

Recasting the Chinese Novel: Ernest Major's Shenbao Publishing House (1872–1890)

Catherine Vance Yeh, Boston University

The modern novel announced its arrival in China after the aborted Hundred Days Reform of 1898 with the claim of being the truly “new novel” (*xin xiaoshuo* 新小說).¹ Recent scholarship (including my own) has highlighted the social and political factors that contributed to the novel becoming an engine in China’s literary and social transformation.² The novel’s potential to address the larger issues of state and society and to advance reform was crucial in elevating the standing of this genre, which also resonated with the writers’ quest for the new and the modern.³

These developments, however, were only made possible through a set of material and cultural conditions that have received far less attention and shall be addressed in this article.⁴ The new material conditions included new-style publishing

1 This study took many years to reach completion. Although it was first conceived as part of my recent book, Catherine Vance Yeh, *The Chinese Political Novel: Migration of a World Genre* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), it soon developed into a separate unit that was more suited to publication as a research article. My work has benefitted from the support and help of a number of scholars. I owe a large debt to the Heidelberg public sphere research group, where the first buds for this study emerged many years ago and where, in 2005, I first gave a talk presenting a systematic outline. Thank you also to Professor Wilt Idema (Harvard), who read the first draft of this study and offered many invaluable suggestions; to Professor Tarumoto Teruo 樽本照雄 (Osaka), who shared his digitized file of late Qing novel publishing with me; to Professor Chen Dakang 陳大康 (East China Normal University, Shanghai), who sent a breakdown of his statistical chart of late Qing novel publishing that was cued to the period I was researching; to the two anonymous readers for *Transcultural Studies* whose comments and critical advice helped me to improve and tighten the paper’s focus; and to John Stevenson, who helped me edit an earlier draft of this article. My deepest gratitude, however, goes to Rudolf Wagner. Without his support this study would hardly have been possible. It is also indebted to his foundational studies—many of them still unpublished—on the *Shenbao*, the Shenbaoguan and its manager Ernest Major, as it is to the helpful comments and suggestions he made on each draft.

2 Milena Doleželová-Velingerová, ed., *The Chinese Novel at the Turn of the Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980); Chen Pingyuan 陳平原, *Ershi shiji Zhongguo xiaoshuo shi* 二十世纪中国小说史 [History of the twentieth-century Chinese novel] (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1989), 27; Yeh, *The Chinese Political Novel*.

3 David Wang, *Fin-de-siècle Splendor: Repressed Modernities of Late Qing Fiction, 1848–1911* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 1–52.

4 This is particularly true for the developments of the Chinese and international book markets during the last decades of the nineteenth century. For a recent discussion on this issue, see Cynthia

houses that used up-to-date printing technology and were intent on cultivating awareness of the novel's market potential, and a Chinese-language newspaper and periodical press with a national (and even international) distribution network that carried information, advertisements, and opinions about such works to readers of Chinese. The cultural conditions that facilitated an elevation of the novel genre encompassed an increasingly vocal group of new-style urban intellectuals who saw China as connected with the "world" and looked for solutions to what they believed to be China's crisis. This group sought new forms that could articulate and spread their ideas. They located these solutions in an idealized past and in the equally idealized notion of the "civilized" nations of the "West" and Japan of their own time. Furthermore, there was a growing public readership that was familiar with the new media of newspapers, looked for leisure reading, and was open to new global fashions and trends.

In China, all of these conditions were present in the Shanghai International Settlement, the primary "contact zone" linking China with the world. Many of the key cultural brokers congregated there from many countries, and its media established connections with the world on a daily basis.

The nineteenth century saw many closely connected and transculturally shared shifts in state institutions, engineering, science, language, religion, ideology, and culture. The emergence of the novel as the lead genre in literature was one such. In Europe this shift occurred earlier in the nineteenth century whereas, as an important but often overlooked early study from the Prague structuralist school has argued, in many Asian nations, including China, it occurred between the 1870s and the 1910s.⁵ This broad generalization suggests a transcultural similarity in the process of the novel's rise; however, the dynamics and agents driving the process in different environments must be studied in their own right.

This study will address a number of questions through critical debate with the existing scholarship: Was the rise of the novel in China—as in Europe—accompanied by an elevation of its artistic, cultural, and social standing? If so, what was the relationship between this rise and the market forces in book printing and book selling? Was there a conceptual reframing for the novel that sustained this new standing, and who were the agents involved? What was the role of foreigners in the pre-1900 Shanghai Chinese-language publishing process, and what motivated these publishers? What were their criteria in

Brokaw and Christopher A. Reed, eds., *From Woodblocks to the Internet: Chinese Publishing and Print Culture in Transition, circa 1800 to 2008* (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

5 On this process, see the pioneering study Oldřich Král and Zlata Černá, eds., *Contributions to the Study of the Rise and Development of Modern Literatures in Asia*, 3 vols. (Prague: Oriental Institute in the Publishing House of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, 1965–1970).

selecting novels for publication and how were these adjusted to readers' reactions? What was it that gave sustenance to their publication ventures: subsidies or readers' interest articulated through market success? How did the novel fit into the growing perception among the elite during the late nineteenth century that China needed to draw on the experience of "civilized" nations and forgotten or sidelined indigenous resources in order to find a way out of the crisis? Were the novels instrumental in the rise of the genre's status translations from these Western nations and works closely modeled on such translations, or were they works drawing on indigenous resources? How did these Chinese novels fit into what was seen as an increasingly shared transcultural "modernity"?

The paucity of our knowledge regarding the publishing of commercial novels in Shanghai during the late nineteenth century is due partly to the fact that Ernest Major (1841–1908)—the founder and manager of the Shenbaoguan 申報館, the most important publishing house in this regard—was a British subject. Within the framework of a nation-centered historiography, the Chinese-language publishing activities of foreigners were subsumed in the PRC under the rubric of "cultural imperialism," which was denounced, but not adequately studied.⁶ However, after Chen Dakang's groundbreaking work, which affirmed the contributions and impact of the Shenbaoguan novel publishing enterprise, some younger scholars, such as Wen Juan 文娟, saw an opening into this "forbidden zone" and were able to publish substantial empirical work on the subject.⁷

6 One example is the contrast between the long and detailed coverage of Chinese publishers, versus the very short entries on the Shenbaoguan in Chinese standard histories of publishing under the categories "Newspapers founded by..." "Publishing house founded by..." and "Foreigners (not including the missionaries)." See Ye Zaisheng 葉再生, ed., *Zhongguo jindai xiandai chuban tongshi* 中國近代現代出版通史 [Comprehensive history of modern Chinese publishing] (Beijing: Huawen chubanshe, 2002). In his study of the publishing houses in the Shanghai area, Pan Jianguo 潘建國 simply disregards the early Shenbaoguan efforts to publish novels and begins his analysis in 1907, after the company was bought by a Chinese consortium. See Pan Jianguo 潘建國, "Qingmo Shanghai diqu shuju yu wan Qing xiaoshuo" 清末上海地區書局與晚清小說 [Late Qing Shanghai publishing houses and the late Qing novel], *Wenxue yichan* 2 (2004): 96–110.

This situation has improved for the newspaper and periodical—including illustrated periodical—publishing of this company in large part through the efforts of a research group at Heidelberg University. See Natascha Vittinghoff (Mrs. Gentz), *Die Anfänge des Journalismus in China* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2002); Andrea Janku, *Nur leere Reden: Politischer Diskurs und die Shanghaier Presse im China des späten 19. Jahrhundert* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2003); Barbara Mittler, *A Newspaper for China? Power, Identity, and Change in Shanghai's News Media, 1872–1912* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2004); Rudolf Wagner, ed., *Joining the Global Public: Word, Image, and City in the Early Chinese Newspapers, 1870–1910* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007).

7 Wen Juan 文娟, "Shenbaoguan yu zhongguo jindai xiaoshuo fazhan zhi guanxi yanjiu" 申報館與中國近代小說發展之關係研究 [A study on the relationship between Shenbaoguan and the

Luckily, the sources relevant to the questions outlined above have not disappeared completely, and some are even accessible in digitized form. An important first step in this analysis is the identification of the number of Chinese language novels published by the foreign owned and managed Shenbaoguan publishing house between 1872 and 1890. According to the data assembled in the *Zhongguo wenyán xiǎoshuō shumu* 中國文言小說書目 (Catalog of novels in classical Chinese), this company, which was founded only in 1872, was the most prolific publisher of the loosely defined genre of the novel, not only for the late Qing period, but also for the Qing period as a whole.⁸

The Shenbaoguan did not enter an already bustling publishing market, but a publishing wasteland, the result of a long and very bloody civil war. Most other publishers started operations only after the Shenbaoguan's success made it attractive to enter this market. The subsequent development of Shanghai into a large and dominant media center in China was the result both of the Shenbaoguan's own innovative operations and of the fact that it had set itself up in the shielded environment of the Shanghai International Settlement. In its publishing strategies, the company did not use Chinese models; instead it found its way as it went along, learning from both its successes and failures, and we have to assume that in many cases the London publishing world, of which Major might have seen something as a young man, was the closest influence. Another likely model was Japan, which saw an explosive rise of the political novel as well as of translation projects of Western novels on a large scale in the 1870s and 1880s.

My own perusal of the novels published by the Shenbaoguan⁹ and the recent multi-volume chronology of Chinese fiction publishing during the period from 1840 to 1911 confirms these claims.¹⁰ Between 1873 and 1892, the Shenbaoguan published about eighty-five works of fiction in book form.¹¹

development of Chinese modern novel] (PhD diss., Huadong shifan daxue, 2006). She has published a number of substantial articles based on her PhD, which will be referred to in my analysis.

8 For the Qing period, of the 549 titles listed in this bibliography, seventy (12.8 percent) were published by the Shenbaoguan, although it published novels for less than two decades; next came the Commercial Press, which became a serious presence on the book market only after 1900. See Yuan Xingpei 袁行霈 and Hou Zhongyi 侯忠義, eds., *Zhongguo wenyán xiǎoshuō shumu* 中國文言小說書目 [Catalog of novels in classical Chinese] (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1981), 345–434.

9 See Appendix 1.

10 Chen Dakang 陳大康, *Zhongguo jindai xiǎoshuō biannian shi* 中國近代小說編年史 [A chronology of the modern Chinese novel], 6 vols. (Beijing: Renmin wenzue chubanshe, 2014). The company published novels in its journals in serialized form, especially the *Dianshizhai huabao* (1884–). For these, see Rudolf Wagner, “Joining the Global Imaginaire: The Shanghai Illustrated Newspaper *Dianshizhai huabao*,” in Wagner, *Joining the Global Public*, 145–147.

11 This does not include reprints of titles published earlier by the Shenbaoguan.

These included classical and vernacular writing, with fifty-seven original works and thirty-nine rare works, some of which were believed to be lost.¹² The company produced on average four to five such titles a year. During the decades of stagnation between 1840 and 1873, the annual average of new fiction titles (excluding reprints of unavailable older works) for the entire empire was less than two.¹³ Over fifty new works of fiction published by the Shenbaoguan between 1873 and 1892 must be juxtaposed with the seventy-eight new works identified by Chen Dakang for the entire country between 1875 and 1895. About 70 percent of all new works of fiction in Qing China during this period were published by the company, which held a similarly dominant position in its publication of out-of-print, rare, or lost works of fiction.¹⁴ These numbers reveal that during the period between 1872 and 1889, when its founder and manager Ernest Major (1841–1908) returned to England and novel publishing in monograph and serialized form by the company gradually ended, the Shenbaoguan was close to an absolute domination of this market. (The company re-initiated the serialization of novels in 1907). We are thus well advised to focus our attention on this company.

12 The calculation includes all fictional works published by the Shenbaoguan between 1872 and 1890, but not reprints by the company. The principle of selection for what might be considered fiction is based on the three categories established in the Shumu: “new and extraordinary vernacular works” (*xinqi shuobu lei* 新奇說部類), “linked-chapter novels” (*zhanghui xiaoshuo lei* 章回小說類), and “new works of opera” (*xinpai yuanben lei* 新排院本類). The list includes translations published in the *Shenbao*; it does not include fictional works published in the Shenbaoguan literary journals *Yinghuan suoji* 瀛寰瑣紀 (Jade splinters from the entire universe), *Huanyu suoji* 寰宇瑣紀 (Jade splinters from the whole world) and *Siming suoji* 四溟瑣紀 (Jade splinters from the four seas), except the translation *Xinxi xiantan* 昕夕閒談 (*Idle talk mornings and nights*), which was also published in a book edition. See Chen Dakang 陳大康, “Dapo jiu pingheng de chushi huanjie—lun Shenbaoguan zai jindai xiaoshuo shi shang de diwei” 打破舊平衡的初始環節—論申報館在近代小說史上的地位 [The first link in smashing the old equilibrium: on the position of the Shenbaoguan in the history of the modern novel], *Wenxue yichan* 2 (2009): 117–200, here 119, where 39 is given as the number of novels reprinted by the Shenbaoguan. This is repeated in his latest monumental *Zhongguo jindai xiaoshuo biannian shi*, 1:11. The problem with using Chen’s statistics is that he does not include any reprints and includes only first-time publications of fiction, which means that the thirty-seven novels reprinted by Shenbaoguan—which would likely have not survived without a great deal of effort and which did not circulate on the book market at the time—were not included; furthermore, any fictional works that do not comply with centenary standards of fiction, for example *chuanqi* 傳奇 (plays) and *tanci* 彈詞 (ballads), are not included.

13 According to Chen’s calculation, twenty works of fiction were published in the eleven years from 1851–1861, twenty-one in the thirteen years from 1862–1874, thirty-four in the ten years from 1875–1884, and forty-four in the ten years from 1885–1894. His calculation only includes new works, and of these only the first printing. See Chen, *Zhongguo jindai xiaoshuo biannian shi*, 1: 93.

14 Due to different criteria for inclusion the numbers are difficult to calculate with absolute certainty. If I had included shorter works of fiction published in the *Yinghuan suoji* and its successors from 1872–1877, the Shenbaoguan share would be even greater.

The innovations introduced by the Shenbaoguan were new to Shanghai and to China altogether, but were already familiar in Europe. Whether Major and his company, rather than inventing, acted as a cultural broker by selecting and establishing the types of publications that were viable in China is an important question to pose. Such brokerage might have touched on a wide array of areas, including the selection of titles, the insertion of paratexts, editorial practices, relationships with authors, forms of cooperation with Chinese staff, interaction between the book publishing and the newspaper, payment methods for Shenbaoguan print products delivered from a long distance, and the use of lithography to reproduce ink paintings, calligraphed texts, and rubbings. Most importantly, however, this brokerage might have influenced the recalibration of the cultural, aesthetic, and social standing of the novel. As Major set up and managed this publishing house in the Shanghai International Settlement, and as the novel was becoming the world's leading genre at the same time, inserting the Chinese development into this transculturally shared development will allow us to better understand the rise of the novel in China within a global context.

In order to do this, we shall draw on relatively reliable sources and on the recent scholarship on how the Shenbaoguan published and marketed novels, as well as its managerial innovations.¹⁵ Chen Dakang and others have highlighted the Shenbaoguan's pioneering introduction of translations of Western novels, serializations, and the systematic use of lithography, metal fonts, and printing machines, all of which helped create suitable material conditions for the rise of the "new novel."¹⁶ Rudolf Wagner has argued that these innovations went a long way toward proving the social acceptability and commercial viability of

15 The conceptual, institutional, and managerial innovations brought about by the Shenbaoguan have been studied in detail by Rudolf Wagner. The company was developing a network of learned intellectuals to serve as editors and commentators for the new books that were published; this strengthened the role of the image as a conveyor of information and developed a national distribution network for its print products. Wagner, "Joining the Global Imaginaire," 108 and *passim*.

16 Much of the research on this subject has been done by scholars at East China Normal University in Shanghai. Chen, "Dapo jiu pingheng de chushi huanjie," 117–200; Chen Dakang 陳大康, "Baokan wenxue yu Shangye jiaohuan guize—yi *Yinghuan suoji* de chubanshi wei fenxi ge'an" 報刊文學與商業交換規則——以《瀛寰瑣紀》的出版史為分析個案 [Newspaper fiction and the rules of commercial exchange: a case study of the publishing history of the *Yinghuan suoji*], *Xueshu yuekan* 5 (2006): 124–127; Liu Yinghui 劉穎慧, "Chatu yu wan Qing xiaoshuo de chuanbo—Yi wan Qing *Shenbao* xiaoshuo guanggao wei li" 插圖與晚清小說的傳播——以晚清《申報》小說廣告為例 [Mapping the dissemination of late Qing novels: taking the advertisements for novels in the late Qing *Shenbao* as an example], *Wenshi zongheng* 11 (2006): 120–122; Liu Yinghui 劉穎慧, "Wan Qing xiaoshuo guanggao yanjiu" 晚清小說廣告研究 [A study on Late Qing advertisements for novels] (PhD diss., Huadong shifan daxue, 2011). For the Shenbaoguan use of modern printing technology, see Christopher A. Reed, *Gutenberg in Shanghai: Chinese Print Capitalism, 1876–1937* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004), 80–81.

traditional Chinese culture in a modern urban environment and in establishing Shanghai as a new media center.¹⁷ The weak and not fully substantiated claims, especially in PRC scholarship, that the Shenbaoguan was simply driven by profit have precluded a more careful analysis of the potential conceptual, aesthetic, and social aspects of its novel publishing.¹⁸

Indeed, relevant sources for such an analysis are hard to come by. For instance, there is no known diary or archival record of the discussions that led to the selection of particular novels for publishing, nor do we have any contemporaneous theoretical treatises on the novel or on fiction that might offer a systematic presentation of the frames into which these selections have been inscribed. Perusal of the novels actually published by this company suggests a certain consistency in the selection, and the descriptions of the works in the book announcements (*gaobai* 告白), in the *Shenbao* 申報 newspaper and in the book catalogs (*Shenbaoguan shumu* 申報館書目 [Shenbaoguan book catalog], hereafter *Shumu*; *Shenbaoguan shumu xuji* 申報館書目續集 [Sequel to the Shenbaoguan book catalog], hereafter *Shumu xuji*) published by the company, are consistent enough to signal the presence of an underlying conceptual framework. This study will attempt to extricate the Shenbaoguan's cultural and commercial strategy from these indirect sources.

The Shenbaoguan publication of novels

1872 was a landmark year in the development of the Chinese novel during the modern period. It saw the founding of the *Shenbao* 申報 newspaper, which from the start published translated novels and excerpts.¹⁹ In that year the same company also founded the literary journal *Yinghuan suoji* 瀛寰瑣紀 (Jade splinters from the entire universe), which serialized novels, and established the Chinese-language publishing house Shenbaoguan, which, besides publishing the newspaper and the journal, quickly began to publish books as well. From the outset, right up to the point when Ernest Major left for England, novels and, more generally, fiction, formed a sizeable part of the company's publication program.

17 Rudolf Wagner, "Commercializing Chinese Culture: Ernest Major in Shanghai," in "Ernest Major: The Life and Times of a Cultural Broker" (unpublished manuscript).

18 For an exception, see Rudolf Wagner, "Women in Shenbaoguan Publications, 1872–1890," in *Different Worlds of Discourse: Transformations of Gender and Genre in Late Qing and Early Republican China*, ed. Nanxiu Qian, Grace Fong, and Richard Smith (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 227–256.

19 Patrick Hanan, "The Translated Fiction in the Early Shenbao," in *Chinese Fiction of the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries: Essays by Patrick Hanan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 110–123.

The Shenbaoguan started publishing full-length novels in 1873, beginning with a translation of Edward Bulwer-Lytton's (1803–1873) *Night and Morning* (originally 1841), as *Xinxi xiantan* 昕夕閒談 (Idle talk mornings and nights), which was serialized in the *Yinghuan suoji*.²⁰ Publishing a commercial periodical in Chinese was unprecedented and the company seems to have been testing the waters for this new venture in the first issues. These issues contained a mix of international news and discussions on Chinese and Western science, as well as a poems and prose writings, such as travelogues and courtesan biographies, from Chinese men of letters; however, there were no novels. Publishing the full translation of an English novel was a “first” and therefore announced as a sensation. The selection of this novel, which had been a huge success in England, shows Major’s awareness of the novel’s development in nineteenth-century Europe; this knowledge may have predisposed him to include novels in the company’s publication program. The serialization had the added benefit of helping to stabilize the readership, since issues had to be bought separately.

Given the efforts of the Shenbaoguan in areas like the format chosen for the newspaper, the selection of bamboo pulp-based Chinese paper, the daily insertion of the full *Jingbao* 京報 (Peking Gazette) into the *Shenbao*, or producing recognizably “Chinese” print products, the decision to undertake a (costly) translation indicates that Major, who was very much involved in running the journal, may have assumed that there were no Chinese-language novels suitable for publication by his company. However, once he came across a copy of *Rulin waishi* 儒林外史 (The scholars), with its lively satire of members of the Chinese elite—a work that had long been unavailable—he seems to have changed his opinion. The Shenbaoguan published *Rulin waishi* in 1874,²¹ and it sold out in ten days. This success taught Major two things: first, there was a great market potential for the novel in the period after the Taiping civil war, which had destroyed many private libraries and the stock of publishers’ woodblocks; and second, there were Chinese novels that met his selection criteria. The Shenbaoguan put its efforts into locating and publishing such works, and indeed never published another translation of a foreign novel. Major’s growing familiarity with the Chinese book market and

20 [Edward Bulwer-Lytton], *Xinxi xiantan* 昕夕閒談 [Idle talk mornings and nights], trans. Lishao jushi 蠡勺居士 [Jiang Zirang 蔣子讓?], serialized in *Yinghuan suoji* 3 (February 1873–1875). Jiang Zirang was an editor at the *Shenbao*. We owe the identification of the author and original of this anonymously published translation to the late Patrick Hanan. See Patrick Hanan, “The First Novel Translated into Chinese,” in *Chinese Fiction of the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries*, 85–109.

21 Wu Jingzi 吳敬梓, *Rulin waishi* 儒林外史 [The scholars] (Shanghai: Shenbaoguan, 1874) Translated by Yang Hsien-yi and Gladys Yang as *The Scholars* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1957). Further revised Chinese editions were published in 1876 and 1881.

reading traditions furthermore prompted him to use his newspaper for “crowd searches” of newly written novels as well as manuscripts and rare prints of earlier novels. However, the company did not simply make commercially safe reprints of well-known works like its early competitors, but was willing to publish barely-known rarities as well as new works, while maintaining that it would not publish works of questionable morals and values.

What, then, were the company’s selection criteria? In literary terms, three genres dominated the early works of fiction published by the Shenbaoguan: reportage literature, entertainment reading matter, and novels. Among the eleven categories listed in the *Shumu*, the 1877 catalog of books printed by the Shenbaoguan, three are related to works of fiction (including opera). These categories comprised twenty-two out of the fifty book titles listed in the catalog, with fourteen in the *shuobu* 說部 or “story,” seven in the novel, and one in the opera categories.²² In other words, almost half of the works published in the first five years after the Shenbaoguan’s founding were works of fiction (this includes “brush notes” [*biji* 筆記] type fictional pieces in classical language, and novels written in the vernacular). The full bibliographical information for all of these publications can be found in Appendix 1. The company published out-of-print works such as *Rulin waishi* in editions that have since become the standard base text for modern editions: an edition of Dong Yue’s 董說 (1620–1686) extremely rare *Xiyou bu* 西遊補 (Supplement to *Journey to the West*), with its fantastic dream of Sun Wukong 孫悟空 trapped by the “green fish” in a tower with myriad mirrors, the first edition on record since its original publication in the seventeenth century;²³ Chen Chen’s 陳忱 (1615–1670) *Shuihu houzhuan* 水滸後傳 (Sequel to *Water Margin*), focusing on the descendants and survivors of the Liangshan heroes in their continued battles against social injustice and for the creation of an ideal kingdom somewhere far away from China;²⁴ Li Ruzhen’s 李汝珍 (~1763–~1830), *Jinghua yuan* 鏡花緣 (Flowers in the mirror) (1880) with its great

22 *Shenbaoguan shumu* 申報館書目 [Shenbaoguan book catalog] (Shanghai: Shenbaoguan, 1875). In the 1879 list of sixty-three works published since 1877, we find ten works of fiction in the *shuobu* (5) and *xiaoshuo* (5) sections, and a sizeable number of works of reportage and poetry besides. *Shenbaoguan shumu xuji* 申報館書目續集 [Sequel to the Shenbaoguan book catalog] (Shanghai: Shenbaoguan, 1879).

23 Dong Yue 董說, *Xiyou bu* 西遊補 [Supplement to *Journey to the West*] (Shanghai: Shenbaoguan, 1876). Translated by Shuen-fu Lin and Larry J. Schulz as *The Tower of Myriad Mirrors: A Supplement to “Journey to the West,”* (Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1978).

24 Gusong Yimin 古宋遺民 [Yan Dangshan 鴈宕山], *Shuihu houzhuan* 水滸後傳 [Sequel to *Water Margin*] (Shanghai: Shenbaoguan, 1883). There is no known translation in a Western language. For a study, see Ellen Widmer, *The Margins of Utopia: Shui-hu hou-chuan and the Literature of Ming Loyalty* (Cambridge: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1987).

satire on the traditional treatment of women;²⁵ and Yu Wanchun's 俞萬春 (?–1849) science fantasy *Dangkou zhi* 蕩寇志 (Quell the bandits) (1883).²⁶ It also published original works that are today considered the hallmarks of late-Qing fiction, such as *Fengyue meng* 風月夢 (Dreams of the wind and the moon), which was published under the pen name Hanshang Mengren 邗上蒙人.²⁷ Among the novels in the “talented scholar and beautiful lady” genre, which was very popular during the eighteenth century, the Shenbaoguan issued Tianhua Caizi's 天華才子 *Kuaixin bian* 快心編 (The teaser, or literally, A book that makes your heart go pitter-patter) in 1875.²⁸ This eighteenth-century satirical work had long been out of print, and Major sent an envoy to Japan to track down a copy for re-publication in China. This was the first in a string of efforts made by his company and others to retrieve cultural treasures that were lost in China from further afield: Japan, Korea, Vietnam, Central Asia, or the West. Other works in this category included Suiyuan Xiashi's 隨緣下士 early Qing *Lin Lan Xiang* 林蘭香 (Lin, Lan, and Xiang) (1877),²⁹ Chen Lang's 陳朗 eighteenth-century novel *Xue Yue Mei zhuan* 陳朗梅傳 (The biographies of Snow, Moon, and Plum) (1878),³⁰ and Xiling Yeqiao's 西泠野樵 mid-nineteenth century *Huifang lu* 繪芳錄 (A record of rich fragrance) (1880).³¹ The last was an original Shenbaoguan publication that was completed in 1878, which the company declared to be on a par with the *Honglou meng* 紅樓夢 (The dream of the red chamber; alternative title *Shitou ji* 石頭記 [Story of

25 Li Ruzhen 李汝珍, *Jinghua yuan* 鏡花緣 [Flowers in the mirror] (Shanghai: Shenbaoguan, 1880). Translated by Lin Tai-yi as *Flowers in the Mirror* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965).

26 The work was first published in 1853. Yu Wanchun 俞萬春, *Dangkou zhi* 蕩寇志 [Quell the bandits] (Shanghai: Shenbaoguan, 1993). For an analysis, see David Wang, *Fin-de-Siècle Splendor*, 124–139.

27 Hanshang Mengren 邗上蒙人, *Fengyue meng* 風月夢 [Dreams of the wind and the moon] (Shanghai: Shenbaoguan, 1883). Translated by Patrick Hanan as *Courtesans and Opium: Romantic Illusions of the Fool of Yangzhou* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009). The book has an 1848 preface, but no earlier print is known. For a study, see Patrick Hanan, “Fengyue Meng and the Courtesan Novel,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 58, no. 2 (December 1998): 345–372.

28 Tianhua Caizi 天華才子, *Kuaixin bian* 快心編 [The teaser, or literally, A book that makes your heart go pitter-patter] (Shanghai: Shenbaoguan, 1975). This work has not been translated to a Western language.

29 Suiyuan Xiashi 隨緣下士, *Lin Lan Xiang* 林蘭香 [Lin, Lan, and Xiang] (Shanghai: Shenbaoguan, 1877). No translations.

30 Chen Lang 陳朗, *Xue Yue Mei zhuan* 陳朗梅傳 [The biographies of Snow, Moon, and Plum] (Shanghai: Shenbaoguan, 1877).

31 Xiling Yeqiao 西泠野樵, *Huifang lu* 繪芳錄 [A record of rich fragrance] (Shanghai: Shenbaoguan, 1878). According to the preface, the author's real name is Zhu Qiushi 竹秋氏.

the stone])³² and with the very popular nineteenth-century novel about male courtesans and actors, *Pinhua baojian* 品花寶鑒 (Precious mirror for ranking flowers), without any of the weaknesses of either.³³ It also challenged the traditional narrative of the “talented scholar and beautiful lady” in that one of the key protagonists defies convention by marrying a courtesan and leaving court to live a quiet life after passing the imperial examinations.



Fig. 1: Cover of *Hanshang Mengren* 邗上蒙人, *Fengyue meng* 風月夢 (Shanghai: Shenbaoguan, 1883).

32 Cao Xueqin 曹雪芹, *Honglou meng* 紅樓夢 [Dream of the red chamber; alternative title *Shitou ji* 石頭記 (Story of the stone)] (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1982), chapter 1, 1. Translated by David Hawkes and John Minford as *The Story of the Stone: A Chinese Novel in Five Volumes*, Penguin Classics (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1973–1986). Extracts from Hawkes’ translation were published as *The Dream of the Red Chamber*, Penguin Classics (New York: Penguin, 1996).

33 “Xinyin Huifang lu chushou” 新印繪芳錄出售 [Newly printed *Record of Rich Fragrance* goes on sale], *Shenbao*, February 15, 1880. Chen Sen 陳森, *Pinhua baojian* 品花寶鑒 [Precious mirror for ranking flowers] (n. p.: Huanzhong liaohuan jushi, n. d.).

One of the specialties developed by the Shenbaoguan was the publication of the various sequels and imitations of *Honglou meng*. These include Gui Chuzi's 歸鋤子 early nineteenth-century *Honglou meng bu* 紅樓夢補 (Supplement to *The Dream of the Red Chamber*) (1876)³⁴ and Chen Shaohai's 陳少海 *Honglou fumeng* 紅樓復夢 (Return of *The Dream of the Red Chamber*) (1884).³⁵ Other fictional works published for the first time by the Shenbaoguan include, besides *Fengyue meng*, Zhang Nanzhuang's 張南莊 (1736–1796) raucous satire *Hedian* 何典 (From what idiom?) (1878);³⁶ Shen Fu's 沈復 (1763–approx.



Fig. 2: Cover of *Xiangxue Daoren* 香雪道人, Fanhun xiang chuanqi 返魂香傳奇 (Shanghai: Shenbaoguan, 1877).

34 Gui Chuzi 歸鋤子, *Honglou meng bu* 紅樓夢補 [Supplement to *The Dream of the Red Chamber*] (Shanghai: Shenbaoguan, 1876). The preface is dated 1819.

35 Chen Shaohai 陳少海, *Honglou fumeng* 紅樓復夢 [Return of the *The Dream of the Red Chamber*] (Shanghai: Shenbaoguan, 1884). The preface is dated 1799.

36 Zhang Nanzhuang 張南莊, *Hedian* 何典 [From what idiom?] (Shanghai: Shenbaoguan, 1878).

1808) *Fusheng liuji* 浮生六記 (Six records from a floating life) (1877),³⁷ and Yu Da's 俞達 (?–1884), *Qinglou meng* 青樓夢 (The dream of the green chamber) (1879).³⁸ Other novels were not published but rather distributed by the company. One example of this is Han Bangqing's 韓邦慶 (1856–1894), *Haishang hua liezhuan* 海上花列傳 (Biographies of Shanghai flowers) (1892).³⁹ By 1884, after the establishment of lithography print facilities in the Dianshizhai Studio, the company was publishing books with lithography illustrations, among them *Huitu Jinghua yuan* 繪圖鏡花緣 (Flowers in the Mirror, illustrated) (1884).⁴⁰

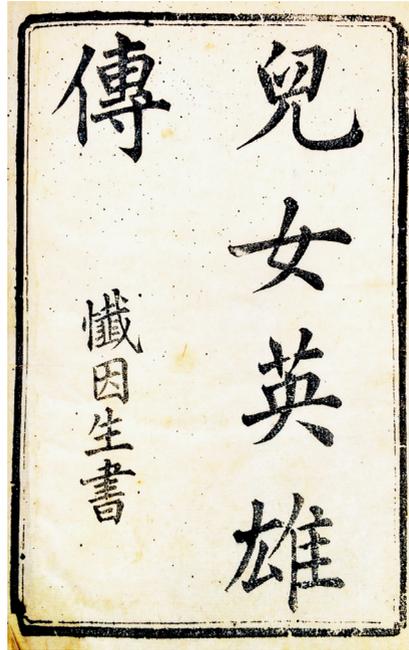


Fig. 3: Cover of *Wenkang* 文康, *Ernü yingxiong zhuan* 兒女英雄傳 (A tale of heroes and lovers) (Shanghai: Shenbaoguan, 1881).

37 Shen Fu 沈復, *Fusheng liuji* 浮生六記 [Six records from a floating life], Duwu'an congchao 獨悟叢抄 [Duwu'an collection] (Shanghai: Shenbaoguan, 1878). Translated by Leonard Pratt and Chiang Su-hui as *Six Records from a Floating Life*, Penguin Classics (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983).

38 Yu Da 俞達, *Qinglou meng* 青樓夢 [The dream of the green chamber] (Shanghai: Shenbaoguan, 1879).

39 Han Bangqing 韓邦慶, *Haishang hua liezhuan* 海上花列傳 [Biographies of Shanghai flowers] (Shanghai: Shenbaoguan distributor, 1892). Translated by Eileen Chang as *The Sing-song Girls of Shanghai* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).

40 Li Ruzhen 李汝珍, *Huitu Jinghua yuan* 繪圖鏡花緣 [Flowers in the Mirror, illustrated] (Shanghai: Dianshizhai, 1884).

These titles were anything but a safe bet: in many cases it was difficult work to locate a copy and then to establish a solid text with the help of invited (and presumably paid) outside scholars. Many late Qing literati, who suggested or submitted works that were published by the Shenbaoguan, expressed deep appreciation for Major's efforts in making rare Chinese treasures available in print.⁴¹ Both the actually published works and the perception of contemporaries suggest that, although economic viability was certainly an important factor in the Shenbaoguan selection of books for publication, the path to this goal involved a much more complex set of cultural strategies.⁴²

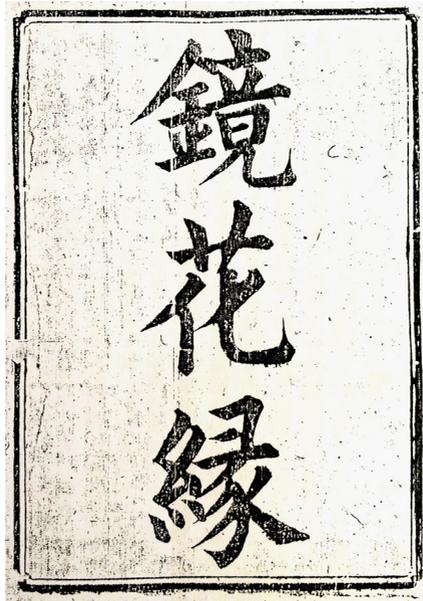


Fig. 4: Cover of Li Ruzhen 李汝珍, Jinghua yuan 鏡花緣 (Shanghai: Shenbaoguan, 1880).

41 See among many such statements, Shi Youlin 施有麟, xu 序 [preface] to *Meixiangguan chidu* 梅香館尺牘 [Letters from the Meixiang Studio], by Luo Can 駱燦 (Xinghe 星河) (Shanghai: Shenbaoguan 1884), 1.

42 Chen Dakang—whose work on the Shenbaoguan “breakthrough” in late Qing fiction publishing with its intense perusal of primary sources is a “breakthrough” in PRC scholarship—has claimed that purely commercial interests drove the Shenbaoguan and that its important cultural contributions were unintentional side-effects. He was perceptive enough, however, to note that something important was missing in this line of explanation. He expressed puzzlement about why the Shenbao published advertisements from competing publishers, or why Major encouraged other publishers to buy advanced printing equipment with the stated purpose of enabling them to shoulder the big burden of making China’s cultural heritage, so much of which had been lost during the Taiping civil war, available again to a wider public. See Chen, “Dapo jiu pingheng de chushi huanjie,” 117–200.

The Shanghai book market: pricing and competition

One of the major contributions made by the company to the professionalization of the Shanghai book market was establishing a fixed price for books. These prices were declared in the *Shenbao* announcements for new books, which were located on the first page and then taken up by the advertisement section in the end. Traditional book marketing involved booksellers buying from publishers and then selling with their own mark-up.⁴³ This new practice was adopted by other Shanghai publishers and became one of the hallmarks of modern book marketing. The practice effectively brought competition between different publishers onto the advertisement pages of the *Shenbao* and into the open.

Shenbaoguan book prices were modest. When it first published *Rulin waishi* in 1874, the price was five *jiao* 角, and the announced print run was 1000 copies. It sold out within ten days. Seven months later, another 1500 copies were published, and the announced price was again five *jiao* a copy. For the next decade, prices for Shenbaoguan fiction remained mostly between one-and-a-half and five *jiao*. Exceptions were six *jiao* for the 1881 third revised printing of *Rulin waishi* with a commentary and a key, eight *jiao* for *Ernü yingxiong zhuan* 兒女英雄傳 (A tale of heroes and lovers) in 1881, and one *yuan* 元 for *Bisheng hua* 筆生花 (The literate flower), also in 1881.⁴⁴ For the next decade prices moved in both directions, with the lowest being one *jiao* and the highest more than three *yuan*. The higher prices reflect the introduction of lithograph illustrations produced by the Dianshizhai Lithography Studio. An example is two *yuan* and four *jiao* for the 1882 illustrated *Sanguo yanyi quantu* 三國演義全圖 (Three kingdoms, enhanced by images), which comprised 120 chapters and as many as 240 illustrations.⁴⁵

An indication of the relative cost of books published by the Shenbaoguan can be ascertained by comparing them with the wages received by a journalist at the time. At the end of the nineteenth century, the monthly salary of a *Shenbao* journalist was between ten and forty *yuan*. Buying *Rulin waishi* would cost an entry-level journalist 5 percent of his salary. The *Yuebao* 粵報 in Canton paid

43 On this practice, see Cynthia J. Brokaw, *Commerce in Culture: The Sibao Book Trade in the Qing and Republican Periods* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2007).

44 Wu Jingzi 吳敬梓, *Rulin waishi* 儒林外史 [The scholars], 3rd rev. ed. (Shanghai: Shenbaoguan, 1881). All subsequent citations refer to this edition; Wen Kang 文康, *Ernü yingxiong zhuan* 兒女英雄傳 [A tale of heroes and lovers] (Shanghai: Shenbaoguan 1878); Huaiyin xinru nüshi 淮陰心如女史 [Qiu Xinru 邱心如], *Bisheng hua* 筆生花 [The literate flower] (Shanghai: Shenbaoguan, 1881).

45 [Luo Guanzhong,] *Sanguo yanyi quantu* 三國演義全圖 [Three kingdoms, enhanced by images] (Shanghai: Shenbaoguan, 1882). Translated by Moss Roberts as *Three Kingdoms: A Historic Novel* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

fifty *yuan* to an editor and ten to a journalist. The journalists of the *Xinbao* 新報 in Shanghai got twenty to thirty *yuan*.⁴⁶ The income of the average gentry/professional was not much higher. According to Natascha Vittinghoff's study, even foreigners such as John Fryer (1839–1928), the former English missionary who became an educator and worked as an editor and translator in the Jiangnan Arsenal in Shanghai, received a monthly salary of only fifty *taels* (*liang* 兩, i.e., sixty *yuan*). A Chinese teacher at Fryer's Anglo-Chinese College had a monthly income of twelve and a half *taels*. A teacher would get about 100 *taels* a year and a worker ten, with the worker's food being taken care of by the employer. A district magistrate received forty-five *taels* a year, to which various incomes totaling about 1000 to 1800 *taels* would be added. The result would be about 150 *taels* (180 *yuan*) a month, about four times that of an editor.⁴⁷ This means that the prices of the Shenbaoguan deluxe fiction publications (a topic I will return to later) were relatively moderate, but it also signals that the target market was the gentry and the urban professional classes, including its lower-income rungs.

Although the Shenbaoguan's prices for works of fiction did reflect the costs of production, and the company sometimes justified its prices as being simply the "cost of the labor involved," they also reflected the fierce competition among publishers, especially those located in Shanghai who emulated the Shenbaoguan model. Chen Dakang's study of the pricing of late-Qing fiction reveals that this competition was a major reason for the Shenbaoguan cutting the prices of some of its fiction publications.⁴⁸ Yet its book prices also reflect the advantages of investments in new printing technology. These investments enabled the company to produce quality books at a substantially faster and cheaper rate and forced the competition to adopt new technologies in order to stay in the market.

With the founding of the Dianshizhai Lithography Studio, for which Major hired the most experienced Chinese lithography printer from the Jesuit publishing house in Xujiahui and managed to assemble a group of skilled graphic artists such as Wu Youru 吳友如 (between 1841 and 1845–1894), the Shenbaoguan opened up a new competitive front with illustrated novels marketed as high-end collector's items.

46 See Lei Jin 雷璠, "Shenbaoguan zhi guoqu zhuangkuang" 申報館之過去狀況 [The early situation in the Shenbaoguan], in *Zuijin wushi nian—Shenbaoguan wushi zhounian jinian* 最近五十年—申報館五十周年紀念 [The last fifty years: commemorating Shenbaoguan's fiftieth anniversary], pt. III (Shanghai: Shenbaoguan, 1922), 26–28.

47 Vittinghoff, *Die Anfänge des Journalismus in China*, 145–149, 175.

48 Chen Dakang 陳大康, "Lun wan Qing xiaoshuo de shujia" 論晚清小說的書價 [On the prices of late Qing novels], *Huadong shifan daxue xuebao* 37, no. 4 (2005): 31–41.

The visible success of the Shenbaoguan book-publishing venture lured others into the field. In 1872, Shanghai had four publishing houses in total, the most famous of which was the venerable missionary press Mohai shuguan 墨海書館 (The London Missionary Society Press), which had been founded in 1843; none of them published fiction. By the early 1880s, Chinese investors had spotted the gap in the market and opened the Tongwen shuju 同文書局 in 1881, the Hongwen shuju 鴻文書局 in 1882, and the Feiyingguan 蜚英館, which became the the Dianshizhai's main competitor, in 1887. While they competed with the Shenbaoguan in large-scale publication projects, they seem to have shied away from the time-consuming, financially risky work of acquiring and editing rare or new works of fiction. Some smaller publishers, however, entered the competitive world of novel publishing. These included Zhenyi shuju 珍藝書局, Wenrui lou 文瑞樓, Wenxuan lou 文選樓, Shiwanzhan lou 十萬卷樓, Jiangzuo shulin 江左書林, Zuiliu tang 醉六堂, Liwen xuan 理文軒, and Wenyi shuju 文宜書局, all located in Shanghai,⁴⁹ and the Juzhen tang 聚珍堂 and later, in the 1890s, also the Wenguang lou 文光樓, located in Beijing.⁵⁰ By the 1890s some of these, including the Zhuyi tang 著易堂 and the Shanghai shuju 上海書局, made it their business to reprint the earlier Shenbaoguan roster of novels.

Although no other publisher had comparable skills in locating, soliciting, editing, printing, and marketing, there were occasions when the Shenbaoguan found itself out-manuevered. In Beijing, for example, the Juzhen tang, a bilingual Manchu-Chinese publisher, active since 1840, whose name already indicates that it was emulating the deluxe (*juzhen ban* 聚珍版) format of the movable letter prints from the Wuying Palace, switched to Chinese-language works completely in 1876. These were mostly works of fiction, including original works such as *Ernü yingxiong zhuan*, which it first published in 1878, the same year as the Shenbaoguan.⁵¹ As Ellen Widmer has demonstrated, the Juzhen tang switch seems to have been influenced by the Shenbaoguan's success.

Another example is the publication of Xia Jingqu's 夏敬渠 (1705–1787) *Yesou puyan* 野叟曝言 (A rustic's idle talk)⁵², which we will return to later in this article. In this case, another Shanghai newspaper managed to get hold of it

49 Chen, "Dapo jiu pingheng de chushi huanjie," 122.

50 This company first published the martial arts novel *Xiao wu yi* 小五義 (The five heroes, the next generation) in 1890, and its sequel *Xu Xiao wu yi* 續小五義 (Sequel to *The Five Heroes, the Next Generation*) in 1892. See Chen, "Lun wan Qing xiaoshuo de shujia," 32.

51 Ellen Widmer, "Honglou meng ying and its Publisher, Juzhen tang of Beijing," *Late Imperial China* 23, no. 2 (December 2002): 33–52, here 40.

52 [Xia Jingqu 夏敬渠], *Yesou puyan* 野叟曝言 [A rustic's idle talk]. (Shanghai: Shanghai Duweilou, 1881), advertisement first in *Shenbao*, December 14, 1881, p. 5.

(Shangwu yinshuguan 商務印書館) in 1897 and the Shanghai shuju in 1892. Both made novel publishing one of their foci. The explosive growth in publications pouring out of the Shanghai International Settlement in the wake of the Shenbaoguan quickly established this small exclave as China's media capital, a position it was to retain until World War II cut the lines connecting the Chinese book market with Shanghai.

The Shanghai International Settlement: an exclave of Qing publishing

The new wave of novel publishing during the late Qing had antecedents in the late Ming, which was a watershed period in the craft of woodblock printing and set standards for high-quality books in editions, prints, and illustrations, as well as for middle-tier and popular editions at lower price points. The late Ming marked a turning point where many writings, which continued to be distributed through manuscript copies even after the option of printing became available, found their way into woodblock printing.⁵³ The full-length vernacular novels are a case in point. Printings of novels such as *Sanguo yanyi* 三國演義 (Three kingdoms)⁵⁴, *Shuihu zhuan* 水滸傳 (Water margin)⁵⁵, and *Xiyou ji* 西遊記 (Journey to the west)⁵⁶, together with collections of vernacular short stories, such as those by Feng Menglong 馮夢龍 (1574–1645) and Ling Mengchu 凌濛初 (1580–1644), explored the new wider market of popular entertainment. Some items became what would today be called bestsellers, stimulating more competition and commercialization in fiction writing and publishing.⁵⁷ In the Qing, the situation changed greatly. Although Qing publishers far out-produced their Ming predecessors in the sheer number of volumes printed, the quality of the prints declined. As Robert Hegel has shown, Qing publishing of low-quality cheap printings of fiction for a “large number

53 Joseph McDermott, “The Ascendance of the Imprint in China,” in *Printing and Book Culture in Late Imperial China*, ed. Cynthia Brokaw and Kai-wing Chow (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 85.

54 [Luo Guanzhong], *Sanguo yanyi* 三國演義 [Three kingdoms] (Shanghai: Shenbaoguan, 1882). Translated by Moss Roberts as *Three Kingdoms: A Historic Novel* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

55 [Shi Nai'an], *Shuihu zhuan* 水滸傳 [Water margin] (Shanghai: Shenbaoguan, 1883). Translated by John Dent-Young and Alex Dent-Young as *The Marshes of Mount Liang: A New Translation of the Shuihu Zhuan or Water Margin of Shi Naian and Luo Guanzhong*, 5 vols. (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1994–2002).

56 Wu Cheng'en 吳承恩, *Xiyou ji* 西遊記 [Journey to the west], ed. Huang Zhouxing 黃周星 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2009). Translated by Anthony Yu as *Journey to the West*, 4 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977–1983).

57 Miao Yonghe 繆詠禾, *Mingdai chuban shigao* 明代出版史稿 [A draft history of Ming dynasty publishing] (Nanjing: Jiangsu renmin chubanshe, 2000), 213–225.

of consumers of limited means,” led to the renewed formation of “an elite of literati aficionados who, disdainful of print and the indiscriminate circulation of texts that it made possible, produced works in manuscript for distribution to a select circle of like-minded readers.”⁵⁸ Thus, the Qing period saw a revival of fiction circulating in manuscript form. Examples include the *Rulin waishi* (ca. 1750), *Honglou meng* (1760s–1790s), *Yesou puyan* (eighteenth century), and Li Lüyuan’s 李綠園 (1707–1790) *Qilu deng* 歧路燈 (Lamp at the crossroads, ca. 1785)⁵⁹. Some relatively fine print editions of fiction continued to be produced throughout the Qing, but many were simply reusing the blocks of earlier editions. In fact, the few exceptional high-quality fiction imprints that appeared in the Qing during the late seventeenth century were produced by literati printers,⁶⁰ but these editions were vastly outnumbered by the imprints produced for the popular market. By the time the Taiping war broke out, even these popular prints became scarce.⁶¹ It was in this historical context that the Shenbaoguan launched its novel-publishing enterprise.

The Qing dynasty was one of the most repressive periods in Chinese history as regards laws on publishing novels.⁶² An early (1652) edict banned the publication of “lewd gossip” (*suoyu yinci* 瑣語淫詞), and threatened “severe punishment for infractions” (*weizhe congzhong zhijiu* 違者從重治究). An explicit ban on publishing novels was issued in 1662 and made more specific in 1714:

We have noticed in recent years that most [book] shops are selling lewd novels, lowly and outrageous folk tales. These do not represent the orthodox principles! They [are a force] not only in beguiling the common people, but even those who belong to the gentry, and the educated class cannot help [but also] be seduced. As all that is related to social custom is not to be trifled with, [the selling of such novels] should be forbidden immediately.⁶³

58 Robert E. Hegel, “Niche Marketing for Late Imperial Fiction,” in Brokaw and Chow, *Printing and Book Culture in Late Imperial China*, 253.

59 Li Lüyuan 李綠園, *Qilu deng* 歧路燈 [Lamp at the crossroads] (Zhengzhou: Zhongzhou shuhashe, 1980).

60 Hegel, “Niche Marketing for Late Imperial Fiction,” 254.

61 I am relying on the publication list provided in Han Xiduo 韓錫鐸 and Wang Qingyuan 王清原, eds., *Xiaoshuo shufang lu* 小說書房錄 [Record of novels published by book publishers] (Shenyang: Chunfeng wenyi chubanshe, 1987), 80–85. I am aware that it contains many mistakes.

62 Chen Dakang 陳大康, *Zhongguo jindai xiaoshuo bianian* 中國近代小說編年 [A chronology of modern Chinese novels] (Shanghai: Huadong shifan daxue chubanshe, 2002), 1:3–4.

63 Quoted in Wang Xiaochuan, *Yuan Ming Qing sandai jinhui xiaoshuo xiqu shiliao* 元明清三代禁

近见坊间多卖小说淫词，荒唐俚鄙，殊非正理。不但诱惑愚民，即缙绅士子，未免游目而盪心焉，所关于风俗者非细。应立即通行严禁。

The Yongzheng period continued with numerous publication bans, including one in 1725 (Yongzheng 3) that directly banned the sale of lewd novels (*jin shi mai yinci xiaoshuo* 禁市賣淫詞小說), an edict reaffirmed in 1738 (Qianlong 3). This ban seems to have pertained to all novels, since it is hard to clearly define which novels were considered “lewd.” In addition to punishments for those involved in printing and selling “lewd” novels, it threatened anyone found buying and reading a “lewd” novel with 100 strokes of the bamboo. The court’s efforts to suppress the genre continued throughout the nineteenth century. After a particularly harsh 1834 edict that ordered all lewd novels be destroyed together with their printing blocks, these rulings came at ever shorter intervals: 1851, 1868, 1872, 1885, 1890, and 1900.⁶⁴ In 1901 one of the most severe laws of its kind was passed, just as the court prepared to promote its own “Reform of Governance” (*xinzheng* 新政) with an explicit emulation of Western models.⁶⁵ The recurrence of the bans reveals that they were not terribly effective; however, they confirmed and reinforced the low status of the novel in society and prevented it from reaching the level of prestige granted to the novel in Europe around the same time. Furthermore, it put novel publishing in a precarious position. The novel could neither profit from extended and sophisticated public discussion nor truly find success on the market.

Against this background, the Shanghai Foreign Settlements offered an exclave where the Shenbaoguan and the novel could thrive. There were many other factors that benefited the Shenbaoguan enterprise: The growth of the urban population in Shanghai through wealthy and cultured refugees from the Taiping civil war; the economic development of the city brought with it a

毀小說戲曲史料 [Historical source materials on novels and plays banned and destroyed during the Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties] (Beijing: Zuojia chubanshe, 1958), 24.

64 Ibid., 64–83. On the question of bans on novels, see Liu Delong 劉德隆, “Wan Qing xiaoshuo fanrong de liangge zhongyao tiaojian” 晚清小說繁榮的兩個重要條件 [Two important conditions for the flourishing of the novel during the late Qing], *Shinmatsu shōsetsu* 清末小說 13 (1990): 31–40, here 33–34. For Qing censorship on novels and books in general, see An Pingqiu 安平秋 and Zhang Peiheng 張培恒, *Zhongguo jinshu daguan* 中國禁書大觀 [A complete overview of Chinese book censorship] (Shanghai: Shanghai wenhua chubanshe, 1990); also Wang Bin 王彬, ed., *Qingdai jinshu zongshu* 清代禁書總述 [An overview of book censorship in the Qing dynasty] (Beijing: Zhongguo shudian, 1990).

65 See Ge Gongzhen 戈公振, “Youguan chuban de gezhong falü 1901–1914” 有關出版的各種法律 1901–1914 [Laws regarding publishing, 1901–1914], in *Zhongguo jindai chuban shiliao, chubian* 中國近代出版史料初編 [Materials on modern Chinese publishing, first collection], ed. Zhang Jinglu 張靜廬 (Shanghai: Qunlian chubanshe, 1953), 312.

class of salaried urbanites with some literacy and a need for entertainment; the expansion of the time available for reading through the introduction of kerosene, gas, and electricity in Shanghai, coupled with the introduction of Sunday as a day of rest for the foreign firms, which spread via their employees to other Chinese inhabitants; and the wealth of many educated and book-hungry Chinese who were retiring to the Shanghai Foreign Settlements. By the time the Taiping civil war ended in 1864, the Lower Yangtze area, from which most of them had come, had witnessed a systematic destruction of all things deemed “of the devil” by the Taipings. These included temples, private libraries, academies, and other centers of learning. The effect was devastating: the Lower Yangtze region, Jiangnan, was not an impoverished or culturally deprived area where few people had books or desired them; on the contrary, for centuries Jiangnan enjoyed the highest concentration of educated men and women, and nearly half of the well-stocked private libraries of the country were located in this region.⁶⁶

The excited comments made by late nineteenth-century Chinese Shanghai tourists in their “bamboo twig ballads” (*zhuzhi ci* 竹枝詞, contemporary travelogues), as well as the steep rise in the number of Shanghai publishing houses, publications, print runs and national market share all suggest that the Shenbaoguan assessment of the potential of the Chinese-language media market was accurate.⁶⁷ The Shanghai media flourished in a transcultural “contact zone,” absorbing whatever seemed fitting and contributing in turn to the development of a new urban lifestyle and sensibility that was enhanced by the proud proclamation that the International Settlement was on a par in urban comforts with the big new commercial cities in the West. Given the wealth, attractiveness, and modernity of Shanghai as the “West” in China, its media, lifestyle, and sensibility found their way first into the Lower Yangtze Valley and from there into other reaches of the empire. This was assisted by the development of national media distribution networks that were again pioneered by the Shenbaoguan.

The material and psychological conditions were thus ripe after the 1870s for the printing of books and for the development of urban leisure and entertainment for a substantial segment of the population in Shanghai and among the wider

66 See Ho Ping-ti, *The Ladder of Success in Imperial China: Aspects of Social Mobility* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), 62–70.

67 Many of the relevant documents have been collected in Gu Bingquan 顧炳權, *Shanghai yangchang zhuzhi ci* 上海洋場竹枝詞 [Bamboo twig ballads on the Shanghai Foreign Settlements] (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 1996). See also the direct praise of the Shenbaoguan in Ge Yuanxu’s 葛元煦 *Shanghai city guide/travelogue Hu you zaji* 滬游雜記 [Miscellaneous jottings on a journey to Shanghai] (1876; repr., in *Hu you zaji*, punctuated by Zheng Zu’an 鄭祖安, Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1989), 54.

Jiangnan gentry. Benefiting from the cultural environment of the International Settlement and protected by the legal privileges that came with the extra-territoriality of its owner, the Shenbaoguan developed this cultural market by offering a large range of high-quality books for information, classical education, and entertainment. As we shall see, the books it published, whether handbooks for classical studies, model examination essays, military treatises, or lowly novels, all shared the same format and editorial care, a treatment that signals that they were inserted into a new modern canon that had its own dignity and flat hierarchies.

Resetting the cultural register of the novel

Central to the Shenbaoguan strategy of novel publishing was the production of first-rate books both in the editorial care taken and in the physical and visual quality of the product created. In this respect it did not differentiate between genres: novels received the same amount of editorial attention and were produced at the same level of printing quality as books of genres that were more highly placed in the cultural register. This treatment of novels went very visibly against the prevailing fashion of publishing lowbrow matter in cheap prints. By using the same material and optical features as traditional high-register works, the Shenbaoguan novel prints suggested that these were works that deserved to stand next to dynastic histories, scholarly works on the classics, or model essays for the imperial examinations.

In its clear mirroring of the European acceptance of the genre into the highest registers of literature and educated reading, this treatment of the novel has all the hallmarks of transcultural interaction. This assessment is reinforced by the very strong role played by Ernest Major—a man who was famous at the time for his mastery of Chinese and for the expansion of his Chinese learning—in tracking and selecting titles for publication. In the preface to the *Shumu*, Cai Erkang 蔡爾康 (1852–1920), one of Major’s most important early Chinese collaborators,⁶⁸ described Major as the guiding force behind the collection and wrote that the entries on the books in the catalog were based on Major’s oral communications.⁶⁹ Indeed, all aspects of novel publishing by the Shenbaoguan bear the hallmark of Major’s personal involvement. In a classic case of transcultural interaction and eventual localization of concepts, the

68 On Cai Erkang, see Natascha Gentz (née Vittinghoff), “Ein Leben am Rande des Ruhms: Cai Erkang (1852–1921),” in *China in seinen biographischen Dimensionen: Gedenkschrift für Helmut Martin*, ed. Christina Neder, Heiner Roetz, and Ines-Susanne Schilling (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2001), 195–205.

69 Lùxin xiānshi 縷馨僊史 [Cai Erkang 蔡爾康], preface to *Shumu*, 1a–b.

Shenbaoguan's recalibration of the cultural standing of the novel was realized through a carefully designed negotiation with the Chinese cultural context. As we shall demonstrate, this included book design, editing, font selection, and formatting, as well as the paratexts within the book itself.

The efforts of the Shenbaoguan to reregister the cultural standing of the novel can be seen in the *Shumu*. While we do not have an archival record of the strategy behind the Shenbaoguan book publication program, the 1877 *Shumu* (fig. 6) and its 1879 sequel allow us to extract the core elements of the program and to determine the place of the novel within it.



Fig. 6: Cover of *Shumu* 申報館書目 (Shanghai: Shenbaoguan, 1877).

Major evidently set his sights high. Cai Erkang wrote in his “preface” that Ernest Major suggested the title “*Shumu tiyao*” 書目提要 for what eventually became the *Shumu*. The suggestion “*Shumu tiyao*” was intended to bring to mind a famous set of entries in the eighteenth-century imperial compilation known as the *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書 (Complete library of the four treasures);

namely, the *Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao* 四庫全書總目提要 (Abstracts of the full list of the *Complete Library of the Four Treasuries*), by Ji Yun 紀昀 (1724–1805) and Yongrong 永瑢 (1744–1790), among others.⁷⁰ Cai Erkang wrote that he refused to use *tiyao* because Ji Yun’s learning was infinitely higher than his own, and because he was concerned that, since the emperor had commissioned and overseen the compilation of the *Siku quanshu*, using the title might be seen as an attempt by the Shenbaoguan and its manager to claim a similar importance or, worse, as a form of *lèse majesté*.

By focusing on authorship and content, the manner in which the *Shumu* discussed the titles published by the Shenbaoguan in fact closely resembles that of Ji Yun’s *Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao*.⁷¹ In the announcement of the publication of the *Shumu*, Major, who wrote under his pen name Zunwenge zhuren 尊文閣主人, made his purpose clear:

From the time our company was founded, we have among other things been printing and selling books regularly on a daily basis. In these years, our publications have run to over fifty titles. We are honored that gentlemen from near and far often came [to our publishing house] to purchase these books for their perusal. However, [for those who come and buy books] book lists only provide the titles, and often they do not know what the book is about or who might be the author. As a consequence many hesitate to purchase the books. [That is why I have] now asked Luxin Xianshi [Cai Erkang] to compose a catalog of the books [published by our company] in which the key points of their contents are summarized clearly and in detail. Besides being a book one can browse through, it can also be a form of leisure reading.⁷²

本館自創設以來，兼印各種書籍發售日以爲常。歷年來共積至五十餘部。蒙遠近諸君子，時來取閱。而書目闕如見書名者，常以不知是書所言何事，所作何人，故購買或多袖手。今特撮其大要因縷罄仙史潤色而成書目一卷。其中開陳明晰於各書之精蘊無不闡發而表彰之。瀏覽之餘，亦可為消遣書之一種也。

70 Yongrong 永瑢 and Ji Yun 紀昀, *Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao* 四庫全書總目提要 [Abstracts of the full list of the *Complete Library of the Four Treasuries*] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1965).

71 It should also be noted that the Shenbaoguan eventually retrieved and published for the first time Ji Yun’s terse summaries in which he provided the gist of the individual titles in the *Siku quanshu*. Ji Yun 紀昀, (*Qinding*) *Siku quanshu jianming mulu* (欽定) 四庫全書簡明目錄 [(Imperially approved) Abbreviated catalog entries for the *Complete Library of the Four Treasuries*], lithograph print (Shanghai: Shenbaoguan, 1879).

72 Zunwenge zhuren 尊閣閣主人 [Ernest Major], “*Shumu fashou*” 書目發售 [The book catalog has gone on sale], *Shenbao*, July 20, 1877.

The idea that a publishing house should provide the potential buyer with a detailed introduction to its books was understood by Major not only as a marketing strategy but also as a way of connecting to a community of Shenbaoguan readers.

With Ji Yun's *Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao* acting as the silent but pervasively present counterpoint to his catalog, Major made his point about the place of the novel in the Chinese social and cultural order of things. To begin with, although the *Shumu* did use Ji Yun's terms to group the *Siku quanshu* works—namely *lei* 類 (genre/class/category)—it also went on to set up entirely new categories. These emphasized the very things that had been sidelined as too insignificant or left out all together as too base for the *Complete Library of the Four Treasuries* as well as the *Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao*. The most striking example of the latter was the full-length novel.⁷³ Ji Yun's comments on *xiaoshuo* 小說, the category under which these novels would have fallen, reiterated the orthodox line that was first articulated in the bibliographical treatise in the *Book of Han* (*Hanshu* 漢書): they were “small talk” (*xiaodao* 小道), that did not deal with the important theme of ordering the state. This came, he said, in three types: “narration of miscellaneous events” (*xushu zashi* 敘述雜事); “records of strange stories” (*jilu yiwen* 記錄異聞); and “compilations of tidbits” (*zhuikan suoyu* 綴輯瑣語). Left out of these three groups was much of what would today be considered the very core of Chinese prose fiction, the *chuanqi* 傳奇 stories (associated with the Tang period), the vernacular stories (associated with the late Ming period), drama, and the full-length novels of the Yuan, Ming, and Qing periods.⁷⁴

The *Shumu* categories offered a provocative alternative to those defined by Ji Yun. By lavishing the same editorial care on all its books and printing them in the format of a series, the Shenbaoguan ultimately established a new standard that placed novels on the same level as canonical works, scholarship, and source collections.

73 None of the full-length novels, such as the *Sanguo yanyi* or *Water Margin*, are listed in the category *xiaoshuojia lei* 小說家類 in Yongrong and Ji Yun, *Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao*, 1161–1162.

74 The category of drama does not exist in Yongrong and Ji, *Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao* and it is likewise absent in the *Shumu*. For Ji Yun it represents a literary genre not worthy of recording; and for the Shenbaoguan the reason might be that by the late nineteenth century, written drama, i.e. *chuanqi* or *zaju* 雜劇, had become a literati genre for reading only, without any pretense of performance or a popular base. In later years, however, the Shenbaoguan serialized new dramatic works with illustrations in the *Dianshizhai huabao*. See Wagner, “Joining the Global Imaginaire,” 146–147.

The categories of the *Shumu* (fig. 7) are as follows:

- Reportages on historical events (*Gushi jishi lei* 古事紀實類)—2 titles;
- Reportages on recent events (*Jinshi jishi lei* 近事紀實類)—5 titles;
- Miscellaneous records of recent events (*Jinshi zazhi lei* 近事雜誌類)—4 titles;
- Model essays appreciation (preparing for the imperial examinations) (*Yilin zhenshang lei* 藝林珍賞類)—5 titles;
- Records of beautiful women past and present (*Gujin jili lei* 古今紀麗類)—5 titles;
- Model reports and letter writing (*Toubao chidu lei* 投報尺牘類)—3 titles;
- New and extraordinary fiction (*Xinqi shuobu lei* 新奇說部類)—14 titles;
- Linked-chapter novels (*Zhanghui xiaoshuo lei* 章回小說類)—7 titles;
- New works of opera (*Xinpai yuanben lei* 新排院本類)—1 title;
- Collections of diverse items (serials) (*Congcan huike lei* 叢殘彙刻類)—4 titles, including three literary journals published by the Shenbaoguan and one on science distributed by it, the *Gezhi huibian* (格致彙編);
- Fine prints of paintings (*Jingyin tuhua lei* 精印圖畫類)—3 titles.⁷⁵

First, the catalog introduced “records of real events” (*jishi* 紀實), as a new literary category of non-fiction narrative. This is similar to the Western notion of “reportage,” which owed its rise in prominence during the nineteenth century to the spread of the newspaper. In this category, for example, the *Shumu* included war reportage written in a detailed and factual style about the defeat of Taiping rebels in Suzhou. Another item comprised the treaties that England and Japan had concluded with the Qing, which were made available to the Chinese public for the first time. The reportage category was subdivided into past and current affairs, *gushi* 古事 and *jinshi* 近事.

⁷⁵ *Shumu*, 1–2.

The new element in this pair was the importance granted to the journalistic treatments of current affairs in a cultural context traditionally dominated by a reverence for the past.

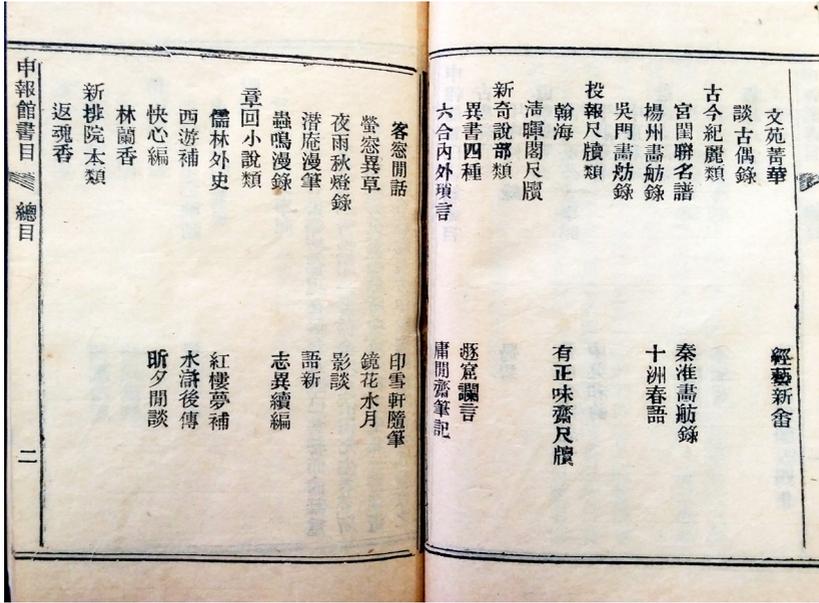


Fig. 7: Part of the table of contents with categories of Shumu 申報館書目 (Shanghai: Shenbaoguan, 1877).

Second, the *Shumu* created a special literary category for writings by and about women, the *jili lei* 紀麗類. One of the works in this group, the 1877 *Gonggui lianming pu* 宮閨聯名譜 (Compilation of assorted works from the women's quarters), is a collection of poems written by more than a thousand women authors that includes short biographical sketches and critical notes.⁷⁶ Other works offer records of courtesans and entertainment (“on the painted boats”) in various commercial centers around the Jiangnan region, with titles such as *Qin Huai huafang lu* 秦淮畫舫錄 (Record of the painted boats at the [confluence of the] Qin and Huai Rivers [Nanjing]); *Wumen huafang lu* 吳門畫舫錄 (Record of the painted boats at Suzhou); and *Yangzhou huafang lu* 揚州畫舫錄 (Record of the painted boats at

76 Dong Xun 董恂, *Gonggui lianming pu* 宮閨聯名譜 [Compilation of assorted works from the women's quarters] (Shanghai: Shenbaoguan, 1877).

Yangzhou).⁷⁷ Although grouped into the *jili* category, these works, which the Shenbaoguan had made great efforts to locate, are described in the *Shumu* as a specific type of reportage that records local customs (*fengtu renqing* 風土人情) in such vivid colors that the reader would feel “personally present in the scene” (*shen qin qi jing* 身親其境).⁷⁸

Third, the *Shumu* created new categories for fictional literature. These followed each other in direct succession—indicating cohesion—and came towards the end, after the higher-ranking genres—indicating lower status. Although these categories were new, they made use of familiar elements. The first category, *xinqi shuobu*, (“new and extraordinary vernacular works,”) offered *biji*, *chuanqi*, and *zhiguai* 志怪 (Record of strange events) stories, which had been included as early as the eleventh century in the *shuobu* category and were associated with storytelling.⁷⁹ The second category, *zhanghui xiaoshuo* (“linked-chapter novels”), which seems to have been invented for the *Shumu* and became a standard term in later literary scholarship,⁸⁰ offered full-length novels that were written as works to be read rather than told. The third, *xinpai yuanben* 新排院本 (“new drama manuscripts”), comprised printing ballads of the *tanci* type as well as dramatic works, which had previously circulated only as the closely guarded possessions of theater troupes. These three were followed by the literary journals. The 1879 sequel to this book catalog, the *Shumu xuji*, retained the two main categories in abridged form, calling them simply *shuobu* and *xiaoshuo*.⁸¹

These categories comprise the first attempt at dividing fictional works by length—a precursor of the modern division between short story, novelette, and novel. For these new categories, the *Shumu* expanded on elements of the

77 *Qin Huai huafang lu* 秦淮畫舫錄 [Record of the painted boats on the Qin and Huai rivers] (Shanghai: Shenbaoguan, 1874); Li Dou 李斗, *Yangzhou huafang lu* 揚州畫舫錄 [Record of the painted boats at Yangzhou] (Shanghai: Shenbaoguan, 1875); *Wumen huafang lu* 吳門畫舫錄 [Record of the painted boats at Wumen] (Shanghai: Shenbaoguan, 1876).

78 *Shumu*, 10.

79 See Judith Zeitlin, “Xiaoshuo,” in *The Novel*. Vol. 1, *History, Geography, and Culture*, ed. Franco Moretti (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 249–261.

80 The earliest occurrence of the term *zhanghui xiaoshuo* as given in the standard dictionaries, such as Morohashi’s *Dai Kan-Wa jiten*, and the *Hanyu dacidian*, can be found in writings on literary history by Lu Xun 魯迅 and Zheng Zhenduo 鄭振鐸 in the 1920s. See Lu Xun 魯迅, *Zhongguo xiaoshuo shilue* 中國小說史略 [A short history of the Chinese novel], (1932; repr., Shanghai: Shanghai shuju, 1990), 148. Given Cai Erkang’s statement in the preface that the content of the *Shumu* was based on oral introductions to the individual titles given to him by Ernest Major, the term *zhanghui* might have originated with Major himself, who might have associated it with the installments of the serialized novels that had been appearing in Western papers since the 1830s.

81 Table of contents of *Shumu xuji*.

Chinese literary tradition, that is to say the *xiaoshuo*, which have already been mentioned, and the *shuobu*, which was used for stories and fictional works. By adding the “new and extraordinary,” *xinqi*, to the *shuobu*, the novelty and interest of these texts was emphasized; and by adding the “linked-chapter,” *zhanghui*, to the *xiaoshuo*, the full-length novel was defined by a purely formal criterion as opposed to traditional groupings according to content, such as the “talented scholar and beautiful lady” (*caizi jiaren* 才子佳人) novels, or the “historical narratives” (*yanyi* 演義). The *Shumu* refers to novels with chapter headings that use either the word *zhang* or *hui*, regardless of their content. All novels listed under this heading were full length. It should also be noted that at this stage the distinction between the vernacular writing of the novel versus the “classical” or *wenyan* 文言 style of most other writing was not yet considered a relevant marker, though elsewhere the Shenbaoguan made great efforts to promote a style of newspaper writing that was easily accessible to people without examination degrees.

The insertion of the novels into the *Shumu* and its sequel reveals that novel publishing was not considered a sideline, but was a core part of the publishing profile of this company. This insertion of the novel into respectable and relevant reading took both daring and confidence that it would eventually overcome the convention of denouncing novels as irrelevant, frivolous, and morally questionable reading matter. It demonstrates that the Shenbaoguan was aware of the market potential for this genre in reaching a broader readership, especially women and young people—a potential that the British print market had highlighted so dramatically since the end of the eighteenth century. Moreover, the European market had also demonstrated the novel’s potential as a means of bringing social and political issues to light.

Although the categories listed in the *Shumu* are clearly Chinese, their underlying concepts interact with European practices and experiences. In Europe, this was the era of Charles Dickens, Benjamin Disraeli, and Edward Bulwer-Lytton, of Eugène Sue, Honoré de Balzac, Alexandre Dumas *père*, and Victor Hugo, all of whom wrote novels on contemporary themes in a “realistic” style that emphasized not so much social “reality” as very specific depictions. Many of these novels were serialized in newspapers, and had taken Europe by storm while driving up newspaper circulation. One must ask, therefore, whether this type of “realistic” (*jishi*) writing on “contemporary” (*jinshi*) themes, which defined the opening categories in the *Shumu*, was also part of the Shenbaoguan criteria in selecting novels for publishing. It is clear that this did not exclude flights of fantasy as long as they were described in a “realistic” mode. After all, the *Shenbao* had

already published excerpts from Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*⁸² with great success, and the stern Ji Yun had been a very successful writer of tales of the fantastic.⁸³

The 1879 *Shumu xuji* dropped the neologisms and returned to the simple *shuobu* and *xiaoshuo* categories to achieve a more elegant unified length for the names of the different categories, but the importance of fiction publishing remained unchanged. Of the fifty-nine new titles listed, five were collections of stories and an additional five were novels. An important addition in this list is the inclusion of works from and about the classical canon of scholarship, which in turn helped to elevate the social standing of the entire collection.

The Shenbaoguan was not much interested in neat genre definitions, but instead pursued a literary practice that was focused on public interest, and acceptance of the works published. Instead of imposing a rigid genre scheme on what was clearly the evolving practice of a very successful and flexible publisher, we will allow the literary practice of our historical protagonists to guide our own genre definitions.

The Shenbaoguan's effort to elevate the cultural standing of the novel can also be seen in the energy it exerted in the design, editing, and formatting of its printed products. Chinese printed books signaled their standing in the cultural hierarchy through their appearance and the editorial care that went into their preparation and paratexts. The fundamental divide was between books printed by the Qing court and those printed by commercial publishers. The former were printed in small runs that amounted to no more than a few dozen, even if the works in question included thousands of volumes. The latter were printed in a variety of formats from refined amateur editions in small runs to mass-produced pulp fiction. Lying on the margins of both categories were mass-produced morality books that were distributed for free as a means of accumulating merit for the donors.

Technically speaking, the most advanced works were the imperial prints created with movable copper fonts. They allowed for a high level of precision and excellent readability, even of small characters, to create books that could be small enough to fit "into the arm sleeve." The eighteenth-century imperial print shop in the Wuying Palace specialized in this type of deluxe publication, but aside from a few stray copies these were not made available on the market (fig. 8).

82 Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels* (1726; repr., New York: Penguin Books, 2012).

83 Ji Yun 紀昀, *Yuewei caotang biji* 閱微草堂筆記 [Brush notes from the Yuewei grass-covered shed] (Beijing: Huaxia chubanshe, 1995). Translated by David E. Pollard as *Real Life in China at the Height of the Empire: Revealed by the Ghosts of Ji Xiaolan* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2014).

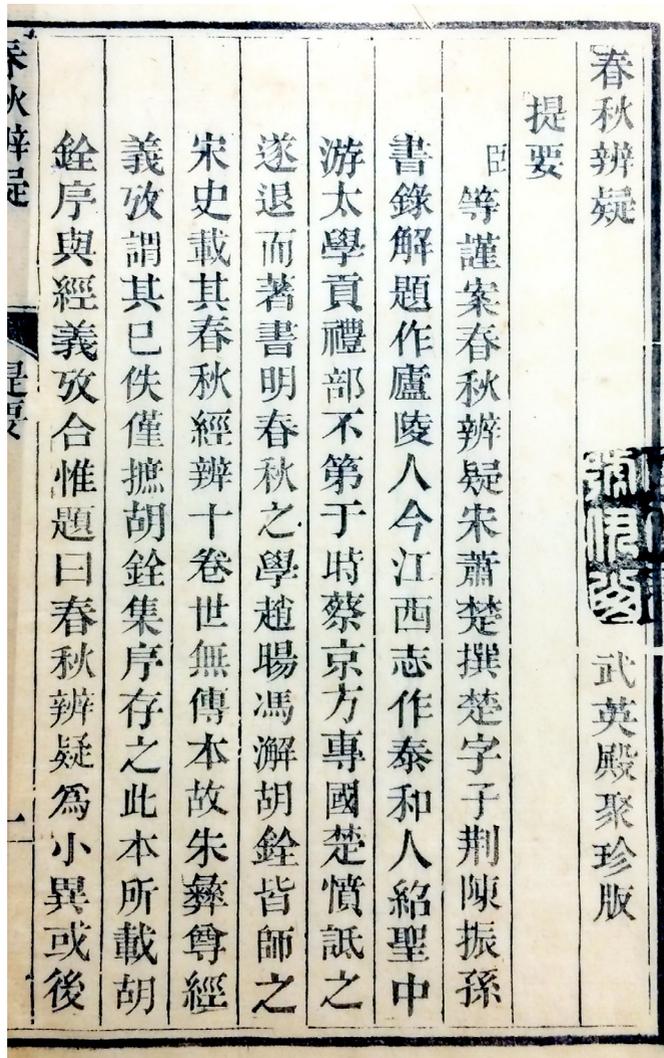


Fig. 8: Example of a juzhen ban print from the Wuying Palace. From Chunqiu bianyi (Beijing: Wuyingdian, between 1773 and 1783).

From the outset, the Shenbaoguan opted to vie with its newspaper, journals, and books for the highest register by printing with a metal font; it added economy and speed to this practice by using imported printing machines. At the same time, in order to stay close to the coveted traditional model, it printed on Chinese bamboo pulp-based paper (not white imported Swedish

paper) and retained a Chinese-style book size and binding. In this manner, it combined signifiers of the highest Chinese cultural register with the allure of new Western technology to create a type of book that had previously only been accessible to the highest ranks of the court, but could now be bought by anybody in the entire country for a modest amount. To alert the readers to the treasure in their hands, the imprints contained the formula “printed by the Shanghai Shenbaoguan modeled on the deluxe prints [from the Wuying Palace]” (*Shanghai Shenbaoguan fang juzhen ban yin* 上海申報館仿聚珍版印 [or *fang juzhen ban* 做聚珍板])” (fig. 9).⁸⁴

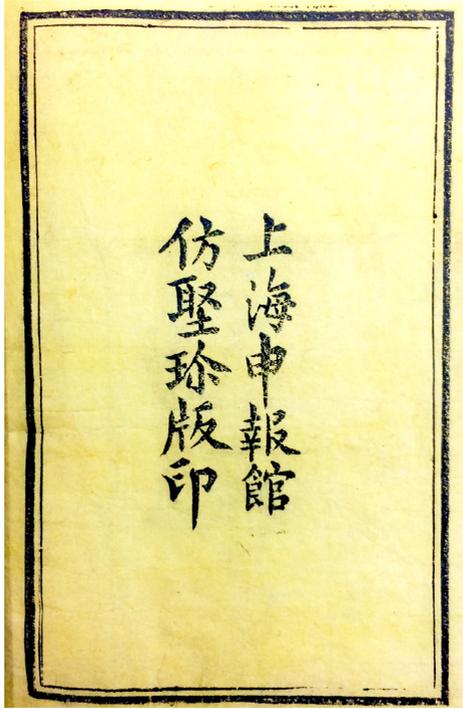


Fig. 9: Imprint of Shenbaoguan publications: “Printed by the Shanghai Shenbaoguan on the model of the [Wuying Palace] deluxe format.” From the front matter of *Rulin waishi* (Shanghai: Shenbaoguan, 1876).

84 For a study of the deluxe editions from the Wuying Palace, see Xiao Li 蕭力, “Qingdai Wuyingdian keshu chutan” 清代武英殿刻書初探 [A first study of the Wuying Palace prints], in *Lidai keshu gaikuang* 歷代刻書概況 [An outline of book printing through the ages], ed. Shanghai Xinsijun lishi yanjiuhui yinshua yinchao fenhui 上海新四軍歷史研究會印刷印鈔分會 (Beijing: Yinshua gongye chubanshe, 1991), 376–393. Major was not alone in emulating this Wuying Palace format, other publishers also made efforts in the same direction. However, it was the Shenbaoguan’s success with this imprint that prompted other Shanghai publishers to follow suit.

The impact of these new, high standards for book publishing set by the *Juzhen ban* edition of Major's press (fig. 10) was immediately felt. As the preface to the *Shumu* proudly points out, a mere three years after the Shenbaoguan pioneered this new style of commercial publishing, no less than four or five Shanghai publishers began to imitate it.

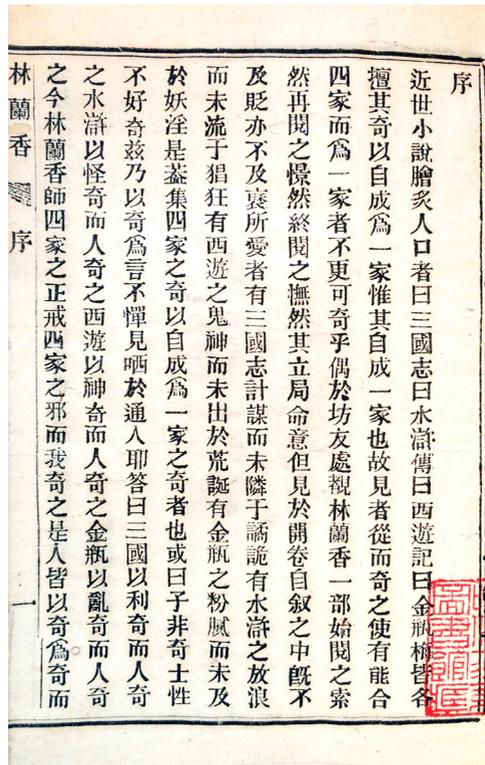


Fig. 10: Shenbaoguan print modeled on the Wuying Palace *juzhen ban* editions. This example shows the preface to *Lin Lan Xiang* (Shanghai: Shenbaoguan, 1877).

The book covers showed the title in seal script, which was becoming an elegant literati fashion during the last decades of the nineteenth century. (fig. 12) They were often written and signed by literati who were known for their fine calligraphy. A good example of this is the cover of *Lin Lan Xiang*. (fig. 12) It was written and signed by Shen Gongzhi 沈共 (拱) 之 (Shen Jinyuan 沈錦垣, 1845–1900), who also often signed as Wenchaoguan zhu 問潮館主, a calligrapher who was famous at the time not only in Shanghai and the Jiangnan region but also among Japanese aficionados, for whom he often calligraphed

titles.⁸⁵ He had been asked to create the masthead for the *Shenbao* newspaper in 1872 and would be asked to do the same for the *Dianshizhai huabao*; he had already done the calligraphy for Major's preface in the latter.

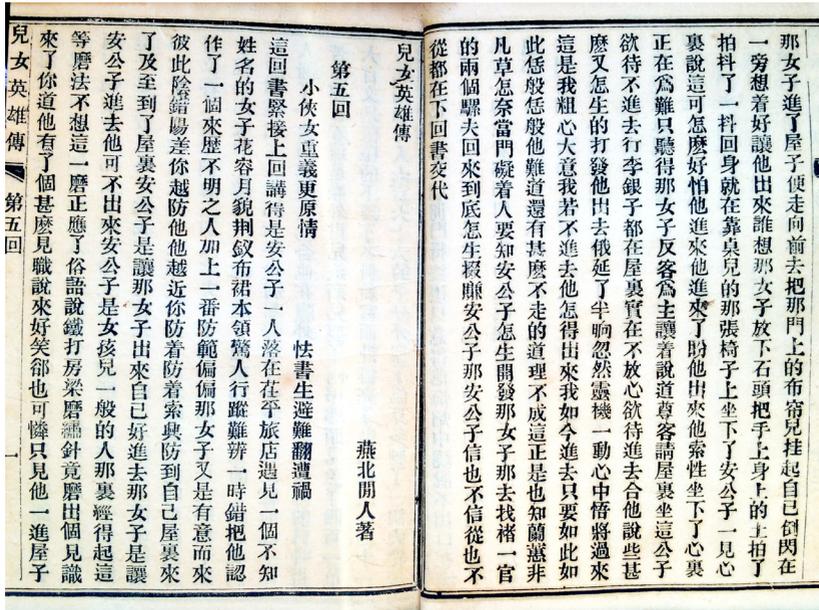


Fig. 11: The print quality was consistent through the decades. *Wenkang*, Ernü yingxiong zhuan (Shanghai: Shenbaoguan, 1881), beginning of chapter five.

The *Shenbaoguan* asked prominent men of letters to write prefaces, and also often involved them in the editing. For novels this involved establishing a good textual base from a variety of manuscripts and prints; adding comments alerting the reader to particularly sophisticated literary devices that were being used, as was done to accompany the translation of Bulwer-Lytton's novel; adding a list of the personae and their connections; or adding a "key" that would highlight the historical figures lampooned through a literary figure, a technique that was used for the revised 1881 edition of *Rulin waishi* and followed English precedents, for example, Benjamin Disraeli's *Coningsby*.⁸⁶

85 *Ginkōkaku sōka* 吟香閣叢書 (Hankou: Leshantang, 1885) is one example. This is a volume containing lithography reproductions of paintings in the collection of the Meiji journalist and pioneer of on-site reporting Kishida Ginkō 岸田吟香 (1833–1905), who set up this bookstore in Hankou to emulate and compete with the *Dianshizhai* in Shanghai.

86 *Key to the Characters in Coningsby: Comprising about Sixty of the Principal Personages in the Story* (London: Sherwood, Gilbert and Piper, 1844).



Fig. 12: Cover page of the novel Lin Lan Xiang in seal script by Shen Gongzhi 沈共(拱)之 (Shen Jinyuan 沈錦垣) (Shanghai: Shenbaoguan, 1877). Suiyuan xiashi (隨緣下土), “Lin Lan Xiang xu” 林蘭香序 (Preface to Lin Lan Xiang) (Shanghai: Shenbaoguan, 1877).

Bestowing these material and paratext markers of high-register works on novels helped to elevate the cultural status of the novel many years before reformers, such as Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873–1929), adopted this already reformed genre of the novel as one of their platforms for articulating their political agenda.

Announcing the arrival of the “modern novel”⁸⁷

To establish the potential of the novel as a literary form compatible with the demands of modern times and to signal its rise in the cultural hierarchy, an example was needed; this was provided by the Shenbaoguan in the form of a serialized translation of Edward Bulwer-Lytton’s *Night and Morning* in 1873. This translation came with newly-written paratexts—advertisements, a book catalog entry, a preface, and inserted commentary—that were designed to contextualize this new and unusual work and to offer the contours of a new theory on the novel.⁸⁸ This novel and the paratexts together thus mark an important juncture in the development of the Chinese novel.

For the Chinese reader, it was the earliest example of a modern novel because it dealt with contemporary events in real places and had commoners as main protagonists.⁸⁹ It was also one of the first to be identified as a “translation of a foreign novel.” The *Shenbao* newspaper had previously, between May and June 1872, published shorter pieces, namely “A Voyage to Lilliput” from Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels*, “Rip Van Winkle,” a story by Washington Irving, and “The Story of the Greek Slave” from Frederick Marryat’s *The Pacha of Many Tales*. None were identified as fiction or as translations of Western works.⁹⁰ Bulwer-Lytton’s novel was extraordinary because it dealt with a modern foreign country—England— and because it depicted contemporary English society through highly realistic writing. The announcement of the serialization of *Xinxi xiantan* (fig. 13) is thus the first time that a novel was

87 The term “modern novel” is not a historical term. It is taken here from Wu Xi’s 武禧 analysis of Lishao Jushi’s [Jiang Zirang?] preface to the translation of Bulwer-Lytton’s *Night and Morning*. Wu Xi 武禧, “Wan Qing xiaoshuo de shixian” 晚清小說的時限 [The timeliness of the late Qing novel], *Shinmatsu shōsetsu kara* 72 (January 2002): 25.

88 The first to point out the importance of these paratexts for the development of a new theoretical framework for the modern Chinese novel was Wu Xi, see “Wan Qing xiaoshuo de shixian,” 25. Against this, Chen Yedong 陳業東 has argued that an advertisement of 1895 by John Fryer (1839–1928), an Englishman who worked in the Shanghai Arsenal, in the *Wanguo gongbao* 萬國公報, or *Review of the Times*, May, 1895, first issue, entitled “Qiu zhu shixin xiaoshuo qi” 求著時新小說啓 [Advertisement searching for submissions of novels on contemporary affairs], was the beginning of a modern theory of the novel in Chinese. Fryer called for submissions to a competition on writing novels with the aim of educating people about the evils of opium smoking, the eight-legged easy, and footbinding. See Chen Yedong 陳業東, “Jindai xiaoshuo lilun qidian zhi wo jian” 近代小說理論起點之我見 [My idea about the starting point of modern theories of the novel], *Ming Qing xiaoshuo yanjiu* 1 (1994): 66–74. For a study on John Fryer’s novel contest, see [Patrick Hanan], “The New Novel Before the New Novel: John Fryer’s Fiction Contest,” in *Writing and Materiality in China*, ed. Judith Zeitlin and Lydia H. Liu, 317–340.

89 Ian P. Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957).

90 See Hanan, “The Translated Fiction in the Early Shenbao,” 110–123.

introduced in a Chinese language newspaper. We will therefore analyze it in detail as a first source for the aesthetic and cultural program behind the larger Shenbaoguan novel publishing project. This will also establish a firm base for an eventual judgment as to whether the Shenbaoguan remained on track or switched gear and priorities once it turned away from translation to publish novels originally written in Chinese.



Fig. 13: Announcement of the publication of Xinxi xiantan (Bulwer-Lytton's Night and Morning), Shenbao, January 4, 1873, front page.

The work was serialized/summarized in the literary journal *Yinghuan suoji* between January 1873 and 1875, and was later published in enlarged book form in 1875. According to Ian Watt's definition, the fact that it is set in real places, deals with contemporary events, and has commoners as main protagonists makes *Night and Morning* an example of a "modern" novel.⁹¹

91 See Watt, *The Rise of the Novel*, chapter 1.

The announcement reads:

Newly translated English novel

We are setting out to translate an English novel entitled *Idle Talk Mornings and Nights* for publication in the [literary magazine] *Jade Splinters from the Entire Universe*. Each issue will carry three or four chapters so that within about one year the entire novel will be completed. Those who are interested, please have a look at it. The esteemed gentlemen will have to purchase [the magazine] each month so as to avoid missing the overall story of this novel while being able to appreciate its flair.⁹²

新譯英國小說

今擬於瀛寰瑣紀中譯刊英國小說一種，其書名昕夕閒談。每出瑣紀約刊三四章，計一年則可畢矣。所冀者，各贈顧觀看之。士君子務必逐月購閱，庶不失此書之綱領，而可得此書之意味耳。

The title of the announcement states that the work is a “novel,” *xiaoshuo*, and that its origin is English; the term “the English novel” offered “foreign” as a new ingredient in the Chinese notion of the “extraordinary” in a novel. The title also aimed to elicit the readers’ curiosity. It described the type of novel and in this case its identity as a translation. This set a precedent for later announcements of translated novels by other publishers. It also announced a new and different kind of publication method—serialization, which came with a new way of reading a novel by monthly installment and with the reminder to buy the new issue each month. This last was not a trivial aside: periodical subscriptions were still an unknown concept in China.⁹³

This novelty, the announcement continues, might find favor with the Chinese reader:

According to Westerners, their novels are to both delight and cultivate the spirit, as well as to warn and regulate social behavior. Now [as you have a chance] to read it, [you] can find out whether what they say is right or not. However, until now no Chinese has seen an English novel, or heard of it. Thus, our publishing house does not shirk the work needed for the translation, and will also shoulder the task of engraving [printing] it. If we succeed in filling

92 “Xinyi Yingguo xiaoshuo” 新譯英國小說 [Newly translated English novel], *Shenbao*, January 4, 1873.

93 Since the 1830s novel serialization had formed an important means of acquainting readers in France, Britain, and Germany with the concept of subscriptions for newspapers and periodicals. For England, see Graham Law, *Serializing Fiction in the Victorian Press* (New York: Palgrave, 2000).

this lacuna [in the knowledge of the Chinese readers], our publishing house will be very fortunate; but if [the reader] believes that it was not worth reading or even feels disappointed, that indeed would be our failing.⁹⁴

據西人云伊之小說大足以怡悅性情，懲勸風俗。今閱之而可知其言之確否。然英國小說則為華人目所未見耳所謂聞者也。本館不惜繙譯之勞力，任剞劂之役，拾遺補缺， 匪我不逮則本館幸甚，如或以為不足觀而竟至失望，則本館之咎也。

The announcement justified publication of the novel as an effort to allow Chinese readers to judge for themselves whether the twofold purpose Westerners associated with the genre, namely to delight and to set standards for social behavior, was achieved. It defined the role of the publisher as that of offering the reader something new, extraordinary, and rare—in this case the translation of something Chinese readers had never seen before, a Western novel. It introduced the notion of an active relationship between the publisher and the reader by calling on the latter not merely to look, but also to form an opinion, even if it turned out to be a negative one; in which case, the fault rested squarely on the publisher's lack of judgment.

The announcement also addresses the standing of the novel genre in the West:

While this is a novel from the hands of a gifted man of letters in the West, with each topic and stroke having its deeper meaning, this translation will aim only at easy language and clear structure, with the modest goal of offering it to be enjoyed by both refined and common people for reading without unnecessary exertion. We would be honored if you, gentlemen, would patronize us by examining [the novel] and therefore make this announcement.⁹⁵

惟此小說係西國慧業文人手筆，命意運筆各有深心，此番所譯僅取其詞語顯明，片段清楚，以為雅俗共賞而已，以便閱之者不費心目而已。幸諸君子其垂鑒焉。謹啟

The author is introduced as an Englishman and a man of outstanding literary qualities, though his name, which would have been meaningless to Chinese readers, was not given. In the West, men of such caliber were willing to entrust their deepest personal thoughts to what was considered a lowly genre in China. This not only enhanced the standing of the novel but also made it

94 "Xinyi Yingguo xiaoshuo."

95 Ibid.

acceptable for the educated reader in China. At the same time it emphasized that the translation was geared towards easy comprehension, so that people of different educational levels could enjoy reading it.

The announcement aimed at establishing direct communication with the reader, telling him what he was offered, how to read it, and why it should be read, and at the same time asking him to read in a critical spirit. Instead of adopting the stance of a purveyor of absolute truth, it established the reader as the ultimate arbiter of cultured taste, suggesting with lighthearted self-irony that he/she might find the novel trite, despite the high-register promises of the announcement. This echoes the general strategy used by the *Shenbao* of encouraging readers to articulate their own opinions on the editorial pages of the paper and submit newsworthy items as well as short lyrical and prose pieces for publication. It also plays on a refreshingly foreign sense of humor regarding the validity of one's own judgment.

The reference to “Western” discussions about the double function of novels to both delight and regulate social behavior echoes a promise that was expressed in many prefaces of even the most raucous late-Ming novels and was a reaction to a shared anxiety about the dangers of novel-reading in Europe and China. This shared cultural understanding was further fleshed out in the next layer of literary criticism of the novel after the announcement, the “preface” to the first installment of the Chinese translation of *Night and Morning*. Here Lishao jushi (Jiang Zirang?), who was the translator as well as commentator, offered a number of bold new arguments regarding the importance of the novel,⁹⁶ setting the tone for a more theoretical and conceptual treatment of the genre *xiaoshuo* by giving a historical sketch of its origin and development.

The origins of *xiaoshuo* go far back in time. Yu Chu's 虞初 *Zhou shuo* 周說 (Zhou anecdotes), with its nine hundred sections, marks the beginning of “mixed anecdotes” (*zashuo* 雜說),⁹⁷ the *Tangdai congshu* 唐代叢書 (Collected books from the Tang dynasty), are the source from which sprang the “sundry reports” (*suoji* 瑣記),⁹⁸ and

96 See Ye Tingliang 葉廷亮, *Qingmo xiaoshuo lilun* 晚清小說理論 [Late Qing theories of the novel] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1996) 10–17.

97 The *Zhou shuo* (Zhou anecdotes), now lost, is a work from the time of Han Wudi 漢武帝 (ruled 141–187 B.C.E.). It is listed in the bibliographical treatise of the Hanshu with no less than 943 *pian* 篇. The term *zashuo* refers to collections of anecdotes, which for the most part were not entered into the official histories.

98 The *Tangdai congshu* 唐代叢書 [Collected books from the Tang dynasty; alternative title *Tangren shuohui* 唐人說薈] is a compilation of *chuanqi* and *biji* narratives by Tang authors, compiled by Chen Shixi 陳世熙 [Chen Liantang 陳蓮塘] (fl. 1791). The term *suoji* refers to short and often anecdotal pieces of fiction.

as we come to the Yuan and Ming dynasties we eventually have the “stories with comment” (*pinghua* 平話).⁹⁹

小說之起，由來久矣。《虞初》九百，雜說之權輿，《唐代叢書》，瑣記之濫觴，降及元、明，聿有平話。

The *xiaoshuo* is thus a genre that developed in gradual and linear ways over time since the Western Han, starting with small loose tidbits and ending in long narratives of high complexity. At all stages, this development happened below and alongside the writing culture of the educated elite.

Where they have no basis in fact, they are adorned with wondrous miraculous elements, and when they simply report trivia, they highlight them with all sorts of sentiments. The result is that people outdo each other in their craze for listening [to these stories] and rush for them as if they were in a competition. Tracing their original purpose, they basically had no aim other than to please people’s eyes and ears. They serve the purpose of preserving tidbits from earlier times, attaching them to the unofficial histories of lowly officials so as to allow those who have fled officialdom to still have an idea of what is going on in the world.¹⁰⁰

無稽之語，演之以神奇；淺近之言，出之以情理。於是人競樂聞，趨之若鶩焉。推原其意，本以取快人之耳目而已，本以存昔日之遺聞瑣事，以附於稗官野史，使避世者亦可考見世事而已。

The main objective of the *xiaoshuo* is to please the eyes and ears, offering leisure and entertainment for “people” (*ren* 人). Although these are not further specified they definitely included more than the literati elite. Novels provided information about the times for educated people who had withdrawn from an active role in the world. With their focus on being fun to hear and read, it is no

99 Lishao Jushi 蠡勺居士, xu 序 [preface] to *Yinghuan suoji* 1 (1972): 1–2. A punctuated edition of this text with short glosses has been included in Huang Lin 黄霖 and Han Tongwen 韓同文, eds., *Zhongguo lidai xiaoshuo lunzhu xuan* 中國歷代小說論著選 [Selections from Chinese writings on the novel through the ages], rev. ed. (Nanchang: Jiangxi renmin chubanshe, 2000), 628–630. *Pinghua*, also written 評話, refers to oral narratives of historical events, interspersed with comments from the narrator. Novels such as the *Sanguo yanyi* and *Shuihu zhuan* are said to go back to such *pinghua* versions. Interestingly, the “preface” completely disregards the crucial role of transcultural interaction in this development, passing over the importance of Indian Buddhist narratives about the Buddha’s earlier lives (*jātaka*) in the development of Chinese fictional narratives as well as that of Central Asian performing arts in the development of Chinese theatre. As a consequence, the “preface” avoids the option of claiming a similar high ground of cultural importance for the novel under consideration.

100 Lishao Jushi, xu to *Yinghuan suoji*, 1.

surprise that *xiaoshuo* were wildly successful with such audiences. The writer recognizes this potential and develops his own view of what this genre could and should do. He agrees with the entertainment potential, but suggests that rather than simply offering fun to nondescript “people,” or those outside the official circuit looking for insider gossip, the novel is ideal leisure reading for people busy in the world.

In my opinion the main purpose of the novel is to delight the spirit and give pleasure to the soul, so that those who busy themselves with worldly affairs may completely abandon their worries and concerns and for a while allow their minds to take refuge in a realm of peace and comfort.¹⁰¹

予則謂小說者，當以怡神悅魄爲主，使人之碌碌此世者，咸棄其焦思繁慮，而暫遷其心於恬適之境者也。

The novel here possesses intrinsic value as an aesthetic form with an emotional impact that gives pleasure to the mind and heart. It is associated with the legitimate leisure-time of readers who are otherwise busily engaged in the world, probably a reference to the lifestyle of Shanghai merchants. There had been attempts in earlier Chinese literary theory to legitimize the novel by stressing its aesthetic function, but they had never been as straightforward and as to the point as this “preface.”¹⁰² Immediately thereafter the “preface” revalidates the lowly “entertainment” value of fiction by claiming that this fictional packaging can facilitate the inspiration of an entirely new set of readers with values and attitudes otherwise communicated only to the literati elite through dry canonical texts:

At the same time [the novel] can stimulate a chivalrous spirit in the reader when he hears about the vigor of righteous heroism, and can stimulate his empathy when he learns of sad events. It can make him loathe the evil when he hears about evil and appreciate goodness when he hears about goodness. This is what the ancients meant with their subtle hint regarding [the ability of literature to] “rouse one’s conscience [through examples of goodness] and control one’s propensity to dissipation [through examples of evil].” Finally, they are of great help in understanding the multitude of things [in the world] and in getting a clear idea of human relationships.¹⁰³

101 Ibid.

102 For critical comments to this effect, see Huang and Han, *Zhongguo lidai xiaoshuo lunzhu xuan*, 630.

103 Lishao Jushi, xu to *Yinghuan suoji*, 1.

又令人之聞義俠之風，則激其慷慨之氣，聞憂愁之事，則動其悽宛之情；聞惡則深惡，聞善則深善，斯則又古人啓發良心懲創逸志之微旨。且又爲明於庶物，察於人倫之大助也。

Through its emotional appeal the novel can inspire heroic righteousness, empathy with suffering, but also the loathing of evils such as dissipation, and the appreciation of goodness. It may even enhance knowledge and deepen one's understanding of human relations. It therefore has the potential to do exactly what earlier writers had claimed for poetry, the highest form of literature, and it can do more. The reference to "the ancients" used here is from Shao Can's 邵璨 (fl. 1475) *Xiangnang ji* 香囊記 (Records from a perfumed satchel):

Poetry is there to guide one's nature and one's emotions. What they approve of is able to mobilize man's benevolence, what they reject is able to discipline man's propensity to dissipation.¹⁰⁴

詩以道性情，善者可以感發人之善心，惡者可以懲創人之逸志。

By referencing the novel's potential to arouse righteous heroism and empathy, to broaden knowledge, and to sharpen judgment, the preface elevates the genre even above poetry. This potential of the novel is realized through its aesthetic and emotional effects. In the *Shenbao* announcement for *Xinxi xiantan*, quoted above, the particular potential of the novel was understood to have been realized in Western novels, and a "Western" authority was quoted for this. Here in the "preface" the point is made on a more general theoretical level using a rhetorical strategy. Thus, the dividing line is not strictly between Western and Chinese novels, but between novels that are pure dissipation and those that also help the reader improve.

The "preface" declares that although the teachings contained in the classics, biographies of worthy men, histories, and works by the philosophers are exceedingly valuable, they are read by only a small group of highly educated men. On the "middling talents" (*zhong cai* 中材) their message is lost.

When they [the "middling talents"] hear these [canonical writings], they doze off and don't want to listen, and this simply because their style is simple and straightforward without elaborate details, and their language is stern without the thrill of light banter. A novel, however, produces a spectacular sight by being decked out and ornamented, covering the full range of merry laughter and

104 Shao Can 邵璨, *Xiangnang ji* 香囊記 [Records from a perfumed satchel], in *Xuxiu Siku quanshu* 續修四庫全書 [Complete library of the Four Treasuries: continued and revised] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1995–1999) 1773:506.

angry curse. This prompts people to look more closely and listen attentively to it without realizing what they are doing. As its rushing flood is truly absorbing and the reader eagerly keeps up without tiring, its impact on people is by necessity effortlessly achieved, and inevitably its meaning sinks in deeply. Who is there to say that the novel is just “small talk”?¹⁰⁵

而中材則聞之而輒思臥，或並不慾聞；無他，其文筆簡當，無繁縟之觀也；其詞義嚴重，無談謔之趣也。若夫小說，則妝點雕飾，遂成奇觀；嬉笑怒罵，無非至文；使人注目視之，傾耳聽之而不覺；其津津甚有味，孳孳然而不厭也，則其感人也必易，而其入人也必深矣。誰謂小說為小道哉？！

We have here a blunt admission of the legitimacy of producing books for “middling talents,” also of the importance of the values and attitudes of people with enough education to read and write but who neither aspire to nor claim the status of scholar-officials. This argument about the advantages of the novel over the classics for the middling talents seemed to have had an impact as it was taken up by the late nineteenth-century political reformers Kang Youwei 康有為 (1858–1927) and Liang Qichao, the promoters of the “new novel.”¹⁰⁶

It would be misreading the argument if this statement were taken to mean that novels in general, or these new novels from the West, were simply subsidiaries to canonical teaching, sweetened for the consumption of people without scholarly interest. Since the Taiping War—and including the Taipings—much effort was made to redefine the canon as something essentially compatible with and supportive of a Western style of modernity.¹⁰⁷ *Night and Morning* meets the criteria spelled out in the “preface” and fits into this recast agenda. It re-crafts a traditional literary form for modern purposes in the same manner as the canonical works were reconfigured. Based on this extraordinarily lofty assessment of the novel’s potential, the “preface” offers a direct challenge to tradition: “Who is there to say that the novel is just ‘small talk’ [with no bearing on the grand issues and no commitment to proper values and attitudes]?”

There is, however, one hitch in all this: The novel does have great and positive potential, especially because it reaches the “middling talents,” but its emotional impact can also lead readers astray:

105 Lishao Jushi, xu to *Yinghuan suoji*, 2.

106 See Yeh, *The Chinese Political Novel*, 72–74.

107 See Rudolf Wagner, “The Zhouli as the Late Qing Path to the Future,” in *Statecraft and Classical Learning: The Rituals of Zhou in East Asian History*, ed. Benjamin A. Elman and Martin Kern (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 359–387.

A writer for this very reason should not regard the scenes he is writing as if they could just be what he personally wanted to say. The difference between the deviant and the correct should definitely not be muddled, nor the representation of good and evil confused.¹⁰⁸

雖然，執筆者于此，則不可視為筆墨燕煙雲，可以惟吾所欲言也。邪正之辨不可混，善惡之鑒不可淆。

Four “flaws” (*bi* 蔽) lurk here, for which famous Chinese examples are given:

If one pens only sentimental words about wind, flowers, snow, and moon, and writes only stories about boys and girls tenderly attached to each other, this will unavoidably come close to leading [readers] toward licentiousness. This is the first [potential] flaw [of a novel].¹⁰⁹

使徒作風花雪夜之詞，記兒女纏綿之事，則未免近於導淫，其蔽一也。

The remaining three include seductive and exciting descriptions of swashbuckling outlaws (as in the *Shuihu zhuan*), which might entice readers to become robbers; descriptions of cunning and treachery in loving detail (as in *Jin Ping Mei* 金瓶梅 [The golden lotus]¹¹⁰), which might prompt readers to become traitors; or filling a book with battle scenes and military stratagems (as in *Sanguo yanyi*), which might prompt readers toward “loving disturbances.” “As long as novels avoid these ‘four flaws,’” the “preface” declares, “they should be widely disseminated.”¹¹¹ A Chinese reader would have easily identified the types of novels referred to here.

The novel is treated here as a global genre, and indeed—probably not unbeknownst to the author of the “preface”—similar criticisms had been made in English, French, and German essays since the beginning of the nineteenth century. The “preface” ends with a discussion of *Night and Morning*:

As to the famous scholar from the West who produced this work, he made sure that the wealthy will not be able to snatch a good reputation, and that the good will not have to fish for fame. The true gentleman’s behavior is as he really is, while the fake

108 Lishao Jushi, xu to *Yinghuan suoji*, 2.

109 Ibid.

110 Xiaoxiaosheng 笑笑生, *Jin Ping Mei cihua* 金瓶梅詞話 [*Jin Ping Mei* interspersed with songs] (Beijing: Huayu jiaoxue chubanshe, 1993). Translated by David Tod Roy as *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, 5 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993-2013).

111 Lishao Jushi, xu to *Yinghuan suoji*, 2.

gentleman's true nature will eventually be unmasked. This is what is called "casting tripods to provide illustrations of [dangerous] beasts [as done by Yu the Great in antiquity]," and what is called "illuminating the water's depths by putting light on a rhinoceros horn."¹¹²

今西國名士，撰成此書，務使富者不得沽名，善者不必釣譽，真君子神彩如生，偽君子神情畢露，此則所謂鑄鼎象物者也，此則所謂照渚然犀者也。

Most importantly, we note a shift in the social status and identity of authorship of the novel. *Night and Morning* is not written by an anonymous writer who would rather not sign his own name to the work, or by an author who while signing his name to the work is known to have repeatedly failed the imperial examination. Here we have a novel by a learned man from the West. Two points are made: first, that Westerners also write novels, and second, that the authors are respected men of letters, and in this case that the writer is even a "famous person in the West" (*xiguo mingshi* 西國名士). From such a person a combination of learning and universally shared values may be reasonably expected, and the novel will provide a guided tour to the "customs and habits" of the people in what was the most successful and powerful nation at the time. The commentaries inserted into the translation highlighted modern features ranging from the postal system that also served as public transport to the ease and safety with which young women could travel. The underlying moral values that govern societies in the East and West are implicitly regarded by the author of the "preface" as being the same.

Accordingly, I have translated [this novel] section for section so as to make it into a *xiaoshuo* in Chinese. Entitled *Xinxi xiantan* (Idle talk mornings and nights), it will be serialized here [in this periodical]. It is certainly significant that this [novel] will broaden the information level of the Chinese lands, and provide details about the habits and customs of Europe. When you gentlemen are perusing this book, you should most certainly not equate it with a run-of-the-mill *pinghua* or a *xiaoshuo* of no benefit.¹¹³

因逐節翻譯之，成爲華字小說。書名昕夕閒談，陸續附刊。其所以廣中土者之見聞，所以記歐洲之風俗者，猶其淺焉者也？諸君子之閱是書者，尚勿等諸尋常之平話、無益之小說也可。

112 Ibid.

113 Ibid.

In short, the author of a novel has a duty to impart the correct attitudes and values to the reader. Moreover, the novel is the optimal medium through which to inform the reader about foreign societies and England above all. It thus becomes the modern counterpart of the bronze tripod cast by Yu in antiquity in order to familiarize his people with the beneficial spirits and the dangerous monsters lurking “out there,” and with the rhinoceros horn that, once lit, has the magical ability to penetrate the dark flow of state, society, and individual through time in the search for strange and precious elements of lasting value.¹¹⁴

Little attention is paid to the artistic quality of Bulwer-Lytton’s novel and the Chinese works beyond a few statements about their emotional appeal and rich content, but the literary comments attached to the first chapters of the translation of *Night and Morning* show great respect for the literary technique and refinement of the author.¹¹⁵ In a comment on the first chapter, for example, the critic highlighted with great appreciation the foreshadowing technique used to introduce the book’s key protagonist long before he actually appears. It is a technique he associates with the *Jieziyuan huazhuan* 芥子園畫傳 (Painting manual from the mustard seed garden),¹¹⁶ which teaches about painting a moon by surrounding an untouched circle of the silk or paper with clouds. The Western novel, in other words, uses artistry as sophisticated as the most refined aspects of Chinese culture.

When the novel was published in book form in 1875,¹¹⁷ the *Shenbao* ran a second announcement. This introduced two new conceptual points: By referring to “the devotion of a gentleman of valor” (*haoshi zhi fenghuai* 豪士之風懷) and “the affections of a beautiful lady” (*meiren zhi qingyi* 美人之情意), it introduced the notion of characters as social and literary types and narrative features as tropes. In the context of the original English novel, this typology had an added significance.

114 Both of these metaphors, the first from the *Zuozhuan* and the second from the *History of the Jin*, have become stock items in texts about the new functions of the novel during the late Qing. For the first, see the announcement for the *Rulin waishi* quoted below, for the second, see Moxi 摩西 [Huang Ren 黃人], “Fakanci” 發刊詞 [Inaugural introduction to our periodical], *Xiaoshuo lin* 1 (1907): 1–3.

115 While an appreciation of these qualities was widely shared in England at the time, his writing skills are hardly appreciated by contemporary literary historians, for whom Bulwer-Lytton survives primarily as the man who coined the clichéd opening phrase “It was a dark and stormy night” and whose name now lends itself to an annual award for the worst opening sentence of a novel. For the Bulwer-Lytton Fiction Contest, see <http://www.bulwer-lytton.com/> [Accessed on 08. July 2015]. The creator of this contest, Prof. Scott Rice, has compiled several volumes of the most dreadful submissions.

116 Wang Gai, *Jieziyuan hua zhuan* [Painting manual from the mustard seed garden] (Beijing: Zhongguo shudian, 1999).

117 *Xinxi xiantan* 听夕閒談 [Idle talk mornings and nights] (Shanghai: Shenbaoguan, 1875).

Xinxi xiantan complete edition on sale:

Xinxi xiantan, which we have just published, is the translation of an English novel. It vividly describes the devotion of a gentleman of valor and narrates in detail the affections of a beautiful lady; it sketches the mountains and rivers, pavilions and terraces, and records the [details down to the] shapes of insects and fishes, grass and trees. Without exception, every sort and type of [characters, scenes, and objects presented in the novel] is completely new, and all are so vivid and immediate that they seem to come alive.

You honorable gentlemen near and far are likely to desire to be the first to read the book and to want to view it in its entirety. The book has now been bound, and will be issued in three volumes. To retrieve the cost of paper and labor, the price is four *jiao*.

The book will be on sale on the seventh of this month without delay. If you wish to patronize us by reading the book, please purchase it from us directly or from our *Shenbao* salesmen. If you reside in other cities, it is sold by our newspaper's salesmen. Announced herewith by our company.¹¹⁸

听夕閒談全帙出售

啟者：本館前所排印之听夕閒談一書，係從英國小說而譯出者也。其間描摹豪士之風懷，縷述美人之情意，寫山水亭臺之狀，記蟲魚草木之形，無不色色俱新，栩栩欲活；是以遠近諸君，爭願得以先觀為快，并欲窺其全豹。茲已裝訂成冊。計每部三本收回紙價工洋四角。準於月之初七日出書。如家賜閱，祈向本館或賣申報人購取。若在外埠，則仍專關賣報者出售也。此佈本館告白

The terms “gentleman of valor” and “beautiful lady” clearly echo the Chinese motif of the “talented scholar and beautiful lady,” but the emphasis here is on social types—that is, the particular not the universal. The novel is not about generic types, rather, it is about the “devotion” of a particular man and the “affections” of a lady. It is the interaction between the specific attitudes of these protagonists that generates the novel’s plot. They are not merely the cogs and wheels of the plot machine. The second point is the value of the new and highly specific in the narrative (“all are so vivid and immediate that they seem to come alive”) as positive characteristics of this novel. The two points have already been noted in the *Shumu*, and have some echo in Chinese “brush notes,” narratives which, while not developing tropes and social types, do emphasize specificity and concreteness.

118 “Xinxi xiantan quanzhi chushou” 听夕閒談全帙出售 [*Idle Talk Mornings and Nights* complete edition on sale]. *Shenbao*, September 3, 1875.

The announcements and the preface for *Xinxi xiantan* suggest that the considerations guiding this young publishing house under its foreign manager in its selection of works of fiction for publication were far more complex than simple profit concerns.¹¹⁹ The aesthetics of the novel in this assessment are characterized by an emphasis on contemporary life, a concrete and realistic narrative, and a vivid and lively rendering of scenes and characters. While no attempt was made to draw a sharp line between traditional and modern, foreign and Chinese novels, the aesthetic criteria clearly signaled a modern sensibility that was linked to the development of new media, such as the newspaper. The language used in the announcements for the Chinese novels follows in exactly these tracks. In other words, the Shenbaoguan did not change tack when it switched to the publication of rare older and unpublished new Chinese novels. Rather, it set out to discover an indigenous source that fit the sensibilities of the new and modern environment into which it was projecting its publications.

The aesthetic criteria of the Shenbaoguan's novel publishing

Having outlined the conceptual framework of the Shenbaoguan book publications as well as some of the material, cultural, social, and marketing features that helped to reposition the novel within the literary and social hierarchy, we will now turn to the core issue of this study, the aesthetic thinking that guided the selection of novels for publication and the possible transcultural dimensions in which it was embedded. Our main source for this will be the introductions of these titles given in the *Shenbao* "announcements" of newly published books.¹²⁰ A close study of these announcements has convinced me that a reading strategy that reduces them to marketing tools is ahistorical and discards what is one of our only extant primary sources for early aesthetic reflections on the modern novel in Chinese.

119 It might be noted that the "for profit only" argument does have its uses. While formally agreeing with the PRC master narrative about the motives guiding foreign-owned media during the late Qing, it also allows for study of the unintended side benefits. Marx provided the argumentative model with a statement that has been much quoted in Shanghai studies and according to which one had to admit that, all the evils of British colonialism notwithstanding, it greatly contributed to the development of productive forces in India.

120 Until recently, these announcements have been read as simple advertisements, which signal marketing efforts in their language and emphasis but certainly do not qualify as *bona fide* sources for an aesthetic agenda. Only Pan Jianguo 潘建國, "You *Shenbao* suo kan san xiaoshuo zhengwen qishi: kan wan Qing xiaoshuo guannian de yanjin" 由申報所刊三小說徵文啓事：看晚清小說觀念的演進 [Viewing the evolution of the concept of the novel from three advertisement for novels published in the *Shenbao*], *Ming Qing xiaoshuo yanjiu* 1 (2002): 43–51, has completed a qualitative analysis of some of them. Otherwise, when dealt with at all, these sources are seen purely within the context of the development of advertisements for novels. See Liu, "Chatu yu wan Qing xiaoshuo de chuanbo," 120–122, and Liu, "Wan Qing xiaoshuo guanggao yanjiu."

Entitled *gaobai*, “announcement,” or *benguan gaobai* 本館告白, “announcement from our company,” these communications, which were often signed by Major, were printed on the first page of the *Shenbao* preceding the editorial. (figs. 14 a–b) Forming the basis for the paper’s daily communication with its readers, they would often contain an apology for the delay of the paper’s delivery on the previous day, a request that readers suggest titles worth publishing, a mention of Major’s search for a good copy of a specific title, or an announcement of the imminent publication of a book with a short introduction and critique of the work’s literary style followed by the title, price, and exact date of publication. These Shenbaoguan announcements were an innovation that made full use of the advantage of having books, journals, image reproductions, and the newspaper published by the same house. They were primarily an instrument of informing, as well as keeping alive and up-to-date, a community of relatively educated men and women who would hopefully consider this “their” publishing house and would be motivated to contribute.¹²¹ None of the publishers in London, Leipzig, Paris, or Edinburgh could rely on a similar combination of marketing tools.¹²²

Seen in the context of late Qing book publishing and the novel’s low status, which was further highlighted by the negative treatment of the genre in the court’s edicts, these announcements are remarkable in themselves. Focusing

121 This aspect has been addressed in Wen Juan 文娟, “Shilun zaoqi Shenbaoguan de xiaoshuo chuban shiye jiqi yingxiang” 試論早期申報館的小說出版事業及其影響 [A tentative assessment of the novel publishing activities of the early Shenbaoguan and its influence], *Zhongwen zixue zhidao* 3 (2007): 34. For details on the interaction with this “Shenbaoguan community,” see the section “Novel Publishing as a Collective Endeavor: Mobilizing the Shenbaoguan Community” further down in the present study.

122 Advertising played an important role as a source of income for the *Shenbao*, and from early on the *Shenbao* printed ads from competing publishers (while rigorously refusing ads for opium). Advertisements and announcements for book publication in the nineteenth-century British press were rather matter of fact and straightforward, as compared, for example, to advertisements for medicine. Although there were journals specializing in literary and art listings, which gave a slightly more detailed account of the advertised book’s content, these were not typical. Nineteenth-century overviews of the very young history of advertising in the British Isles have a lot to say about frivolous advertising, but this mostly refers to medical products. See “Cesar Birotteau” (an article referred to at the top of the pages as “The Advertisement System”), *The Edinburgh Review*; or, *Critical Journal* 77, no. 155 (February 1843): 2-43; and “Scottish Newspaper Directory and Guide to Advertisers,” *The Quarterly Review* (1855): 185. If these articles refer to book advertisements at all, it is to authors who pen anonymous reviews of their own books. At the same time, there was a well-developed book-review culture in England, one with strong and rigorous intellectual standards. Since the eighteenth century, critiques of books were published in book review journals such as *The Edinburgh Review*. Thus, it would seem that the prevailing practice, at least in the nineteenth century, was that advertisement for new books and book reviews were regarded as two separate categories. For a general history of British advertising, see E. A. Turner, *The Shocking History of Advertising* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965), 27. For a study on advertising in the women’s press, see Margaret Beetham, *A Magazine of Her Own? Domesticity and Desire in the “Woman’s Magazine,” 1800–1914* (London: Routledge, 1996), 142–154.

大清光緒二十五年五月廿七日

申報

日 八 十

二 拜 禮 拜 日 一 初 五 年 七 十 七 百 八 千 一 第

本館告白

本館自開辦以來，承蒙諸君光顧，不勝感荷。茲因本館所售各書，均已發售，特此聲明。如有欲購者，請向本館接洽。本館地址：上海英大馬路。

新書出售

本館現有新書出售，內容豐富，包括歷史、地理、文學、科學等各個領域。歡迎各界人士踴躍購買。詳情請洽本館。

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Fig. 14a: "Xinshu chushou" 新書出售 (New books for sale) [signed] Bengan gaobai 本館告白 (Advertisement from our company). Shenbao, May 1, 1877, 1.

大清光緒二十五年五月廿七日

申報

日 十 三

二 拜 禮 拜 日 一 初 五 年 七 十 七 百 八 千 一 第

本館告白

本館現有新書發售，內容精彩，歡迎各界人士踴躍購買。詳情請洽本館。

書目發售

本館現有新書發售，內容精彩，歡迎各界人士踴躍購買。詳情請洽本館。

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Fig. 14b: "Shumufashou" 書目發售 (Publication and sale of [the Shenbaoguan] book catalog) [signed] Zunwenge zhu shou bu 尊文閣主手佈 (Announced by Zunwenge zhu [Ernest Major] personally). Shenbao, July 10, 1877.

on the writing style and the aesthetics of the narrative rather than on the content of the novel, they reveal a light touch that appealed to a wider audience. They allow us to extract the literary values emphasized by the company as its criteria for modern literary merit, which would in turn form the basis for upgrading the cultural and social standing of this genre altogether.

The *Shenbao* announcements of newly printed novels were the first public discussion of most of these works. Unlike the entries in the Shenbaoguan book catalogs, they focused on literary merit rather than on content. From these *Shenbao* announcements as well as the language used in requests to readers to suggest novels for publishing or to help locate rare copies, one can extract the company's views on the kind of novels it deemed worthy of publication.

The Shenbaoguan “announcements” were separated from the advertisements by their privileged place in the paper, and they did not follow the rhetorical formulae found, for example, in the medicine ads and occasionally even in book ads by other publishers on the *Shenbao*'s advertisement pages (fig. 5 and Figs. 14a–b).¹²³

There is no intrinsic contradiction in reading these announcements as a form of advertisement for books printed by the company and reading them as a communication by the company about the literary merits and entertainment value of these books. Even if one were to assume that from the company's perspective we are dealing with a marketing strategy, when seen in the context of the novel's low social status and the severe and repeated court injunctions against such publications, these announcements take on their own broader cultural and social meaning; all the more since they were published in what, by any standards, was the prime space in the paper. The use of this page for the announcement of novels claims an elevated space for them and makes them an organic part of the communication in a paper that banked on establishing its reliability and probity with readers.

123 Late Ming and early Qing advertisements for books, located in the back pages of other books by the same publisher, claiming it was a “Capital edition” (*Jing ben* 京本), was “carefully edited” (*jingxin xiaozheng* 精心校正), or “based on the personal copy” (*shouyue ben* 手閱本) of some famous person, relate more closely to the advertisements in the end of the *Shenbao* than to the announcements in the beginning. The space where this form of book advertisement appeared was known, among many other terms, as “paiji” 牌記. See Miao, *Mingdai chuban shigao*, 293; and Fu Xianglong 傅湘龍, “Wan Ming, wan Qing shangye yunzuo yu xiaoshuo kanyin xingtai zhi bianqian—yi wan Ming Jianyang shufang he wan Qing Shanghai shuju wei zhongxin” 晚明, 晚清商業運作與小說刊印形態之變遷—以晚明建陽書坊和晚清上海書局為中心 [Late Ming and late Qing commercial operations and the transformations in the situation of fiction printing—with a focus on the late Ming Jianyang Bookstore and late Qing Shanghai Bookstore], *Zhongguo wenxue yanjiu* 4 (2009): 89. Apart from this, these ads did not appear in a newspaper's daily communication with its readers where the credibility of the paper itself enhanced that of the announcement. This was not the case even for the ads in the end of the *Shenbao*, which, as everybody knew, were paid for.

Although obviously designed to promote the novels, the announcements were unique since they came in the form of literary discussions that often included critical assessments and comparisons with other works. In this study, we shall read them as the first public entry into these novels and as part of a staggered series of literary paratexts, with the entries in the *Shumu* and its sequel *Shumu xuji* forming the second, and the actual prefaces, “editorial principles” (*fanli* 凡例), and comments in the published novels forming the third layer.¹²⁴

As mentioned earlier, Cai Erkang emphasized Major’s role in the selection of the books—including novels—that were eventually published by the company. His contemporaries often remarked with admiration on Major’s passion for rediscovering Chinese books for publication and with gratitude on his willingness to publish new works. The famous late Qing writer and journalist Wang Tao 王韜 (1828–1897) wrote, for instance:

1875: the Master of the Cherish the News Studio [E. Major] has a commitment to find and compile books with ‘records of the strange’ [that is, fiction, CY].¹²⁵

歲乙亥，尊聞閣主人有搜輯志異書之志。

The book announcements in the *Shenbao* seem to indicate that Major based his decisions on a personal perusal of the manuscripts.¹²⁶

124 The authorship of the announcements is not easy to determine as many are signed simply “Announcement from our company.” From the outset, however, many announcements, including announcements for novels, were signed by Ernest Major under his pen name Shenbaoguan zhuren. Examples are *Huifang lu* 繪芳錄 (Record of make-up and perfume) (February 15, 1880); *Bisheng hua* 筆生花 (The literate flower) (January 29, 1882); *Shuihu zhuan* 水滸傳 (*Water Margin*) (September 11, 1883); *Zhengxu Shuihu zhuan* 正續水滸傳 (*Water Margin*, original work plus sequel) (September 12, 1883); *Fengyue meng* 風月夢 (Dreams of the wind and the moon) (September 25, 1883); *Sanbao taijian Xiyang ji* 三寶太監西洋記 (The record of the eunuch [Zheng He’s] journey to the Western Seas) (December 11, 1883); and *Honglou fumeng* 紅樓復夢 (Return of *The Dream of the Red Chamber*) (May 14, 1884).

125 Wang Tao, “*Dunku lanyan xu*” 通窟譚言序 [Preface to *Dunku lanyan*], in *Zhongguo lidai xiaoshuo xuba ji* 中國歷代小說序跋集 [Collection of pre- and postfaces throughout the ages], ed. Ding Xigen 丁錫根 (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1996), 2:623.

126 An example of one such signed announcement is Shenbaoguan zhuren 申報館主人, “Xinyin *Fengyue meng* chushou” 新印風月夢出售 [Newly printed *Dreams of the Wind and the Moon* on sale], *Shenbao*, September 25, 1883. While there is good evidence for Major’s hands-on involvement, this can only be truly established by research that maps his role in the way the Shenbaoguan’s products were selected, produced, distributed, and circulated. We shall therefore refer in this study to the Shenbaoguan’s novel publishing enterprise as being under the leadership of Major in general, but will refer to his personal role in promoting the novel only when using materials containing his personal signatures Zunwenge zhuren or Shenbaoguan zhuren.

As we have seen, the Shenbaoguan switched strategy in its novel publishing at an early date, moving to publish novels written in Chinese and never returning to its earlier focus on translations. We can see a similar process unfold a few years later. Assuming that there was no tradition of news painting in China, Major opted initially for reprints of Western news paintings (to which Chinese captions were added) that he thought might be of interest in China. Once he discovered the illustrated prints sold on the street during the early days of the Franco-Chinese War in 1884, he switched strategy, hired some of the people involved in making these prints, started the *Dianshizhai huabao*, and discontinued using Western illustrations altogether.¹²⁷ Was this switch to Chinese novels accompanied by a change in selection criteria, or did the Shenbaoguan search out Chinese works that fit the mold it had initially assumed could only be filled by Western works?

From the outset the company seems to have kept to a rather consistent general baseline regarding the kinds of novel it intended to publish, whether these were translations or original Chinese works: They should not contradict basic social values and should be entertaining in their capacity to generate wonder. Thus far, it confirmed the criteria for the quality of a novel developed by late Ming and early Qing commentators. The Shenbaoguan would publish neither boring edifications in literary costume nor sexually explicit novels. Incidentally, these were the same criteria that dominated the English discussion at the time.¹²⁸

But the company not only paid attention to ethical sensibilities and the interest of their readers to be entertained, it also followed a rather clear set of aesthetic criteria. In the very first announcement in the *Shenbao* on November 13, 1874, through which the company sought manuscripts for publication, these criteria are already fully formulated.

Our company is currently hunting for new and extraordinary, captivating and unusual, out-of-the-way as well as subtle and elegant books with the intention to publish them in due sequence to form a collection. But our familiarity [with such works] is limited since we have only a few of them in our book collection. If there are family heirlooms and rare manuscripts in the [holdings] of esteemed book collectors and luckily you do not want to keep

127 See Wagner, "Joining the Global Imaginaire," 114, 132–134.

128 See for example, "Early Criticism of the Victorian Novel from James Oliphant to David Cecil," chapter 1 in *The Victorian Novel: A Guide to Criticism*, ed. Francis O'Gorman (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2008).

them locked away but are willing to share them across the land, send them wrapped to our company and we will directly reproduce them in printing. The original copy we will treat with the utmost care without doing any damage to it and once the work is done, we will send it back packaged and with the proper address, and we will add as a gift new [printed copies of your] book which you might use as gifts for your friends' perusal. We eagerly look forward to your esteemed checking your bookshelves and sending such [treasures] to our mailbox, this truly is our hope. Announcement from our company.¹²⁹

本館現在搜求新奇艷異幽僻瑰瑋之書，擬各陸續擺印彙作叢書。惟見聞有限藏弄不多。如有藏書之家珍度秘本者，幸勿寶之帳中概允公之海內函達本館，即當代為印行，其原本自必珍惜寶護，不使傷損。竣工後封識繳還，并可奉贈新書，以為分貽親友之用也。專望檢之鄰架，命彼郵筒。實為切盼 本館告白。

This was a strategic move. On the same day, directly after this first announcement was made, there came a second. While the first searched for books, primarily works of fiction, of which no printed editions were known, the second announcement looked for books that had once been in print but were now unavailable. It contained a list of titles the company was searching for and offered to buy them for a good price. This innovation was the polar opposite of the prevailing practice where the author paid the publisher for having a book published. The first response came just eleven days later when three different manuscripts were offered, and on January 22, 1875, Major answered and accepted Mr. Mu Tao's 慕陶 offer to provide a sequel to Pu Songling's 蒲松齡 famous collection of stories, the *Liaozhai zhiyi* 聊齋志異 (Selection of strange tales from the Liaozhai Studio), for publication.¹³⁰ Evidently the Shenbaoguan was successful in mobilizing its readers to join the enterprise of making lost works publicly available. The company continually emphasized and praised the willingness of collectors to share their goods with the world.¹³¹

Of the adjective pairs “new and stunning, captivating and extraordinary, out-of-the-way as well as subtle and elegant” the first two were most relevant

129 “Announcement,” *Shenbao*, November 13, 1874.

130 Zunwenge zhuren 尊聞閣主人, “Da Xileng tixiaguan zhu shu” 答西冷梯霞館主書 [Answering the letter from the Master of the Tixiaguan in Xileng], *Shenbao*, January 22, 1875.

131 The importance of these announcements for mobilizing the readership has been noted by Wen, “Shilun zaoqi Shenbaoguan,” 34.

for novels.¹³² Combined with these were the notions of the “new” (*xin* 新) and the “lively” (*huo* 活). Together these combinations formed the terms most frequently used in the *Shenbao* announcements of newly published novels. We have already seen that the *Shumu* gave the prefix “new,” *xin*, to the *shuobu* category to mark the particular character of the Shenbaoguan novels: These works should be “new and extraordinary” (*xinqi* 新奇); “captivating and unusual” (*yanyi* 艷異); “out-of-the-way” (*youpi* 幽僻); and “subtle and elegant” (*guiwei* 瑰璋).

The 1875 announcement for the book edition of the Bulwer-Lytton translation *Xinxi xiantan* praised its ability to present “every sort and type of characters, scenes and objects in a completely fresh and new way, and evoke them in a vivid and immediate manner to the point of their seeming to be alive.” (*Sese juxin, xuxu yu huo* 色色俱新，栩栩欲活).¹³³ In the 1877 announcement for *Nü caizi* 女才子 (Women of genius)¹³⁴, these two concepts were developed to include the reader. The announcement reads:

Women of Genius is a work by Yuanhu yanshui sanren 鴛湖煙水散人. It comes in twelve chapters, with each chapter focusing on the story of one person. These are Feng Xiaoqing 馮小青, Yang Biqu 楊碧秋, Zhang Xiaolian 張小蓮, Cui Shu 崔淑, Zhang Wanxiang 張晚香, Chen Xiaru 陳霞如, Lu Yunqing 盧雲卿, Hao Xiang'e 郝湘俄, Wang Yan 王琰, Xie Cai 謝彩, Zheng Yuqi 鄭玉姬, and Song Wan 宋琬.¹³⁵ The different [chapters] focus on telling each woman's character, describing her looks, and recording the events in her life. Their fragrance wafts in the air, and their image comes alive under the [writer's] brush. The biographies of these women select their most outstanding qualities and describe them. [Thus] for the reader, it is as though [he is actually] entering into the fragrant kingdom [of

132 The notion that the extraordinary or *qi* represents the highest achievement of novel creation began with Yuan Hongdao 袁宏道 (1568–1610), Li Zhi 李贄 (1527–1602), and Jin Shengtan 金聖嘆 (1608–1661) in the Ming period; even though traditional novels often stated in their prefaces the claim to educate the reader as to what NOT to do, the notion that the novel could be a tool for moral education was first clearly articulated by commentators in the Ming period; see Chen Hong 陳洪, *Zhongguo xiaoshuo lilun shi* 中國小說理論史 [A history of theories of the Chinese novel] (Hefei: Anhui wenyi chubanshe, 1992), 55–56; and Huang and Han, *Zhongguo lidai xiaoshuo lunzhu xuan*, 628–630.

133 *Shenbao*, September 3, 1875.

134 Yanhu Yanshui Sanren 鴛湖煙水散人 [Xu Zhen 徐震], *Nü caizi (shu)* 女才子 (書) [Women of Genius] (Shanghai: Shenbaoguan, 1877).

135 Many works have been attributed to this author. *Nü caizi* consists of biographies of outstanding literati women from the Ming dynasty. Qing editions appeared under the new title *Guixiu yingcai zhuan* 閩秀英才傳 [Biographies of outstanding women talents].

the beauties], and visiting the range of jade mountains. Even after the book is closed, its impressions will linger.

There has never been a print edition of this work, which is why it was not passed on. After a special search our publishing house discovered [the manuscript] in a colleague's¹³⁶ house and now publishes it in the [deluxe] format modeled on the juzhen ban editions. In ten days we will be able to complete the printing. The work is carefully edited and neatly bound, further delighting the eyes.¹³⁷

女才子一書為鴛湖煙水散人所著。共十二卷。每卷述一人之事。計馮小青，楊碧秋，張小蓮，崔淑，張晚香，陳霞如，盧雲鄉，郝湘娥，王琰，謝彩，鄭玉姬，宋琬，計十有二人。皆敘其性情，述其容貌，記其事實。生香活色，湧現豪端。且諸人生平之撰著，擇其尤者，悉載於篇。閱之者，如入衆香國，如遊羣玉山。雖掩卷而餘芬未散也。特向無刊板，故不傳於世。本館特從友人處覓得，仿聚珍板排印之。十日之間便已竣事。且校對詳細，裝訂整齊，尤可悅目。

The vivid writing will engage the reader so that he feels he is experiencing in person the fascinating world of these women who would otherwise remain invisible in the “inner quarters.” The novel’s capacity to “bring to life” denotes a literary quality that makes reading it a pleasure. Committed to the cultured entertainment of its readers, the Shenbaoguan spared no effort in locating this kind of treasure and publishing it in style.

Wit and liveliness were also celebrated in the 1880 announcement for *Hou Xiyou ji* 後西遊記 (Sequel to *Journey to the West*). It implicitly places the *Xiyou ji* in the category of the “allegorical novel” (*yuyan* 寓言). This makes a reading-guide necessary, and it offers this sequel as a witty and entertaining key to the mysteries of the original:

The *Xiyou ji* essentially belongs to the [category of] allegory. The commentators have defined it as a work for self-cultivation and the enlightenment of one’s mind. This indeed shows depth of understanding. However, although [these commentators] have understood the true warp [of this work], their explanations are

136 “Colleague” or “friend,” (*you* 友), is the term used in *Shenbao* announcements to refer to people who were in some way loosely associated with the publishing house without being employed there. Appeals would, for example, be directed to “friends” to recommend someone in another town as a correspondent for the paper.

137 “Fashou *Nü caizi gaobai*” 發售女才子告白 [Advertisement for *Women of Genius* going on sale], *Shenbao*, October 22, 1877.

insufficient for an understanding of the work's subtle purport regarding the former heaven, the previous invisible existence of all things. Neither are they able to fathom the true interpretation of the visible state of existence. For these reasons, this *Hou Xiyou ji* has been written. It is written in a manner akin to jokes and curses; [the author] uses his humorous brush to act as a rod to arouse one from one's follies. This has always been a method to wake up the dumb and foolish.

As the [existing] woodblock prints of this work are barely legible and full of mistakes, our company has reset them with movable type and printed them again. Proofreading has been handled with great care, and fine workmanship marks the binding. The work will go on sale on the tenth day of this month.¹³⁸

西游記一書，本屬寓言。說者謂其養性明心，頗有解悟。然而真經雖獲，索解無從尋妙義於先天，究莫識真詮於後起。此後西遊記一書，所由作也。記中所載類近嬉笑怒罵；以詼諧之筆為捧喝之經。亦未始非喚醒痴愚之一法也。是書坊本，漫漶兼多訛誤。本館倣用活字板，重為排印，校對詳慎，裝訂精工，定於本月初十日出書。

Without great fanfare, this announcement offers key terms for the definition of allegory, the purpose of allegorical novels, and the function of literary commentaries for such works—namely, to decipher the “subtle purport” (*miaoyi* 妙義) and “true interpretation” (*zhenquan* 真詮), hidden in these allegories. In an ironic twist, it then offers a novel that omits this type of ponderous commentary in favor of the deft language and imagery of jokes and curses, which manages to shed a much clearer light on the work's “subtle purport,” quite apart from bringing it close in tone to the *Journey of the West* itself.

The announcement for one of these novels goes to extremes in praise of its qualities: “The extraordinary twists of the imagination and the subtle turns in the diction of this book are just about uncanny.” (*Shi shu shexiang zhi qi, cuoci zhi miao, ji bu keyi siyi* 是書設想之奇，措詞之妙，幾不可以思議)¹³⁹ Another example is the 1875 announcement for *Kuaixin bian* 快心編 (The teaser, or literally, A book that makes your heart go pitter-patter). In addition

138 “*Hou Xiyou ji chushou*” 後西遊記出售 [*Sequel to “Journey to the West”* goes on sale], *Shenbao*, December 14, 1880. For a modern edition with Tianhua Caizi's comments, see *Hou Xiyou ji* 後西遊記 [*Sequel to Journey to the West*] (Shenyang: Chunfeng wenyi chubanshe, 1985).

139 An example is “*Ying tan chushou*” 影談出售 [*Shadow Talk* goes on sale], *Shenbao*, December 28, 1876.

to the title that is its own advertisement, it is praised as “delightfully new and extraordinary” (*xinqi kexi* 新奇可喜). The rumor that this work existed led the Shenbaoguan to extraordinary effort and expense to locate a copy:

Our publishing house has recently succeeded in purchasing a complete [copy of] *The Teaser* from Japan. The work consists of sixteen volumes. It is a Chinese work that found its way to Japan. However, [in China] the novel’s printing blocks were destroyed long ago, and there were no reprints [recently made] in Japan. For this reason, we have made special efforts to bring [this work] back, have reduced it to a ten-volume format, and printed it with movable type. The thirty-two chapters of the novel are divided into three sections. The stories described in this book are all delightfully new and extraordinary; it almost makes one slap the table and cry out in admiration. It is a work, furthermore, without obscene language, and thus is suitable reading for everyone.¹⁴⁰

本館近從東洋購得快心編，全帙計共十六冊。原自中國流傳而去，但其板早經毀失，即東洋亦無翻刻，故特携回，用活字版排印縮成十本。按此書分上，中，下三集，共三十二回。所述之事，俱新奇可喜，幾令人拍案叫絕，而又無淫亂等詞，是以無論何人均可披閱。

The Teaser is in fact quite a lurid adventure story, complete with killing, revenge, sworn brotherhood, chance meeting, kidnapping, and love at first sight. The anonymous author of the preface to the original work claims that this novel “could rid the reader of anger and bitterness and soothe all indignation [toward this unjust world]” (足以破忿悶而抒不平).¹⁴¹ According to the “Editorial Principles” (*fanli* 凡例), printed before the text of the novel proper, it excelled in “realistic depictions” (*bizhen* 逼真) of the “ways of the world” (*shiqing* 世情), without falling into the conventional and sentimental “talented scholar and beauty” trope. While the novel “does discuss the world at large, it avoids the common practice of long and empty diatribes; it is a novel, in short, to evoke the ways of the world like a mirror, for the innocents to be vindicated and for the wicked to be ashamed.”¹⁴² The Shenbaoguan added its

140 “Xinyin *Kuaixin bian chushou*” 新印快心編出售 [Newly printed *The Teaser* goes on sale], *Shenbao*, December 11, 1875. The 1875 Shenbaoguan book edition is *Tianhua Caizi* 天花才子, *Kuaixin bian chuji* 快心編初集 [The teaser, part one]. The copy in my hand, according to the title page, is a Shenbaoguan reprint, no date of publication.

141 “Yuan xu” 原序 [Original preface] to *Kuaixin bian chuji* 快心編初集 [The teaser, part one] by *Tianhua Caizi* 天花才子, ed. Zhu Meishu 朱眉叔, commentary by Siqiao Jushi 四橋居士 (Shanghai: Shenbaoguan, 1875).

142 *Tianhua Caizi* 天花才子, “Fanli” 凡例 [Editorial principles], in *Kuai xin bian chuji*.

own new and extraordinary element to the story by tracking down a copy in Japan and repatriating this delightful work that nevertheless did not fail to “vindicate the innocents” and “make the wicked ashamed.”

Obviously, these notions, which were so pervasive in the novel announcements, were not used for works such as the *Jingji zuangu* 經籍纂故 (Reference sources for classical studies), Ruan Yuan’s 阮元 (1764–1849) supremely dry reference work collecting word glosses by earlier commentators, which was very useful for textual criticism (and was also published by the Shenbaoguan).¹⁴³ After the Taiping onslaught on “devilish” books, reference works like this probably did not need glowing words to be attractive to scholars and students preparing for their examinations or officials trying to revive scholarship.¹⁴⁴ But while the company was very much committed to publishing books of high learning, its unabashed emphasis on the entertainment quality of the works it sought for publication shows that it did not share the pretentious disdain for such works that was common, especially during the Qing period. The Shenbaoguan calculated that even buyers of the *Jingji zuangu* would go for such works if they came with the proper status and cultural packaging.

These criteria suggest a positive appreciation and welcoming of the fast-changing new urban lifestyle and its emerging values together with a rejection of the sedate, stable, and familiar attitudes and patterns of life depicted in most earlier works of fiction. In literary terms, this emphasis on the “extraordinary”, *qi* 奇, rejects the long, often tediously predictable romances between talented scholars and beauties that had dominated the scene since the eighteenth century.¹⁴⁵

The second aesthetic criterion for Shenbaoguan novel publishing was *jishi* 紀實, what we have called above “realistic” in the sense either of a reference to actual events and circumstances, or a realistic mode of description that could also be used

143 Ruan Yuan 阮元, *Jingji zuangu* 經籍纂故 [Reference sources for classical studies] (Shanghai: Shenbaoguan, 1884). The publication was the result of a two-year long search.

144 The high number of submissions for Shenbaoguan volumes with innovative model essays to help in the preparations for the imperial examinations, *Wenyuan jinghua* 文苑菁華 (Lush flowers from the garden of literature) (1873) and *Jingyi xinyu* 經藝新畚 (Newly retrieved examination essays on the classics) (1875), shows the degree of acceptance the company enjoyed even in this culturally sensitive field and among men heading for official careers.

145 As Qiu Jiangning 邱江寧 pointed out, this was the prevailing genre in novel publishing during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, but it had dwindled by the late Qing. See Qiu Jiangning 邱江寧, *Qingchu caizi jieren xiaoshuo xushu moshi yanjiu* 清初才子佳人小說敘述模式研究 [A study on the narrative structure of the *Talented Young Man and Beautiful Lady* novel of the early Qing period] (Shanghai: Shanghai sanlian chubanshe, 2005), 6.

for invented and fantastic persons and occurrences.¹⁴⁶ This emphasis dominated much of the Shenbaoguan publishing program right down to the biographies of courtesans, the travelogues, the news paintings with their riots, fires, monsters, and freak births in the *Dianshizhai huabao*, the paintings selected for lithography reproduction, and the company's reprint of the gigantic imperial *Gujin tushu jicheng* 古今圖書集成 (Compilation of old and new illustrated books), with its many technical illustrations.

“Records of real events” (*jishi*) focus on all things factual and experienced or investigated personally.¹⁴⁷ In the Shenbaoguan context, this included the “realities” of war, social and political life, or travel and leisure. It is an emphasis that literary texts based on personal experiences shared with newspaper reporting. In that sense, recording the real and illustrating the specific both draw their interest from dealing with things that are stunning and extraordinary, that is, *qi*. This is illustrated, for example, in the announcement for the *Yingchuang yicao* 螢窗異草 (Curious jottings from the studio lit by fireflies):

This is a book where the real is so extraordinary and fantastic, and the literary style is so graceful and elegant, that it is an outstanding literary work of the *shuobu* [category] that is on a par with the *Liaozhai* [collection of stories by Pu Songling].¹⁴⁸

此書事實之奇幻，文筆之娟秀，與《聊齋》相彷彿，說部中之佳構也。

The real can be so fantastic that it seems illusionary. Furthermore, the “real” is only of interest if it *is* fantastic.

The emphasis on the “real” and the “realistic” is evident, for example, in the 1874 *Shenbao* announcement for *Rulin waishi*:

This novel draws an exact copy of the ways of the world and people's emotions; [the images it captures] are vivid and in exact likeness; all [the characters and scenes] come alive from the tip of the brush. For example, the manners of the country-gentry; inside scenes at government offices; the ignorance of famous literati; the

146 For a detailed discussion of realism and modern Chinese literature, see Marston Anderson, *The Limits of Realism: Chinese Fiction in the Revolutionary Period* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

147 In using the terms “new,” “lively,” “real,” and “realistic,” we shall follow their historical usage in the *Shumu*, the paratexts, and the announcements rather than in modern literary scholarship.

148 “Xinshu chushou” 新書出售 [New book on sale], *Shenbao*, August 17, 1876.

stupidity of scholars; the spleens of sons of dukes and rich officials; the slang of prostitutes and parasites; and the antics of roaming strong-men. [This novel] truly resembles the vivid images of the world's [monsters] cast [as a warning] upon the great tripods [made by Yü the Great]¹⁴⁹ and will make one split one's sides and dissolve in laughter. Best of all, it is also suitable for both the refined and the rustic reader while being fully appreciated by all of them.¹⁵⁰

其書中描摹世態人情，無不窮形盡相，活現毫端。如鄉紳之習氣，衙署之情形，名士之陋，書生之猷，公子闖官之脾氣，娼伎幫閒之口吻，遊方把勢之身段，真屬鑄鼎象物，殊可噴飯解頤。尤妙在雅俗皆宜，有目共賞。

This announcement praises the novel as an “exact copy of the ways of the world and people’s emotions; [the images it captures] are vivid and in exact likeness.” This emphasis on “realistic depictions” is not found in earlier Chinese literary criticism. The announcement conceptualizes the characters as social types with a shared behavioral pattern. It moves away from the dominant view of the Chinese novel, articulated by the founders of Chinese novel theory, such as Jin Shengtian 金聖嘆 (1608–1661) and Zhang Zhupo 張竹坡 (1670–1698), which deemed the portrait of a singular character as the highest sign of artistic achievement.¹⁵¹ The reference to such types is also found in other novel announcements after *Xinxi xiantan*, indicating that this concept had become a tool of literary criticism and a way to evoke interest through the pleasure of recognizing a familiar social type.¹⁵² Accuracy in the depiction of such types was seen as a mark of quality. (This aesthetic appreciation will later resurface in the late-Qing exposé novels that thrived on recognizable social types).

149 For this metaphor, see note 144.

150 “Benguan xinyin *Rulin waishi*” 本館新印儒林外史 [New print of the *Rulin waishi* by our company], *Shenbao*, November 10, 1874.

151 See Huang and Han, *Zhongguo lidai xiaoshuo lunzhu xuan*, 433, 560; see also Milena Doleželová-Velingerová, “Seventeenth-Century Chinese Theory of Narrative: A Reconstruction of its System and Concepts,” in *Poetics East and West*, ed. Milena Doleželová-Velingerová (Toronto: Toronto Semiotic Circle, Victoria College in the University of Toronto, 1989): 137–157.

152 This coincides with a literary fashion in Europe. Since the 1830s, such types had been described in the French “physiologies,” which used the almost sociological depictions by all the later literary giants (Balzac, Hugo, Dumas, Sue, etc.). The fashion was also strong in England as may be seen from many of the famous characters in the works of Charles Dickens, as well as caricatures from *Punch*; or, *The London Charivari*. For background information on this see Rudolf Wagner, *Inside a Service Trade: Studies in Contemporary Chinese Prose* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 1992), 363–367.

A commitment to the “real” and historically verifiable can be seen in the *Shenbao* announcement of the second edition of the *Rulin waishi* in 1875:

While *Rulin waishi* belongs to the [“lowly”] novel genre, it has nonetheless opened a new path [in writing] with its supreme irony and the realism of its narrative. It will be appreciated by gentry and merchants throughout the land. Our publishing house originally published this novel with movable letters in a print run of one thousand. It was sold out within ten days. Those who came late regretted that they were not able to get a copy. We have therefore decided to issue another 1,500 copies¹⁵³ in a [new] critically revised edition. This will also include a postface by Mr. Jin from Shangyuan 上元金君 (Jin He 金和, 1819–1895), in which the [real] name of the author and the names of the characters [will reveal] that they are not merely products of the imagination but real persons who can be identified.¹⁵⁴

儒林外史一書，雖係小說，而談諧之妙，敘述之實，足別開蹊徑。宜為海內仕商所賞鑑。本館前用活字版排印千部，曾不浹旬而便即銷罄。在後購閱者俱以來遲，弗獲為憾。是以近又詳加讐校重印一千五百部，并附以上元金君跋語，俾共知作者之姓名，而并知書中所述之人，亦皆歷歷可考，非同憑空臆造也。

To emphasize the realistic character of the novel, a key was added—another first, modeled after a European fashion¹⁵⁵—to identify the real-life counterparts of the novel’s characters. As we shall see, this did not involve a degrading of the fantasy elements in the novel. With this double emphasis, novels without the “four flaws” discussed above could be included in a book series with works of recent high scholarship, literati “brush notes,” and up-to-date information and reportage.

The emphasis on the real and realistic in the announcement is echoed in the 1876 preface by Zhang Wenhui 張文虎 (1808–1885), a scholar of great learning and renown, whose edition of *Rulin waishi*, together with his comments, made

153 This number was cut out in the subsequent advertisements for this edition.

154 “*Rulin waishi* chushou” 儒林外史出售 [*Rulin waishi* goes on sale], *Shenbao*, May 20, 1875. For a study of different editions of this novel, see Li Hanqiu 李漢秋, “*Rulin waishi*” *yanjiu ziliao* 儒林外史研究資料 [Research materials on *Rulin waishi*] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1984), 99–159.

155 See, for example, *Key to the Characters in Coningsby*.

him the leading authority on this text.¹⁵⁶ Writing under the pen name Tianmu Shanqiao 天目山樵, he offered his critique:

While the writing of *Rulin waishi* stays within the parameters of *Shuihu zhuan* and the *Jin Ping Mei*, its boldness does not come close [to theirs]. When it comes to sketching the affairs of the world, however, it is so true to the situation and underlying patterns that, without having to point explicitly at a particular individual, the spirit conveyed by its images always fits what is seen in social intercourse. It can be used as a mirror for others as well as oneself.¹⁵⁷

外史用筆是不離水滸傳、金瓶梅範圍，魄力則不及遠甚。然描寫世事實情實理，不必確指其人而遺貌取神皆酬接中所頻見。可以鏡人，可以自鏡。

The same emphasis on the contemporary and the real is found in the 1878 announcement for the *Duwu'an congchao* 獨悟庵叢抄 (Duwu'an collection), which included the first publication of Shen Fu's 沈復 (Shen Sanbai 沈三白) seminal, lively, and "realistic" memoir *Fusheng liuji*. The announcement claims that the artistic quality of the work is derived from the vividness of its scenes, which are "as though in front of one's eyes" (*ru zai muqian* 如在目前), as if "one was personally on the scene" (*ru shenqin qi jing* 如身親其境), and from its emotional effect, which is such as "to overwhelm the reader to the point of crying" (*duzhe xiaohun wen zhi suanbi* 讀者銷魂聞之酸鼻).¹⁵⁸

In Major's signed 1884 announcement for the first publication of *Fengyue meng*¹⁵⁹, "the real" and the personal have become full quality markers for a work of fiction. As this was the first public announcement regarding an original novel published by the *Shenbao* and reflects its publishing policy, it deserves to be quoted in full:

Hanshang Mengren is the author of *Fengyue meng*; hiding it in his cupboard, he did not show it to people randomly, for it is all based on what he himself had experienced and had personally seen. Now that he has discovered our publishing house with its movable type and its

156 For a short study of Zhang Huwen's role in forming the modern editions of *Rulin waishi*, see Zhou Junwen 周君文, "Wan Qing *Rulin waishi* de wenren pingdian qunti" 晚清儒林外史的文人評點群體 [The group of literati annotators of the late Qing *Rulin waishi*], *Shanghai shifan daxue xuebao* 32, no. 3 (2003): 43–44.

157 Wu, *Rulin waishi*, 1.

158 "Duwu'an congchao chushou" 獨悟庵叢抄出售 [The Duwu'an congchao goes on sale], *Shenbao*, June 3, 1878.

159 Hanshang, *Fengyue meng*. Patrick Hanan offers a study and translation of this novel, see n27 above.

policy of print to order, he has commissioned us to print [the work] and to bring it to the world's attention. Having some leisure during a trip, I read it through, and it is indeed a work that can enlighten those who are besotted: it is not merely a portrayal of courtesans and their clients. The novel will go on sale on the twenty-seventh; it has thirty-two chapters, and will be in four volumes. It costs exactly three *jiao*, and will be sold through the normal channels.¹⁶⁰

邗上蒙人著有風月夢，度藏行篋未肯輕以示人，盖皆其身所經歷，目所親覩者。現知本館有活字版可以代人排印，因諄託刊刷問世。旅窓無事，偶一繙閱，誠足喚醒痴迷，不僅為紅粉青衫寫照也。

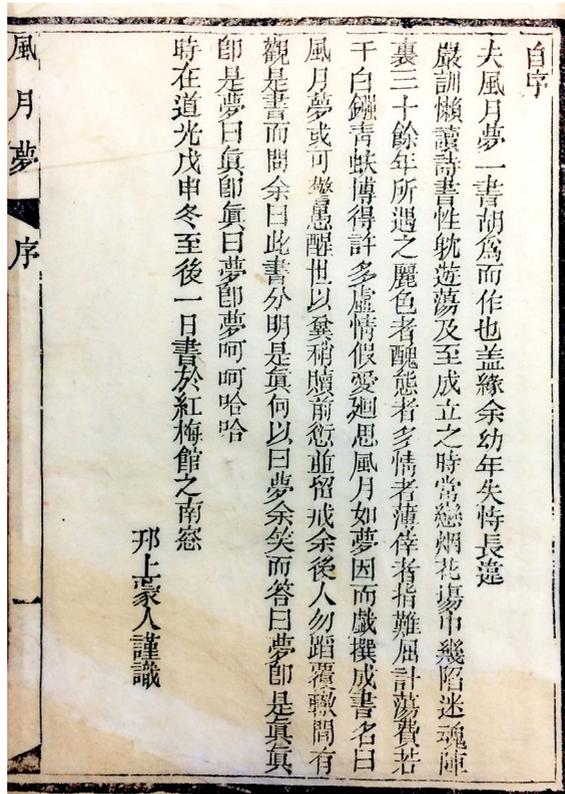


Fig. 15: Hanshang Mengren, preface to *Fengyue meng* (Shanghai: Shenbaoguan, 1884), 1.

160 Shenbaoguan zhuren, "Xinyin *Fengyue meng* chushou."

The novel deals with Yangzhou courtesans and their clients. Unlike traditional idealizations of the grand courtesans of the past, this novel is set during the author's lifetime and in effect exposes many of the shadier business practices of courtesan establishments as well as describing some of the games courtesans and clients play on each other. As the novel had come to the press in manuscript form and the Shenbaoguan was the first to print it, the company was relatively free to define it in its own terms and to emphasize its authentic character and realistic descriptions. It should be noted that none of the announcements quoted hitherto used abstract theoretical terms, but instead assumed that their Chinese readership would appreciate true-to-life descriptions.

The authenticity and realism praised here are by implication different from the real life base claimed for widely-read earlier novels such as *Honglou meng*. In its introduction, the author claimed that the novel was based on his own personal experience.¹⁶¹ However, given the strong Buddhist framing of the story, in which the novel unfolds as the autobiography of a stone, there is no realistic agenda at work. The author's claim thus indicates autobiographical rather than literary authenticity. The realism mentioned in the Shenbaoguan announcements, on the other hand, draws on a European literary fashion of the time, which with its critical or ironic descriptions of urban environments and its social types was linked aesthetically to the rise of the press and thus to newspaper writing and reading. One reason the author of *Fengyue meng* kept the manuscript hidden may have been its unusually critical stance on what had been until then the canonized idealization of the "talented scholar and beautiful lady" literary motif. None of the characters in this novel are depicted in an idealized manner. This emphasis on an exposé based on personal experience was new to discussions of the novel.

Within the aesthetic criterion exhibited by the Shenbaoguan novel-publishing program, and as is evident in the first literary translations published in the *Shenbao* newspaper, Major had no problem juxtaposing the fantastic and grotesque with the "realistic." Indeed, a similar juxtaposition could be found in English eighteenth-century fiction such as *Gulliver's Travels* or *The Monk* and in Ming novels such as *Xiyou ji* or *Rou putuan* 肉蒲團 (The carnal prayer mat).¹⁶²

161 Cao Xueqin 曹雪芹, *Honglou meng* 紅樓夢 [Dream of the red chamber] (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1982), chapter 1, 1.

162 Matthew G. Lewis, *The Monk* (Waterford: Saunders, 1796); Li Yu 李漁, *Rou putuan* 肉蒲團 [The carnal prayer mat], ed. Qingyin xiansheng 情隱先生 (Taipei: Taiwan Daying baiken gufen youxian gongsi, 1994). Translated by Patrick Hanan as *The Carnal Prayer Mat* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1990).

Major's awareness that many Chinese readers would accept fantastic narratives was first exhibited in 1872 in the *Shenbao's* translation of "A Voyage to Lilliput" from Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* as *Tanying xiaolu* 談瀛小錄 (Notes on countries overseas),¹⁶³ and of Washington Irving's "Rip Van Winkle" as *Yi shui qishi nian* 一睡七十年 (Asleep for seventy years).¹⁶⁴ Deliberately including the notion of the fantastic in the categories of literary appreciation, the Shenbaoguan strongly supported novels, both old and new, that were written in this mode.¹⁶⁵

Since the late Ming and early Qing, the novel had received increased critical attention, even from authors who were willing to use their real names. This marked the beginning of an improved status for the novel, and reflected the advent of a new urban readership and of commercial printing. Hitherto, most critical attention had been devoted to novels with an emphasis on human emotions and interactions described in a realistic narrative mode, such as *Shuihu zhuan*, *Jin Ping Mei*, and later *Honglou meng*. The Shenbaoguan announcements considered pieces that "indulge in the wildest fantasy" (*yixiang tiankai* 異想天開), and that offered a "multitude of confusing strange images" (*luli guangluan* 陸離光亂), a welcome and original enrichment of the contemporary novel scene written in a realistic vein. Evidence for this includes the announcements for Dong Yue's *Xiyou bu* and Zhang Nanzhuang's *Hedian*.

The announcement for *Supplement to "Journey to the West"* reads:

Our company has recently published *Supplement to "Journey to the West,"* a work that indulges in the wildest fantasies. Not a word or sentence goes without the extreme [expression] of a multitude of confusing and strange images. Compared to the earlier work [*Xiyou ji*], which entrusted [its narrative] to empty illusions, this is even more fantastic. Yet it follows the directions of the earlier novel at every juncture. After each sitting, one claps the table in delight. It is truly an extraordinary paradigm among novels.¹⁶⁶

本館近排印西游補一書。其書異想天開，無字無句不極陸離光

163 "Tanying xiaolu" 談瀛小錄 [Notes on countries overseas], *Shenbao*, serialized May 21, 24, 1872.

164 "Yi shui qishi nian" 一睡七十年 [Asleep for seventy years], *Shenbao*, May 28, 1872.

165 The *Dianshizhai huabao* also offered a rich fare of the fantastic and grotesque. See Nanny Kim, "New Wine in Old Bottles? Making and Reading an Illustrated Magazine in Late Nineteenth-Century Shanghai," in Wagner, *Joining the Global Public*, 175–200.

166 "Xinyin Xiyou bu chushou" 新印西游補出售 [Newly printed *Supplement to "Journey to the West"* goes on sale], *Shenbao*, January 3, 1876.

怪之致；較之前書，託迹虛無，尤為想入非非。而處處仍跟定前書線索，每讀一過，令人拍案叫絕。誠小說之奇觀也。

The announcement for *Hedian* reads:

“From what idiom does that come?” is an expression in everyday speech, and today there is a manuscript actually entitled *From What Idiom?* This work is by Mr. Zhang Nanzhuang from Shanghai. It has never been printed. During the Qianlong and Jiaqing eras [1736–1821], he was one of the “ten commoners” from [the district of] Shangyi [in Shanxi Province].¹⁶⁷ The novel has ten chapters, which we have bound into two volumes. It speaks the language of ghosts and indeed has quite a bit of ghostly fun. There is a lot of Shanghai dialect. It is an exceedingly funny and entertaining read.¹⁶⁸

出於何典，是人口頭語也。而今竟有其書曰何典。係上海張南莊先生所著。向無刊本。先生於乾嘉時，為上邑十布衣中之一。是書凡十回，裝成兩冊。說鬼話而頗有鬼極，其辭句則吳下諺語居多。閱之實堪噴飯。

The novel certainly lives up to this announcement with its grotesquely satirical characters and use of thick vernacular. The promise of no obscene language is undermined by the introduction of one of the protagonists as “Miss Refuse-to-Enter-the-Bedroom.”

By upgrading narratives of the fantastic and grotesque, these announcements avoided the moral platitudes that were traditionally used to justify the writing and reading of a novel (even if they were easily discernable, as in the case of the *Xiyoubu*). Instead the novels are deemed great works in their own right.

It is also clear from these announcements that the Shenbaoguan aimed for an unadulterated celebration of literary fantasy as one of the potential marks of a work of excellence. Appreciation of this, which might be more in tune with popular urban tastes than with the literati’s over-intellectualization of the novel,¹⁶⁹ was not imposed as a unified perspective. Scholars invited by the company to edit works of fiction and provide them with prefaces were

167 Nothing further is known about them.

168 “Xinyin *Hedian* chushou” 新印何典出售 [Newly printed *From What Idiom?* goes on sale], *Shenbao*, December 14, 1878.

169 Tianmu Shanqiao 天目山樵 [Zhang Wenhu 張文虎], xu 序 [preface] to *Rulin waishi*, by Wu Jingzi (Shanghai: Shenbaoguan 1881).

free to maintain their own approach. One example is Zhang Huwen, who had been invited to edit *Rulin waishi*. His preface stressed the significance and philosophical implications of sense illusion. Fantasy was not a consideration in his appreciation of fiction.¹⁷⁰

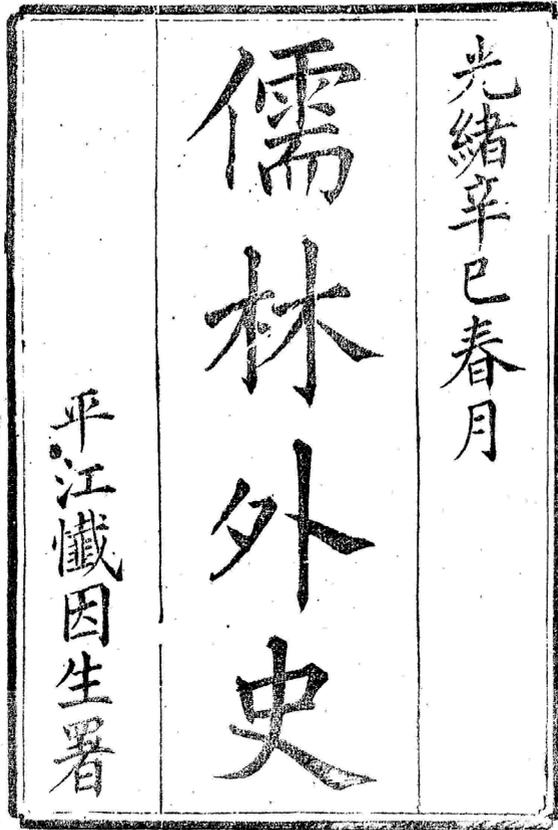


Fig. 16: Cover for Wu Jingzi 吳敬梓, *Rulin waishi* 儒林外史 (Shanghai: Shenbaoguan, 1874).

The Shenbaoguan announcements and *Shumu* entries operated in a transitional period that saw the beginning of a break with the inherited canon of accepted high-register genres, the introduction of new forms into this canon, and exposure to international literary fashions and genres. After his

170 Ibid.

first efforts at publishing translations of Western novels, Major seems to have discovered that there were indeed Chinese works that were both “realistic” and “extraordinary,” which suited his artistic and ethical agenda as well as a modern taste, and that some of them dealt with the present and even with commoners. In short, Major discovered China’s indigenous sources of literary modernity.

Women as implied readers

The ethical standards that the company claimed for its print products, and which very much reflected what was becoming a global standard of “civilized” publications that abided by high ethical norms, are most distinctly visible in the works of fiction directed at women. According to the announcements, the publication of some novels specifically targeted women audiences. Books such as the novel *Lin Lan Xiang*¹⁷¹ and the *tanci Bisheng hua*, are good examples of this. As potential readers, women were often referred to in these announcements in general terms such as “lüchuang” 綠窗 ([readers in the] boudoir).¹⁷²

Lin Lan Xiang, which was written after *Honglou meng* around 1800 by an author signing as Suiyuan Xiashi, tells the story of a talented young man who was patronized by the Ming court at a young age and, after enduring many travails and mishaps, finds himself married to five young women. Obviously influenced by novels such as *Jin Ping Mei* and *Honglou meng*, the ballad focuses on the different characters of the five beauties and their relationship to the hero, who resembles Jia Baoyu from *Honglou meng*. The title of the ballad comes from the names of three of the wives. The story ends with the husband’s regret when he realizes his mistake in casting off one of his wives, the main female heroine of the story, after she sacrificed herself for him. She died shortly after he abandoned her and redemption comes through her son, who grows up to become an upright official after his mother’s death and shortly after that of his father.

The story of *Bisheng hua*, by Qiu Xinru, a woman author signing as Xinru Nüshi 心如女史, was also set in the Ming. It tells the story of a virtuous young woman who, in order to save her father from persecution by the court, agrees to serve as the emperor’s consort. To preserve her virtue, however, she tries to commit suicide on the way to the capital by jumping into a river,

171 “*Lin Lan Xiang* yihuo” 林蘭香已獲 [*Lin Lan Xiang* has been obtained], *Shenbao*, June 22, 1877.

172 See “Xinyin *Hou Shuihu* chushou” 新印後水滸出售 [Newly printed *Sequel to the “Water Margin”* goes on sale], *Shenbao*, April 16, 1877.

only to be saved by a fox spirit. She travels to the capital dressed in a man's clothes and eventually takes first place in the imperial examination, thereby becoming a major figure at court, which eventually enables her to save her father without ever losing her virtue. In due course she is discovered and married off to her cousin, who was already her legitimate fiancé.

The 1882 announcement of the publication of *Bisheng hua* offers fascinating insights into the genres of reading that were considered appropriate for women in contrast to the reading that women actually preferred. The announcement, again signed by Major, shows not only an easy familiarity with different kinds of Chinese writing, but also a careful handling of words. It reflects Major's interest in attracting women readers without alienating men. Because *Bisheng hua* was written by a woman, it seems to have been considered natural to state that women preferred works written by women.

The prompt books for zaju drama are already no match for the *Daya* 大雅 (Great Odes of the *Book of Poetry*), but with the *tanci* [ballads] we [really] hit bottom. However, in their spare time from embroidery work generations of women would time and again put *Exhortations for Women* (*Nüzhen* 女箴) and *Lectures for the Women's Quarters* (*Hexun* 閨訓) on some high shelf, and what they most love is to take up a *tanci* and read it. The reason is that the grammar [of these *tanci*] is simple and straightforward, and therefore they are easy to read. True, books close to pornography, such as the *Wopao* [zhuàn] 倭袍 [傳] [a banned *tanci* about a woman killing her husband to make place for a lover],¹⁷³ are genuinely capable of hurting morals and damaging proper behavior, and should be banned. But if their purpose proceeds from correct motives and does not contravene the classics even though the emotions might be violent and the language extravagant as is the case with *Bisheng hua* by lady [Qiu] Xinru from Huaiyin—then this truly is something outstanding and of singular skill.

This book totals thirty-two episodes in sixteen volumes. The events in it might be considered exceedingly shocking and amusing, optimistic and tearful, but they manage to stay clear of vulgarity and retain refined meaning throughout. We have heard that Lady [Qiu] Xinru spent thirty years of mental labor to finish this book. Distressed in her poverty (?) she did not [have the money to privately] print the book, and therefore made a copy for circulation. But it was rarely

173 A print of this work from the Daoguang period under the alternative title *Guobao lu* 果報錄 (A record of retribution) may be found in the Harvard Yenching Library, call number 5727 6480.

seen. Our company made a special effort to buy the manuscript and print it with movable type for all to read.¹⁷⁴

雜劇院本已無當於大雅，降至彈詞末矣。然婦女輩針黹餘閑，往往束女箴闈訓於高閣。而最好取彈詞閱之。蓋以其文理淺近，易以通曉也。惟語近穢褻如《倭袍》等書，實足傷風敗俗，理宜禁絕。若情雖[?]，而務出於正，語雖誕而弗背乎經，如淮陰心如女史所著之筆生花一書，洵為別開生面，獨運將心者矣。此書共計三十二回，訂成十六本其中事實頗覺可驚可喜，可歌可無滯。而仍能擺脫凡庸，獨澀俊旨。據聞女史積三十年心力，撰成是書，因窘於[?]未付剞劂，氏即抄本流傳亦不多見。本館今特購取稿本，用活字排印問世。

What is at stake here is more than the questionable morality of some *tanci*. It is the status of the *tanci* as a literary genre as a whole, which the *Shumu xuji* subsumed under the same *shuobu* category as the “linked-chapter novels.” Although it is clearly acknowledged that no claim can be made for high literary refinement, the genre is one that is loved by women, largely written by women, and might even form a stepping-stone to higher things for both women writers and readers. In short, because the moral education books available for the inner quarters obviously did not meet the needs of their intended readers, *tanci* should not be simply abandoned, but efforts should be made to redeem them.

The Shenbaoguan had a strong commitment to women as authors, readers, and as the subject matter of news, editorials, and fiction.¹⁷⁵ It joined and materially supported one of the strong undercurrents in Qing literati thinking regarding the education of women and the promotion of female writers, as exemplified by Yuan Mei 袁枚 (1716–1797).¹⁷⁶ And, quite in tune with British thinking about women and the novel at the time, it regarded the betterment of women and the furthering of their education as not being served by texts such as the *Wopao zhuan*, even if they might be commercial hits. With *Bisheng hua* the Shenbaoguan, posing as a responsible leader on the Chinese book market, offered an original work written by a woman, with a woman as the main protagonist, which provided the racy narrative typical of the genre without being marred by lewd language and outrageous plot elements.

174 Shenbaoguan zhuren, “Xinyin *Bisheng hua tanci chushou*,” *Shenbao*, January 27, 1882. The translation largely follows Wagner, “Women in Shenbaoguan Publications,” 248.

175 For detailed discussion of this issue, see Wagner, “Women in Shenbaoguan publications.” See also Barbara Mittler’s study of the development of women as readers of *Shenbao* advertisements in *A Newspaper for China*, 245–311.

176 See Ellen Widmer, *The Beauty and the Book: Women and Fiction in Nineteenth-Century China* (Cambridge: Harvard Asia Center, 2006), 168–170.

The announcements were not endorsing sentimental writing for women. The 1881 announcement for *Ernü yingxiang zhuan*, after stating that the work was written by a recent author [without giving the name], comments that

[The novel's] diction shows taste and elegance; its narration is full of sound and colors. Above all, there is no trace of womanly airs or posturing excitement.¹⁷⁷

其措辭也，宜風宜雅；其敘述也，有聲有色；尤妙無脂粉叫囂之氣。

The argument for publishing novels that would benefit women as well as find favor, while guiding them away from potentially harmful works, was made in the 1878 announcement for *Xue Yue Mei*:

Presently an immense number of novels are being written; yet, their content is nothing but the trio of sentimental love, heroic manliness, and the magical arts of gods and immortals. In each of these books there is a superfluity of salacious language together with a failure to encourage chastity. If you are looking for [a work] to correct this, a work that has the beauty of a flower as its model and is gorgeous but still ends up balanced, there is nothing like *Xue Yue Mei*.¹⁷⁸

邇來小說書幾於汗牛充棟。然，要其大旨有三，曰：兒女風情；曰：英雄氣概；曰：神仙法術。但每書中總多淫褻之詞，而少勸懲之意。求其正而葩麗以則，絢爛而仍歸平淡，則莫如《雪月梅》一書。

The announcement begins by lampooning the fashion for trite novels. In contrast, *Xue Yue Mei* is positioned not only to correct the questionable morals of these novels but also to surpass them in literary terms. The argument is once again based mainly on the beauty and splendor of its writing. The novel tells of the adventures of the three beautiful young ladies with martial skills whose names make up the title. In the end, each of them marries the heroic young man to whom they had been betrothed after being honored by the court for valor and virtue. The announcement seems to have been primarily addressed to discerning women who still enjoyed reading about love, valor, and magic. For them, *Xue Yue Mei* offered a splendid narrative without any questionable language and morals.

177 This was confirmed in the announcement for *Lin Lan Xiang*, which states that it would not introduce the content of the work, since this had been given in the *Shumu*. “*Ernü yingxiang zhuan chushou*” 兒女英雄傳出售 [Ernü yingxiang zhuan on sale], *Shenbao*, March 23, 1881.

178 “*Xinshu chushou*” 新書出售 [New book on sale], *Shenbao*, April 15, 1878.

The 1880 announcement for Li Ruzhen's *Jinghua yuan* demonstrates the degree to which the aesthetic and ethical standards guiding the public presentation of Shenbaoguan publications had become the foundation for the introduction of particular works. It groups a set of Chinese terms and ideas into a new ensemble to create a vocabulary of modern enlightened civility and refinement. The announcement emphasizes that "the way in which [this novel] talks about filial piety and loyalty is so powerful that it inspires one to burst out in song and [be moved to] tears." (其中言孝言忠，可歌可泣。) But the work is also full of light and delightful entertainment. The author

spent his remaining energy on poetry, songs, and rhymes for drinking games, which are all leaving the vulgar behind and entering the realm of refinement while showing ease and freshness. Although one talks of [novels] as "small talk by minor officials," this one is more than able to benefit one's mind and knowledge.¹⁷⁹

以餘力作爲詩歌酒令，亦復出風入雅，雋逸清新。雖曰稗官小說，實足以益人神智。

The announcement also stresses that the novels published by this company are never merely entertaining "small talk," but of benefit to the mind and acquisition of knowledge. It should be remembered that *Jinghua yuan* is anything but a tale dripping with stale morality, it contains one of the most spirited and witty satires on the treatment of women in China ever written. The livelier and more diverse the work, the more easily moral benefit for the mind was accrued. Both in its announcements and in the novels it actually published, the Shenbaoguan defied the Chinese men of letters' professed (and often pretended) disdain for such lowly reading matter, as well as the court edicts' official denunciation of such works as "lewd." Its efforts went a long way towards elevating the social and cultural standing of the novel as an art form that was compatible with the Chinese notion of "a state of civilized governance" (*wenli zhi bang* 文理之邦) and a taste for the concrete and specific while providing *bona fide* Chinese works that were both modern and entertaining.

Novel publishing as a collective endeavor: mobilizing the *Shenbao* community

In addressing the social standing of the novel, the Shenbaoguan made it a priority to develop and involve what might be called the "Shenbaoguan community."¹⁸⁰ It tried to make its novels attractive through their intrinsic

179 "Jinghua yuan chushou" 鏡花緣出售 [*Flowers in the Mirror* goes on sale], *Shenbao*, December 29, 1880.

180 Rudolf Wagner has done a qualitative and quantitative analysis of this Shenbaoguan community

style and acceptable to both male and female readers through the social values they conveyed. It also tried, as has been shown, to create a collective identity by actively involving readers in selecting works.

The daily communications on the first page were an important and innovative link between the publisher and the readers, who were also potential authors, proofreaders, editors, correspondents, critics, or middlemen helping to establish a contact. This practice was unique among publishing houses at the time. The loyalty of a community built up in this way was a huge asset, even more so in the case of the Shenbaoguan as a foreign-owned and foreign-managed Chinese-language publisher of a newspaper that was bound to (and did) excite some anxiety in official circles. While the *Shenbao* did not use any specific collective term to identify “the community of *Shenbao* readers,” it addressed them collectively as “friends” or “colleagues” (*youren* 友人) in the announcements; and there is strong evidence that it actively cultivated such a community—possibly after noting how positive the responses were.

One example of an enthusiastic communication and response to Shenbaoguan’s newspaper and publication program was from a reader in the outlying military post Qingjiangpu (today’s city of Huaian) in Jiangsu. In his long letter, which was published in the *Shenbao* on June 13, 1874, the reader first praised Major’s efforts to uphold the dignity of learning as well as the responsibility of the literati in times of low social moral standards. He then described how he had joined the army and was now stranded as a low-ranking officer in a forlorn place after failing twice at the imperial examinations, supporting no less than eight people. One day, a visitor from Shanghai brought a copy of the *Shenbao* and of the *Yinghuan suoji*, in which the reader found the serialized translation of *Night and Morning*. His excitement about the criticism in the paper of bad morals in Shanghai was such that his staff thought he had gone beserk. He exclaimed: “You have won my heart, sir!” (*Zhuren shi huo wo xin zai* 主人寔獲我心哉) He then subscribed to both the newspaper and the journal, adding that he could not wait to see the next installments of the novel.¹⁸¹

An example of *Shenbao*’s conscious efforts to reach out is the support for a private advertisement that elicited proposals for the writing of a novel, certainly the first such ad in a Chinese-language newspaper.¹⁸² This 1877 advertisement from “A guest from far away who resides in Shanghai” (Yu Hu yuanke 寓滬

as well as its geographic distribution. See Rudolf Wagner, “Ernest Major’s Shenbaoguan and the Formation of Late Qing Print Culture,” unpublished manuscript.

181 “Yingyou lai shu” 營友來書 [Letter from a friend in the military], *Shenbao*, June 13, 1874.

182 Pan, “You *Shenbao* suo kan san xiaoshuo zhengwen qishi,” 44–45.

遠客) was entitled “*Illustrations looking for a text on sale*” (*You tu qiu shuo chushou* 有圖求說出售).¹⁸³ The ad solicited a work of fiction to go with ten fine drawings which the owner had commissioned the Shenbaoguan to publish. Apparently the ten drawings told a story involving characters, places, and events, which the owner was at a loss to link together. To obtain a novel of about 50,000 words to accompany these drawings, he was willing to pay twenty *yuan* for the best submission and ten to the runner-up. The condition was that the work had to be submitted within two months of the publication of the advertisement.

The *Shenbao*'s “Note Following the Request for Submitting a Novel” read:

Recently, the numbers of “local narratives [collected by] officials”¹⁸⁴ [i.e. novels] are so numerous as to make the oxen [bearing them] sweat and the rafters [of the house holding them] bend. However, though men of letters might have the same intentions and write in the same style, the works they produce while still able to open minds and entertain will each have their own particularities. But among all the novels [we have] read, whether they have illustrations at the beginning or not, there has never been a case where there were only illustrations and no words [to go with them]. The advertisement by Yu Hu yuanke soliciting the writing of a novel, which is published at the end of our paper today, seems to belong to the tradition of soliciting poetry or essays. [Writing such a piece] is something any scholar and refined gentleman will regard as a highly entertaining way to while away the time after dinner before going to sleep; one sees emerging under one's wrist extraordinary emotions and vigorous images, encouraging colleagues to applaud by knocking the table in praise.¹⁸⁵

近來裨官小說幾于汗牛充棟。然，文人同此心同此筆而所撰之書，各有相同；是足以開拓心胸為消閒之助。但所閱諸小說其卷首或有圖或無圖，從未有圖而無說者。茲見本報後寓滬遠客所登之請撰小說告白，似即徵文之。遺意文人雅士於酒後睡餘，大可藉此消遣功夫，行見奇情壯采奔赴腕下，而諸同人又得擊節欣賞矣。

183 Yu Hu yuanke 寓滬遠客, “*You tu qiu shuo chushou*” 有圖求說出售 [*Illustrations Looking for a Text on sale*], *Shenbao*, November 21, 1877.

184 *Beiguan xiaoshuo* 裨官小說, verbatim. “Small talk by local officials” is a semi-ironic reference to the first mention of the term *xiaoshuo* and the author and collector of this type of narrative in the History of the Han Dynasty. See Ban Gu 班固, “Yiwen zhi” 藝文志 [Bibliographical treatise], in *Hanshu* 漢書 (*Book of Han*) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1970), 1745.

185 “*Shu qing zhuan xiaoshuo hou*” 書請撰小說後 [Note following the request for submitting a novel], *Shenbao*, November 21, 1877.

With this light note the publishing house addressed its readers not just as readers but as potential “men of letters,” who might enjoy the challenge of writing a novel of their own in their leisure hours. It defined novel writing as a refined activity, and implicitly elevated the genre to the same level as poetry and essay writing. For its time and potential audience, this was a bold and even risky claim. While maintaining that the novel’s primary aim was to widen the reader’s horizon and entertain, the note also stressed the fun that was to be had by the writer, who would also win the admiration of his friends. Writing novels is thus introduced as something that is worthy of brilliant men of letters in China, too; like poetry, the genre has high artistic potential and can be a medium for the expression of individuality.

Readers were not just encouraged to become authors, there were other more modest ways in which they could help establish a flourishing cultural scene. As previously mentioned, the Shenbaoguan and especially Major himself were constantly publishing announcements asking their readers to suggest or help locate specific titles for publication. At times the publication of a book appears as the climax of a complex drama that played out on the front page of the *Shenbao*. It started with frequent appeals by Major to suggest titles worth printing, followed by a note that a manuscript or a rare edition in good condition of a given title was being sought. It might read like this:

“Announcement of Looking for *Lin Lan Xiang* [copy].”

Very few people nowadays own a copy of *Lin Lan Xiang*. Our publishing house would very much like to publish this work and bring it to the attention of the world, but we do not have a good complete copy. Please, if you have the book on your shelf, we would appreciate if you would send it to us in a speedy manner within a few days. After we have received it and printed the book, we will definitely offer you a reward and your original will be returned without delay. May this be made known.¹⁸⁶

訪覓林蘭香告白 本館謹啟

林蘭香一書近日藏之者甚罕。本館欲排印，一時無完善之本。各處鄰架中如有是書，即望於數日間從速寄交本館。收取俟印成後，定當酬謝也。其原本亦即奉繳不悞。此佈。

Sometimes after several months, a happy note followed to indicate that the search had been successful. In the case of *Lin Lan Xiang* it took just one day before a note entitled “*Lin Lan Xiang* already obtained” appeared: “Yesterday, we placed

186 “Fangmi *Lin Lan Xiang* gaobai” 訪覓林蘭香告白 [Announcement of looking for *Lin Lan Xiang* (copy)], *Shenbao*, June 21, 1877.

an announcement seeking *Lin Lan Xiang*; this morning, at 9:00 am, we already received a complete copy sent by the Zuiliutang bookstore.¹⁸⁷ Eventually an announcement that the work was published and would be available from such and such a date appeared, sometimes with a summary of the tribulations the press had gone through to obtain and edit it: “Last month we were able to get hold of a copy of *Lin Lan Xiang*. However, some pages were missing in the copy. This is why the publication was delayed. On Monday, the eleventh day of this month, printing will be complete and the book will go on sale.”¹⁸⁸

Making use of these announcements, the Shenbaoguan publicized the exact date that a work would go on sale; given the rarity of many of the works in question, this turned each publication into an event, and because of their privileged location in the paper, these announcements were read and further spread by the readers. Through the active involvement of readers in suggesting titles and tracking copies, the Shenbaoguan created a shared feeling of suspense and success and was not shy about heightening the drama.¹⁸⁹

Not every project ended so well for the Shenbaoguan, however. Its efforts to locate the manuscript of *Yesou puyan* suffered a humiliating setback. A first announcement pleading for help in the search of this work appeared in 1877.¹⁹⁰ In December 1879, Major wrote a note on the state of the search, informing readers that the company had managed to get a copy of the manuscript from a friend, but that it was badly damaged and not fit for print; the press now called for help in locating a better copy, for which it was willing to pay a high price.¹⁹¹ In March 1880, they announced that it had received some copies but none was

187 “*Lin Lan Xiang* yihuo.”

188 “*Lin Lan Xiang* yin qi chushou” 林蘭香印齊出售 [*Lin Lan Xiang* goes on sale after printing has been completed], *Shenbao*, July 19, 1877.

189 Rudolf Wagner has described the strategy of building suspense to turn the Shenbaoguan publication of the *Rulin waishi* into a public event. See Rudolf Wagner, “Shenbaoguan zaoqi de shuji chuban” 申報館早期的書籍出版 [Early print culture of the Shenbaoguan], in *Wan Ming yu wan Qing: Lishi zhuanheng yu wenhua chuangxin* 晚明與晚清：歷史傳承與文化創新 [Late Ming and late Qing: heritage and innovation], ed. Chen Pingyuan 陳平原, Wang Dewei 王德威, and Shang Wei 商偉 (Wuhan: Hubei jiaoyu chubanshe, 2001), 174–177.

190 Zunwenge zhuren, “Sou *Yesou puyan* ji, yuanben *Honglou meng* er shu qi. Zunwenge zhuren shou zou” 蒐野叟曝言記原本紅樓夢二書啟。尊聞閣主人手奏 [Advertising search for the *Yesou puyan* and the original manuscript of *The Dream of the Red Chamber*. A personal memorandum from the Master of the Cherish the News Studio], *Shenbao*, July 18, 1877. Three months later another advertisement appeared appealing for support in locating the manuscript: “Qi ji *Yesou puyan* gaoben shu” 乞寄野叟曝言稿本書 [A plea to send us the manuscript of *Yesou puyan*], *Shenbao*, October 29, 1877.

191 “Sou fang *Yesou puyan*” 蒐訪野叟曝言 [In search of *Yesou puyan*], *Shenbao*, December 21, 1879. The same advertisement was repeated on January 19, 1880.

complete. Now a “friend” had notified them that a relatively complete copy could be found at “The home of Mr. Zhao Yinggu [the proprietor of] the Diao family’s shop in Taixing county,” and that another copy could be found in Jiangying county. The note appealed to the public-minded spirit of the paper’s readers to help the press locate these copies so that the book would no longer “lie secretly buried day after day under someone’s pillow.” The Shenbaoguan even offered to send someone to copy the manuscript by hand.¹⁹²

One year and nine months later, an advertisement appeared in the *Shenbao* announcing that the novel was about to be published. The ad was placed by Qianqingtang 千頃堂 of Suzhou and Duweilou 讀未樓 of Shanghai, who were the distributors of *Yesou puyan*. It had been published by Biling Huizhenlou 毗陵匯珍樓 (Biling, today Changzhou, Jiangsu).¹⁹³ The newly founded *Hubao* 滬報 newspaper, run by the former *Shenbao* editor Cai Erkang, serialized *Yesou puyan* for the next two and a half years, starting on June 10, 1882. This tactic, which the *Hubao* had learned from Shenbaoguan’s serialization of *Xinxi xiantan*, greatly increased its circulation.¹⁹⁴

In January 1883, the Shenbaoguan finally published its own version of *Yesou puyan*. To enhance its status and improve its chances on the market place, the novel appeared with a preface by Ximin Shanqiao 西岷山樵, who claimed that his ancestor had actually been a good friend of the author, Xia Jingqu 夏敬渠. The Shenbaoguan sharpened its competitive edge by charging only one silver dollar, while the Biling Huizhenlou wanted six silver dollars for their prints.¹⁹⁵

These Shenbaoguan announcements promoted a public culture regarding novels. Book collectors were asked to share their possessions in the spirit of assisting in the dissemination and appreciation of the shared cultural heritage contained in these books; readers were asked to help locate copies by mobilizing their own network of friends; and those who had helped were publicly thanked in the pages of the paper.

The cultural standing of any given novel was also evoked through detailed information about its transmission history and its present rarity in the announcements. All its books, the company claimed, were based on

192 “Sou fang *Yesou puyan*.”

193 “Xinyin *Yesou puyan* chushou” 新印野叟曝言出售 [Newly printed *Yesou puyan* goes on sale], *Shenbao*, December 16, 1881; see Chen, “Dapo jiu pingheng de chushi huanjie,” 120.

194 See Chen, “Dapo jiu pingheng de chushi huanjie,” 120–121.

195 “Ji shou *Yesou puyan* xiaoyin” 寄售野叟曝言小引 [Small preface for the sale and mailing of *Yesou puyan*], *Shenbao*, January 24, 1883. The advertisement of the publication of *Yesou puyan* by Biling Huizhenlou, however, was published in the *Shenbao*, December 21, 1881.

manuscripts, rare editions, or were newly edited because available editions were too sloppy. If they were available and no new manuscripts or critical scholarship were forthcoming, the Shenbaoguan would not publish; examples of this included *Xiyou ji* and *Honglou meng*. For *Honglou meng*, the press chased—unsuccessfully—the novel’s original edition, which it claimed was the best and most complete, and was different from what was circulating at the time.¹⁹⁶

The information given in the announcements lent bibliophile stature to these editions, which are much sought after on the antique book market to this day, with original copies often fetching prices substantially exceeding RMB 1000. As we know from the multitude of library catalogs available today, it is clear that the Shenbaoguan was sometimes mistaken in thinking that a work had never been printed before or was not available anywhere in print at the time of publication. Examples of this are *Bisheng hua* and *Lin Lan Xiang*. One can accept the claim, however, that at least in Shanghai and Jiangnan, to the best of the company’s knowledge, these works were not available. The Shenbaoguan could thus justly say that it tried to make a contribution toward preserving and enriching China’s cultural heritage, much of which had been destroyed during the Taiping War.

Conclusions

This study has explored the material, social, market, and cultural conditions that prepared the novel genre for its development into one of the main platforms for reform issues of national importance after the failure of the court-sponsored reforms of 1898. It is no coincidence that Liang Qichao, the key figure in promoting the “new novel” or “new fiction” after his efforts at promoting these reforms had come to naught, included *Xinxi xiantan* as a “must read” Western book in his *Xixue shumu biao* 西學書目表 (List of books on Western learning);¹⁹⁷ that he published first a translation of a foreign (Japanese) novel before writing his own; that he introduced his own novel through an announcement in his newspapers; and that he announced in his new journal, *Xin xiaoshuo* 新小說 (The new novel), that he was “looking for new novels.” In this he was clearly influenced by the Shenbaoguan’s activities twenty-eight years earlier.¹⁹⁸

196 Zunwenge zhuren, “Sou Yesou puyan ji.”

197 Liang Qichao 梁啟超, *Xixue shumu biao* 西學書目表 [List of books on Western learning], in *Zhixue congshu* 質學叢書 (Wuchang: Zhixuehui, 1897), vol. 9, ch. 2, 3b.

198 Wen, “Shilun zaoqi Shenbaoguan,” 36.

Given the dominance of the Shenbaoguan publishing house in Shanghai in the late Qing Chinese-language world of novel-publishing, this study has focused on the company's role in establishing the material conditions for reform by making both older and new novels available in modestly priced high-quality metal font machine print as well as in equally high-quality lithograph editions.

The company challenged the Chinese elite's—pretended or real—social disdain for novels as lowbrow and the court's ban on them as morally lewd on two fronts: first, by claiming that novels had the potential to convey transculturally shared “civilizational” aspirations, relevant information about human behavior and social customs, and standards that were aligned with the classics; and second, by publishing rare older as well as unpublished new novels that upheld those standards while retaining their potential to entertain and therefore to be widely read.

The company used the national distribution network it developed for its newspaper, the *Shenbao*, to spread information about and appreciation for the books it published, and to encourage readers all over the country to buy these books. In the process it established a unified national book market that was anchored in the Shanghai International Settlement, but was able to serve the entire country. Locating the centre of the national book market in Shanghai protected it against court intervention, since the clauses in Chinese treaties with foreign countries allowed the in-land sale of commercial goods from the International Settlement.

The Shenbaoguan further enhanced the cultural standing of the novel by inserting it into a publishing program that was modeled on the deluxe prints from the imperial Wuying Palace workshop. At the same time it reconfigured the traditional canon by introducing to it works that included China's treaties with foreign countries, collections of model letters, innovative model texts for the imperial examinations, novels, and theater plays that had not been part of earlier canonical collections such as the *Four Treasuries*. It articulated claims for the inclusion of the novel into the canon through staggered forms of literary criticism and appreciation that were published in the Shenbaoguan's book announcements, in the characterizations of these works in the *Shumu*, and finally in the multiple paratexts that came with the publications of the novels themselves. These articulations offered aesthetic, ethical, and social categories and standards for the appreciation of good novels and added a theoretical layer to the cultural standing of the novel. In literary terms, the company came out in favor of writings in a “realist” and highly specific mode. For novels, the entertainment elements described as “stunning” or “extraordinary” were emphasized. The pervasive use of these key terms from *Shenbao* novel

announcements in later advertisements by other publishers well into the Republican period reveals the degree to which the Shenbaoguan criteria found general acceptance. This “realist” mode very prominently included satirical as well as allegorical writing. The same preference dominated the selection of images published in the company’s *Dianshizhai huabao*.

The company’s direction in all four realms—cultural standing of the novel, distribution network, print model, and aesthetic standards—was closely tied to its founder and manager Ernest Major. An English citizen, Major’s role is best described as that of a cultural broker who mediated between Chinese and “Western” cultural and social sensibilities in his publications while remaining firmly committed to the commercial viability of his print products. On the print side, his company used Western-style metal fonts and printing machines, but emulated the imperial Wuying Palace deluxe editions. On the social side, it maintained that novels could convey attitudes and values that were appreciated in any civilized environment including the West. At the same time, the Shenbaoguan highlighted the critical function of literary works by publishing Chinese as well as Western political and social satires and avoiding the publication of fictional works that eulogized practices (such as foot-binding) and attitudes (such as blind submission to superiors) that it deemed to be out-of-sync with modernity or with the spirit of the time.

Culturally, the aesthetic standards of writing with “realist” specificity and creating “stunning” and “entertaining” features were articulated as being transculturally shared. The selection of a foreign novel as the first novel the company published did not reflect a program of further publications, but the initial assumption that works fitting these standards were unavailable in China and that therefore recourse to translations was necessary to introduce these standards. Once Major discovered the satirical novel *Rulin waishi* (and the dramatic market potential of this line of publication), the company switched track altogether to publish Chinese novels. It maintained, however, its criteria of selection as long as Major was in charge (and it completely stopped publishing novels soon after he left). The preference for indigenous sources of modernity (to use a different terminology) seemed to be consistent with Major’s other publishing projects. The company thrived because its readers responded to his commitment to a productive relationship between strands of Chinese cultural traditions and the requirements of the coming modern world.

In summation, the groundwork for the new role which the advocacy novel assumed after the turn of the twentieth century—a role for which Liang Qichao and others quite naturally claimed Western and Japanese models—was laid by the Shenbaoguan. It is clear that this publishing house was guided by

a consistent vision that was instrumental, among other contributions by this publisher, in helping to establish the cultural and social legitimacy of the novel in modern times, and in creating conditions for the eventual rise of the genre to become the dominant literary form of twentieth-century China.

Appendix I: Fictional works published by the Shenbaoguan, 1872–1890

The principle of selection for what might be considered a novel is based on the three categories established in the *Shumu* discussed above: “new and extraordinary vernacular works”, “linked-chapter novels”; and “new works of opera”. The list includes translations published in the *Shenbao*; it does not include shorter fictional works published in the Shenbaoguan literary journals *Yinghuan suoji*, *Huanying suoji*, and *Siming suoji*, except for the translation of *Xinxi xiantan*, which was also published in a book edition. The timeline ranges from the founding of the Shenbaoguan in 1872 to 1890, one year after Major’s departure. Sources: *Shenbao* announcements, supplemented by Chen Dakang, *Zhongguo jindai xiaoshuo shiliao*: *Shenbao xiaoshuo shiliao nianbian* 中國近代小說史料年編¹ (entries identified with**). Information provided in the table, if not marked **, is from the *Shenbao* announcements, the *Shumu*, or the *Shumu xiji*.

Year of printing or <i>Shenbao</i> announcement	Title	Author	Publication information	Print-type	Chapters	Price
1872						
May 21 / Tongzhi 同治 11, Fourth month)	<i>Tanying xiaolu</i> 《談瀛小錄》 (Notes on countries overseas)	(Ying 英) Siweifute 斯威夫特 (The Englishman Jonathan Swift)	Translation of “A Voyage to Lilliput” from <i>Gulliver’s Travels</i> . <i>Shenbao</i> , serialized May 21, 24.			

1 Chen Dakang 陳大康, “Zhongguo jindai xiaoshuo shiliao: Shenbao xiaoshuo shiliao nianbian” 中國近代小說史料年編 [Historical reference materials on the modern Chinese novel—chronology of historical materials on the novel from the Shenbao], *Wenzue yichan wangluo ban* 文學遺產 網絡版, http://wxye.literature.org.cn/journals_article.aspx?id=424 [Accessed 26. July 2015].

Year of printing or <i>Shenbao</i> announcement	Title	Author	Publication information	Print-type	Chapters	Price
May 28 / Fourth month	<i>Yishui qishi nian</i> 《一睡七十年》 (Asleep for seventy years)	[Washington Irving]	Translation of "Rip Van Winkle." <i>Shenbao</i> , May 28.			
May 31 / Fourth month	<i>Naisu guo qiwen</i> 《乃蘇國奇聞》 (Story of the Greek slave)	[Frederick Marryat]	Translation of <i>The Pacha of Many Tales. Shenbao</i> , serialized May 31, June 6, 7, 11, 14, 15.			
1873						
January 15 / Tongzhi 11, Twelfth month	<i>Xinxi xiantan</i> 《新夕閒談》 (Idle talk mornings and nights)	[Edmund Bulwer-Lytton]	Translation of <i>Night and Morning. Yinghuan suoji</i> 瀛寰瑣記 (Jade splinters from the entire universe), serialized Jan. 15–Dec. 19, 1874.			

Year of printing or <i>Shenbao</i> announcement	Title	Author	Publication information	Print-type	Chapters	Price
1874						
January 16 / Tongzhi 12, Eleventh month	<i>Xinxi xiantan</i> , shang juan 《听夕閒談》上卷 (<i>Night and Morning</i>) pt. 1		Monograph edition, first part. Identified as an English novel (<i>Yingguo</i> <i>xiaoshuo</i> 英國小說) on front page.			250 wen 文
Nov. 5 / Tongzhi 13, Ninth month	(Xinyin) <i>Rulin waishi</i> 新印《儒林外史》 (Newly printed <i>The</i> <i>Scholars</i>)	[Wu Jingzi 吳敬梓 (1701–1754)]	With a postface by Mr. Jin from Shangyuan (Shangyuan Jinjun 上 元金君)	Lead font (<i>qianyin</i> 鉛 印); deluxe edition (<i>xiuzhen</i> <i>ban</i> 袖珍 板)	56 chapters (<i>hui</i> 回)	5 <i>jiao</i> 角
December / Eleventh month	** <i>Xinxi xiantan</i> 《听夕閒談》 (<i>Night and Morning</i>) pt. 2		Monograph edition, pt. 2. With a preface by Lishao jushi 蠡勺居士.		2 fascicles (<i>ce</i> 冊)	

Year of printing or <i>Shenbao</i> announcement	Title	Author	Publication information	Print-type	Chapters	Price
1875						
April 12 / Guangxu 光緒 1, Third month	<i>Dunku lanyan</i> 《遁窟調言》 (Loose words from a cave of retreat)	Wang Ziquan 王紫詮 (王 韜 Wang Tao)	Included in <i>shuobu</i> 說 部 category.		12 chapters (<i>juan</i> 卷)	
May 20 / Fourth month	(Chongyin) <i>Rulin</i> <i>waishi</i> (重印) 《儒林外史》 (Reprint edition of <i>The Scholars</i>)	[Wu Jingzi 吳敬梓 (1701–1754)]	With a postface by Mr. Jin from Shangyuan.			5 <i>jiao</i>
September 3 / Eighth month	<i>Xinxi xiantan</i> (<i>Night and Morning</i>)		Complete monograph edition.	Lead font	Boxed (<i>dingle</i> 言訂 冊), with three vol- umes (<i>ben</i> 本) in each box.	4 <i>jiao</i>
December 10 / Eleventh month	<i>Kuaxin bian</i> 《快心編》 (The teaser)	[Tianhua caizi 天花 才子; (early Qing)]	Original work found in Japan.	Lead font	10 chapters each in vols 1 and 2, 12 in vol. 3.	5 <i>jiao</i>

Year of printing or <i>Shenbao</i> announcement	Title	Author	Publication information	Print-type	Chapters	Price
December 31 / Guangxu 1, Twelfth month	<i>Xiyou bu</i> 《西遊補》 (Supplement to <i>Journey to the West</i>)	[Dong Yue 董說; (late Ming)]		Lead font	16 chapters	2 <i>jiao</i>
1876						
Feb. 10 / Guangxu 2, First month	<i>Yinxue xuan suibi</i> 《印雪軒隨筆》 (Brush notes from the snow-covered hut)	<i>Yu Jian Huafeng weng</i> 俞樾 花封翁 (Yu Hongjian 俞鴻漸)	In <i>shuobu</i> category. Old print edition no longer available; can be purchased at <i>Shenbao</i> or at Shanghai <i>Minbao</i> 民報.	Lead font	4 fascicles	2 <i>jiao</i>
June 10 / Fifth month	<i>Kechuang xianhua</i> 《客窓閒話》 (Gossip of a traveler)	Chen Zizhuang 陳子莊	In <i>shuobu</i> category. Listed in <i>Xin yin gezhong shuji chushou</i> 新印各種書籍出售 (Newly printed titles of different kinds on sale).		4 volumes	2 <i>jiao</i> and 5 <i>fen</i>
July 3 / Fifth month	<i>Yongxian zhai biji</i> 《庸閑齋筆記》 (Brush notes from the Yongxian Studio)	Chen Zizhuang 陳子莊	In <i>shuobu</i> category.		4 fascicles	1 <i>jiao</i> and 5 <i>fen</i>

Year of printing or <i>Shenbao</i> announcement	Title	Author	Publication information	Print-type	Chapters	Price
August 5 / Sixth month	<i>Jianwen xubi</i> 《見聞續筆》 (More [stories] about things seen and heard)	Qi Yuxi 齊玉溪	In <i>shuobu</i> category.	Lead font	24 scrolls in 8 fascicles	4 <i>jiao</i>
August 17 / Sixth month	<i>Yinhuang yicao</i> 《螢窗異草》 (Curious jottings from studio lit by fireflies). Also known as: <i>Li-aozhai sheng gao</i> 《聊齋剩稿》 (Remaining manuscript from [<i>Strange Tales from the Liao-zhai Studio</i>] or <i>Xu Liao-zhai zhiyi</i> 《續聊志異》 (Sequel to <i>Strange Tales from the Liao-zhai Studio</i>))	[Changbai haoge zi 長白浩歌子 (Yi Qinglan 伊慶蘭)]	In <i>shuobu</i> category.	Lead font	4 fascicles	2 <i>jiao</i>

Year of printing or <i>Shenbao</i> announcement	Title	Author	Publication information	Print-type	Chapters	Price
November 17 / Tenth month	<i>Honglou meng bu</i> 《紅樓夢補》 (Supplement to <i>The Dream of the Red Chamber</i>)	Guichuzi 歸鋤子		Lead font	48 chapters in 10 fascicles	5 <i>jiao</i>
December 5 / Tenth month	<i>Xinyu</i> 《語新》 (New tales)	Qian Xing 錢醒 (Qusong 蘧松)	In <i>shuobu</i> category. Identified as a “manuscript from a deceased author” (<i>yigao</i> 遺稿).		2 fascicles	1 <i>jiao</i> and 2 <i>fen</i>
December 14 / Eleventh month	<i>Xiantan huayu</i> 《偃壇花雨》 (Blossoms and rain from the immortal’s altar)	Luxin xianshi 縷馨僊史	First edition. Published in <i>Yishu si zhong</i> 《異書四種》 (Four works on the strange), vol. 1. Includes female ghost stories.	Lead font; deluxe edition (<i>juzhen ban</i> 聚珍版)	Total of 2 fascicles	Price for set: 2 <i>jiao</i>

Year of printing or <i>Shenbao</i> announcement	Title	Author	Publication information	Print-type	Chapters	Price
December 14 / Eleventh month	<i>Biluo zazhi</i> 《碧落雜誌》 (Miscellaneous records of the heavenly realm)		First edition. Published in <i>Yishu si zhong</i> , vol. 2. The <i>Shenbao</i> announcement notes that the work “features tales of immortals and fairies” (<i>Ji xian xiang ji zhi zuo</i> 乩仙降乩之作); written in the style of poetry on “encounters with the supernatural” (<i>youxian shi</i> 遊仙詩).	Lead font; deluxe edition (<i>juzhen ban</i>)	Total of 2 volumes	Price for set: 2 <i>jiao</i>
December 14	<i>Xuechuang xinyu</i> 《雪窓新語》 (New sayings from the snow-lit window)	Xia Zhiting 夏芝庭	First edition. Published in <i>Yishu si zhong</i> , vol. 3.	Lead font; deluxe edition (<i>juzhen ban</i>)	Total of 2 volumes	Price for set: 2 <i>jiao</i>

Year of printing or <i>Shenbao</i> announcement	Title	Author	Publication information	Print-type	Chapters	Price
December 14	<p><i>Sanshi liu sheng fen-duo tuyong</i> 《三十六聲粉鐸圖 詠》 (Picture and poem album of thirty six comedian plays)</p>	<p>Yi Shoumei 宣瘦梅</p>	<p>First edition. Published in <i>Yishu si zhong</i>, vol. 4. The album is a collection of thirty-six fragments highlighting the popular clown role in scenes from <i>Kun</i> opera. Half of these plays originated from operas of the Yuan or Ming dynasties. The Shenbaoguan edition does not contain the drawings, but only poems and narratives.</p>	<p>Lead font; deluxe edition (<i>juzhen ban</i>)</p>	<p>Total of 2 volumes</p>	<p>Price for set: 2 <i>jiao</i></p>
December 28 / Eleventh month	<p><i>Ying tan</i> 《影談》 (Shadow talk)</p>	<p>[Guan Shihao 管世灝]</p>	<p>First edition announcement: “The imagination that informs this work and the cleverness of its language make it almost unathomable.” (是書設想之奇，措詞之妙，幾不可以思議)</p>	<p>Lead font</p>	<p>2 fascicles</p>	<p>1 <i>jiao</i> and 5 <i>fen</i></p>

Year of printing or <i>Shenbao</i> announcement	Title	Author	Publication information	Print-type	Chapters	Price
1877						
Jan. 12 / Guangxi 2, Eleventh month	<i>Liuhé neiwai suoyan</i> 《六合内外琐言》 (Tidbits from within and beyond the four quarters)	[Tu Shen屠 紳]			12 scrolls	4 <i>jiao</i>
March 7 / Guangxu 3, First month	<i>Jinghua shuiyue</i> 《鏡花水月》 (Flower reflected in the mirror and the moon in the water)		In <i>shuobu</i> category. Listed in <i>Shumu</i> .		4 volumes	2 <i>jiao</i>
April 11 / Second month	<i>Hou Shuihu</i> 《後水滸》 (Sequel to <i>Water Margin</i>)	[Qinglianshi zhuren青蓮 室主人]	<i>Shenbao</i> found rare edi- tion and printed it after careful editing.	Lead font	40 chapters in 10 fasci- cles	5 <i>jiao</i>
May 7 / Third month	<i>Shuihu houzhuan</i> 《水滸後傳》 (Sequel to <i>Water Margin</i>)	Chen Chen 陳忱	Listed in "New books on sale."			5 <i>jiao</i>

Year of printing or <i>Shenbao</i> announcement	Title	Author	Publication information	Print-type	Chapters	Price
May 16 / Sixth month	<i>Chongming manlu</i> 《蟲鳴漫錄》 (Records of chirping insects)	Maoyuan 茂 Caihengzi 茂 苑采衡子 (Qing)	In <i>shuobu</i> category. Listed in <i>Shumu</i> .		2 fascicles	1 <i>jiao</i> and 5 <i>fen</i>
May 22 / Fourth month	<i>Zhiyi xubian</i> 《志異續編》 (Sequel to <i>Strange Tales [from the Liaozhai Studio]</i>). Also known as <i>Li-aozhai xubian</i> 《聊齋續編》 (Sequel to <i>Strange Tales from the Liaozhai Studio</i>)	Song Yong 宋永岳 yue 宋永岳 (Qing)	Book sent to Shenbaoguan by Baoyuelou zhuren 寶月樓主人.	Lead font	8 fascicles	3 <i>jiao</i> and 5 <i>fen</i>
July 10 / Fifth month	<i>Yingchuang yicao erji</i> 《螢窗異草二集》 (Curious jottings from the studio lit by fireflies, second collection)	Changbai 蒼白 haoge zi (Yin Qinglan)	Re-edited. Manuscript offered by Wulin Ruoguxiansheng 武林若谷先生.		4 fascicles	2 <i>jiao</i>

Year of printing or <i>Shenbao</i> announcement	Title	Author	Publication information	Print-type	Chapters	Price
July 19 / Sixth month	<i>Lin Lan Xiang</i> 《林蘭香》 (Lin, Lan, and Xiang)	Suiyuan xiashi 隨緣 下士 (early Qing)	Announcement tells how the Shenbaoguan initially found a copy of the manuscript that was not complete enough for publication; soon another copy was obtained.	Lead font; deluxe edition (<i>juzhen ban</i>)	64 chapters in 8 volumes	4 <i>jiao</i> and 5 <i>fen</i>
July 31 / Sixth month	<i>Fanhun xiang</i> 《返魂香》 (Life-returning incense)	Yi Shoumei 宜瘦梅 from Tianchang 天長	Play in forty acts (<i>chu</i> 齣)		2 fascicles	2 <i>jiao</i>
August 7 / Sixth month	<i>Yeyu qiudeng lu</i> 《夜雨秋燈錄》 (Record of rainy nights under the autumn lamp)	Yi Shoumei from Tianchang	In <i>shuobu</i> category. Earlier, on May 2, Major had published a letter to Fufeng pingman 復風萍漫士, thanking him for sending his friend's manuscript for publication.		8 volumes	4 <i>jiao</i> and 4 <i>fen</i>

Year of printing or <i>Shenbao</i> announcement	Title	Author	Publication information	Print-type	Chapters	Price
August 28 / Seventh month	<i>Yingchuang yicao sanji</i> 《瑩窗異草三集》 (Curious jottings from the studio lit by fireflies, third collection)				4 fascicles	2 <i>jiao</i>
October 5 / Eighth month	<i>Suiyuan suoji</i> 《隨園瑣記》 (Miscellaneous records of Sui garden)	Yuan Xiongfū 袁翔甫 (Yuan Zuzhi 袁祖志)	First edition. Published in <i>Xu yishu si zhong</i> 《續異書四種》 (Sequel to <i>Four Works on the Strange</i>), vol. 1.	Lead font; deluxe edition (<i>juzhen ban</i>)	1 volume	Price for set: 2 <i>jiao</i> and 5 <i>fen</i>
October 5 / Eighth month	<i>Jingxi ji</i> 《驚喜集》 (A volume of pleasant surprises)	Cheng Lanqi 程蘭畦 (Cheng Wan 程畹)	In <i>xiaoshuo</i> category. First edition. Published in <i>Xu yishu si zhong</i> , vol. 2.	Lead font; deluxe edition (<i>juzhen ban</i>)	1 volume	Price for set: 2 <i>jiao</i> and 5 <i>fen</i>
October 5 / Eighth month	<i>Xiangyin lou bintan</i> 《香飲樓賓談》 (Chatter of the guest from the Xiangyin tower)	Lu Changchun 陸長春	In <i>shuobu</i> category. First edition. Published in <i>Xu yishu si zhong</i> , vol. 3.	Lead font; deluxe edition (<i>juzhen ban</i>)	1 volume	Price for set: 2 <i>jiao</i> and 5 <i>fen</i>

Year of printing or <i>Shenbao</i> announcement	Title	Author	Publication information	Print-type	Chapters	Price
October 5 / Eighth month	<i>Gu li</i> 《姁律》 (Rules regarding [female] jealousy)	Guangmo sanren 廣漠 散人	First edition. Two works in one volume (together with <i>Gui li</i> 《閩律》 [Rules regarding women]). Published in <i>Xu yishu si zhong</i> , vol. 4.	Lead font; deluxe edition (<i>juzhen ban</i>)	1 volume	Price for set: 2 <i>jiao</i> and 5 <i>fen</i>
October 5 / Eighth month	<i>Gui li</i> 《閩律》 (Rules regarding women)	Furong wai-shi 芙蓉外史	First edition. Two works in one volume (together with <i>Gu li</i>). Published in <i>Xu yishu si zhong</i> , vol. 4.	Lead font; deluxe edition (<i>juzhen ban</i>)	1 volume	Price for set: 2 <i>jiao</i> and 5 <i>fen</i>
October 20 / Ninth month	<i>Nü caizi</i> 《女子》 (Women of genius)	Yuanhu yan-shui 鷺湖煙水 散人		In the style of a deluxe edition (<i>fang ju-zhen ban</i> 仿聚珍版)	12 scrolls	2 <i>jiao</i>

Year of printing or <i>Shenbao</i> announcement	Title	Author	Publication information	Print-type	Chapters	Price
1878						
March 22 / Guangxu 4, Second month	<i>Taiwan waiji</i> 《臺灣外記》 (Unofficial record of Taiwan)	Jiang Risheng 江 日升	Announcement de- scribes the style of the work as “imitating the linked-chapter format” (<i>fang zhanghui ti</i> 仿章 回體).	Lead font	30 scrolls	3 <i>jiao</i> and 5 <i>fen</i>
April 15 / Third month	<i>Xue Yue Mei [zhuan]</i> 《陳朗梅[傳]》 ([Biographies of] Snow, Moon and Plum)	[Chen Lang 陳朗, 18th century]		Lead font	50 chapters in 8 volumes	3 <i>jiao</i> and 5 <i>fen</i>
April 21 / Third month	<i>Fusheng liuji</i> 《浮生六記》 (Six sketches from a floating life)	Shen San- bai 沈三白 (Shen Fu 沈 復)	First edition. Published in <i>Duwu'an congchao</i> 《獨悟庵叢抄》 (Du- wuan collection), vol. 1.	Lead font	1 volume	Price for col- lection: 2 <i>jiao</i>
April 21 / Third month	<i>Jingting yishi</i> 《鏡亭軼事》 (Anecdotes [on things seen and heard] by Jingting)	Cheng Jingting 程 鏡亭	First edition. Published in <i>Duwuan congchao</i> , vol. 2.	Lead font	1 volume	Price for col- lection: 2 <i>jiao</i>

Year of printing or <i>Shenbao</i> announcement	Title	Author	Publication information	Print-type	Chapters	Price
April 21 / Third month	<i>Tianshan qingbian</i> 《天山清辨》 (Pure debates at Tianshan)	Can Tongzi 參同子	First edition. Published in <i>Duwu'an congchao</i> , vol. 3.	Lead font	1 volume	Price for collection: 2 <i>jiao</i>
April 21 / Third month	<i>Wenjian zalu</i> 《聞見雜錄》 (Miscellaneous jottings on things seen and heard)	Dong Lizi 東 籬子 (Chai-sang 柴桑)	First edition. Published in <i>Duwu'an congchao</i> , vol. 4	Lead font	1 volume	Price for collection: 2 <i>jiao</i>
May 3 / Fourth month	<i>Wenjian yici</i> 《聞見異辭》 (Strange tales as seen and heard)		Manuscript found and sent to Shenbaoguan by Zhexi Xingxinzi 浙西惺心子. Major thanked him on March 9.	Lead font	2 volumes	1 <i>jiao</i> and 5 <i>fen</i>
June 14 / Fifth month	<i>Shanzhong yixi hua</i> 《山中一夕話》 (Stories for an evening in the mountains)		In <i>shuobu</i> category. Original too bulky. Shenbaoguan made a small edition easy to travel with. Described in the announcement as “playful jottings” (<i>youxu bimo</i> 遊戲筆墨).		4 fascicles	2 <i>jiao</i> and 5 <i>fen</i>

Year of printing or <i>Shenbao</i> announcement	Title	Author	Publication information	Print-type	Chapters	Price
August 12 / Seventh month	<i>Jiaochou ji</i> 《澆愁集》 (Anthology of drowning one's sorrow)	Zou Hanfei 鄒翰飛 (Zou Tao 鄒韜)	First edition.	Lead font	4 volumes	2 <i>jiao</i>
September 26 / Ninth month	<i>Er you</i> 《耳郵》 (Stories once heard)	Yang Zhu 羊朱 翁 (Yu Yue 俞樾)	Described in the announcement as "Best of the novelist's craft" (<i>xiaoshuojia zhi shang sheng</i> 小說家之上乘)	Lead font	2 fascicles	1 <i>jiao</i> and 5 <i>fen</i>
November 5 / Tenth month	<i>Ting shi</i> 《程史》 (Historical [stories] written at my bed table)	Yueyi zhai 岳亦齋	Described in the announcement as "stories from the Song period" (<i>Songdai yiwen gushi</i> 宋代遺聞故實).		4 volumes	2 <i>jiao</i>
November 22 / Tenth month	<i>Xiliu zhitian</i> 《昔柳摭談》 (Anecdotes from the past)	Feng Qifeng 馮起鳳 (Qing)]	In <i>shuobu</i> category. Printed by commission for famine relief		2 volumes	2 <i>jiao</i> and 5 <i>fen</i>
December 14 / Eleventh month	<i>Hedian</i> 《何典》 (From what idiom?)	Zhang Nan-zhuang 張南莊		Lead font	10 chapters	1 <i>jiao</i> and 5 <i>fen</i>

Year of printing or <i>Shenbao</i> announcement	Title	Author	Publication information	Print-type	Chapters	Price
1879						
January 9 / Twelfth month	<i>Baimen xinliu ji</i> 《白門新柳記》 (New record of the willows [courtesans] at Nanjing)		New print of a book out of circulation.	Lead font		1 <i>jiao</i>
February 8 / Guangxu 5, First month	<i>Qinglou meng</i> 《青樓夢》 (The dream of the green chamber)	Dongting Mozhen shanren 洞庭 慕真山人 (Yu Da 俞達)	First edition.	Lead font	64 chapters in 10 volumes	5 <i>jiao</i>
May 3 / Third month	<i>Xiaoshi</i> 《笑史》 (The history of jokes)	Jue Laizi 覺來子	First edition.		2 volumes	1 <i>jiao</i> and 5 <i>fen</i>
November 5 / Tenth month	<i>Xiaoxiao lu</i> 《笑笑錄》 (Pearly of laughter)	<i>Duyiwo tushi</i> 獨逸窩 退士	Original edition.		4 volumes	3 <i>jiao</i>
November 19 / Tenth month	<i>Yin shi</i> 《蟬史》 (The history of [the book-eating worm] Yin)	[Leiluo shanfang zhuren 磊柯山房主 人 (Tu Shen 屠紳)]	Reprint edition.		20 scrolls in 6 volumes	3 <i>jiao</i> and 5 <i>fen</i>

Year of printing or <i>Shenbao</i> announcement	Title	Author	Publication information	Print-type	Chapters	Price
1880						
January 15 / Twelfth month	<i>Chayu tanhui</i> 《茶餘談薈》 (Tales of the sensational told after tea)	Jian nan shanren 見南 山人	In <i>shuobu</i> category. The book was out of circulation.		2 scrolls	1 <i>jiao</i> and 2 <i>fen</i>
February 15 Guangxu 6, First month	<i>Huifang lu</i> 《繪芳錄》 (A record of rich fragrance)	Xileng ye- qiao 西冷野樵	First edition. Identified as a “linked-chapter novel.” (<i>zhanghui xiaoshuo</i> 章回小說).	Lead font	8 scrolls with 80 chapters in 16 volumes	8 <i>jiao</i>
February 17 / First month	<i>(Xinyin) Yeyu qiudeng lu</i> (新印)《夜雨秋燈錄》(Newly printed <i>Record of Rainy Nights under the Autumn Lamp</i>)	Xuan Shou- mei 宣瘦梅	“Linked-chapter novel.”		16 fascicles	8 <i>jiao</i>

Year of printing or <i>Shenbao</i> announcement	Title	Author	Publication information	Print-type	Chapters	Price
March 9 / First month	<i>Hua Ying shoubu</i> <i>cuoyao</i> 《華英說部撮要》 (The Chinese-English Speaker)	Luo Bodan 羅伯聃 [Robert Thom (1807– 1846)]	Chinese-English literary text excerpts in translation, produced by an officer from the British embassy. It was first designed for Westerners to study northern Chinese. The announcement states that it is for both the study of English by the Chinese and the study of Chinese by Westerners. Text based on <i>The Dream of the Red Chamber</i> and <i>Familily Heirloom</i> (<i>Chuanjiaobao</i> 傳家寶).		1 fascicle	4 <i>jiao</i>
October 17 / Ninth month	<i>Yeyu qiudeng xulu</i> 《夜雨秋燈續錄》 (Sequel to <i>Record of Rainy Nights under the Autumn Lamp</i>)	Xuan Shoumei 宣瘦梅	First edition. Manuscript obtained in February.		8 scrolls with 155 sections (<i>pian</i> 篇)	4 <i>jiao</i> and 5 <i>fen</i>

Year of printing or <i>Shenbao</i> announcement	Title	Author	Publication information	Print-type	Chapters	Price
December 9 / Eleventh month	<i>Hou Xiyou ji</i> 《後西遊記》 (Sequel to <i>Journey to the West</i>)		With “commentary” (<i>pingdian</i> 評點) by Tianhua caizi 天花才子. Careful new edition made because current prints had too many mistakes.	Movable type print (<i>fangyong huozi ban</i> 仿用活字版)	8 volumes	5 <i>jiao</i>
December 18 / Eleventh month	<i>Yijian zhi</i> 《夷堅志》 (Record of the listener)	[Hong Mai 洪邁, (1123–1202)]			Complete version (<i>zuben</i> 足本)	2.5 <i>yuan</i> 元
December 29 / Eleventh month	<i>Jinghua yuan</i> 《鏡花緣》 (Flowers in the mirror)	Mr. Li 李 from Beijing 北平 [Li Ruzhen 李汝珍 (~1763–~1830)]	Announced as a “novel” (<i>xiaoshuo</i> 小說).	Reprint with movable type (<i>huozi ban chongyin</i> 活字版重印)	12 volumes	6 <i>jiao</i>

Year of printing or <i>Shenbao</i> announcement	Title	Author	Publication information	Print-type	Chapters	Price
1881						
March 16 / Guangxu 7, Second month	(<i>Chongyin</i>) <i>Rulin waishi</i> (重印) 《儒林外史》 (Reprint edition of <i>The Scholars</i>)	[Wu Jingzi 吴敬梓 (1701–1754)]		Lead font	50 chapters in 10 volumes	6 <i>jiao</i>
March 22 / Second month	<i>Ernü yingxiong zhuan</i> 《兒女英雄傳》 (A tale of heroes and lovers)	[Wenkang 文康, active 1842–1851]	First published in 1878 by Juzhen tang 聚珍堂 in Beijing.	Lead font	40 chapters in 16 volumes	8 <i>jiao</i>
April 27 / Third month	<i>Xiao doupeng</i> 《小豆棚》 ([Tales told under] the small bean shed)	Zeng Qiru 曾七如	According to the announcement the work is even better than <i>Doupeng xianhua</i> 《豆瓣閒話》 (Idle chatter [told under] the small bean shed).		16 scrolls	3 <i>jiao</i> and 5 <i>fen</i>

Year of printing or <i>Shenbao</i> announcement	Title	Author	Publication information	Print-type	Chapters	Price
July 24 / Sixth month	<i>Xihu shiyi</i> 《西湖拾遺》 (Anecdotes from the West Lake)		Illustrated edition.	Photolithography on Lian-shizhi 連史紙 bamboo pulp-based paper	44 chapters in 12 volumes	6 <i>jiao</i>
1882						
January 29 / Twelfth month	<i>Bisheng hua</i> [<i>tanci</i>] 《筆生花》[彈詞] (The literate flower [a ballad])	Xinru nüshi 心如女史 from Huaiyin 淮陰	According to the announcement by Major, an original edition based on a manuscript.		32 chapters in 16 volumes	1 <i>yuan</i> and 4 <i>jiao</i>
December 13 / Guangxu 8, Eleventh month	<i>Sanguo yanyi quantu</i> 《三國演義全圖》 (Fully illustrated <i>Three Kingdoms</i>). Also listed as <i>Quantu Sanguo yanyi</i> 《全圖三國演義》 (<i>The Three Kingdoms</i> , fully illustrated)		Reprint of old edition with 140 original illustrations. Price reduced to 1 <i>yuan</i> 5 <i>jiao</i> in May 1886 to compete with new Tongwenguan edition.	Lithograph (<i>shiyin</i> 石印)	8 volumes in 2 separate casings (<i>han</i> 函)	2 <i>yuan</i> and 4 <i>jiao</i>

Year of printing or <i>Shenbao</i> announcement	Title	Author	Publication information	Print-type	Chapters	Price
1883						
January 24 / Twelfth month	<i>Yésou puyan</i> 《野叟曝言》 (A rustic's idle talk)		Printed and distributed by the Shenbao-owned Shenchang 申昌 bookstore on commission.	Reduced size movable font edition; Lead font	10 volumes	1 yuan
February 17 / Guangxu 9, First month	<i>(Zengkan) Honglou meng tuyong</i> 增刊《紅樓夢圖詠》 (Illustrated album with poems on the [characters of] <i>The Dream of the Red Chamber</i> , enlarged edition)	[Gai Qi 改琦 (1774–1829)]	Original album very rare. Lyrics with illustrations of <i>Honglou meng</i> characters. Lyrics by Huaqingshan shannong 華青山農, illustrations by Huating Gai Qixiang [Gai Qi] jushi 華亭改七鄉居士, with 120 illustrations of the individual beauties added by Wang Yunjie 王雲階 from Chengjiang 澄江.	Reduced size (<i>suoyin</i> 縮印) photolithography (<i>zhaoxiang shiyingfa</i> 照相石印法)	2 volumes	8 jiao

Year of printing or <i>Shenbao</i> announcement	Title	Author	Publication information	Print-type	Chapters	Price
June 27 / Fifth month	<i>Dangkou zhi</i> 《蕩寇志》 (Quell the bandits)	Yu Zhonghua 俞仲華 (Yu Wanchun 俞萬春 [?-1849])		Lead font	70 chapters in 18 fascicles	1 <i>yuan</i>
September 11 / Eighth month	<i>Shuihu zhuan</i> 《水滸傳》 (Water margin)		Newly corrected edition. In the <i>Shenbao</i> announcement, signed Shenbaoguan zhu 申報館主, of September 16, the work was identified as <i>Zheng xu Shuihu zhuan</i> 《正續水滸傳》 (<i>Water Margin</i> , original work plus sequel).	Lead font	10 volumes	5 <i>jiao</i>
September 25 / Eighth month	<i>Fengyue meng</i> 《風月夢》 (Dreams of the wind and the moon)	Hanshang mengren 邢上蒙人	Announcement by Shenbaoguan zhu 申報館主.	Lead font	32 chapters	3 <i>jiao</i>

Year of printing or <i>Shenbao</i> announcement	Title	Author	Publication information	Print-type	Chapters	Price
December 10 / Eleventh month	(<i>Chongyin</i>) <i>Sanbao taijian xiyang ji tongshu yanji</i> (重印)《三寶大監西洋記通俗演義》 (Reprint edition of <i>The Record of the Eunuch [Zheng He's] Journey to the Western Seas</i>)		Announcement by Shenbaoguan zhuren 申報館主人.	Lead font.	100 chapters in 20 scrolls	6 <i>jiao</i>
1884						
May 15 / Guangxu 10, Fourth month	<i>Honglou fumeng</i> 《紅樓復夢》 (Return of <i>The Dream of the Red Chamber</i>)	[Chen Shaohai 陳少海 (late 18th century)]	Announcement by Shenbaoguan zhuren 申報館主人.	Movable type	10 volumes	7 <i>jiao</i>
August 4 / Sixth month	<i>Cizhong renyu</i> 《此中人語》 (Wonders told by an insider)	Cheng Zhixiang 程趾祥	Announced by Shenbaoguan zhuren 申報館主人 as a "novel" (<i>xiaoshuo</i>).		6 chapters in 1 volume	8 <i>fen</i>

Year of printing or <i>Shenbao</i> announcement	Title	Author	Publication information	Print-type	Chapters	Price
1885						
August 16 / Guangxu 11, Seventh month	(<i>Chongyin</i>) <i>Qinglou meng</i> (重印)《青樓夢》 (Reprint edition of <i>Dream of the Green Chamber</i>)	Muzhen shanren 慕真山人	First edition had sold out.		60 chapters in 10 volumes	5 <i>jiao</i>
1886						
June 26 / Guangxu 12, Fifth month	(<i>Xuyin</i>) <i>Yesou pu yan</i> (續印)《野叟曝言》 (Continued printing of <i>A Rustic's Idle Talk</i>)		Dianshizhai small format edition.		10 volumes	1 <i>yuan</i>
October 18 / Ninth month	(<i>Xinyin</i>) <i>Sanyi bitan</i> (新印)《三異筆談》 (Newly printed <i>Brush Notes on the Three Strange [Phenomena]</i>)	Xu Xiao'ou 許小歐 (Zhongyuan 仲元)	Reprint of an obtained original edition.		2 volumes	1 <i>jiao</i> and 5 <i>fen</i>

Year of printing or <i>Shenbao</i> announcement	Title	Author	Publication information	Print-type	Chapters	Price
November 27 / Eleventh month	<i>(Chongyin) Ying-chuang yicao</i> (重印)《螢窗異草初集》 (Reprint edition of <i>Curious jottings from the Studio Lit by Fire-flies</i> , first collection)		First edition contains three volumes. The first volume had sold out.		4 volumes	2 <i>jiao</i>
December 16 / Eleventh month	<i>Zengxiang quantu Dongzhou lieguo zhi</i> 《增像全圖東周列國志》 (Fully illustrated <i>History of the Kingdoms of Eastern Zhou</i>)	Commentary (<i>pingdian</i> 評點) by Cai Yuanfang 蔡元放	No price given yet; readers are asked to come to the Dianshizhai Studio to have a look at the sample.	Lithograph		
1887						
August 24 / Guangxu 13, Seventh month	<i>Songyin xulu</i> 《淞隱續錄續錄》 (Sequel to <i>Random Jottings of Hidden [Tales] of Shanghai</i>)	Tiannan dunsou 天南遁叟 (Wang Tao 王韜)	Listed in <i>shuobu</i> category. Illustrated in part by Wu Youru 吳友如. Announcement by Dianshizhai zhuren 點石齋主人 (Major).	Lithograph	4 fascicles	1 <i> yuan</i> and 2 <i>jiao</i>

Year of printing or <i>Shenbao</i> announcement	Title	Author	Publication information	Print-type	Chapters	Price
September 10 / Seventh month	(<i>Chongyin</i>) <i>Yeyu qiudeng lu</i> (重印)《夜雨秋燈錄》 (Reprint edition of <i>Record of Rainy Nights under the Autumn Lamp</i>)	Xuan Shoumei 宣瘦梅		Lead font	8 volumes	4 <i>jiao</i> and 5 <i>fen</i>
September 24 / Eighth month	(<i>Chongyin</i>) <i>Yingchuang yicao sanji</i> (重印)《螢窗異草三集》 (Reprint edition of <i>Curious jottings from the Studio Lit by Fireflies</i> , third collection)		Reprint. Third collection had sold out. Announcement by Shenbaoguan zhuren 申報館主人.		4 volumes	2 <i>jiao</i>

Year of printing or <i>Shenbao</i> announcement	Title	Author	Publication information	Print-type	Chapters	Price
November 3 / Ninth month	<i>(Xinyin suoben) Song-yin manlu tushuo</i> (新印縮本)《崧隱漫錄圖說》 (Newly printed, reduced size, illustrated <i>Random Jottings of Hidden [Tales] of Shanghai</i>)		Dianshizhai had commissioned Wang Tao to write <i>Songyin manlu tushuo</i> based on his experiences. First serialized in the <i>Dianshizhai Illustrated Magazine</i> , now printed in book form. Illustrated by Wu Youru. Announcement by Dianshizhai zhuren 點石齋主人.	Lithograph	4 volumes	1 yuan
November 22 / Tenth month	<i>(Chongyin) Ernü yingxiang zhuan</i> (重印)《兒女英雄傳》 (Reprint edition of <i>A Tale of Heroes and Lovers</i>)			Printed with newly cast lead fonts	12 volumes	8 jiao

Year of printing or <i>Shenbao</i> announcement	Title	Author	Publication information	Print-type	Chapters	Price
1888						
January 20 / Guangxu 13, Twelfth month	<i>(Chongyin) Yeyu qiu deng xulu</i> (重印) 夜雨秋燈續錄 (Reprint edition of <i>Sequel to Record of Rainy Nights under the Autumn Lamp</i>)	Xuan Shoumei 宣瘦梅	Newly re-edited edition.	Freshly cast lead fonts	16 volumes	4 <i>jiao</i> and 5 <i>fen</i>
May 10 / Guangxu 14, Third month	<i>(Zengxiang) Sanguo yanyi</i> (增像) 《三國演義》 (<i>The Three Kingdoms</i> , with added illustrations)		New edition with more than 140 new illustrations.	New-style lead fonts; lithographs	12 fascicles enclosed by redwood panels (<i>hongmu jiaban</i> 紅木夾板)	3 <i>yuan</i>
May 10 / Third month	<i>(Huitu) Dongzhou lieguozhi</i> (繪圖) 《東周列國志》 (<i>History of the Kingdoms of the Eastern Zhou</i> , with illustrations)		Announcement by Dianshizhai zhuren 點石齋主人.	Lithograph	With redwood panels	3 <i>jiao</i>

Year of printing or <i>Shenbao</i> announcement	Title	Author	Publication information	Print-type	Chapters	Price
June 8 / Fourth month	(<i>Shiyin huiyu</i>) <i>Jinghua yuan</i> (石印繪圖) 《鏡花緣》 (<i>Flowers in the Mirror</i> , with lithographed illustrations)		Dianshizhai edition.	Lithograph	6 fascicles	4 <i>jiao</i>
September 12 / Eighth month	(<i>Xinyin</i>) <i>San jie lu biji</i> (新印) 《三借廬筆記》 (Newly printed. <i>Jo-tings from the Sanjie Hut</i>)	Zou Hanfei 鄒翰飛 (Zou Tao 鄒韜)	Listed in <i>shuobu</i> category. Announcement by Shenbaoguan zhuren 申報主人.		6 volumes	3 <i>jiao</i> and 5 <i>fen</i>
September 12 / Eighth Month	(<i>Chongyin</i>) <i>Sanguo zhi yanyi</i> (重印) 《三國志演義》 (Reprint edition of <i>Three Kingdoms</i>)		Dianshizhai edition.	Lithograph	8 volumes in two separate casings	1 <i> yuan</i> and 8 <i>jiao</i>

Year of printing or Shenbao announcement	Title	Author	Publication information	Print-type	Chapters	Price
September 14 / Eighth month	(Chongyin) <i>Qinglou meng</i> (重印)《青樓夢》 (Reprint edition of <i>The Dream of the Green Chamber</i>)		First edition sold out. Announcement by Shenbaoguan zhuren 申報館主人			5 jiao
October 1 / Eighth month	(Chongyin) <i>Xiao doupeng</i> (重印)《小豆棚》 (Reprint edition of [<i>Tales Told under] the Small Bean Shed</i>)		Announcement by Shenbaoguan zhuren 申報館主人		6 volumes	3 jiao and 5 fen
1889						
January 11 / Twelfth month	(Chongyin) <i>Fengyue meng</i> (重印)《風月夢》 (Reprint edition of <i>Dreams of the Wind and the Moon</i>)	Hanshang mengren 邗上蒙人	First edition out of print.	New-style lead fonts		3 jiao

Year of printing or <i>Shenbao</i> announcement	Title	Author	Publication information	Print-type	Chapters	Price
January 22 / Twelfth month	(<i>Chongyin</i>) <i>Shi li jindan</i> (重印)《十粒金丹》 (Reprint edition of <i>Ten Pills of the Golden Life-saver</i>)		The announcement by Shenbaoguan zhuren 申報館主人 identifies the work as a "linked-chapter novel."		12 volumes	7 <i>jiao</i>
September 9 / Guangxu 15, Eighth month	(<i>Xinyin huitu</i>) <i>Fengshen yanyi</i> (新印繪圖)《封神演》 (Newly printed <i>Creation of the Gods</i> , with illustrations)		Announcement by Shenbaoguan zhuren 申報館主人.	New-style lead fonts, with lithographs	16 volumes	8 <i>jiao</i>
1890						
May 16 / Guangxu 16 Third month	(<i>Chongyin</i>) <i>Honglou meng</i> (重印)《紅樓夢補》 (Reprint edition of <i>Sequel to "The Dream of the Red Chamber"</i>)		First edition sold out.		8 volumes	4 <i>jiao</i>

Year of printing or <i>Shenbao</i> announcement	Title	Author	Publication information	Print-type	Chapters	Price
September 5 / Seventh month	<i>(Chongyin) Kuaixin bian</i> (重印)《快心編》 (Reprint edition of <i>The Teaser</i>)	Tianhua caizi 天花才子	Announcement by Shenbaoguan zhuren 申報館主人.		3 compilations (<i>bian</i> 編) in 10 volumes	5 <i>jiao</i>
November 4 / Ninth month	<i>(Xinyin) Xiao wu yi</i> (新印)《小五義》 (Newly printed <i>The Five Heroes, the Next Generation</i>)		Announcement by Shenbaoguan zhuren 申報館主人.		10 volumes	5 <i>jiao</i>