unknown], dated 1494) and Xiuran Zi (the pen name of Zhang Shangde [dates unknown], dated 1522). This edition is known generally as the Jiajing-period edition; facs. edn. in the Guben xiaoshuo jicheng, ser. 3 (Shanghai: Guji chubanshe, 1990), vol. 31, pt. 4, *juan* 15, p. 41a.
 - b. *Xinkan tongsu yanyi Sanguo zhi shi zhuan* (New Edition of the Popularized Elaboration of the Historical Record of the Three Kingdoms), 10 *juan*, preface by Yuan Fengzi dated 1548, published by Ye Fengchun (dates unknown). See *juan* 7, p. 6a. Published in facsimile as *Sanguo zhi tongsu yanyi shi zhuan* by Taizan Inoue (Osaka: Kansai University Publishers, 1998), 2 vols. Original held in the Escorial Library in Madrid.
 - c. *Yinshi buyi an Jian yanyi quanxiang piping Sanguo zhi* (Commentarial

Edition of the Three Kingdoms According to the *Zizhi tongjian* with Complete Illustrations, Pronunciation, and Supplementary Notes), preface by Yu Xiangwu (Shuangfengtang, 1592), 20 *juan*. See *juan* 9, p. 3a. From the facsimile copy reproduced by Harmut Walravens, *Two Recently Discovered Fragments of the Chinese Novels San-Kuo-chih Yen-I and Shui-hu-chuan* (Hamburg: C. Bell, 1982).

d. *Xinkan jingben jiaozheng yanyi quanxiang Sanguo zhizhuan pinglin* (New Edition of the Capital Text: Revised Elaboration of the Record of the Three Kingdoms with Complete Illustrations and Commentary), (Yu Xiangdou, Shuangfengtang, post-1592), 20 *juan*. This image is reproduced from a microfilm held in the British Library, London, produced from the original, which is held at Waseda University. See *juan* 13, p. 5b.

47. See Hegel's discussion in *Reading Illustrated Fiction*, pp. 110-113. Samples of the *jiangti* style are given on page 111.
48. For more detailed discussion on these texts, see Anne McLaren, "Ming Audiences and Vernacular Hermeneutics: The Uses of *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*," *T'oung Pao* 81 (1995), pp. 51-80.
49. This is not the only case in which simple terms are elucidated in fictional and dramatic texts. The well-known writer Ling Mengchu (1580-1644), for example, scoffed at editions of Wang Shifu's (fl. 1295-1307) famous play *Xixiang ji* (Western Chamber Romance), which glossed even simple words like *gushuang* (orphans and widows). See Ling's preface to his edition of the *Xixiang ji* in the compilation by Cai Yi, in the series *Zhongguo gudian xiqu xuba huibian* (Jinan: Qi Lu chubanshe, 1989), vol. 2, p. 677.
50. Such as Shanghai, Lanzhou, Beijing, and Tianjin. For further details see Wei An (Andrew West), *Sanguo yanyi banben kao* (Shanghai: Guji chubanshe, 1996), p. 16.
51. The main evidence for this attribution with respect to the publisher is an item in a catalogue with mention of an edition in twenty-four *juan* published by the Duchayuan. See Zhou Hongzu (jinshi of 1559), *Gujin shuke* in the modern edition *Baichuan shuzhi Gujin shuke* (Shanghai: Gudian wenxue, 1957), p. 325. Of extant texts, the above edition is the only one to be arranged in twenty-four *juan*. An edition of the *Sanguo yanyi* was held in the Silijian (Directorate of Ceremonial). See Liu Ruoyu (1548-ca. 1642), *Zhuo zhong zhi* (Taipei: Weiwen tushu chubanshe, 1976), *juan* 18, p. 4b. For further details see my discussion of editions 3A and 3B in "Popularizing *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*: A Study of Two Early Editions," *Journal of Oriental Studies* 33.2 (1995), pp. 165-185.
52. By "pictorial" editions I mean those with comic-strip-like layout of illustrations at the top of each page. Only two of the pictorial editions of *Narrative of the Three Kingdoms* dating from the Ming to early-Qing period are extant in China today (the edition bearing commentary by Tang Binyin [ca. 1595] and the edition bearing commentary by Huang Zhengfu [dates unknown], and both have been discovered in China in recent times; another copy of the Huang Zhengfu edition is found in the Harvard-Yenching Library). For a list

- of the pictorial editions and their locations see West (Wei An), *Sanguo yanyi banben kao*, pp. 36–54. The majority of Ming and early-Qing editions had illustrations, often half-folio size, scattered throughout the text. Sometimes illustrations were inserted into the text of occasional folios. The ca. 1522 edition, the earliest one extant (in figure 3A), is unusual in having no illustrations. The relative dearth of pictorial editions in China could indicate that the *shangtu xiawen* type of *Narrative of the Three Kingdoms* was more “popular” than the other varieties and less likely to be passed down or kept in imperial libraries. Foreigners in China during this period, on the other hand, purchased these texts and gave them as gifts to patrons, and because of this they are now held in libraries outside China.
53. The Portuguese Jesuit missionary Gregorio González was sent to China in 1553. He was held in captivity by the Ming government but later freed and moved to Macau where he lived for twelve years. In 1572 González presented several Chinese books to the Spanish ambassador based in Lisbon, Juan de Borja. In the following year Borja presented the books to Felipe II. The texts were bound in solid Western binding and placed in the Escorial Library. González was subsequently given a missionary post representing Spain in Macau. For these details see Sun Chongtao, *Fengyue jinnang kaoshi* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2000), p. 253; Inoue Taizan, “Xibanya Aisigaoliya jingyuan suo cang ‘Sanguo zhi tongsu yanyi shi zhuan’ chu kao,” *Zhonghua wenshi luncong* 60 (1999), pp. 153–169.
 54. For a stimulating discussion of these issues, see Chartier, *Forms and Meanings*, pp. 83–97.
 55. See, for example, the preface by Yongyu Zi to the *Sanguo zhi tongsu yanyi*. He complains that official history (*shi*) does not get through (communicate) to the multitudes (*bu tong hu zhong ren*). The preface to the same edition by Xiuran Zi refers to enthusiasts who use vulgar language to write a work that people of the empire will understand by ear and thus comprehend (*tong*) the content (*yu tianxia zhi ren ru er er tong qi shi*). One hundred years later it was commonplace to describe the *yanyi* (historical fiction) as a genre designed to instruct people by using easily comprehensible material (*yi tongsu yu ren*). For this example see the preface by Yang Erzeng (fl. 1612) to the *Dong Xi Jin yanyi* (Elaboration of the Eastern and Western Jin), which can be conveniently consulted in Zhu Yixuan, ed., *Ming Qing xiaoshuo ziliao xuanbian* (Jinan: Qi Lu shushe, 1989), vol. 1, p. 146.
 56. Concerning the use of the term “popular” with regard to Chinese fiction, Wilt L. Idema’s discussion many years ago in *Chinese Vernacular Fiction: The Formative Period* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1974) is still relevant. Note in particular his avoidance of the term “popular fiction,” p. xlvi, and his comments on the variable language registers of “colloquial fiction,” pp. liii–liv.
 57. Many *yanyi*-type texts were written in a simplified form of classical Chinese. The term *su* did not necessarily refer to vernacular language. The term *tongsu* is also discussed in this author’s “Constructing New Reading Publics.”
 58. McLaren, “Ming Audiences and Vernacular Hermeneutics.” Andrew West (as

- Wei An), in his comprehensive study of extant Ming and early-Qing editions of this narrative, concludes that texts in this category were read by a less-educated audience; see *Sanguo yanyi banben kao*, p. 131.
59. For the cases discussed by Chartier that illustrate this point in the European experience, see his *Forms and Meanings*, pp. 83–97.
 60. The notion of “literary competence” refers to the background knowledge of conventions required by readers if they are to make sense of a particular work. See Jonathan Culler, *Structuralist Poetics* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975), pp. 113–130.
 61. I say more about *qindu* in the section “Books about How to Read and Study” below. The tools for reading and writing in China (brush, ink, and paper) would have been easier to use than the clay tablets, papyrus, and animal skins associated with Western “scribal culture” before the thirteenth century. On the latter, see Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London and New York: Methuen, 1982), pp. 94–96, 115–116. For a survey of writing methods in the West, see Henri-Jean Martin, *The History and Power of Writing*, trans. Lydia Cochrane (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1988). The technology of writing and reading in the West has influenced reading practices, literacy levels, and the social impact of writing; see M. T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066–1307* (1972; Oxford and Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1993), especially chap. 4, pp. 114–144 and pt. 2, “What Reading Meant,” pp. 185–334; and Paul Saenger, *Space between Words: The Origins of Silent Reading* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).
 62. For examples from Dunhuang manuscripts, see Victor H. Mair, “Lay Students in the Making of Written Vernacular Narratives: An Inventory of the Tunhuang Manuscripts,” *Chinoperl Papers* 10 (1981), pp. 5–96.
 63. Cheng Duanli, of Yinxian in Zhejiang, was a Confucian School instructor at Quzhou lu and follower of the educational philosophy of Zhu Xi. Cheng’s *Dushu fennian richeng* comprised three *juan* and a separate “Gangling” (Outline), 1 *juan*. Cheng’s curriculum schedule was circulated throughout schools in the Yuan period by the Directorate of Education; see Cheng Duanli’s short biography in Song Lian (1310–1381), *Yuan shi* (Yuan History) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1976), *juan* 190, p. 4343. Cheng’s *Schedule of Study* remained influential in academies of the Ming and Qing period. See John Meskill, *Academies in Ming China* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1982), p. 61, p. 177, n. 55. In the *Zhongguo dushu da cidian*, comp. Wang Yuguang and Xu Yan, it is noted that this guide to curriculum was widely applied in the early Ming among the literati classes (1993; Nanjing: Nanjing Daxue chubanshe, 1995), p. 272. For details on the content, see pp. 797–798. William de Bary and Irene Bloom in *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, 2d. ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), vol. 1, p. 816, note that the *Cheng Family School Schedule* “became the model for many family schools and academies in late-imperial China and was widely quoted in educational manuals.” I consulted

- the edition of Cheng's *Schedule* in the Siku quanshu (Taiwan: Shangwu yinshuguan), vol. 709, *Dushu fennian richeng*, *juan* 1 and 2, pp. 471-497.
64. See Meskill's translation of sections of the *Schedule* in *Academies*, pp. 160-161.
65. *Ibid.*, pp. 162-163.
66. *Ibid.*, pp. 160-166.
67. Discussed in Zhu Hengfu, "Mao Jin he tade chuban shiye," *Zhongguo dianji yu wenhua* (Chinese Classics and Culture) 3 (2000), pp. 50-56; Hummel, *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period*, pp. 565-566.
68. For details on each text see note 46.
69. I have surmised that this could have been done to add an air of historical verisimilitude to what was essentially a work of fiction. See Anne E. McLaren, "Chantefables and the Textual Evolution of the *San-kuo-chih yen-i*," *T'oung Pao* 71 (1985), pp. 159-227. This feature was imitated by later admirers of the *Sanguo*, notably Xiong Damu; see Chen Dakang, *Mingdai xiaoshuo shi* (Shanghai: Wenyi chubanshe, 2000), pp. 262-263.
70. In the Song period the notation of "biaodian" (punctuation) was used to indicate pauses. Colored ink was used to mark a passage or word, and other symbols were used to signal tonal punctuation. However, *biaodian* was the formulation of similar practices that had been in use for centuries; see Ren Yuan, *Judou xue lun gao* (Hangzhou: Zhejiang Guji chubanshe, 1998), pp. 4-6. One of the goals of this sort of punctuation was to make a text easier to recite; see *ibid.*, pp. 154-157. On the role of learning how to punctuate in learning literacy, see Lai Xinxia, "Lun judou," in *Guji zhengli lunwen ji*, comp. Zhongguo lishi wenxian yanjiu hui (Lanzhou: Ganzhou renmin chubanshe, 1984), pp. 38-52. For an excellent survey of commentary and punctuation as it applies to Chinese fiction, see David L. Rolston, ed., *How to Read the Chinese Novel* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990), pp. 42-49. The pictorial style can be traced back to Buddhist votive prints of the Tang and Song periods. For discussion see my *Chinese Popular Culture and Ming Chantefables* (Leiden, Boston, Köln: Brill Academic Publishers, 1998), pp. 53-67.
71. The *Shuihu zhuan* is variously attributed to Luo Guanzhong and Shi Nai'an (ca. 1290-1365). The earliest recorded editions date from the mid-sixteenth century. For further details, see Andrew H. Plaks, *The Four Masterworks of the Ming Novel: Ssu ta ch'i-shu* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1987), p. 281; on the authorship of this novel, see p. 293. These examples are also discussed in McLaren, "Constructing New Reading Publics."
72. See, for example, Hu Yinglin's (1551-1602) scathing comments in the *Shaoshi shanfang bicong* about *cunxuejiu* who included fictional tales in *Narrative of the Three Kingdoms*. This can be conveniently consulted in the compilation of Huang Lin and Han Tongwen, *Zhongguo lidai xiaoshuo lunzhu xuan* (Jiangxi: Renmin chubanshe, 1982) p. 151. For this and other examples of *cunxuejiu* see my discussion in "Constructing New Reading Publics."
73. In the case of the *Sanguo yanyi*, military personnel were among the readership;

- see my discussion in "Ming Audiences and Vernacular Hermeneutics," pp. 77–78.
74. Empirical evidence for illustrated vernacular texts such as chantefables (*shuochang cihua*) suggests an emerging female readership, at least in the Qing period (1644–1911); see my *Chinese Popular Culture*, pp. 67–76. The word "affluence" is used advisedly here. The chantefables of Jiading county, for example, were discovered in the tomb of an affluent family with official connections; *ibid.*, pp. 15–31. See also the extensive discussion on readerships in Hegel, *Reading Illustrated Fiction*, pp. 294–303.
 75. See the comments of Shen Chunze (fl. 1573–1620) discussed in Wai-ye Li, "The Collector, the Connoisseur, and Late-Ming Sensibility," *T'oung Pao* 81 (1995, 4–5), pp. 279–280, and McLaren, "Constructing New Reading Publics."
 76. Discussed in more detail in McLaren, "Constructing New Reading Publics."
 77. Prefaces to Chinese novels can be conveniently consulted in Ding Xigen, comp., *Zhongguo lidai xiaoshuo xuba ji* (Beijing: Renmin wenzue chubanshe, 1996), 3 vols. For this reference, see vol. 2, p. 588.
 78. For example, see Xiong Damu's preface of 1522 to the *Da Song zhongxing tongsu yanyi* (Popular Elaboration of the History of the Restoration of the Great Song Dynasty) in Ding, *Zhongguo lidai xiaoshuo xuba ji*, vol. 2, p. 980.
 79. See a report written by Xu Nianci that originally appeared in the journal *Xiaoshuo lin*, no. 9–10 (1908) and is reprinted in Zhu Yixuan, *Ming Qing xiaoshuo ziliao xuanbian* (Jinan: Qilu chubanshe, 1989), vol. 1, p. 121.
 80. See a report that originally appeared in Zhang Mingfei, *Gujin xiaoshuo pinglin* (1919) and is reprinted in Zhu Yixuan, *Ming Qing xiaoshuo ziliao xuanbian*, vol. 1, p. 140.
 81. This report originally appeared in the periodical *Zhonghua xiaoshuo jie* 2.1 (1915) and is reprinted in Zhu Yixuan, *Ming Qing xiaoshuo ziliao xuanbian*, vol. 1, p. 122.
 82. The translation of the title comes from J. I. Crump who discusses this work in *Chinese Theater in the Days of Kublai Khan* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1980), pp. 28–29.
 83. See the compilation of paratextual material to drama in Cai Yi, ed., *Zhongguo gudian xiqu xuba huibian* (Jinan: Qi Lu shushe, 1989), vol. 1, pp. 8–15.
 84. *Ibid.*, pp. 8–10.
 85. *Ibid.*, pp. 12–13.
 86. *Ibid.*, pp. 13–14.
 87. *Ibid.*, pp. 14–15. Part of this preface is translated in Ch'ien Hsing-hai and L. Carrington Goodrich, *Western and Central Asians in China under the Mongols* by Chen Yuan, Monumenta Serica Monograph 15 (Los Angeles: Monumenta Serica at the University of California, 1966), pp. 183–184. The transliteration of this name is found in Wang Deyi et al., *Yuanren zhuanji ziliao suoyin* (Taipei: Xinwenfeng chuban gongsi, 1979–1982; Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1987), vol. 4, p. 2625.
 88. Cai, *Zhongguo gudian xiqu*, pp. 10–11. An excerpt from this postscript is

- translated by Ch'ien and Goodrich, *Western and Central Asians*, pp. 182–183.
89. I make this observation on the basis of a survey of paratextual material from the Yuan in fiction and *xiaoshuo*. My survey is based on compendiums such as that of Cai Yi, *Zhongguo gudian xiqu xuba huibian* for dramas and Ding Xigen, *Zhongguo lidai xiaoshuo* for fiction; see notes 77 and 83. Some of the results of this survey appear in my “Constructing New Reading Publics” and “Print Culture in China and the Emergence of the Common Reader.”
90. For Xiong’s preface see Ding, *Zhongguo lidai xiaoshuo*, vol. 2, pp. 980–981.
91. Sun Kaidi, *Zhongguo tongshu xiaoshuo shumu* (Beijing: Renmin wenzue chubanshe, 1957; rev. ed. 1982), pp. 57–59. Ōtsuka Hideta, *Chūgoku tsūzoku shōmoku kaitei ko* (Tokyo: Kyūko shoin, 1984), pp. 172–173.
92. This is according to Sun Kaidi who viewed a manuscript copy of this narrative in the possession of a French man (?), that is, Faren) called Duo-er-meng; see Sun Kaidi, *Riben Dongjing suo jian xiaoshuo shumu* (Beijing: Renmin wenzue chubanshe, 1981), p. 30. Sun notes this manuscript is of fine quality but with an “artisanal air.” In his *Zhongguo tongshu xiaoshuo shumu* (Beijing: Renmin wenzue, 1982), p. 58, Sun expresses regret that this edition is fragmentary. Only three *juan* survive. It is not known where this manuscript copy is located today.
93. Chen Dakang, taking into account the intermarginal commentary, believes that this text was indeed directed to the “ordinary folk.” See his “Xiong Damu xianxiang: gudai tongshu xiaoshuo chuanbo moshi ji qiyi,” *Wenzue yichan* 2 (2000), p. 102.
94. For these later editions, see the indexes listed in notes 91 and 92.
95. Substantial excerpts from the *Dushu fa* are available in English translation in Daniel K. Gardner, *Learning to Be a Sage: Selections from the Conversations of Master Chu, Arranged Topically* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); see “On Reading,” pp. 128–162. I have also discussed Zhu Xi’s *Dushu fa* in “Constructing New Reading Publics.”
96. For the story of Sun Jing, see the *Taiping yulan* (Imperial Compendium of the Taiping Xingguo Era [976–984]), comp. Li Fang (925–996), 1,000 *juan* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1960), vol. 2, *juan* 363, p. 1,674. The story of Su Qin is related in the *Zhanguoce* (Intrigues of the Warring States [475–221 BCE]) (Shanghai: Guji chubanshe, 1978), vol. 1, *juan* 3, p. 85. The story of Su Qin has been translated by J. I. Crump, *Chan-kuo Ts’u*, 2d rev. edn. (San Francisco: Chinese Materials Center, 1979), pp. 55–58, esp. p. 57. These two stories circulated widely in late-imperial China. For further details on later circulation, see Wang Yuguang and Xu Yan, *Zhongguo dushu da cidian*, p. 661.
97. Qi Chenghan, *Dushu xun* (Instructions on How to Study), 1 *juan*, included in his *Danshengtang cangshu yue* (Contract for the Danshengtang Library). Qi had a vast library and set up rules for the management of his library for his sons to follow. See L. Carrington Goodrich and Chaoying Fang, eds., *Dictionary of Ming Biography* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1976), vol. 1, pp. 216–220, esp. p. 218. For the anecdotes cited here from the *Dushu xun*, see the modern annotated edition included together with three similar

- instructional works in Wang Yuguang, ed., *Dushu siguan* (Hubei: Cishu chubanshe, 1997), pp. 1–12.
98. *Dushu xun* in Wang, *Dushu siguan*, p. 6. The text reads “chang you Luoyang shisi jian, yue suo mai shu” ([He] often roamed through the bookshops of Loyang to read the books on sale). The original tale is found in Fan Ye (398–445), *Hou Han shu* (Hong Kong: Zhonghua shuju, 1971), vol. 3, *juan* 49, p. 1629, which contains the line above. It takes an effort to imagine what types of books and bookshops were available in the first century CE. We do know that paper made of vegetable fiber was known in the second century BCE; see Xiao Dongfa, *Zhongguo tushu chuban yinshua shilun* (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2001), pp. 35ff. Li Ruiliang has traced bookshops (*shusi*) and people employed to copy books as far back as the Eastern Han period (25–220 CE); see *Zhongguo gudai tushu liutong shi* (Shanghai: Renmin chubanshe, 2000), pp. 94–95.
99. Qi Chenghan, *Dushu xun*, pp. 7–8.
100. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
101. The Buddhist connotations of the term *zhiguan* in the title are explained in *Zhongguo lidai xiaoshuo* in Wang, *Dushu siguan*, p. 13. The complete work is given in *ibid.*, pp. 13–104.
102. *Ibid.*, p. 84.
103. For an example of copying, see *ibid.*, p. 103. One is advised to make appropriate attributions in copying a text, p. 97.
104. *Zhongguo lidai xiaoshuo*, p. 81.
105. *Ibid.*, p. 91.
106. *Ibid.*, p. 93.
107. The mythical Fu Xi is credited with devising the Eight Trigrams at the Fu Xi shi huaguatai (Platform Where Fu Xi Drew Trigrams) located in Tianshui county in Gansu. A Ming-period record attests to an actual platform at this spot although it does not remain today. See Wang Yuguang and Xu Yan, *Zhongguo dushu da cidian* (1993; Nanjing: Nanjing daxue chubanshe, 1995), p. 3. The mythical Cang Jie is purported to have devised Chinese characters at the Zaozitai (Character Creation Platform) in Shensi, not far from Xi’an city. A platform of earth is said to be in existence there today. An alternative site is claimed to be in Luonan county, Shensi; *ibid.*, p. 3. The Kongzi xian’getai (Platform Where Confucius Strummed Songs) is located in Huaiyang county, Henan. The name Kongzi xian’getai dates only from the Ming period. As with many of these locations attributed to sites of antiquity, the surviving buildings date from the late-imperial period. In the case of the Confucius platform, the remaining buildings date back to the early-eighteenth century; *ibid.*, p. 5.
108. Qu Yuan’s Reading Cave (Qu Yuan dushudong), located in Zigui county in Hubei, is said to be where he studied in his youth. It is reported to be six meters in height and furnished with stone benches and tables; Wang and Xu, *Zhongguo dushu da cidian*, pp. 5–6. Sima Xiangru’s Reading Cavern (Sima Xiangru dushuku) is located in Zitong county, Sichuan. He is said to have

- paused here to read while en route to Chang'an. The Tang emperor Xuanzong (r. 713–755) is said to have penned an inscription for this cavern while passing through the area. The surrounding buildings were destroyed in 1967; *ibid.*, p. 7.
109. The practice of commemorating particular places where important people studied or worked has been continued in the present day. Many famous writers, among them the philosopher Yan Fu (1853–1921), the reformer Kang Youwei (1858–1927), and authors Lu Xun (1881–1936) and Mao Dun (1896–1981), are associated with significant places where they read and composed their works (*dushuchu*).
110. The place of the alleged desecration of the books is said to be outside Xi'an in Shensi close to the emperor's palace or alternatively, in Weinan county, Shensi; Wang and Xu, *Zhongguo dushu da cidian*, p. 6.
111. From the compilation of short stories, Zhou Ji (Qingyuan, fl. sixteenth to seventeenth century), comp., *Xihu erji* (Second Collection from West Lake), Chongzhen era (1628–1644) in the series Guben xiaoshuo jicheng, ser. 1 (Shanghai: Guji chubanshe, 1990–1991), vol. 42; see the opening series of illustrations, p. 53.
112. An example of the image of a young boy reading perched atop an ox is given in Wang and Xu, *Zhongguo dushu da cidian*, facing p. 1. The *Christian Science Monitor* (May 25, 1995, p. 16) features a delightful photograph of a farm boy holding an umbrella as he reads a magazine astride a water buffalo in Wuhan, China. The photograph was taken by Norman Matheny in the early years of the reform period (early 1980s). I thank the editor of the *East Asian Library Journal* for drawing my attention to this photo. The notion of the farmer who studied as he toiled was a familiar one in household texts. Yan Zhitui (531–591) in *Yanshi jiaxun* mentions “carrying classics while hoeing” (*chu ze dai jing*) and “weaving rushes into tablets for writing while tending the flocks” (*mu ze bian jian*); see the modern edition, *Yanshi jiaxun jijie* (Shanghai: Guji chubanshe, 1980), section 8, “Mian xue,” p. 189. For this translation see Teng Ssü-yu, *Family Instructions for the Yen Clan: Yen-shih chia-hsün* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1968), p. 72.
113. *Xinkan quanxiang shuochang Bao daizhi chushen zhuan* (New Edition of the Fully Illustrated Chantefable of the Childhood of Judge Bao), late-fifteenth century, in *Ming Chenghua shuochang congkan* (Shanghai: Shanghai bowuguan, 1979), vol. 4, p. 5a.
114. Maria Rudova, comp., *Chinese Popular Prints*, trans. Viacheslav Sobolev (Leningrad: Aurora Art Publishers, 1988), pp. 106–107.
115. *Wanjin qinglin*, comp. Yu Xiangdou (fl. ca. 1550–1637), facs. edn. in the Guben xiaoshuo jicheng, 1990, ser. 4, vol. 152, frontispiece. Richard G. Wang presents this illustration with discussion in “The Publishing of Ming Novellas and the Print Culture,” *Monumenta Serica* 48 (2000), pp. 126–128.
116. *Wanjin qinglin*, *juan* 1, p. 23b (p. 46). The illustration comes from the *Zhongqing li ji*, which runs on the lower half of the first *juan* of the *Wanjin*

- qinglin*. The *Zhongqing li ji* was first published ca. 1487. The author is unknown. The early edition had no illustrations; see Sun Kaidi, *Riben Dongjing*, p. 122.
117. *Wanjin qinglin*, *juan* 1, p. 22b (p. 44).
118. Two commentators who circulated the rumor were Lü Tiancheng (1580–1618) and Shen Defu (1578–1642). See the discussion by Chen Dakang, *Mingdai xiaoshuo shi* (Shanghai: Wenyi chubanshe, 2000), pp. 212–214. See also Chu Hung-lam, “The Authorship of the Story *Chung-ch’ing Li-Chi*,” *Asia Major*, 3d. ser., 1.1 (1988), pp. 71–82.
119. In Chinese book illustrations the figures of higher status are commonly depicted as taller than those of lesser status, such as servants and attendants. The relative height, hair arrangement, and dignified pose of the lady on the right suggest her status as principal wife. Anne S. Farrer notes the larger size of “authority figures” in illustrations to vernacular fiction; see her “The Shui-hu Chuan: A Study in the Development of Late-Ming Woodblock Illustration” (Ph.D. diss., University of London, 1984), p. 105. Examples from chantefable illustrations involving family scenes showing parents larger than their children and servants are discussed in McLaren, *Chinese Popular Culture*, p. 55.
120. Compiler unknown, *Saizheng geji*, thought to be late Ming, reprinted in Fu Xihua, *Zhongguo gudian wenxue banhua xuanji* (Shanghai: Renmin meishu chubanshe, 1981), vol. 1, p. 73. Also available in facsimile copy in Shanben xiqu congkan, ed. Wang Qiugui (Taipei: Taiwan xuesheng shuju, 1987), 104 vols., vol. 46, p. 41.
121. For this image from the *Saizheng geji*, see the reproduction in Zhou Xin, *Mingdai banke tushi* (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 1998), vol. 4, p. 109.
122. See the exquisite illustration by Chen Hongshou (1599–1652) reproduced in *Zhongguo banhua xuan* (Beijing: Rongbaozhai, 1958), nos. 125–126.
123. Yuan Zhan, *Wenju de gushi* (Taipei: Gugong bowuguan, 1991), p. 67. Ceramics commonly reproduced scenes from fictional tales. For other examples of scenes from *The Western Chamber* on everyday artifacts, see a porcelain wine jar in Craig Clunas, *Art in China* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press), p. 94, and a bottle from the late-Ming period reproduced in his *Pictures and Visuality in Early Modern China* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997), p. 56.
124. The *Lüchuang nüshi* in fourteen *juan* is attributed to an unknown author with the pen name Qinhuai yuke. It was published in the late Ming. For discussion, see Shen Jin, *Meiguo Hafo daxue*, p. 407. On the stories recounted in the *Lüchuang nüshi*, see Katherine Carlitz, “Desire, Danger, and the Body: Stories of Women’s Virtue in Late-Ming China,” in Christina K. Gilmartin, Gail Hershatter, Lisa Rofel, and Tyrene White, eds., *Engendering China: Women, Culture, and the State* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994), pp. 101–124, esp. pp. 120–122. The translation of the title follows Carlitz.
125. This image is reproduced in my “Constructing New Reading Publics.”
126. Katherine Carlitz, “Desire and Writing in the Late-Ming Play ‘Parrot Island,’”

- in Ellen Widmer and Kang-I Sun Chang, eds., *Writing Women in Late Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), p. 123. Carlitz further discusses how the boundaries between instructional texts for women and romantic texts became blurred by the late Ming; see p. 125.
127. Poem by Shang Jinglan (1604–1680), trans. Ellen Widmer, in Kang-I Sun Chang and Haun Saussy, *Women Writers of Traditional China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), p. 316.
128. Poem by Xu Can, trans. Charles Kwong, in *ibid.*, p. 347.
129. Poem by Wu Qi, trans. Ellen Widmer, in *ibid.*, p. 372.

GLOSSARY

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| Bao 包 | <i>Da Song yanyi zhongxing yinglie zhuan</i> |
| biaodian 標點 | 大宋演義中興英烈傳 |
| bu tong hu zhong ren 不通乎衆人 | <i>Da Song zhongxing tongsu yanyi</i> |
| Cai Yong 蔡邕 | 大宋中興通俗演義 |
| Cang Jie 蒼頡 | Daxue 大學 |
| Cao Cao 曹操 | dian 點 |
| Chang'an 長安 | dixiuben 遞修本 |
| chang you Luoyang shisi jian yue suo mai | <i>Dong Xi Jin yanyi</i> 東西晉演義 |
| shu 常遊洛陽市肆間閱所賣書 | Duchayuan 都察院 |
| Cheng Duanli 程端禮 | Dunhuang 敦煌 |
| <i>Cheng shi dushu fennian richeng</i> | Duo-er-meng 鐸爾孟 |
| 程氏讀書分年日程 | dushu 讀書 |
| Chen Hongshou 陳洪綬 | dushuchu 讀書處 |
| Chen Jitai 陳際泰 | <i>Dushu fa</i> 讀書法 |
| Chen Shou 陳壽 | Dushu fennian richeng 讀書分年日程 |
| Chen Zilong 陳子龍 | <i>Dushu xun</i> 讀書訓 |
| chongkeben 重刻本 | <i>Dushu zhiguan lu</i> 讀書止觀錄 |
| chu 處 | <i>Erke pai'an jingqi</i> 二刻拍案驚奇 |
| chu ze dai jing 鋤則帶經 | fanche 翻車 |
| cihua 辭話 | fangkeben 仿刻本 |
| Cui Yingying 崔鶯鶯 | fang Song 仿宋 |
| cunxuejiu 村學究 | fankeben 翻刻本 |
| <i>Danshengtang cangshu yue</i> 澹生堂藏書約 | Fanli 凡例 |

- Fan Ye 范曄
 Faren 法人
 Fei Hong 飛紅
 fukeben 覆刻本
 Fu Xi 伏羲
 Fu Xi shi huaguatai 伏羲氏畫卦台
 Gangling 綱領
 Gao Ming 高明
 gongzhu tianxia 公諸天下
 guan 館
 Guan Yu 關羽
Gujin shuke 古今書刻
 Gu Lu 辜輅
 Gu sheng gong Yu bingjian guan zhuan
 辜生共瑜並肩觀傳
 gushuang 孤孀
 Hangzhou 杭州
 Hanzhong 漢中
 haoshizhe 好事者
 houbei xueci 後輩學詞
Hou Han shu 後漢書
 Huaiyang 淮陽
 Huanduzhai 還讀齋
 huanguan 宦官
 Huang Zhengfu 黃正甫
 Hu Yinglin 胡應麟
 ji 計
 Jiading 嘉定
 Jiang Daqi 蔣大器
 Jiangnan 江南
 jiangti 匠體
Jiao Hong ji 嬌紅記
 Jingshu 敬叔
Jingzhong lu 精忠錄
 Jinling kejingchu 金陵刻經處
 jinshen 縉 (搢) 紳
 Jin Shengtan 金聖嘆
 jinxiangben 巾箱本
 Kang Youwei 康有為
 Kongzi xian'ge tai 孔子弦歌台
 lanzhe 覽者
 Lanzhou 蘭州
 lataben 邇邇本
 Liang Qichao 梁啓超
 Liaofan 了凡
 Li Fang 李昉
 Ling Mengchu 凌濛初
 Liu Bei 劉備
 Liu Jun 劉峻
 Liu Ruoyu 劉若愚
 liusu 流俗
 Li Yuniang 黎瑜娘
 Li Zhi 李贄
 longguche 龍骨車
 lou 樓
Lüchuang nüshi 綠窗女史
Lunheng 論衡
 Luo Guanzhong 羅貫中
 Luonan 洛南
 Luoyang 洛陽
 Luo Ye 羅燁
 Luo Zongxin 羅宗信
 Lü Tiancheng 呂天成
 Lu Xun 魯迅
 lüyan geyong zhe 閭閻歌詠者
 Ma Jun 馬鈞
 Mao Dun 茅盾
 Mao Jin 毛晉
 Mao Zonggang 毛宗崗
 Mian xue 勉學

- mu 畝
Mudan ting 牡丹亭
 mu ze bian jian 牧則編箋
 neifu 內府
 Niu 牛
 niujiao shusheng 牛角書生
 nongshu 農書
Nongzheng quanshu 農政全書
 Nüxun 女訓
 Ouyang Xuan 歐陽玄
 pinglin 評林
 Pinglutang 平露堂
Pipa ji 琵琶記
 qi 妻
 Qi Chenghan 祁承燦
 qindu 勤讀
 Qinhuai yuke 秦淮寓客
 Qin Shihuang 秦始皇
 Qiongsan 瓊山
 Qiu Jun 邱濬
Quan nongshu 勸農書
 Qu Yuan 屈原
 Qu Yuan dushudong 屈原讀書洞
 Quzhou lu 衢州路
 renche 人車
Saizheng geji 賽徵歌集
Sanguo yanyi 三國演義
Sanguo zhi 三國志
Sanguo zhi tongsu yanyi 三國志通俗演義
Sanguo zhi tongsu yanyi shi zhuan
 三國志通俗演義史傳
 Sao song sanlang qu dushu
 嫂送三郎去讀書
 Shang Jinglan 商景蘭
 shangtu xiawen 上圖下文
 shanjieben 刪節本
Shaoshi shanfang bicon 少室山房筆叢
 Shen Chunze 沈春澤
 Shen Defu 沈德符
 shi 史 (history)
 shi 士 (literati)
 shidaifu 士大夫
 shijing zhi tu 市井之徒
 shi junzi 士君子
 shi junzi zhi haoshizhe 士君子之好事者
 Shi Nai'an 施耐庵
 shizi 士子
 Shu 蜀
Shuangfengtang 雙峰堂
 shuiche 水車
Shuihu 水滸
Shuihu zhuan 水滸傳
 shuochang cihua 說唱詞話
 shusi 書肆
Siku quanshu 四庫全書
 Silijian 司禮監
 Sima Xiangru 司馬相如
 Sima Xiangru dushuku 司馬相如讀書窟
 simin 四民
 Song Lian 宋濂
 Song Yingxing 宋應星
 Song Yuan 宋遠
 Soqui Fuchu 瑣非復初
 su 俗
 suben 俗本
 Sun Jing 孫敬
 Su Qin 蘇秦
 Su Shi 蘇軾
 Su Xun 蘇洵
 Su Zhe 蘇轍

- tache 踏車
 tai 台
 Taiping yulan 太平御覽
 Tang Binyin 湯賓尹
 Tiangong kaiwu 天工開物
 Tianjin 天津
 Tianshui 天水
 tianxia zhi ren 天下之人
 tong 通
 tongsu 通俗
 tongsu xiaoshuo 通俗小說
 tu 圖
 Wang Chong 王充
 Wang Jiaoniang 王嬌娘
 Wang Shifu 王實甫
 Wanjin qinglin 萬錦情林
 Wei 魏
 Weilüe 魏略
 Weilüe jiben 魏略輯本
 Weinan 渭南
 wenyan 文言
 Wu 吳
 Wu Cheng'en 吳承恩
 Wu Qi 吳琪
 Wu Yingji 吳應箕
 Xi'an 西安
 Xiao Cuncun 蕭存存
 xiaoshuo 小說
 xie 邪
 xiekeben 寫刻本
 Xihu erji 西湖二集
 Xinkan jingben jiaoxzheng yanyi quanxiang
 Sanguo zhizhuan pinglin 新刊京本校
 正演義全像三國志傳評林
 Xinkan quanxiang shuochang Bao daizhi chu-
 shen zhuan 新刊全象說唱包待制出
 身傳
 Xinkan tongsu yanyi Sanguo zhi shi zhuan
 新刊通俗演義三國志史傳
 Xiong Damu 熊大木
 xiububen 修補本
 Xiuran Zi 修髯子
 Xixiang ji 西廂記
 Xiyou ji 西遊記
 xuanliang cigu 懸梁刺股
 Xuanzong 玄宗
 Xu Can 徐燦
 Xu Guangqi 徐光啓
 Xu Yan 徐雁
 Yan Fu 嚴復
 Yang Erzeng 楊爾曾
 Yang Yongquan 楊涌泉
 Yanshi jiaxun 顏氏家訓
 yanyi 演義
 Yan Zhitui 顏之推
 Ye Fengchun 葉逢春
 yingkeben 影刻本
 Yingying 鶯鶯
 Yinshi buyi an Jian yanyi quanxiang piping
 Sanguo zhi 音釋補遺按鑑演義全
 像批評三國志
 Yinxian 鄆縣
 yi tongsu yu ren 以通俗諭人
 Yongyu Zi 庸愚子
 Yuan Fengzi 元峰子
 Yuan Huang 袁黃
 yuankeben 原刻本
 Yuan Liaofan quan nongshu 袁了凡勸農書

- Yuan shi* 元史
Yue Fei 岳飛
yufu deng bei 愚夫等輩
yufu yufu 愚夫愚婦
Yu Huan 魚豢
yu tianxia zhi ren ru er er tong qi shi
 欲天下之人入耳而通其事
Yu Xiangdou 余象斗
Yu Xiangwu 余象烏
Zaozitai 造字台
zengkeben 增刻本
Zhang 張
Zhangguoce 戰國策
Zhang Guowei 張國維
Zhang Pengyi 張鵬一
Zhang Shangde 張尙德
zhiguan 止觀
zhiyin 知音
Zhongqing li ji 鍾情麗集
Zhongyuan yinyun 中原音韻
Zhou Deqing 周德清
Zhou Gongjin 周公瑾
Zhou Hongzu 周弘祖
Zhou Ji 周楫
Zhou Qingyuan 周清源
Zhou Yu 周瑜
Zhuo zhong zhi 酌中志
Zhu Xi 朱熹
Zigui 秭歸
Zitong 梓潼
Zizhi tongjian 資治通監
Zizhi tongjian gangmu 資治通監綱目
zuben 祖本
Zuiweng tanlu 醉翁談錄