

IN THE EYE OF THE SELECTOR:
ANCIENT-STYLE PROSE ANTHOLOGIES
IN MING DYNASTY (1368-1644) CHINA

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To my teachers

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ABSTRACT

IN THE EYE OF THE SELECTOR: ANCIENT-STYLE PROSE ANTHOLOGIES IN
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Timothy Robert Clifford

Dr. Victor H. Mair

The rapid growth of woodblock printing in sixteenth-century China not only transformed *wenzhang* (“literature”) as a category of knowledge, it also transformed the communities in which knowledge of *wenzhang* circulated. Twentieth-century scholarship described this event as an expansion of the non-elite reading public coinciding with the ascent of vernacular fiction and performance literature over stagnant classical forms. Because this narrative was designed to serve as a native genealogy for the New Literature Movement, it overlooked the crucial role of *guwen* (“ancient-style prose,” a term which denoted the everyday style of classical prose used in both preparing for the civil service examinations as well as the social exchange of letters, gravestone inscriptions, and other occasional prose forms among the literati) in early modern literary culture. This dissertation revises that narrative by showing how a diverse range of social actors used anthologies of ancient-style prose to build new forms of literary knowledge and shape new literary publics. In this dissertation, I focus on a corpus of roughly 100 anthologies dating from the early sixteenth century to the fall of the Ming in 1644. I begin with an overview of what a prose anthology was, how and where they were produced, and what kinds of selection strategies their editors employed. I first argue that government schools

served as sites for reconstructing a more or less uniform canon of classical prose across the empire, and demonstrate how the figure of the anthologist enabled printers to codify seemingly universal “rules” (*fa*) of prose for an empire-wide student reading public. Having delineated this process, I then turn to a group of *xiaopin* (“minor appraisal”) anthologies produced by commercial printers in the Jiangnan region, and argue for reading their contents as a feminized ancient-style prose counter-canon embodying the values of an urban counterculture which valorized women writers. Thus, what twentieth-century scholarship viewed as an encounter between the individual writer and a monolithic tradition is better understood, I argue, as the emergence of an empire-wide student reading public followed by the creation of a print counterculture, in which male anthologists used female prose to signify alterity.

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INTRODUCTION

The Kangxi 康熙 Emperor (r. 1661-1722) once contrasted the history of political institutions and laws with the history of literature:

Institutions and laws are clearly distinguishable, the regulations of one ruler need not copy previous rulers, nor be passed down to subsequent rulers. In this respect, they can be delimited according to era. As for literary matters, their sources are deep and their streams long; in them, present and past intertwine; their rises and falls always take millennia, and their gains and losses are not linked to individual dynasties. In this respect, they cannot be delimited according to era.

夫典章法度粲然，一王之制，前不必相師，後不必相襲，此可限以年代者也。至於文章之事，則源流深長，今古錯綜，盛衰恒通於千載，損益非關於一朝，此不可限以年代者也。¹

According to this understanding, because “institutions and laws” (*dianzhang fadu* 典章法度) are determined solely by the ruler, it is possible to study those of one reign or one dynasty in isolation. *Wenzhang* 文章, here denoting prose written in the classical language, i.e. “literature” or “literary composition,” is different.² Its transformations transcend individual dynasties and defy the model of linear, chronological development.

The Kangxi Emperor’s preface was for an anthology of prose works written in literary Chinese titled *Profound Mirror for Ancient-Style Prose* (*Guwen yuanjian* 古文淵

¹ *Guwen yuanjian* 古文淵鑒, preface dated 1685, Harvard-Yenching Library, preface, 1.

² In early usage, *wenzhang* actually denoted something closer to (ritual) “institutions and laws” than “literary texts.” For a discussion of how *wenzhang* was “transferred from the sphere of ritual order to that of, however officially functional and ritualized, writings” see Martin Kern, “Ritual, Text, and the Formation of the Canon: Historical Transitions of ‘Wen’ in Early China,” *T’oung Pao*, Second Series, 87, Fasc. 1/3 (2001), 60.

鑒). Compiled by a team of Hanlin academicians headed by Xu Qianxue 徐乾學 (1631-1694), the finished product includes 1386 prose works organized chronologically, from as early as the *Zuo Tradition* (*Zuo zhuan* 左傳) through the Southern Song dynasty (1127-1279).³ In the book's upper margin, we also find 2,141 comments by 120 pre-Qing scholars, 1,096 comments by Xu Qianxue and his colleagues, and 1,391 comments attributed to the Kangxi Emperor himself.⁴ In order to differentiate these paratexts from the main text and from one another, the book was printed in four colors using multiple sets of blocks: black for main text, blue for the comments of pre-Qing scholars, red for punctuation and comments by Qing scholars, and imperial yellow for the Kangxi Emperor's comments.

³ For a biography of Xu Qianxue, see Arthur Hummel, ed., *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period* (1644-1912) (Taipei: SMC publishing, 1991), 310-12.

⁴ Tabulated and identified in Wang Ya'nan 王亞楠, "Guwen yuanjian yanjiu 〈古文淵鑒〉研究" (Master's Thesis, Zhengzhou daxue, 2011), 17-27.



Figure 1: Polychrome eyebrow comments in *Profound Mirror for Ancient-Style Prose*. Note how the Kangxi Emperor's comments, in yellow, are also raised one graph's length above the comments of Qing and pre-Qing scholars, in red and blue. From *Guwen yuanjian* 古文淵鑑, preface dated 1685, Harvard-Yenching Library, 1.3-4.

The Kangxi Emperor's rhetorical decoupling of literature and politics was a clever way of building solidarity with the literati while extending his political authority over them into the cultural realm. Indeed, political-scholarly hierarchy is coded in the very structure of the eyebrow comments, in which Kangxi's imperial yellow comments are raised one graph's length above the comments of both Qing and pre-Qing scholars.

Kangxi leveraged his political power to make the *Profound Mirror for Ancient-Style Prose* the standard textbook for ancient-style prose, consulted by Manchu and Han alike in government schools across the empire. The edition that has come down to us today was first printed in Chinese in 1705, when copies were distributed to all Manchu and Han officials 內外滿漢文武大臣, the Jingshan 景山 and Eight Banner government schools 八旗官學 in the capital, as well as the government school in Shenyang 盛京官學.⁵ In 1706, Kangxi ordered that copies *Profound Mirror for Ancient-Style Prose*, being “specially made to benefit the study of the scholar-gentry” 特為士子學習有益而製, should be “speedily dispatched to the provinces” 可速頒行直省.⁶ In the same edict Kangxi also authorized reproduction of the book by commercial printers: “All commercial booksellers wishing to print for sale are permitted to circulate it” 凡坊間書賈有情願刊刻售賣者聽其傳布.⁷

Through the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth century, *Profound Mirror for Ancient-Style Prose* continued to be reprinted and dispatched to government schools and examination grounds, as well as adapted into new formats.⁸ The Qianlong 乾隆

⁵ *Qing Shengzu shilu* 清聖祖實錄, 219.2. Although Kangxi wrote his preface for the book in 1685, the version he prefaced seems to have undergone sporadic revision for another twenty years, during which time Xu Qianxue became embroiled in a struggle with the grand secretary Mingju (1635-1708), was removed from office, and died in forced retirement. On this compilation process, see Wang Ya’nan, *Guwen yuanjian yanjiu*, 3-9; Martin Gimm, “Neue Materialien Zur Kompilation Der Grossen Ku-Wen-Anthologie Kaiser K’ang-Hsis (Ku-Wen Yüan-Chien),” in *Florilegia Manjurica : In Memoriam Walter Fuchs*, ed. Michael Weiers and Giovanni Stary (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1982), 30-31. Gimm records that a Manchu edition was printed as early as 1704, see Martin Gimm, “Neue Materialien Zur Kompilation Der Grossen Ku-Wen-Anthologie Kaiser K’ang-Hsis (Ku-Wen Yüan-Chien),” 32.

⁶ *Da Qing huidian zeli* 大清會典則例, Wenyuange Siku quanshu edition, 69.59.

⁷ *Da Qing huidian zeli*, 69.59.

⁸ For records of the book’s ongoing promulgation in government schools, see *Qing Gaozong shilu* 清高宗實錄, 100.16-17; *Da Qing huidian shili* 大清會典事例, Xuxiu Siku quanshu edition, juan 360, 364.

Emperor (r. 1735-1796) commissioned a reduced size “sleeve-pearl edition” (*xiu zhen ben* 袖珍本), and the figurehead of the Tongcheng 桐城 School of ancient-style prose Fang Bao 方苞 (1668-1749) compiled an abridged version titled *An Abridged Selection of Ancient-Style Prose* (*Guwen yuexuan* 古文約選).⁹ A Manchu language edition was made for the “translation exams” 翻譯考試 of Manchu bannermen, and a partial French translation of the book by the Jesuit Julien-Placide Hervieu was included in Jean-Baptiste Du Halde’s *Description de la Chine*, which was first printed in 1735—barely three decades after the 1705 printing of *Profound Mirror for Ancient-Style Prose*.¹⁰ From the initial production of *Profound Mirror for Ancient-Style Prose*, through its official and commercial reprintings, to its numerous adaptations and translations, the basic terms of ancient-style prose stylistics in the Qing were set by Kangxi as emperor-anthologist.

Also belying the claim that “literary matters” transcend the policies of individual rulers and the institutions of individual dynasties, Kangxi’s active intervention in the literary realm through the mass promulgation of a literary anthology marked a sharp break from Ming imperial precedent. When we examine the few imperially commissioned literary anthologies produced during the Ming, we find none promulgated

⁹ *Guwen yuexuan* 古文約選, reprint of 1733 edition (Taipei: Taiwan Zhonghua shuju, 1969). For overviews of the Tongcheng School, see Theodore Hutters, “From Writing to Literature: The Development of Late Qing Theories of Prose,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 47, no. 1 (1987), 51-96; David Der-wei Wang, “The Revival of Wen: The Paradox of the Tongcheng School,” in *The Cambridge History of Chinese Literature, Volume II*, ed. Kang-I Sun Chang and Stephen Owen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 422-27.

¹⁰ Jean Baptiste Du Halde, *Description Géographique, Historique, Chronologique, Politique, et Physique de L’empire de La Chine et de La Tartarie Chinoise, Enrichie Des Cartes Générales et Particulieres de Ces Pays, de La Carte Générale et Des Cartes Particulieres Du Thibet, & de La Corée; & Ornée D’un Grand Nombre de Figures & de Vignettes Gravées En Tailledouce*, second edition (The Hague: H. Scheurleer, 1736), 2.459. Cited in Jyrki Kallio, “Confucian Education and Enlightenment for the Masses in the Manner of *Guwen Guanzhi*” (Licentiate thesis, University of Helsinki, Faculty of Arts, Institute for Asian and African Studies, 2009), 32-33n.

on the level of *Profound Mirror for Ancient-Style Prose*. Apparently, no Ming emperor thought to undertake such a project. Instead, we find only reprints of Yuan anthologies like *Quintessence of Ancient Writing* (*Guwen jingcui* 古文精粹) and *True Treasures of Ancient Writing* (*Guwen zhenbao* 古文真寶).¹¹ And in contrast to the grandiose claims made in Kangxi's preface to *Profound Mirror for Ancient-Style Prose*, in the prefaces of Ming emperors we find little more than bland praise for their anthologies' contents as "rare treasures" 希世至寶.¹²

Closer in intent to Kangxi's grand, unifying anthologizing/printing projects perhaps were the Yongle 永樂 Emperor's (r. 1402-1424) three *Great Compendia*: the *Great Compendium of the Four Books* (*Sishu daquan* 四書大全), *Great Compendium of the Five Classics* (*Wujing daquan* 五經大全), and *Great Compendium of Nature and Principle* (*Xingli daquan* 性理大全).¹³ But unlike *Profound Mirror for Ancient-Style Prose*, literature was marginal to the *Great Compendia*. Poetry and prose were relegated to the very last *juan* of the *Great Compendium of Nature and Principle*, and included only a narrow selection of works by Zhang Zai 張載 (1020-1077), Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200), Zhen Dexiu 真德秀 (1178-1235), and a few other early Neo-Confucian thinkers.

¹¹ *Guwen jingcui* 古文精粹, 1475 *jingchang* 經廠 edition, National Central Library; *Zhuru jianjie guwen zhenbao* 諸儒箋解古文真寶, 1583 *silijian* 司禮監 edition, National Central Library. Cf. Timothy Brook, "A Bibliography of Books Published by the Ming State," in *Imprimer sans Profit? Le Livre Non Commercial Dans La Chine Impériale*, ed. Michela Bussotti and Jean-Pierre Drège (Librairie Droz, 2015), 180-81.

¹² For this preface, see Guoli zhongyang tushuguan, ed., *Guoli zhongyang tushuguan shanben xuba jilu ji bu* 國立中央圖書館善本序跋集錄集部 (Taipei: Guoli zhongyang tushuguan, 1994), zongji lei 總集類, 66.

¹³ Benjamin Elman, *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 133-16.

Nevertheless, below this level of imperial indifference in the Ming, we find a profusion of anthology production by a wide range of social actors whose ideological and aesthetic diversity far surpassed the Qing anthology scene, which developed more centripetally around Kangxi's *Profound Mirror for Ancient-Style Prose*. Indeed, I would argue that the incredible diversity of the Ming anthology scene—in which we find famous literati and anonymous commercial editors, school superintendents and dropouts alike engaged in passionate debates regarding the classical tradition, its historical development, and its relationship to new forms of textual production and consumption—was due precisely to the indifference of its rulers. Within this environment, imperial authority was not absent so much as up for grabs, a mode of performance through which self-interest and polemic could assume a universalistic, officially sanctioned, public legitimacy.

This strange ambiguity is nowhere better illustrated than the first *juan* of the *Great Compendium of Precious Ancient Writing, Newly Carved and Expanded with Annotations* (*Xinqin zengbu zhushi shanhu guwen daquan* 新鋟增補註釋珊瑚古文大全).¹⁴ This chapter comprises historical “encouragements to study” (*quanxue wen* 勸學文) in prose and verse. It features such encouragements as “To enrich your family you

¹⁴ This book was a somewhat altered version of the earlier Yuan dynasty anthology *True Treasures of Ancient Writing* (*Guwen zhenbao* 古文真寶). The substitution of *daquan* for *zhenbao* in the title was, I suspect, an allusion to Yongle's *Great Compendia*, making the book a sort of literary sequel to the *Great Compendium of Nature and Principle*. The word *shanhu* 珊瑚 (literally “coral,” but here meaning “precious”) was possibly a pun on *shanbu* 刪補 (“revised and emended”). Various editions of this book were printed numerous times in Jianyang throughout the sixteenth century, and as Yuming He has shown, content from *True Treasures of Ancient Writing* often appeared in drama miscellanies from the period. See Yuming He, *Home and the World: Editing the “Glorious Ming” in Woodblock-Printed Books of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2013), 31-43.

needn't buy fertile fields, / Books yield grain a thousand fold. / To make your house comfortable you needn't build great chambers, / Within books are rooms of gold” 富家不用買良田，書中自有千鍾粟；安居不用架高堂，書中自有黃金屋, and “If they study, the sons of common people become officials. / If they don't study, the sons of officials become common people” 學則庶人之子爲公卿；不學則公卿之子爲庶人.¹⁵ The practical tone of these encouragements (they would not be out of place in a modern day cram school) reflected the new status of *wenzhang* as an instrument of social advancement in the late imperial civil service examination system, a point driven home in an illustration accompanying titled “The Emperor Encouraging Study” (*Huangwang quanxue* 皇王勸學):

¹⁵ Attributed to Emperor Zhenzong of the Song dynasty 真宗皇帝, “Quanxue wen 勸學文,” in *Xinqin zengbu zhushi shanhu guwen daquan* 新鈐增補註釋珊瑚古文大全, c. 1573-1620, Harvard-Yenching Library, 1.1-2; Liu Tuntian 劉屯田 (a.k.a. Liu Yong 柳永), “Quanxue wen 勸學文,” in *Xinqin zengbu zhushi shanhu guwen daquan*, 1.3a. Emperor Zhenzong's piece is cited in Miyazaki Ichisada, *China's Examination Hell: The Civil Service Examinations of Imperial China*, trans. Conrad Shirokauer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 17: “In later times this poem was criticized because it tempted students with the promise of beautiful women and riches, but that was the very reason it was effective.”



Figure 2: The Emperor Encouraging Study. From *Xinqin zengbu zhushi shanhu guwen daquan* 新鉞增補註釋珊瑚古文大全, c. 1573-1620, Harvard-Yenching Library, 1.1.

On the right sits the emperor, clad in dragon robes, flanked by two attendants and two ministers. On the left kneels the student, making obeisance to the emperor as he would to his teacher, or his examiner. All are smiling, but none more than the student. One imagines the minister on the left speaking highly of the student to the emperor, perhaps noting his great promise, or reporting his excellent performance on the examinations, and as the emperor listens receptively, the student smiles in the realization that fame and fortune are nearly his. Even more vividly than in the texts that follow, this image gives form to the reader's fantasy of success. Most importantly, in the center of the image, on top of the desk standing between the emperor and the student, we see the four basic instruments of literary composition, sometimes referred to as the "four treasures of the study" (*wenfang sibao* 文房四寶): ruled paper, two brushes sitting on brush holders, and an inkstone filled with ink. On the one hand, the orientation of these instruments identify them as the emperor's. On the other, their placement in between the emperor and student link the two in a teacher-student relationship.

The central role of the instruments of literary composition in this image recalls one of the most common clichés found in Ming anthology prefaces: the statement "literary composition is the public instrument of all the kingdom" 文章天下公器.¹⁶ What this assertion actually meant is clarified in earlier elaborations such as: "Literary

¹⁶ See, for example, Cao Sanyang 曹三暘, Preface to *Jilu Zhen Xishan Wenzhang zhengzong* 集錄真西山文章正宗, in *Guoli zhongyang tushuguan shanben xuba jilu ji bu*, zongji lei, 56; Li Boyu 李伯嶼, Postface to *Wenhan leixuan dacheng* 文翰類選大成, in *Guoli zhongyang tushuguan shanben xuba jilu ji bu*, zongji lei, 78; Fan Weiyi 范惟一, Preface to *Lidai wenxuan* 歷代文軒, in *Guoli zhongyang tushuguan shanben xuba jilu ji bu*, zongji lei, 135.

composition is the public instrument of all the kingdom; none apart from the emperor have the authority to govern it” 天下公器也，匪皇極不乂，and “Literary composition is the public instrument of all the kingdom. Rankings of superior and inferior should be determined by public discourse, not set apart according to one’s private inclinations” 文章天下公器，其品級高下，當定於公論，非私意所能翕。¹⁷ In other words, asserting literary composition’s status as a “public instrument” meant that writing standards should be fixed by imperially-sanctioned official consensus, not disordered by the polemics of renegade private literati. Some Ming anthologists took this idea a step farther, invoking the ancient, cosmic meaning of *wen* 文 as “distinctive markings on animals and natural phenomena” to naturalize and reify these standards, so that they appear to, as Tang Shunzhi wrote, “proceed from nature, are unalterable, and brook no deviation” 出乎自然而不可易者，則不容異也。¹⁸

In reality, however, any literate person could compile an anthology and any printer could print an anthology claiming to distill these universal rules. Results varied depending on the perceived authority of the anthologist, as I will demonstrate in the chapters that follow, but in any case one could always assume the name of a more authoritative anthologist, and before the reign of Kangxi no emperor saw fit to seize the instruments of literary composition, assume the role of the “emperor encouraging study,”

¹⁷ Quan Deyu 權德輿, “Tang Guyin Qingguang lu dafu shou zhongshu shilang tong pingzhang shi zeng Taifu Changshan Wenzhen Cui gong ji xu 唐故銀青光祿大夫守中書侍郎同平章事贈太傅常山文貞公崔公集序,” in *Quan Zaizhi wenji* 權載之文集, Sibu congkan reprint of Jiaqing era (c. 1796-1820) edition, 33.2a; Wang Yan 王炎, “Lan weng shi xu 懶翁詩序,” in *Shuangxi leigao* 雙溪類稿, Wenyuange Siku quanshu edition, 25.22-3.

¹⁸ Tang Shunzhi 唐順之, “Dong Zhongfeng shilang wenji xu 董中峯侍郎文集序,” in *Tang Shunzhi ji* 唐順之集, ed. Ma Meixin 馬美信 and Huang Yi 黃毅 (Hangzhou: Zhejiang guji chubanshe, 2014), 2.466.

and direct literary discourse. The fundamental instability of literary standards and values made the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries into, to adapt Hilde De Weerd's words, a grand competition over style.¹⁹ This dissertation uses anthologies of ancient-style prose to explore that competition. Before we begin, however, it is necessary to outline the existing account of Ming style wars and explain how my account will depart from it.

A Teleology of New Literature

The standard, schoolbook history of Ming literature, which specialists will have already encountered innumerable times, goes as follows: In the early Ming, high officials like Song Lian 宋濂 (1310-1381), Liu Ji 劉基 (1311-1375), and Fang Xiaoru 方孝孺 (1357-1402) dominated the literary scene; statecraft and literary writing were closely connected. The early fifteenth century saw the emergence of the Secretariat Style (*Taige ti* 臺閣體), reflecting the consolidation of political and cultural power under the Yongle Emperor and the grand secretaries Yang Shiqi 楊士奇 (1365-1444), Yang Rong 楊榮 (1370-1440), and Yang Pu 楊溥 (1371-1446), known as the “three Yangs.”²⁰ In the late fifteenth century, scholar-officials such as Li Mengyang 李夢陽 (1472-1530), He Jingming 何景明 (1483-1521), and the rest of the so-called “former seven masters” (*qian qi zi* 前七子) attacked the secretariat style for lacking vigor, and advocated following

¹⁹ Cf. Hilde De Weerd, *Competition over Content: Negotiating Standards for the Civil Service Examinations in Imperial China (1127-1279)* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Asia Center, 2007).

²⁰ For a recent reevaluation of the “secretariat style,” see Zheng Liju 郑礼炬, *Ming dai Hongwu zhi Zhengde nianjian de Hanlin yuan yu wenxue* 明代洪武至正德年间的翰林院与文学 (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2011).

earlier literary models with the slogan “prose must follow the Qin and Han, poetry must follow the high Tang” 文必秦漢，詩必盛唐。

As Li and He’s “archaist movement” (*fugu yundong* 復古運動) spread across the empire, the narrative continues, it degenerated into superficial imitation and plagiarism. In response, the former archaist Tang Shunzhi 唐順之 (1507-1560), along with Wang Shenzhong 王慎中 (1509-1559) and Gui Youguang 歸有光 (1507-1571), advocated more recent models closer in style to contemporary usage, giving rise to a “Tang-Song School” (*Tang-Song pai* 唐宋派) of prose. This shift toward a more familiar, colloquial style was opposed by Li Panlong 李攀龍 (1514-1570), Wang Shizhen 王世貞 (1526-1590), and the “later seven masters” (*hou qi zi* 後七子) in a second archaist movement, but was also pushed in an even more colloquial direction by Yuan Hongdao 袁宏道 (1568-1610) and the “Gongan School” (*Gongan pai* 公安派), who advocated “independently expressing one’s personality, without being restrained by set forms” 獨抒性靈，不拘格套。²¹

Finally, the narrative concludes, although the further development of the Gong’an School’s movement was temporarily curtailed by the fall of the Ming and the rise of the more repressive Qing regime, its expressionist, liberationist aims would ultimately come to fruition in the New Literature Movement, its slogans unconsciously echoed Hu Shi’s

²¹ This slogan comes from Yuan Hongdao 袁宏道, “Xu Xiaoxiu shi 敘小修詩,” in *Yuan Hongdao ji jianjiao* 袁宏道集箋校, ed. Qian Bochong 錢伯城 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1981), 1.187.

胡適 (1891-1962) denunciation of archaist imitation and classicist cliché.²² As the famous modern essayist Zhou Zuoren 周作人 (1885-1967) summarized, “The basic direction of our contemporary literary movement is exactly identical to that of the late Ming movement.”²³

Moderns like Zhou inherited the individual elements of this narrative, as well as their chronology, from earlier periods. Most obviously, the *History of the Ming* (*Mingshi* 明史) gives the familiar narrative structure of Song Lian and Liu Ji, Secretariat Style, Li Mengyang and He Jingming, Tang Shunzhi and Gui Youguang, Wang Shizhen and Li Panlong, Yuan brothers, and so on.²⁴ Even in the sixteenth century, Tang Shunzhi could remember an earlier time in his life when he followed the teaching “poetry must take after the Tang and prose must take after the Qin and Han and so on” 詩必唐文必秦與漢云云者, a slogan repeated almost verbatim in the *History of the Ming* and then repeated in nearly all later discussions of the archaists.²⁵ The basic categories of Ming literary history—the schools, the representative writers, the slogans—were produced during the Ming, not imposed upon it by later historiography.

Linking these categories into a teleology of self-expression culminating in the May Fourth Movement, however, was a decidedly modern invention.²⁶ Most obviously,

²² See Hu Shi 胡適, “Wenxue gailiang chuyi 文學改良芻議,” *Xin qingnian* 新青年 2, no. 5 (January 1917).

²³ Quoted in Chou Chih-p’ing, *Yüan Hung-Tao and the Kung-an School* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 119.

²⁴ *Mingshi* 明史 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), 173.7307-8.

²⁵ Tang Shunzhi, “Da Huangfu Baiquan langzhong 答皇甫百泉郎中,” in *Tang Shunzhi ji*, ed. Ma Meixin and Huang Yi, 1.257.

²⁶ Nor was this the only possible modern narrative of the Ming style wars. For example, even in the throes of the New Culture movement, at least one conservative scholar attacked proponents of vernacular

as Qian Zhongshu 錢鍾書 (1910-1998) noted in response to Zhou Zuoren, there was no concept in premodern China that perfectly corresponded to the modern notion of *wenxue* 文學 (a “round-trip word” reimported from the Japanese *bungaku*, which was used to translate the word “literature”), and Zhou’s use of literature obscured important historical distinctions between poetry (*shi* 詩) and prose (*wen* 文), a point I will discuss further below.²⁷ Second, although the narrative’s component parts (the Secretariat Style, the Archaist Movement, the Tang-Song School, the Gong’an School) were inherited from Ming and Qing scholarship (more on this point below), the teleological logic that links them together into a turning point (from imitation of officially sanctioned models to pluralistic expression of individuals’ thoughts and feelings) was a way to explain and institutionalize the history of the New Literature Movement.

This narrative features prominently in academic works from the time. Zheng Zhenduo 鄭振鐸 (1898-1958) in his *Illustrated History of Chinese Literature* (*Chatu ben Zhongguo wenxue shi* 插圖本中國文學史), described the Ming archaist movement as the “imitating antiquity movement” (*nigu yundong* 擬古運動), and compared the emergence of the Gong’an School to the feeling of fleeing a cemetery of ancient rulers and suddenly

literature by comparing them to the Ming archaists. See Xia Chongpu 夏崇璞, “Mingdai fugu pai yu Tang-Song wen pai zhi chaoliu 明代復古派與唐宋文派之潮流,” *Xueheng* 9 (September 1922), 1-10.

²⁷ Qian Zhongshu 錢鍾書, “Zhongguo xin wenxue de yuanliu 中國新文學的源流,” *Xin yue* 新月 4, no. 4 (1932). See also Theodore Hutters, *Bringing the World Home: Appropriating the West in Late Qing and Early Republican China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2005), 76-80; Theodore Hutters, “From Writing to Literature: The Development of Late Qing Theories of Prose,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 47, no. 1 (1987), 51-96. For a list of other “round-trip words,” see Victor Mair, “East Asian Round Trip Words,” *Sino-Platonic Papers*, no. 34 (1992), 5-13.

finding oneself in a natural, springtime garden.²⁸ For Zheng, the rapid succession of literary schools beginning in the Jiajing reign (1521-1567) marked a new period of “recent era literature” (*jindai wenxue* 近代文學), a period which would culminate in the May Fourth student protests of 1919.²⁹ Shen Qiwu 沈啓无 anthologized the prose of this period in his *Transcribed Prose of the Recent Era* (*Jindai sanwen chao* 近代散文抄), a book which heavily focused on the *xiaopin* 小品 (“minor appraisal”) essays of the Gong’an School and explicitly connected them to the May Fourth agenda. This agenda is unmistakably present in the very first line of the very first essay, Yuan Zongdao’s “On Prose” (*Lun wen* 論文), which reads: “The mouth and tongue act on behalf of the heart, and literature acts on behalf of the mouth and tongue” 口舌代心者也，文章又代口舌者也。³⁰

It was the famous essayist Zhou Zuoren, however, who articulated this narrative most satisfyingly and influentially. In a preface he contributed to Shen Qiwu’s anthology, Zhou deemed the *xiaopin* essays collected therein as both the “peak of literary development” 文學發達的機致, and the product of “an era which saw the breakdown of imperial power” 王綱解紐的時代.³¹ In March or April of 1932, Shen in turn invited Zhou to give a series of lectures at Beijing’s Fu Jen University 輔仁大學 on the historical origins of New Chinese Literature. Soon after, Zhou’s lectures were published as a short

²⁸ Zheng Zhenduo 鄭振鐸, *Chatu ben Zhongguo wenxue shi* 插圖本中國文學史 (Hong Kong: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1961), 938-39.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 828.

³⁰ Shen Qiwu 沈啓无, ed., *Jindai sanwen chao* 近代散文抄 (Hong Kong: Tianhong chubanshe, 1957), 3.

³¹ Zhou Zuoren 周作人, “Zhou xu 周序,” in *Jindai sanwen chao*, ed. Shen Qiwu, 4.

book with the ambitious title *The Origin of New Chinese Literature* (*Zhongguo xin wenxue de yuanliu* 中國新文學的源流).³²

As is evident in the title, the narrative of Chinese literary history presented in this book was unabashedly teleological. By “teleological,” I mean that it attributed the course of literary history not to its past origin, nor solely to its environment, but to the ongoing yet never quite finished realization of its proper function. In *The Origin of New Chinese Literature*, Zhou explained the proper function of “literature” (*wenxue* 文學) in terms of two classical clichés, *yan zhi* 言志 and *zai dao* 載道, which Zhou would later clarify as speaking one’s own thoughts versus speaking the thoughts of others.³³ He argued that literature first originated in religious-political ritual, but whereas ritual always had some practical, performative function, literature has never had any function beyond the emotionally satisfying but politically useless act of “speaking out” (*shuochu* 說出).³⁴

³² The earliest edition of the book I have seen is Zhou Zuoren 周作人, *Zhongguo xin wenxue de yuanliu* 中國新文學的源流 (Beiping: Renwen shudian, 1934). In the discussion below, however, I will cite a newer, more widely available edition, Zhou Zuoren 周作人, *Zhongguo xin wenxue de yuanliu* 中國新文學的源流, ed. Yang Yang 楊揚 (Shanghai: Huadong shifan daxue chubanshe, 1995).

³³ Zhou Zuoren, *Zhongguo xin wenxue de yuanliu*, ed. Yang Yang, 17. For an overview of Zhou’s attempts to clarify these terms in the face of Qian Zhongshu’s criticisms, see Li Guangmo 李光摩, “Zhou Zuoren Qian Zhongshu youguan wenxue shi lunzheng zhi shuping 周作人錢鍾書有關文學史論爭之述評,” *Shaoguan xueyuan xuebao* 29, no. 7 (July 2008), 12. The phrase *yan zhi* comes from the *Documents Classic* (*Shu jing* 書經) passage “poetry expresses aspiration” 詩言志. See He Zhihua 何志華, ed., *Shangshu zhuzi suoyin* 尚書逐字索引 (Hong Kong: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1995), 2/3/18. The phrase also suggests the famous passage from the *Great Preface* (*Da xu* 大序) to the *Poetry Classic* (*Shi jing* 詩經): “Poetry is where the aspiration goes.” 詩者，志之所之也。See He Zhihua 何志華, ed., *Maoshi zhuzi suoyin* 毛詩逐字索引 (Hong Kong: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1995), 1/1/6. *Zai dao* comes from a passage by the Song dynasty Neo-Confucian Zhou Dunyi 周敦頤 (1017-1073): “Prose is a means of conveying the Way. If the wheels and axles of a cart are gaily ornamented but no man uses the cart, then the ornamentation is in vain. How much more so if the cart is empty!” 文所以載道也，輪轅飾而人弗庸，徒飾也，況虛車乎。See *Tongshu shujie* 通書述解, Wenyuange Siku quanshu edition, 2.14b. Cf. David Pollard, *A Chinese Look at Literature; the Literary Values of Chou Tso-Jên in Relation to the Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 1-28; Susan Daruvala, *Zhou Zuoren and an Alternative Chinese Response to Modernity* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Asia Center, 2000) 13.

³⁴ Zhou Zuoren, *Zhongguo xin wenxue de yuanliu*, ed. Yang Yang, 11-16.

Furthermore, although literature's inherent tendency had always been toward individual expression—which, again, was necessarily apolitical for Zhou—strong states throughout history were often able to make literature into an instrument of propaganda. In Zhou's view, this was not only the wrong way to use literature (he compared it to using a chair to beat someone rather than to sit), it also represented a regression to a less highly developed state.³⁵

Thus, for Zhou the rise and fall of literature was the inverse of the rise and fall of states, a wavy line that progressed toward self-expression during periods of weak or fragmented government, and regressed toward state ideology during periods of strong and unified government. Zhou illustrated this vision of literary history in the following diagram:

³⁵ Ibid., 15-16.

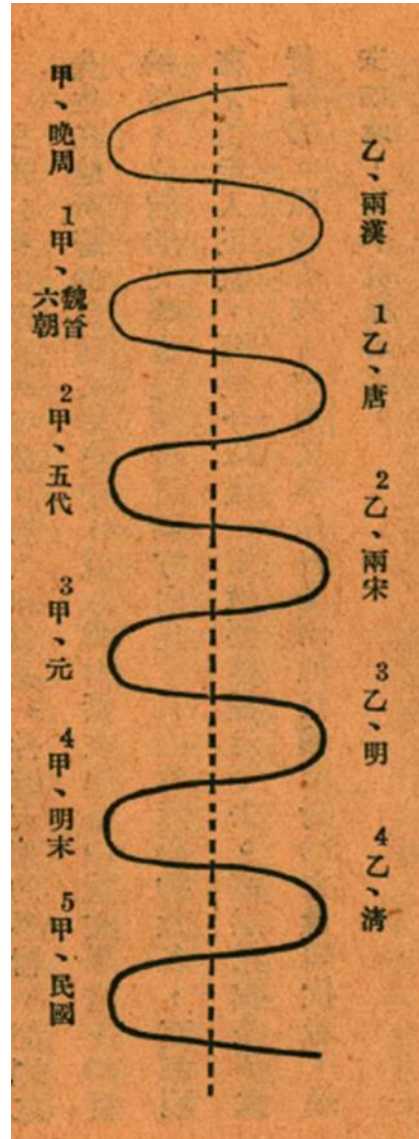


Figure 3: The wavy path of literary history, as imagined by Zhou Zuoren. From Zhou Zuoren 周作人, *Zhongguo xin wenxue de yuanliu* 中國新文學的源流 (Beiping: Renwen shudian, 1934), 35.

The left side of the diagram represents the individualist, expressionist tendency of literature; the right side represents the collectivist, didactic tendency. A dotted, permeable border separates these two tendencies. A wavy line, representing literature, moves between them. Although the line originates in prehistory on the right side of the diagram, the way in which the left side is labeled *jia* 甲 and the right side *yi* 乙 (like labeling a pair

“A” and “B” in the Roman alphabet) establishes a hierarchy between the two, wherein the left side is primary and the right side secondary. The line of literary history and dotted line separating the two sides also seem to become stronger and darker toward the bottom, creating a sense of spatial perspective in which the recent past seems physically closer than the distant past.

Along the two sides of the diagram, we see listed the states whose relative strength or weakness gave shape to literary history. On the left side, the late Zhou, Wei-Jin and Six Dynasties, Five Dynasties, Yuan, the end of the Ming, and Republican periods were times in which literature was able to realize its proper expressionist function; on the right side, the Han, Tang, Song, Ming, and Qing were periods in which literature became the vessel of state ideology. Notably, the Ming is the only period listed on both sides of the diagram—the only time when the course of literary history shifted, in a progressive direction, mid-dynasty. In *The Origin of New Chinese Literature*, Zhou did not so much discover this shift as generalize its teleology of individual expression to the entirety of Chinese literary history.

Zhou’s work represented the centerpiece of an intense debate between would-be apolitical writers like Zhou Zuoren and leftist writers like his brother Lu Xun regarding the political status of individual expression and the late Ming *xiaopin* essay.³⁶ After this debate was curtailed by the Japanese invasion in 1937, however, few efforts were made to reappraise or even historicize the narrative of New Literature’s Ming origins. Some subsequent studies of Ming archaism continued to emphasize its seemingly stultifying,

³⁶ For an overview of this debate and the factions involved, see Charles Laughlin, *The Literature of Leisure and Chinese Modernity* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2008).

authoritarian reliance on objective rules, in contrast to the Gong'an School's liberating emphasis on individual personality, individual emotion, and unlearned creativity.³⁷ Other studies, in contrast, highlighted expressionist trends within the archaist movement—for example, Li Mengyang's admiration for the deep “feeling” (*qing* 情) expressed in folk songs—as well as archaist elements in the Gong'an School.³⁸ Although this second body of scholarship sought to alter the place of the archaist movement within the 1930s narrative of New Literature's origins, repositioning it as a forerunner of the expressionist movement, rather than its antithesis, it did not question the basic logic of the narrative.

Likewise, most subsequent scholarship on the Gong'an School, the expressionist movement, and late Ming *xiaopin* also found itself caught within the New Literature teleology.³⁹ In the introduction to the first anthology of *xiaopin* in English translation, for example, we find the standard account of the “intellectual stultification” brought on by Li Mengyang's “neoclassicist” movement, the transitional Tang-Song School, and the

³⁷ Guo Shaoyu 郭紹虞, *Zhongguo shi de shenyun, gediao ji xingling shuo* 中國詩的神韻、格調及性靈說 (Hong Kong: Chongwen shudian, 1971); Richard John Lynn, “Orthodoxy and Enlightenment: Wang Shih-Chen's Theory of Poetry and Its Antecedents,” in *The Unfolding of Neo-Confucianism*, ed. W.T. DeBary (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975), 215-69; Richard John Lynn, “Alternate Routes to Self-Realization in Ming Theories of Poetry,” in *Theories of the Arts in China*, ed. Susan Bush and Christian Murck (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 317-40; Yoshikawa Kōjirō, *Five Hundred Years of Chinese Poetry, 1150-1650: The Chin, Yuan, and Ming Dynasties*, trans. John Timothy Wixted (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1989), 137-38.

³⁸ Yoshikawa Kōjirō 吉川幸次郎, “Ri Bo-Yo no Ichi Sokumen: Kobunji no Shominsei 李夢陽の一側面--古文辭の庶民性,” *Ritsumeikan Bungaku* 180 (1960), 190-208; Jonathan Chaves, “A Panoply of Images: A Reconsideration of the Literary Theory of the Kung-an School,” in *Theories of the Arts in China*, ed. Susan Bush and Christian Murck, 341-64; Chou Chih-P'ing, *Yüan Hung-Tao and the Kung-an School* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 3-14; Leonard K.K. Chan 陳國球, *Tang shi de chuancheng: Ming dai fugu shilun yanjiu* 唐詩的傳承：明代復古詩論研究 (Taipei: Taiwan xuesheng shuju, 1990); Liao Kebin 廖可斌, *Fugu pai yu Ming dai wenxue sichao* 復古派與明代文學思潮 (Taipei: Wenjin chubanshe, 1994). Cf. Maeno Naoaki 前野 直彬, “Mindai Kobunjiha No Bungakuron 明代古文辭派の文学論,” *Nihon to Chūgoku Kyōkai* 16 (1964), 157-66; Kenneth James Hammond, “Beyond Archaism: Wang Shizhen and the Legacy of the Northern Song,” *Ming Studies* 36 (1996), 6-28.

³⁹ A point noted, if not fully addressed, in Jonathan Chaves, “A Panoply of Images,” 341.

Gong'an School's liberating emphasis on "self-expression."⁴⁰ One influential study of Yuan Hongdao, the central figure of the Gong'an school, makes the legacy of Zhou Zuoren quite explicit, asserting: "The true significance of Yuan Hongdao's literary theory lies precisely in this coincidental similarity to Hu Shi's views, for it is just this kind of historical coincidence that convinces me that the trend of self-expression which originated with the Gong'an school had never ceased to develop during the past four centuries. Like a subterranean current flowing beneath the vast desert of classicism in the Qing dynasty, the trend emerged like a great fountain in the early twentieth century."⁴¹

More recent studies have evinced a growing dissatisfaction with the presentist limitations of this narrative. Daniel Bryant, in his study of the archaist poet He Jingming, uses Zheng Zhenduo's *Illustrated History of Chinese Literature* to illustrate the "distortion of the past to serve transient present goals," and cautions scholars against "taking the interpretations of Chinese scholars, whether pre-modern or modern, as definitive of our 'base-lines.'"⁴² Rivi Handler-Spitz resituates the *xiaopin* essay in a more global, comparative framework.⁴³ Philip Kafalas, in a study of the *xiaopin* essayist Zhang Dai 張岱 (1597-1679), goes so far as to doubt "that there was a thing called late-Ming *xiaopin*," arguing that "it is almost entirely a retroactive creation of twentieth-century

⁴⁰ Yang Ye, "Hsiao-p'in of the Late Ming: An Introduction," in *Vignettes from the Late Ming: A Hsiao-P'in Anthology* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999), xix-xxi.

⁴¹ Chou Chih-p'ing, *Yuan Hung-tao and the Kung'an school*, 121-122. Cf. Martine Vallette-Hémery, *Yuan Hongdao, 1568-1610: Théorie et Pratique Littéraires* (Paris: Collège de France, Institut des hautes études chinoises, 1982); Ming-shui Hung, *The Romantic Vision of Yuan Hung-Tao, Late Ming Poet and Critic* (Taipei, Taiwan: Bookman Books, 1997).

⁴² Daniel Bryant, *The Great Recreation: Ho Ching-Ming (1483-1521) and His World* (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2008), 557.

⁴³ Rivi Handler-Spitz, "Short Prose Forms in a Global Sixteenth-Century Context," *Prose Studies: History, Theory, Criticism* 32, no. 2 (2010), 110-21.

readers and essayists and anthologizers who defined it largely through their own process of selecting scattered texts from amongst the collected works of Ming (and earlier) writers.”⁴⁴ Although, as we will see in chapter 4, I disagree with this specific argument by Kafalas, I agree with the broader point that Ming literary polemics appear uninteresting and even incomprehensible when reduce them to a proto-May Fourth Movement.

What do we really mean when we talk about literary “schools” and “movements” in the Ming? By “school,” do we mean an actual network of likeminded literati, or is the category of “school” an anachronistic way of referring to some perceived trend among literati who may or may not have known one another? When do “schools” become “movements”? What do we mean, for example, when we say that Tang Shunzhi started a movement to imitate Tang-Song models? How did he promote this movement? How did he have the authority to promote it? Was this authority universally recognized, or did it reflect stratifications within the reading public? Did this movement reach everywhere at about the same time, or was it embraced in Jiangnan more eagerly and rapidly than, for instance, in Shanxi? Indeed, how can we make sense of the relationships between movements when their promoters so often seem to use the same terms with contradictory connotations—as, for example, when Tang Shunzhi and Yuan Hongdao, writing several decades apart, both praised “authenticity” (*zhen* 真)?⁴⁵ And how should we make sense of the fact that these increasingly rapid shifts in literary mores coincided with the expansion of printing and the creation of new reading publics in the sixteenth century?

⁴⁴ Philip Kafalas, *In Limpid Dream: Nostalgia and Zhang Dai's Reminiscences of the Ming* (Connecticut: EastBridge, 2007), 8.

⁴⁵ For a discussion of this point, see Huang Yi 黄毅, *Mingdai Tang-Song pai yanjiu* 明代唐宋派研究 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2008), 106.

One thing that has become increasingly clear is that, for an individual's or a school's literary practice to become more than a kind of idiolect—that is, in order for it to spread through and give shape to a literary public—it needed to pass through the medium of the printed literary anthology.⁴⁶ For this reason, in this dissertation I do not treat literature, as most twentieth-century scholars did, as an autonomous entity which impelled Ming people away from the reproduction of ancient models and toward a more authentic form of self-expression. Rather, my aim is to investigate how printed anthologies of classical literature were used to construct new forms of literary knowledge and create new reading publics. Specifically, I will focus my attention on anthologies of “ancient-style prose” (*guwen* 古文), which have received less attention than poetry anthologies, despite surviving from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in comparable or perhaps even greater numbers.

Ancient-Style Prose, Publics, and Anthologies

In Ming China, literary anthologies were simplified, general guides to literature for “beginning students” (*chuxuezhe* 初學者) who lacked the ability or time to read through the collected works of individual authors. Seemingly subordinate to their

⁴⁶ Leonard Chan links the popularization of archaist poetics to the printing of anthologies like *Collected Rankings of Tang Poetry* (*Tang shi pinhui* 唐詩品匯) and *Selections of Tang Poetry* (*Tang shi xuan* 唐詩選), and argues likewise that the Gong'an School never had any broader social influence beyond the official class because they never compiled or printed any anthologies expressing their poetics. In contrast, Zhong Xing 鍾惺 (1581-1624) and Tan Yuanchun's 譚元春 (1586-1637) anthology *Repository of Ancient and Tang Poetry* (*Gu Tang shigui* 古唐詩歸) ensured that the archaist Jingling School 竟陵派 would have an immense impact on popular poetic practice in the late Ming. See Leonard Chan, *Tang shi de chuancheng*, 213-16, 233-34; Jie Cui, “Gu Tang Shigui and the Making of Commented Poetry Anthologies in the Seventeenth Century China” (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2013).

sources, in reality literary anthologies possessed an ideological and social power far greater than these sources. The anthology's function of simplifying literary matters for beginning students gave the anthologist immense narrative freedom to construct canons, define genres, identify major authors, supply directions for reading, and advance polemical positions, all with an implicit claim to normativity concealed in a pedagogue's false modesty (the anthologist always speaks in a tone of "some of you probably already know this, but I am going to explain it anyway for those who do not..."). Likewise, because of how they tended to address themselves to "beginning students," anthologies were especially well positioned to colonize the margins of an expanding literate population. At the same time, the ability of anthologies to create new publics was not limited to the margins. Everyone read anthologies, regardless of their erudition level—indeed, as my analysis in chapter 1 suggests, even anthologists themselves were often compiling from previous anthologies, selecting from a narrower and narrower range of texts which some independent-minded literati found unbearably boring.⁴⁷

But what do we really mean when we talk about a "reading public" or "literary public" in the Ming? To begin, it is essential to note that only a small minority of the total population (less than 10%) possessed the requisite skills to be included in the sort of public I am to discuss. Functional knowledge of a few graphs relevant to day-to-day life

⁴⁷ With the exception of a few pieces (notably Yuan Hongdao's biography of Xu Wei, "Xu Wenchang zhuan 徐文長傳", the *Comprehensive Overview of Ancient-Style Prose* (*Guwen guanzhi* 古文觀止) represented the culmination of this increasingly narrow, boring ancient-style prose canon, a fact which would not surprise the numerous twentieth and twenty-first-century students who had the misfortune of using it as their classical Chinese textbook. On the textual history of the *Guwen guanzhi*, see Jyrki Kallio, "Confucian Education and Enlightenment for the Masses in the Manner of *Guwen Guanzhi*" (Licentiate thesis, University of Helsinki, Faculty of Arts, Institute for Asian and African Studies, 2009); An Pingqiu 安平秋, "Guwen guanzhi banben kaolun 《古文觀止》版本考論," *Zhongguo gudian wenxue luncong* 4 (October 1986), 360. I will return to this point in the conclusion of the dissertation.

was not sufficient. At minimum, these men and women would have memorized the Four Books and at least one of the Five Classics, and would have been able to compose passable regulated verse, non-parallel “ancient-style” prose, and examination prose, consisting of both parallel and non-parallel elements. Indeed, as Benjamin Elman notes, the creation of “reading publics” was in many ways ancillary to the maintenance of a “writing elite” able to participate in the civil service examinations, as well as the social exchange of letters, gravestone inscriptions, and other classical forms of occasional prose.⁴⁸

To understand the logic of anthology compilation and how this logic corresponded with the social world, we must also recognize the way in which Ming people perceived poetry and prose as occupying separate social spheres—a point which Zhou Zuoren obscured in his monolithic and anachronistic conception of *wenxue*. The ways in which poetry and prose were each traditionally divided into sub-categories give some indication of this difference. Poetic genres tended to be defined formally, by the number of syllables per line, number of lines, and the presence or absence of tonal rules. Prose genres, in contrast, were defined in terms of social occasion, to the extent that the sequence of genres in a prose collection often gives some sense of the texture of life, beginning with memorials and other official documentary forms, letters, prefaces and the like, and ending with tomb inscriptions, elegies, sacrificial prayers, and other forms of death prose.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Benjamin Elman, *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations*, 276-77.

⁴⁹ A few overviews and glossaries of ancient-style prose genres: Georges Margouliès, *Le Kou-Wen Chinois* (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1926), vi-xxiii; E.D. Edwards, “A Classified Guide to the Thirteen Classes of Chinese Prose,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 12, no. 3-4

In the Ming, however, the most important factor contributing to the separate social spheres of poetry and prose was the exclusion of poetry from the civil service examination curriculum.⁵⁰ While in the eyes of many educators this exclusion simply made poetry irrelevant to examinees' daily program of study, for many literati—particularly in the Jiangnan centers of literati culture, whose residents had historically leveraged their poetic skill to dominate the civil service examinations—the irrelevance of poetry freed it from the taint of careerism. Concern with poetry became a way of displaying one's high minded detachment from the prosaic world of politics, social climbing, and examinations. Particularly after Li Dongyang's 李東陽 (1447-1516) tenure as Grand Secretary, during which time he promoted a careful, formal approach to poetry composition, archaists such as Li Mengyang (a student of Li Dongyang's) began to rigorously police the boundary between poetry and prose.⁵¹ Both Li Mengyang and He Jingming attacked perceived intrusions of prosy language (for example, the heavy use of grammatical particles) and Neo-Confucian jargon into the emotional world of poetry, and by the mid-sixteenth-century literati like Tang Shunzhi were going to far as to compare the separate spheres of poetry and prose to the separate spheres of women and men.⁵²

(1948), 770-88; Robert Hartwell, "A Guide to Documentary Sources of Middle Period Chinese History: Documentary Forms Contained in the Collected Papers (Wen-Chi) of Twenty-One T'ang and Sung Writers," *Bulletin of Sung-Yuan Studies* 18 (1986), 133-82; Timothy Phelan, "Yao Nai's Classes of Ku-Wen Prose: A Translation of the Introduction," *Parerga*, 3 (1976), 30-65.

⁵⁰ Benjamin Elman, *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations*, 44-45.

⁵¹ Daniel Bryant, *The Great Recreation*, 425-26; Liao Kebin, *Fugu pai yu Ming dai wenxue sichao*, 137-47.

⁵² On Li Mengyang and He Jingming's shared distaste for prosy poetry, see Leonard K.K. Chan, *Tang shi de chuancheng*, 31-34. For Tang Shunzhi's gendering of poetry, see Tang Shunzhi, "Wu ruren wanshi xu 吳孺人輓詩序," in *Tang Shunzhi ji*, ed. Ma Meixin and Huang Yi, 2.462. Cf. Joanna Handlin, "Lü Kun's New Audience: The Influence of Women's Literacy on Sixteenth-Century Thought," in *Women in Chinese Society*, ed. Margery Wolf, Roxane Witke, and Emily Martin (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975), 27-28; Dorothy Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers: Women and Culture in Seventeenth-Century China* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1994), 50.

More often than not, Ming debates about whether one dynasty's writing was better than another dynasty's were really about defining and policing the relationship between the prosaic and poetic spheres, in which prose was increasingly associated with the world of men competing for political and social status, and poetry was idealized as a domestic, feminine, emotionally authentic refuge from this this public world of competition. The use of prosy elements in poetry could feel either insipid and vulgar, or mild and calming, depending on one's tastes. But either way, the way in which ancient-style prose felt mundane to Ming readers should alert us to how, in contrast to the Tang and Northern Song dynasties, when the use of non-parallel prose in social and examination writing was a radical act of self-distinction, by the Ming the prose style of Han Yu and Ouyang Xiu had become the default form of public expression, the taken-for-granted ground against which individual members of the "writing elite" could distinguish themselves.

Membership in this "writing elite" was exclusive with reference to the total population, but it is also universally agreed upon by historians of books and printing that this classically literate minority was both expanding and diversifying in the sixteenth century.⁵³ Twentieth-century scholars tended to link this expansion and diversification to the rise of the vernacular novel. Anne McLaren, for example, correlates the publication of more vernacular texts in the late Ming with an "emerging awareness...that the potential readership for these texts was a heterogeneous one of officials, literati, common people,

⁵³ Although, as Cynthia Brokaw notes, "Song and Yuan historians prefer to see it as a revival of the flourishing book trade...after a brief lapse in the early Ming." Cynthia Brokaw, "On the History of the Book in China," in *Printing and Book Culture in Late Imperial China*, ed. Cynthia Joanne Brokaw and Kai-wing Chow (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 24-25.

the relatively unlearned, and even the all-inclusive ‘people of the empire’ (*tianxia zhi ren*) or ‘people of the four classes’ (*simin*).⁵⁴ This is a valid point, but we should also be careful not to overemphasize the social significance of vernacular printing. Based on Lucille Chia’s quantitative analysis of the types of books printed in Jianyang and Nanjing, it appears that *ci* poetry collections, the collected writings of individuals, and anthologies of classical literature all controlled greater market shares than the vernacular novels studied by McLaren. In sixteenth-century China we find no analogue to the collapse of Latin publishing and the rise of proto-national vernaculars in sixteenth-century Europe.⁵⁵ If we are to explain the expansion and diversification of the reading public in sixteenth-century China, we must do so in a way that accounts for the undiminished centrality of ancient-style prose.

Kai-Wing Chow provides one such attempt in a study of examination writing, printing, and anthologizing in the late Ming, arguing that the near impossibility of passing the civil service examinations and the growth of commercial printing generated a “literary public sphere” (*gong 公*) of “professional writers, critics, editors, and commentators” who “came to rival and challenge the imperial authority over interpretation of the Confucian canon and the standard of literary excellence.”⁵⁶ One problem with Chow’s approach is its lack of temporal and geographic specificity.

⁵⁴ Anne McLaren, “Constructing New Reading Publics in Late Ming China,” in *Printing and Book Culture in Late Imperial China*, ed. Cynthia Joanne Brokaw and Kai-wing Chow (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 152.

⁵⁵ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London ; New York: Verso, 1991), 18.

⁵⁶ Kai-Wing Chow, *Publishing, Culture, and Power in Early Modern China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 12, 15.

Commercial printing—and especially commercial anthology printing, as I will show in chapter 1—did not develop the same everywhere at the same time, and in general anthology polemics were driven more by recent fashions or regional tastes than friction between imperial authority and a distinct class of “literati-merchant-businessman” (*shishang* 士商). *Gong* was not a discursive space created by this class, but rather a strategy of claiming universality for and thus legitimizing one’s own ideas about literature. This strategy was deployed by many types of social actors in the Ming, both government and commercial anthologists, *jinshi* degree holders and school dropouts. Furthermore, claiming *gong* for one’s own ideas was not necessarily the only way to position oneself as an authority or tastemaker in the Ming; as I demonstrate in chapter 4, claims to minority, triviality, and marginality also came to acquire great social cachet for seventeenth-century readers in Jiangnan urban centers.

Indeed, the most cohesive and least reductive studies of Ming print culture have focused specifically on these Jiangnan urban centers, with Dorothy Ko examining the pivotal role of women’s culture, Katherine Carlitz analyzing the construction and performance of literati identity, and Yuming He exploring the playfully “hucksterish” sensibility which guided the textual production of commercial printers and editors.⁵⁷ The “subversive wit,” as He calls it, on display in this materials gives them internal cohesion (and who does not love to read joke books, drinking game manuals, and drama

⁵⁷ Dorothy Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers*; Katherine Carlitz, “Printing as Performance: Literati Playwright-Publishers of the Late Ming,” in *Printing and Book Culture in Late Imperial China*, ed. Cynthia Joanne Brokaw and Kai-wing Chow, 267-303; Yuming He, *Home and the World: Editing the “Glorious Ming” in Woodblock-Printed Books of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2013).

miscellanies?), but it is difficult to explain this playful, countercultural print culture without situating it in relation to the mainstream against which it defined itself, something which Jiangnan-focused studies have not yet accomplished.

The theoretical background of this dissertation does not differ from the recent studies outlined above; like them—indeed, like most recent research on Ming literature—it proceeds within a framework of cultural studies, book history, and Pierre Bourdieu’s sociological approach to literature.⁵⁸ Where this dissertation differs from previous studies is its conviction that ancient-style prose deeply mattered to literate people in the Ming—at least on a practical, if not always a theoretical level. In fact, because ancient-style prose was the taken-for-granted ground of the Ming literary field, as an object of study it is able to address the central concerns of this scholarly trend much more effectively than fiction, drama, and popular songs.

For example, in contrast to studies of fiction, drama, popular songs, and other widely-enjoyed but still basically sub-literary genres (indeed, even examination prose was not included in the collected works of individual literati), ancient-style prose anthologies allow us to see how *wen* itself was constructed as a field of knowledge. And because knowledge of *wen* was vital for literate people in every part of the empire throughout the dynasty, ancient-style prose anthologies can help us temporally, socially, and geographically correlate new modes of textual production and consumption, without relying on simplistic class distinctions or universalizing the print culture of one specific region.

⁵⁸ I refer specifically to Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*, trans. Susan Emanuel (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996).

More specifically, my goal is to show how an itinerant class of education officials constructed a mainstream canon of ancient-style prose in government schools across the empire, how literati who learned to write within this world of apparently universal prose laws eventually sought to transcend them, and finally, how in seventeenth-century Jiangnan those male literati, along with a growing population of women writers and commercial printers, constructed a new counter-canon of ancient-style prose.

This dissertation comprises four chapters. In chapter 1, I provide an overview of the roughly 100 sixteenth- and seventeenth-century prose anthologies that served as my primary sources. By “literary anthology,” I refer to the traditional bibliographic category of *zongji* 總集, collections of classical literary works by multiple authors. After giving a historical overview of *zongji* as a bibliographic category, I describe the physical and visual qualities of Ming anthologies, especially their page layout and use of punctuation and annotation. I then discuss how these books were produced, using GIS to visualize patterns in production sites, and citing records of funding, compilation, and printing practices in anthology prefaces. Finally, having digitized the tables of contents for 34 anthologies, I use the network analysis tool Gephi to visualize clusters of anthologies corresponding with distinct editorial strategies.

In Chapter 2, I zoom in on a cluster of anthologies produced by teams of education officials, teachers and students at local government schools, and private literati. Despite being produced across a vast geographic area throughout the sixteenth century, these anthologies tended to include more or less the same corpus of ancient-style prose developed in the twelfth-century anthology *Orthodox Tradition of Literature* (*Wenzhang*

zhengzong 文章正宗). I attribute the similarity of these books' selection strategies to the modularity of their production teams and the government schools on which they centered, as well as the tendency of education officials to carry anthologies with them to new posts. I argue for understanding these government school anthologies as embodying a core curriculum of ancient-style prose designed for an empire-wide student reading public.

In chapter 3, I examine the life and literary personas of one especially influential member of this public, Tang Shunzhi 唐順之 (1507-1560). Like many students at the time, Tang's early literary education emphasized the compatibility of examination prose and ancient-style prose. I begin the chapter with a look at an anthology printed in 1510 by the education intendant to the Changzhou 常州 prefectural school, where several years later Tang enrolled as a student. This anthology not only reproduced the same core curriculum of ancient-style prose discussed in chapter 1, it also attributed the unity of this core curriculum to universal "rules" (*fa* 法) of prose.

Tang's rapid rise to fame as an examination essayist culminated in his first place finish in the 1529 metropolitan examinations. This period coincided with the popularization of ancient-style prose anthologies in government schools across the empire, as well as the rapid growth of commercial printing more generally. Within this environment, Tang's examination success almost immediately generated a printed persona, "number one graduate Tang" (*Tang huiyuan* 唐會元). Anthologies of ancient-style prose claiming to bear Tang's annotations appeared in droves, and his style of annotating essays became a template which printers projected across geographic space and back through literary history. Through this process of reproduction and assimilation,

the student reading public really did come to experience the rules of prose as universal. I conclude this chapter with an examination of Tang's reflections on his printed persona and the shortcomings of the literary pedagogy it embodied.

In chapter 4, I turn to a group of self-identified "ancient-style *xiaopin*" anthologies produced by commercial editors and printers in the urban centers of late Ming Jiangnan. These anthologies, while also including works of ancient-style prose from throughout history, evince a selection strategy quite different from the anthologies discussed in chapters 2 and 3. Most obviously, they included numerous works attributed to women. The makers of ancient-style *xiaopin* anthologies contrasted such works against the boring curricula of "village pedants" 村學究 and the careerist world of civil service examinations, claiming that *xiaopin* had the power to restore feeling to benumbed, depressed readers. After tracing this line of argument through several prefaces, I turn to the actual contents of these anthologies, highlighting a reading strategy finely attuned to the trivialization of serious literary genres and to ironic inversions of gender hierarchy. Correlating this reading strategy to the growing prominence of women writers in late Ming urban Jiangnan, I argue for understanding *xiaopin* as a feminized countercanon developed by commercial printers to embody a shared sense of countercultural identity among the emerging Jiangnan reading public.

A final word: By highlighting the differences between my approach to the Ming against that of the May Fourth generation, and emphasizing the political mission of May Fourth literary scholarship, I do not mean to portray them as presentists, and myself as a historicist, with somehow greater access to the final truth of Ming literary history. We are

all presentist readers. But, to paraphrase Sheldon Pollock, in order for the past to teach us something that is genuinely new to us, we must also be historicists. And in order to recognize that ours will not be the last word in this dialogue between the new and old, we must also be traditionalists.⁵⁹ I hope that my findings will help generate a new story about the history of literature in Ming China, a story at once stranger and more relevant to twenty-first century readers.

⁵⁹ Sheldon Pollock, "Areas, Disciplines, and the Goals of Inquiry," *Journal of Asian Studies* 75, no. 4 (November 2016), 921-24.

CHAPTER 1: MING ANTHOLOGIES OF ANCIENT-STYLE PROSE

The market for ancient literature was booming in sixteenth-century China. Shen Shixing 申時行 (1535-1614) imagined the daunting variety of these writings in terms of a grand antique market:

In the marketplace of a great metropolis, all kinds of merchandise are assembled. For strange and extraordinary things, you have axle-illuminating pearls, night-shining jade, and the thatch-flying sword.⁶⁰ For things with ancient charm, you have the inclining clepsydra, Shouwang's cauldron, and tiles from the Jinggan Building in Sasuo Hall.⁶¹ For other various things you have silk and hemp, floating chimes, and seaside pearls, as well as *yao* and *kun* stones; bamboos, small and large; feathers, hair, ivory, and hides.⁶² The things are always strewn about thick as chess pieces. There is a rich merchant who does not begrudge a thousand or even ten-thousand in gold, taking in everything and casting his net wide, and still it is not enough. There is a wise merchant who leaves the low quality and takes the high quality, leaves the blemished and takes the unblemished, he fills his sack and returns. And there is a stupid merchant, who spends the whole day with mind wandering and eyes scanning, yet when you look through what he has in his breast, you find nothing there—what could this merchant have to offer?

五都之市，百貨聚焉，光怪者爲照乘珠、爲夜光璧、爲
茨飛劍，古色者爲欽器、爲壽夢鼎、爲馭娑井幹瓦，珍
錯者爲岱畎絲、臬、浮磬、濱珠，以至瑤、琨、篠蕩，

⁶⁰ The “axle-illuminating pearl” is a pearl so lustrous that it illuminates the axles of nearby carts. See Dugu Liangqi 獨孤良器, “Fu de chenzhu yu quan 賦得沉珠於泉,” in *Yuding quan Tang shi* 御定全唐詩, Wenyuange Siku quanshu edition, 313.4. For the “night-shining jade,” see Liu Dianjue 劉殿爵 and Chen Fangzheng 陳方正, eds., *Zhanguo ce zhuzi suoyin* 戰國策逐字索引 (Hong Kong: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1992), 168/87/27.

⁶¹ For the “inclining clepsydra,” see Liu Dianjue, ed., *Xunzi zhuzi suoyin* 荀子逐字索引 (Hong Kong: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1996), 28/138/10.

⁶² These object names were taken from the *Yugong* 禹貢 chapter of the *Documents Classic*. See He Zhihua, ed., *Shangshu zhuzi suoyin*, 6/8-10. I have used Legge's translations for object names. See James Legge, trans., *The Chinese Classics: With A Translation, Critical and Exegetical Notes, Prolegomena, and Copious Indexes. Vol. III--Part I. The First Parts of the Shoo King* (London: Trübner & co., 1865), 92-127.

羽、毛、齒、革之屬，往往矚列綦布。有富賈焉，不愛千萬金，廣收而羅致之，未足也。有智賈焉，舍粗取精，舍瑕取瑜，盈橐而歸矣。有愚賈焉，終日游意極目，反而索之懷中，無有也，則亦奚取於是賈者哉？⁶³

This passage comes from Shen's preface to *Unification of Myriad Essays by the Great Masters* (*Dafang wanwen yitong* 大方萬文一統), a literary anthology printed in 1596 by the great commercial publisher Yu Xiangdou 余象斗.⁶⁴ On the one hand, this dazzling vision of the literary marketplace reflected a real sixteenth-century growth in the number of printed books circulating—an increase in which Yu Xiangdou and numerous other commercial printers based in Jianyang 建陽, Fujian played a crucial role—as well as the general opulence of late Ming material culture.⁶⁵ At the same time, the bewildering variety of this literary opulence, verbally conveyed in Shen's inventory of obscure names, also served to justify the anthologist's role as middleman between readers and the book market.

In Shen's preface, readers are buyers and the act of reading is a purchase. Some well-endowed readers read everything indiscriminately, like the “rich merchant” who buys everything he sees yet still falls short. Some readers, lacking ability, are paralyzed by indecision and end up reading nothing, like the “stupid merchant” who goes window shopping and leaves with his sack empty. Because neither of these readers can distinguish

⁶³ Shen Shixing 申時行, preface to *Dafang wanwen yitong* 大方萬文一統, 1596 edition, Princeton University Gest Collection. For the preface, see *Guoli zhongyang tushuguan shanben xuba jilu ji bu*, zongji lei, 156.

⁶⁴ On Yu Xiangdou, see Lucille Chia, *Printing for Profit: The Commercial Publishers of Jianyang, Fujian (11th-17th Centuries)* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2003), 156-60.

⁶⁵ See Lucille Chia, “Mashaben: Commercial Publishing in Jianyang from the Song to the Ming,” in *The Song-Yuan-Ming Transition in Chinese History*, ed. Paul Jakov Smith and Richard Von Glahn (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2003), 303-4; Joseph McDermott, *A Social History of the Chinese Book: Books and Literati Culture in Late Imperial China* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2006), 66.

quality literary works, their strategies of reading everything and reading nothing in the end fail to gain anything of value. Only the anthologist, like the “wise merchant,” can see through the dazzling profusion of texts to their true literary value, and make a set of purchases that minimize quantity while maximizing quality.

In one sense, we might think of the Ming anthologist as a retailer of classical literature: mining older, larger compilations; transporting the textual products of others across time, space, and social class; and repackaging them in response to changing fashions and readerships. In fact, this activity constituted a significant portion of commercial book production in the Ming. Lucille Chia calculates that 8.3% of books produced by Jianyang printers were literary anthologies. Only medical texts (14.7%), encyclopedias (13.9%), and the collected works of individual writers (8.7%) were more numerous. Among Nanjing printers, anthologies seem to have been even more prominent, constituting 10.6% of books produced; only books of *ci* poetry and dramatic songs (22.4%) were more numerous.⁶⁶

At the same time, a focus on commercial publishing only presents a partial view of the Ming anthology market. Often, anthologists were not seeking profit. Many kinds of people, officials and non-officials, engaged in anthology production with a variety of non-commercial motivations: helping students, honoring teachers, networking with other officials, and complying with orders to rectify literary style and improve the behavior of local gentry. Whereas previous studies of Ming print culture have limited themselves to

⁶⁶ Lucille Chia, *Printing for Profit*, 312-13; Lucille Chia, “Of Three Mountains Street: The Commercial Publishers of Ming Nanjing,” in *Printing and Book Culture in Late Imperial China*, ed. Cynthia Brokaw and Kai-wing Chow (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 129-30.

either commercial or non-commercial printing, a study of literary anthologies must investigate how both commercial and non-commercial printers engaged with regional and national markets.⁶⁷

In this chapter, I present an overview of the primary sources for this dissertation: anthologies of classical literature printed in the Ming dynasty (1368-1644). I will first outline the history of *zongji* 總集 (“general anthology”) as a bibliographic category and survey recent scholarship on premodern Chinese anthologies. I will then turn to the anthologies I examined over the course of my dissertation research and describe in general terms their physical appearance, compilation, printing, financing, and use. Finally, using GIS and the network analysis tool Gephi, I will map this corpus of anthologies spatially, temporally, and intertextually.

Plotting the printing sites of 63 anthologies, while distinguishing among government, commercial, and princely printings, shows that government schools printed anthologies over a wide geographic area, whereas commercial anthology production was concentrated in Nanjing, Jianyang, and Zhejiang urban centers (Suzhou, Hangzhou, Huzhou, etc.). Examined temporally, we find that most government school anthologies

⁶⁷ Major studies of commercial printing in the Ming include Lucille Chia, “Mashaben: Commercial Publishing in Jianyang from the Song to the Ming,” in *The Song-Yuan-Ming Transition in Chinese History*, ed. Paul Jakov Smith and Richard Von Glahn (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2003), 284–328; Lucille Chia, *Printing for Profit: The Commercial Publishers of Jianyang, Fujian (11th-17th Centuries)*; Lucille Chia, “Of Three Mountains Street: The Commercial Publishers of Ming Nanjing.” For studies focusing on non-commercial printing, see Jerome Kerlouegan, “Printing for Prestige? Publishing and Publications by Ming Princes,” *East Asian Publishing and Society* 1–2 (2011-2012), 39–144, 3–98; Michela Bussotti and Jean-Pierre Drège, eds., *Imprimer sans profit? le livre non commercial dans la Chine impériale* (Genève: Librairie Droz S.A, 2015); Joseph Dennis, *Writing, Publishing, and Reading Local Gazetteers in Imperial China, 1100-1700* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2015).

were printed in the sixteenth century, and most commercial anthologies in the seventeenth century.

Visualizing titles shared among 34 anthologies and grouping these into sub-communities, furthermore, shows that government school anthologies, although printed over a vast geographic area, were assembled with a more or less uniform selection strategy, a product of the ceaseless movement of education intendants and other officials from province to province, as well as the intra-province migrations of students at government schools. In contrast, the anthologies produced by commercial printers for the Jiangnan market show much more variation in content: some follow the same canon that we see in government school anthologies; some focus exclusively on prose from the Han 漢 dynasty (206 BCE-220 CE) and earlier; and some, beginning in the late sixteenth century, focus on a type of text known as *xiaopin* 小品 (“minor appraisal”).

Previous research on Ming literary polemics, discussed in the introduction to my dissertation, has relied on a narrative of monolithic and geographically non-specific “schools” or “movements” (the archaist movement, the Tang-Song school, and the expressionist movement) whose succession prefigured the early twentieth-century New Culture Movement. In contrast, this chapter’s visualizations will serve as the storyboard for the narrative I will lay out in chapters 2 through 4, a new narrative of Ming literary history with less teleology and more attention to how literary polemics reflected the development of regional and interregional book markets and reading publics.

The “Literary Anthology” as an Object of Study

Literary anthologies in premodern China included varying combinations of poetry, prose, and prosimetric genres. My dissertation focuses predominately on anthologies of ancient-style prose (*guwen* 古文), with the exception of a few anthologies which included both ancient-style prose and *shi* 詩 poetry. I have excluded pure poetry anthologies from this study because Ming poetry anthologies have received relatively greater scholarly attention than prose anthologies.⁶⁸ My dissertation should be read in conjunction with this body of scholarship on Ming poetry anthologies, and I will make references to it periodically throughout the dissertation. I have also excluded Ming editions of *Selections of Refined Literature* (*Wen xuan* 文選) from this study. Due to the special canonical status of this book in the Ming, not to mention the high number of Ming editions, the reception of *Selections of Refined Literature* in the Ming is a topic better left aside for separate treatment.

Over the course of my dissertation research I identified and examined roughly 100 anthologies of ancient-style prose, listed alphabetically by title in my bibliography. These anthologies were printed from the mid-fifteenth century to the fall of the Ming in 1644,

⁶⁸ Helpful studies of Ming poetry anthologies include Leonard K.K. Chan, *Tang shi de chuancheng: Mingdai fugu shilun yanjiu* (Taipei: Taiwan xuesheng shuju, 1990); Cui Jie, “Gu Tang Shigui and the Making of Commented Poetry Anthologies in the Seventeenth Century China” (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2013); Chen Jing, “Anthologizing Culture: Publication and Reception of Ancient-Style Poetry Anthologies in Late Imperial China, 1500s-1700s” (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2017). Relevant studies of prose anthologies include Lü Hsiang-yu 呂湘瑜, “Song Ming Qing guwen xuanben shulüe--Dianfan xingcheng de lishi 宋明清古文選本述略——典範形成的歷程,” *Fuda Zhongyansuo xuekan* 輔大中研所學刊 17 (April 2007), 235-55; Chung Chih-wei 鍾志偉, *Ming-Qing Tang-Song ba da jia xuanben yanjiu* 明清唐宋八大家選本研究 (Taipei: Wenjin chubanshe, 2008); Sim Chuin Peng 沈俊平, *Juye jinliang: Ming zhongye yihou fangke zhiju yongshu de shengchan yu liutong* 舉業津梁：明中葉以後坊刻制舉用書的生產與流通 (Taipei: Taiwan xuesheng shuju, 2009).

but a small number were compiled prior to the founding of the Ming. Most of the editions I viewed are in the National Central Library Chinese Rare Books Collection and the Princeton University Gest Collection. I also viewed a smaller number in the Fu Ssu-nien Library, the National Diet Library, the National Archives of Japan, the National Library of China, the Peking University Library, and the Harvard-Yenching Library. Although I did not view materials from the rare book collections of the Library of Congress, the Shanghai Library, or any Hong Kong libraries, the catalogs of these collections do not list any titles I have not already seen, giving me a high degree of confidence that any lacunae or bias in my sources are due more to survival rates than to the specific collections I consulted.⁶⁹

Still, this does not explain what I mean by “anthology.” In premodern China there were many different kinds of textual compilations. In fact, it might be convincingly argued that compilation was the dominant form of textual production in premodern China, and comprehensive study of premodern Chinese compilation culture would need to encompass an impossibly broad range of texts, from encyclopedias to literary collections, “brush-notes” (*biji* 筆記) to “collectanea” (*congshu* 叢書), religious texts to administrative records—even the Five Classics were thought to have been compiled by Confucius. Given this extremely broad range of compilations, many of which were literary, any study of “literary anthologies” in premodern China must begin by defining “literary anthology” as a category.

⁶⁹ Nor does Wang Zhongmin 王重民, *Zhongguo shanben shu tiyao* 中国善本书提要 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1983) list any titles I have not seen.

In this dissertation, I use the term “literary anthology” to translate the traditional bibliographic category of *zongji* 總集. The stability of this bibliographic category from as early as the *Book of Sui* (*Sui shu* 隋書), compiled in 636 CE, through the compilation of the *Siku quanshu* in the late eighteenth century, and continuing into present times made the process of locating materials quite simple. All the anthologies listed in my bibliography were found in the *zongji* sections of their respective rare book catalogs. During the research process, I located them by simply reading through the *zongji* sections of rare book catalogues and requesting the titles I wished to view.

As a historical bibliographic category, a few features of *zongji* should be noted. First, *zongji* 總集 and *bieji* 別集 were the two major subcategories of *ji* 集 in the traditional bibliographic system of *jing* 經 (“classics”), *shi* 史 (“history”), *zi* 子 (“philosophy”), and *ji* 集 (“literary collections”). The *zong* (“to bind together/gather,” later “comprehensive” or “general”) of *zongji* indicates that *zongji* bring together works by multiple authors, whereas the *bie* (“separate”) of *bieji* specifically refers to the collected works of individual authors. *Zongji* have titles like “Comprehensive Overview of Ancient-Style Prose” and “Essays by the Eight Masters of the Tang and Song Dynasties”; *bieji* have titles like “Collected Works of Su Dongpo.” Some twentieth-century book catalogs further divide *zongji* into those which include works from multiple dynasties, called *tongdai* 通代 (“trans-dynastic”), and those which include works from only a single dynasty, called *duandai* 斷代 (“limited to a single dynasty”). In the table below, I have highlighted the place of *zongji*, and thus the scope of this dissertation, within the traditional bibliographic system.

Literary Anthologies in the Traditional Bibliographic System

<i>Jing</i> 經 (classics)	<i>Shi</i> 史 (history)	<i>Zi</i> 子 (philosophy)	<i>Ji</i> 集 (literary collections)	
			<i>Bieji</i> 別集 (single author literary collections)	<i>Zongji</i> 總集 (“general,” i.e. multi-author literary anthologies)
				<div> <div><i>Tongdai</i> 通代 (contents include works from multiple dynasties)</div> <div><i>Duandai</i> 斷代 (contents limited to a single dynasty)</div> </div>

The earliest attested use of the word *zongji* to denote the bibliographic category of multi-author literary collections was in the *Treatise on Bibliography* (*Jingji zhi* 經籍志) in the *Book of Sui*. In the *zongji* section of this treatise, the term *zongji* was explained with reference to one of the earliest literary anthologies in China, the lost *Discourse on the Categories of Literary Composition* (*Wenzhang liubie lun* 文章流別論), compiled by Zhi Yu 摯虞 in the late third century CE:

Regarding *zongji*: After the Jian'an reign belletristic compositions became numerous, and the collections of the various authors grew ever greater in number. Zhi Yu of the Jin dynasty felt sorry for the toil of readers, and so he gathered up the finest specimens and weeded out the superfluous. Beginning with poetry and rhapsody, he made categories for each, assembled and compiled them, and called these their "categories." After this anthology, literary collections were assembled and transcribed, writers followed established regulations, and belletrist scholar-officials thought it profound, and took it as their standard.

總集者，以建安之後，辭賦轉繁，眾家之集，日以滋廣，晉代摯虞，苦覽者之勞倦，於是採摭孔翠，芟剪繁蕪，自詩賦下，各為條貫，合而編之，謂為流別。是後文集總鈔，作者繼軌，屬辭之士，以為覃奧，而取則焉。⁷⁰

Over a millennium later, the editors of the *Siku quanshu* would define the function of *zongji* in much the same terms:

Writings multiply by the day, but they are scattered, without anything to unite them. Therefore, general anthologies are made: first, to catch the unbound and adrift, and give short, fragmented pieces a place to stay; second, to eliminate the superfluous and overgrown, to cut down the weeds and save the finest blossoms. They have always been the standard for literature, and the source of composition.

文籍日興，散無統紀。於是總集作焉，一則網羅放佚，使零章殘什，並有所歸；一則刪汰繁蕪，使莠稗咸除，菁華畢出。是固文章之衡鑒，著作之淵藪矣。⁷¹

As seen in these passages, the functions of literary anthologies were threefold. First, literary anthologies guaranteed the transmission of worthy texts and eliminated unworthy texts; they "gathered up the finest specimens and weeded out the superfluous," "cut down the weeds and save the finest blossoms." Second, literary anthologies codified writing. Through selecting the best works, they provided the "standard for literature" which

⁷⁰ *Suishu* 隋書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1973), 4.1089-90.

⁷¹ *Siku quanshu zongmu* 四庫全書總目, 186.1.

allowed writers to “follow established regulations.” Third, literary anthologies saved readers time and effort—they lessened what the Sui *Treatise on Bibliography* called “the toil of readers.” Anthologies were thus simultaneously secondary and superior to the corpora that they managed: secondary because they were a time and effort-saving shortcut, and superior because they implicitly made normative claims about “standards for literature” which more specialized collections could not.

Because of this simultaneously despised and privileged status, literary anthologies were arguably the most influential form of literary criticism in premodern China. Lu Xun 魯迅 (1881-1936) once perceptively observed:

The power of annotated anthologies to influence later literature was not slight—I fear it was far greater than the individual collected works of great authors. I think that this is probably something that people researching the history of Chinese literature should pay attention to.
評選的本子，影響於後來的文章的力量是不小的，恐怕還遠在名家的專集之上，我想，這許是研究中國文學史的人們也該留意的罷。⁷²

Until two decades ago, however, there were almost no detailed studies of literary anthologies in English.⁷³ There were three reasons for this lack of scholarship. First, the anthology is not an original creative work. Likewise, the anthologist is not an author. Third, even as works of literary criticism rather than original, authorial creations, premodern literary anthologies did not look like what Western and Western-influenced

⁷² Lu Xun 魯迅, “*Xuanben* 選本,” in *Lu Xun quanji* 魯迅全集, vol. 7 (Hong Kong: Wenxue yanjiushe, 1973), 131.

⁷³ Two early studies are Wang Yao 王瑤, “Zhongguo wenxue piping yu zongji 中國文學批評與總集,” in *Guanyu Zhongguo gudian wenxue wenti* 關於中國古典文學問題 (Shanghai: Shanghai gudian wenxue chubanshe, 1956), 45-50; Adele Rickett, “The Anthologist as Literary Critic in China,” *Literature East and West* 19 (1975), 146-65.

scholars thought that literary criticism should look like. Unlike *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons* (*Wenxin diaolong* 文心雕龍) and *Canglang's Discussions of Poetry* (*Canglang shihua* 滄浪詩話), anthologies were practical, not discursive. The anthologist's critical sensibility manifested itself in how the anthology's contents were arranged and annotated, and the forms of literary practice that these features inculcated in the act of reading.

Given this closeness to practice rather than theory, it is not surprising that a body of scholarship on Chinese literary anthologies only began to take form in the 1980s, as scholars became interested in literature as social practice, or literary culture. Although anthologies often included literary works from multiple periods, it has been the practice of most anthology scholarship to use the selection strategies of one or a number of anthologies to talk about the sociology of taste, the mechanisms of textual transmission, and the construction of literary authority during the historical period in which the anthology in question was compiled.

Responding to debates on canon and cultural capital, Pauline Yu has used anthologies to examine canon formation in early and late imperial China.⁷⁴ David Knechtges and Tian Xiaofei have discussed medieval literary culture through the lens of anthologizing.⁷⁵ Anna Shields has used the *Collection from among the Flowers* (*Huajian*

⁷⁴ Pauline Yu, "Poems in Their Place: Collections and Canons in Early Chinese Literature," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 50, no. 1 (June 1990), 163-96; Pauline Yu "Canon Formation in Late Imperial China," in *Culture & State in Chinese History*, ed. Theodore Huters, R. Bin Wong, and Pauline Yu (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 83-104.

⁷⁵ David Knechtges, "Culling the Weeds and Selecting Prime Blossoms: The Anthology in Early Medieval China," in *Culture and Power in the Reconstitution of the Chinese Realm, 200-600*, ed. Scott Pearce et. al. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 200-241; Tian Xiaofei, *Beacon Fire and Shooting Star: The Literary Culture of the Liang (502-557)* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2007), 100-110.

ji 花間集) to discuss poetic practice in the Tang, and Hilde De Weerdts has used ancient-style prose anthologies like the *Orthodox Tradition of Literature* (*Wenzhang zhengzong* 文章正宗) to analyze Southern Song examination culture.⁷⁶ Scholars of Ming-Qing literature have used anthologies to discuss the transmission of women's poetry, letter writing, and literati networks following the Qing conquest.⁷⁷ Michael Gibbs Hill has provided a modern counterpoint in an article on Lin Shu's work as an anthologist.⁷⁸ There are no signs that scholarship on anthologies and collections is abating.

This dissertation builds on several recent studies of Ming anthology production, such as Chen Jing's work on poetry anthologies, Sim Chuin Peng's research on commercial exam aids, and Chung Chih-wei's survey of Tang-Song "eight masters" collections. At the same time, it is the first study to use anthologies of ancient-style prose to revise the received narrative of Ming literary history. On a more technical level, it is also the first study to work with such a large corpus of anthologies. In particular, my use of the network analysis tool Gephi is able to visualize a typology of editorial strategies with important ramifications for understanding the Ming literary field. Before turning to

⁷⁶ Anna Shields, *Crafting a Collection: The Cultural Contexts and Poetic Practice of the Huajian Ji* (*Collection from among the Flowers*) (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2006); Hilde De Weerdts, *Competition over Content: Negotiating Standards for the Civil Service Examinations in Imperial China (1127-1279)* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Asia Center, 2007).

⁷⁷ Kang-I Sun Chang, "Ming and Qing Anthologies of Women's Poetry and Their Selection Strategies," in *Writing Women in Late Imperial China*, ed. Ellen Widmer and Kang-I Sun Chang (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 147-70; David Pattinson, "The Market for Letter Collections in Seventeenth-Century China," *CLEAR* 28 (December 2006), 125-57; Tobie Meyer-Fong, "Packaging the Men of Our Times: Literary Anthologies, Friendship Networks, and Political Accommodation in the Early Qing," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 64, no. 1 (June 2004), 5-56.

⁷⁸ Michael Gibbs Hill, "National Classicism: Lin Shu as a Textbook Writer and Anthologist," *Twentieth-Century China* 33, no. 3 (November 2007), 27-52.

these digital analyses, however, let us consider the more tangible, qualitative features of Ming anthologies.

Physical Layout and Appearance

At their most basic, anthologies contain a sequence of essays by various authors. Below is the first page of Zhuge Liang's 諸葛亮 (181-234) "Memorial on Sending out the Troops" (*Chu shi biao* 出師表) from the 1618 anthology *Short Overview of Prose* (*Wen lie* 文略). On the printed page we see the title, author, and main text. Along the far left center fold of the page we see the title of the book, the chapter number, the page number, and a "fishtail" (*yuwei* 魚尾), printed as a guide to help the printer fold the page evenly.

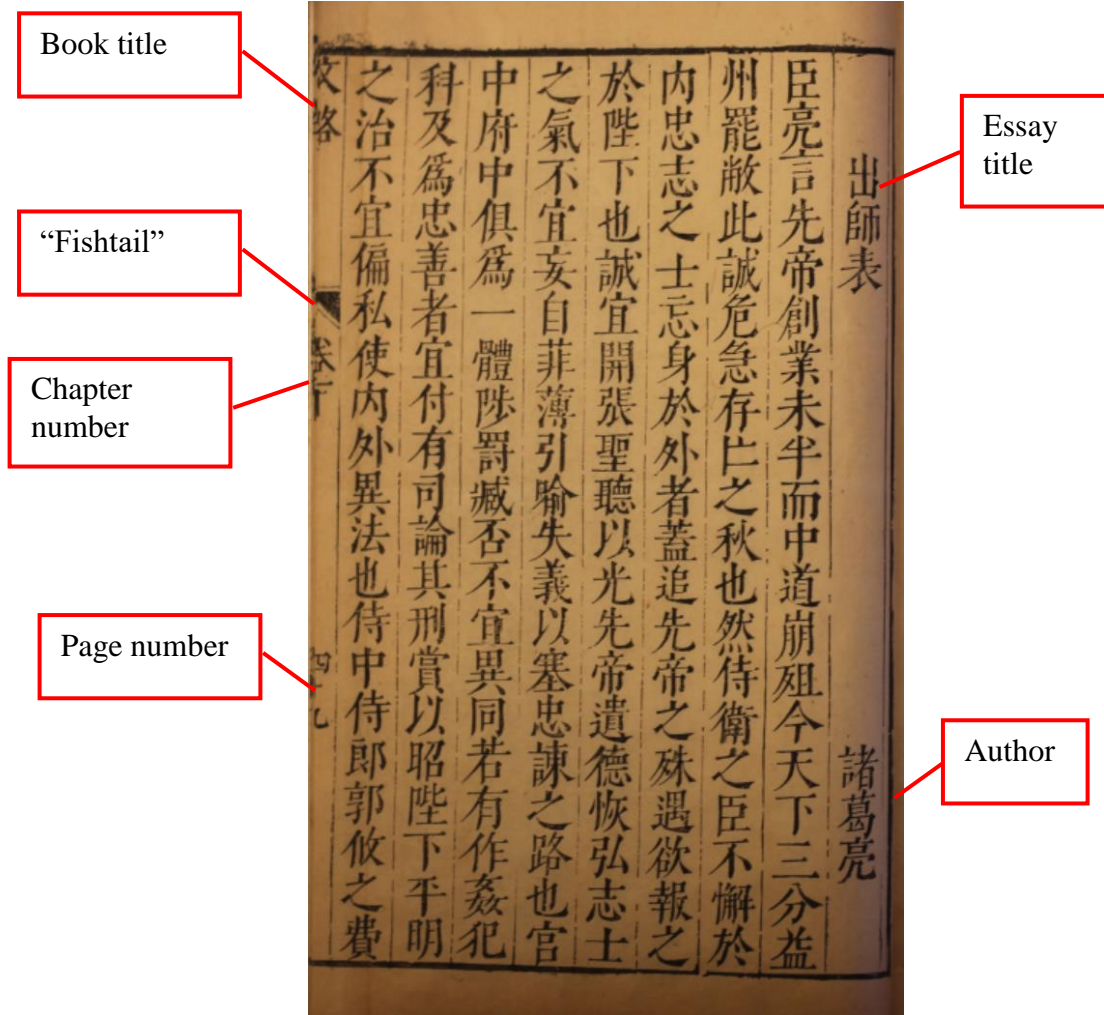


Figure 4: Zhuge Liang's "Memorial on Sending out the Troops." From *Wen lie* 文略, 1618 edition, Princeton University Gest Collection, 2.49a.

Besides these basic features, many anthologies have more on the page. Below, we again see the first page of Zhuge Liang's "Memorial on Sending out the Troops," but this time in the late-Ming *Newly Carved Forest of Commentary to Ancient-Style Prose Models for Examination Writing* (*Juan lidai guwen juye biao zhun pinglin* 鐫歷代古文舉業標準評林). Note the addition of printed circles ○, concentric circles ◎, and dabs 、, as well as linear, interlinear, and upper margin comments, referred to as "eyebrow

comments” (*meipi* 眉批). One anonymous reader has also added his or her own handwritten punctuation.

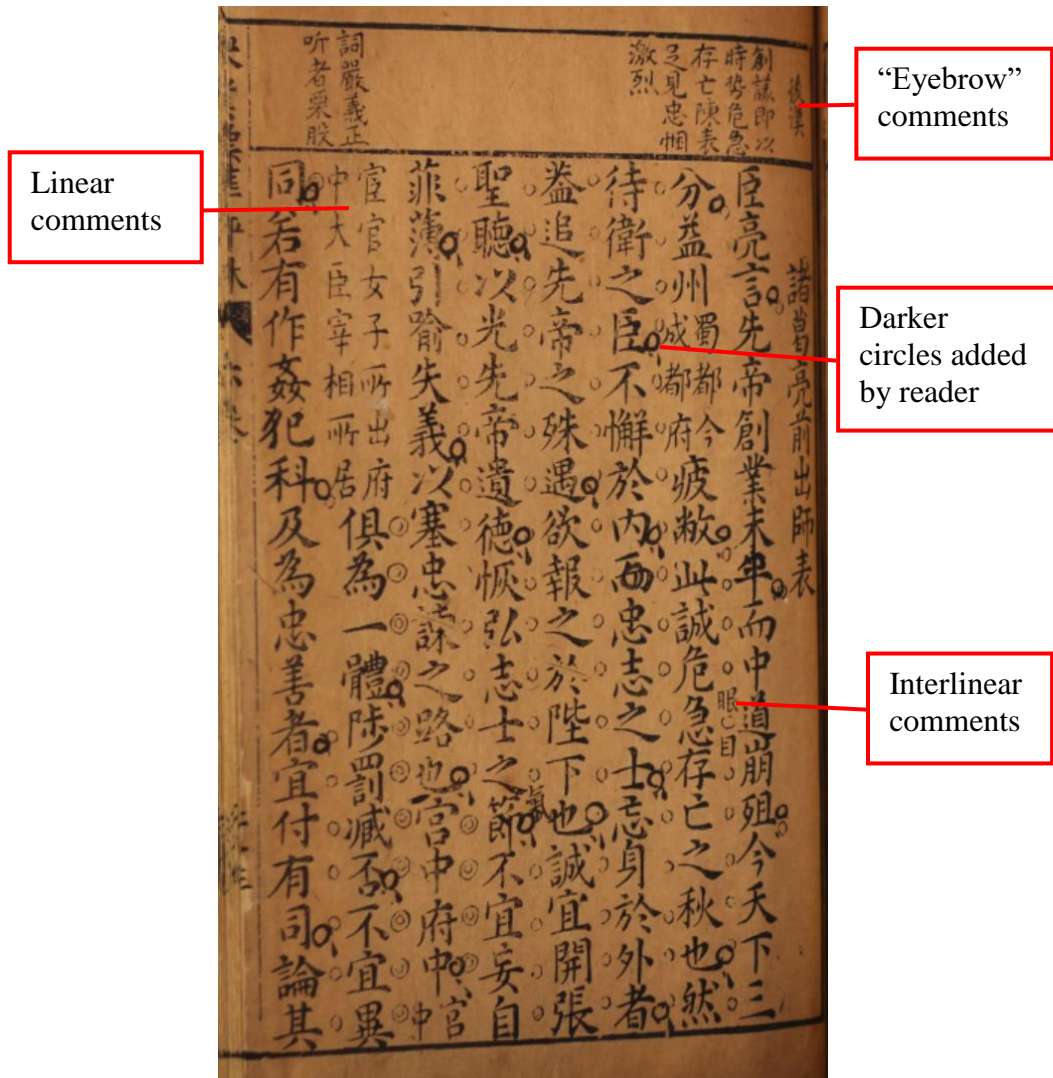


Figure 5: Zhuge Liang’s “Memorial on Sending out the Troops,” with *pingdian* added. From *Juan lidai guwen juyue biao zhun pinglin* 鐫歷代古文舉業標準評林, 1602-1644 edition, Princeton University Gest Collection, 6.23.

What was the experience of reading a heavily marked up essay like this? The translations of fictional commentary included in David Rolston’s *How to Read the Chinese Novel* already give some sense of it, as does Shuhui Yang and Yunqin Yang’s

English translation of the Ming collection of vernacular short stories *Stories Old and New* (*Gujin xiaoshuo* 古今小說, also known as *Yushi mingyan* 喻世明言) with Feng Menglong's 馮夢龍 (1574-1645) editorial comments.⁷⁹ Below, I have attempted to render the above page in English.⁸⁰ I have placed the eyebrow comments in the left column and the main text in the right, while using subscript, all-caps, italics, and bold type to reproduce commentary and emphasis markers. Note how apparent the constant redirection of the eye—as if several editors are constantly yelling “Look here! Now look there!”—becomes in translation:

Eyebrow comments	Main text
<p>Later Han</p> <p>The intent of its composition is to memorialize on a precarious situation, with survival and destruction</p>	<p>Your minister Liang advises:</p> <p>The former emperor passed away with his great enterprise half unfinished. Now the realm is divided in three. Yizhou the capital of Shu, nowadays Chengdu Prefecture is hard pressed. <i>This is truly a precarious time, with survival and destruction hanging in balance</i> MAIN TOPIC. <i>Yet the imperial bodyguards [sic] who remain diligent at your side, and the loyal hearted ministers who risk their lives in the field do so because they recall the grace</i></p>

⁷⁹ David Rolston, ed., *How to Read the Chinese Novel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990); Feng Menglong, *Stories Old and New: A Ming Dynasty Collection*, trans. Shuhui Yang and Yunqin Yang (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000).

⁸⁰ Cf. the English translation in David Pollard, *The Chinese Essay* (London: Hurst & Company, 2000), 25-27; the French in Georges Margouliès, *Le Kou-Wen Chinois* (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1926), 113-16; and the Latin in Angelo Zottoli, *Cursus Litteraturæ Sinicæ* (Chang-hai: Ex Typographia Missionis Catholicæ in orphanotrophio Tou-sè-vè (Tou-chan-wan), 1879), 4.283-87.

hanging in balance. Its fidelity and ardency is plain to see. The phrasing is severe and the meaning upright; the listener's loins tremble!	<i>they received from the former emperor, and wish to repay it to your majesty. Truly, it is right for you to open your sage ears, emblazon your bequeathed virtue, and swell the conduct [sic] of resolute officials. It would not be right to unduly belittle yourself, draw inappropriate analogies, and so stifle the free flow of good- intentioned remonstrance. The palace and the office “the palace” is where eunuchs and girls come from; “the office” is where high officials and prime ministers reside together constitute one body. There should be no difference in how they are appraised. If there are some who behave traitorously and flout the law, or behave like good, loyal subjects, <i>it should be</i> <i>communicated to the relevant officials.</i></i>
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As seen here, ancient-style prose *pingdian* explains meaning, clarifies pronunciation, and brings certain rhetorical or emotional features to the reader's attention. Generally speaking, linear commentary focuses on meaning and pronunciation, interlinear commentary supply rhetorical signposting, and eyebrow comments model emotional response.⁸¹ This is not always the case, but it does hold in the image below, where a linear comment glosses the words Yizhou 益州, *gongzhong* 宮中 and *fuzhong* 府中, an interlinear comment identifies the first sentence as the key point (lit. the “eye” 眼

⁸¹ Cf. David Rolston, *Traditional Chinese Fiction and Fiction Commentary: Reading and Writing Between the Lines* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).

目) of the essay, and an eyebrow comment gushes “the phrasing is severe and the meaning is upright; the listener’s loins tremble!” 詞嚴義正，聽者栗股。

The use and appearance of paratexts on the printed page is one of the best ways of gauging the market for a given book. With the *Newly Carved Forest of Commentary to Ancient-Style Prose Models for Examination Writing*, as was common in low quality Ming imprints, nearly all the text has been highlighted with emphasis markers, rendering them useless as a reading aid and giving the page a crowded, confusing, overstimulating appearance. The low quality of the book is also evident the presence of two typos, *daiwei* 待衛 in place of *shiwei* 侍衛 and *jie* 節 in place of *qi* 氣, the second of which an anonymous reader has taken the initiative to correct.

In contrast, look at the page layout and use of *pingdian* in Min Maide’s 閔邁德 1620 *Transcribed Prose from the Qin and Han Dynasties* (*Qin-Han wen chao* 秦漢文鈔). Note the uncluttered appearance of the page, the high ratio of empty space to text, the judicious application of *pingdian*, the absence of typos, and most importantly the use of red and black ink to distinguish *pingdian* from main text. Visible overprinting indicates that red ink text was printed with a second set of blocks, which would have considerably added to the book’s price.

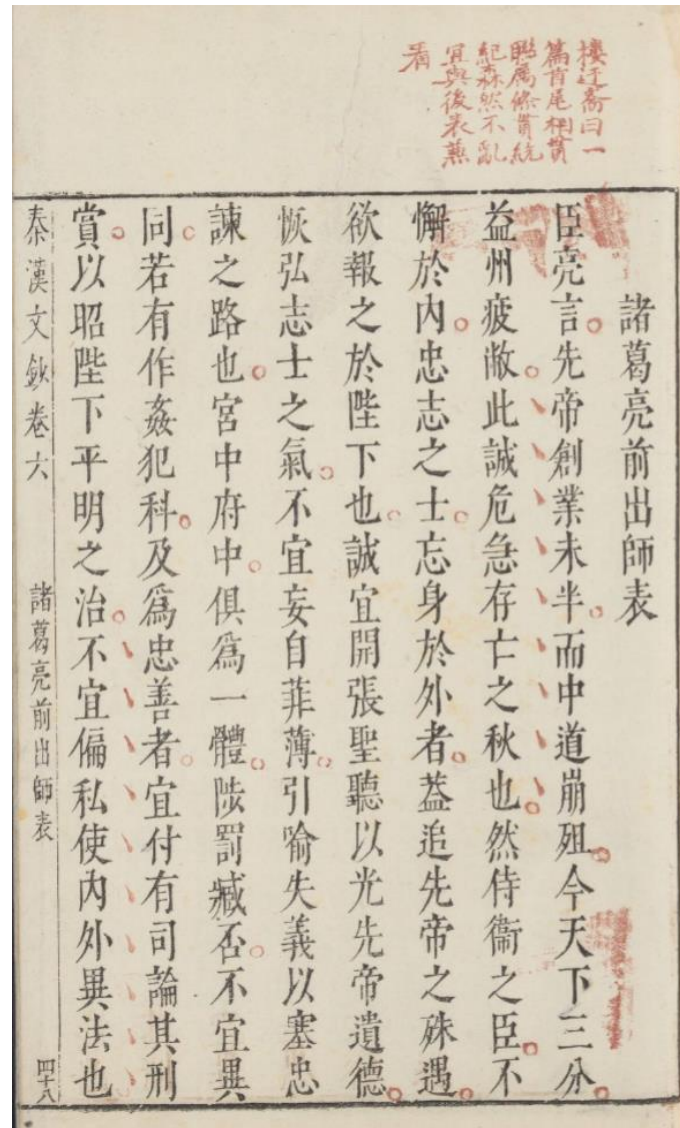


Figure 6: Zhuge Liang's "Memorial on Sending out the Troops." From *Qin-Han wen chao*, 1620 edition, Harvard-Yenching Library, 6.48

This edition of *Transcribed Prose from the Qin and Han* is typical of the upmarket polychrome imprints produced by the Min family of Huzhou in the early seventeenth century.⁸² Anthologies produced in other commercial printing centers display other characteristics. One example is the *Complete compendia of Masters of Ancient Writing*,

⁸² See Sören Edgren, "Chinese Rare Books and Color Printing," *The East Asian Library Journal* 10, no. 1 (2001), 25-52.

Newly Carved and Expanded with Commentary (*Xinqin zengbu zhushi shanhu guwen daquan* 新鉞增補註釋珊瑚古文大全), sometimes shortened to *Complete Compendia of Ancient Writing* (*Guwen daquan* 古文大全). Several variations of this book were repeatedly printed in Jianyang during the Wanli reign (1572-1620). By including unrelated texts in the upper register instead of eyebrow comments, the page layout of this book resembles that of the “daily use encyclopedias” (*riyong leishu* 日用類書) and drama miscellanies studied by Yuming He more than literary anthologies.⁸³ Here, above Zhuge Liang’s “Memorial on Sending out the Troops,” we find a text titled *Newly Recorded Exemplary Exhortations* (*Xinlu quanjie huazhang* 新錄勸戒華章), which begins with a “Warning against Heavy Drinking” (*Jie xujiu* 戒酗酒) composed in purple prose. The two texts are no more related than a local weather forecast and a medical advice column occupying the same newspaper page.

⁸³ On the multi-register format, see Yuming He, *Home and the World*, 56.

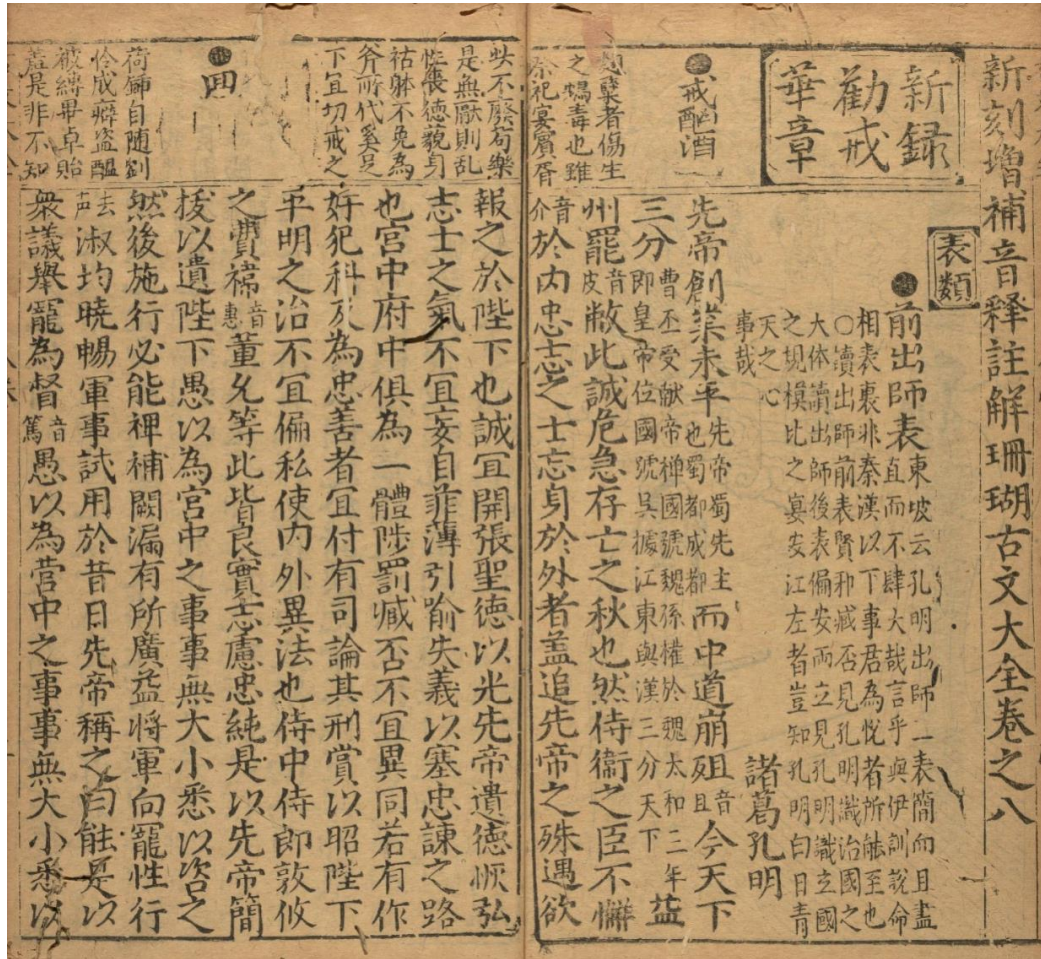


Figure 7: Zhuge Liang's "Memorial on Sending out the Troops" below a "Warning against Heavy Drinking." From *Xinjin zenbu zhushi shanhu guwen daquan* 新鉞增補註釋珊瑚古文大全, c. 1572-1620 edition, Harvard-Yenching Library, 8.1-2.

As I will discuss in chapter 3, consistent systems of *pingdian*, when reproduced widely enough, had the power to make many different kinds of texts (different genres, different authors, different period styles) appear similar to the reader's eye, and thus to "reveal" to the reader universal laws or principles of literary composition operating across diverse literary corpora. Likewise, systems of classification and arrangement conditioned readers to see certain kinds of similarities and differences between texts: to group them by period, author, genre, or any number of alternative categories, such as the

categories shown below in Figure 8: “Polemic Prose” 議論文, “Upright and Righteous Prose” 正大節義文, “Earnest and Exemplary Prose” 懇至標表文, and “Mysterious and Empty Prose” 玄虛文. Zhuge Liang’s “Memorial on Sending out the Troops” is included in the category of “Upright and Righteous Prose.”

<p>卷三 懇至標表文</p> <p>陳情表 祭十二郎文 祭長源鄭通議 祭穆子美文 族譜引 許由先生廟碣 郭有道碑文 故御史周君碣 嚴先生祠堂記 潮州韓文公廟碑 三槐堂銘</p> <p>上吏部裴侍聖 獨孤申叔哀辭 祭呂衡州溫文 祭石曼卿文 東方朔畫像贊序 陳太丘碑文 書箕子廟碑陰 畫錦堂記 張益州畫像記 表忠觀碑 祭歐陽公文</p>	<p>卷一 議論文</p> <p>禮書上 禮書下 平準書 諫論上 明論 攻守 六國 大臣論上 留侯論</p> <p>禮書中 律書 春秋論 諫下 心術 高祖論 王者不治夷狄論 大臣論下 賈誼論</p>
<p>卷四 玄虛文</p> <p>老子上篇 老子下篇</p>	<p>卷二 正大節義文</p> <p>祭鰥魚文 原道辟佛老 學簡當書 諫院題名記 袁州學記 報李陵書 條災異封事 上孝桓皇帝疏 論王氏書 前出師表 後出師表 上高宗封事 文天祥慧和說却聘書</p>

Figure 8: Table of contents, from *Dafang wanwen yitong*, 1596 edition, Princeton University Gest Collection.

These systems of categorization are seen most obviously in the “table of contents” (*mulu* 目錄), but it was also often the job of prefaces and colophons (*xuba* 序跋), and

editorial statements (*fanli* 凡例) to explain and justify these systems, situating them in relationship to precedents and standard practices, explaining the state of the field and this anthology's unique contribution. The compiler of the *Five Abridged Collections of Ancient-Style Prose* (*Guwen wushan* 古文五刪), for example, explained in a preface how he previously compiled two anthologies to show the complex relationship between *wen* 文 ("literature") and *shi* 史 ("history"): the first he arranged in an "annalistic" 編年 format to reveal the relationship between literary change to political history; the second he arranged by "category" 類 in the manner of *Selections of Refined Literature*, presumably to show the persistence of literary forms in the *longue durée*.⁸⁴ Literary anthologies were not just collections of texts, they were also collections of textual categories.⁸⁵

Lastly, it should be noted that ease of use was also an important factor in designing an anthology's paratexts—an unsurprising expectation, given the anthology's role as an instrument for alleviating "the toil of readers." One Ming anthologist noted the advantages of the widespread practice of organizing anthology contents by genre, but worried that if readers try to consult all the included works by "one single author" 一家言, they are inevitably subjected to the annoyance of flipping back and forth between

⁸⁴ Zhang Pu 張溥, preface to *Guwen wushan* 古文五刪, late Ming edition, National Central Library, in *Guoli zhongyang tushuguan shanben xuba jilu ji bu*, zongji lei, 268.

⁸⁵ On generic distinctions, see James R. Hightower, "The Wen Hsüan and Genre Theory," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 20, no. 3/4 (December 1957), 512-33; Pauline Yu, "Formal Distinctions in Chinese Literary Theory," in *Theories of the Arts in China*, ed. Susan Bush and Christian Murck (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 27-53.

chapters.⁸⁶ To facilitate consultation, some printers included chapter categories in the lower corner of the page, allowing readers to quickly flip to the section they wanted. Other printers rendered tables of contents in novel ways. In Figure 8 above, each chapter is enclosed in a printed box. Similarly, as I will discuss in chapter 2, the table of contents for the archaist writer and educator He Jingming's 何景明 (1483-1521) *Ancient-Style Prose for the Curriculum* (*Xueyue guwen* 學約古文) came in the form of a three-year reading syllabus.

Compiling Ancient-Style Prose Anthologies

Making a printed anthology comprised two processes: compilation and printing. Anthology paratexts—prefaces, editorial statements, editor lists, printers' cartouches, and title pages—often give detailed information about both of these processes. Based on the paratexts of roughly 100 anthologies, the following two sections present an overview of why and how people compiled and printed anthologies in the Ming.

Most of the anthologies that survive from Ming times were printed, but these were only the tip of the iceberg of a more widespread culture of anthology compilation. For many literate people, the practice of reading involved copying essays into notebooks. People did this to study for the exams, as well as to simply keep a record of their reading progress, a record which they might later use to teach their younger family members, or

⁸⁶ Fan Weiyi 范惟一, preface to *Lidai wenxuan* 歷代文選, 1561 edition, National Central Library, in *Guoli zhongyang tushuguan shanben xuba jilu ji bu*, zongji lei, 135.

hand down as a vessel of “family learning” (*jiaxue* 家學). In one manuscript anthology, the anonymous compiler wrote:

I perused a broad array of books, starting from the *Zuo Tradition* and *Records of the Grand Historian*, and proceeding up to the Tang and Song. Whenever I met with something that agreed with my heart-mind, I would always copy it out by hand in this book. I obtained 130 pieces and gathered them into two volumes. From time to time I open it up and intone them, meeting with all of history in a single moment, and combining its finest blossoms in a one inch book box.

余汎覽載籍，上自左史，下迄唐宋，遇有當於心者，輒手錄焉，得百三十首，彙爲二編，時披而誦之，會千古於斯須，總英華於寸帙。⁸⁷

The almost artisanal tone of this preface—in which the author personally reads through a wide range of ancient writings, selects and copies “by hand” those that “agree with his heart mind,” and personally intones them—models a more personal, less instrumental engagement with past writings which was then being promoted by certain activist education officials, a phenomenon which I will discuss in chapter 2. At the same time, the very fact that this compiler included a preface suggests that he wanted his anthology to be perceived by others as embodying this more personal approach of study, and perhaps even expected his family members to eventually print it. The compilation of manuscript anthologies for private use was always already linked to the world of print.

Most of the anthologies that I will discuss in this dissertation, in contrast, were explicitly compiled to manage not one’s own reading, but the reading of others. Again, this was the anthologist as middleman, adapting the growing textual excess of the

⁸⁷ Anonymous preface to *Guwen xuanben* 古文選本, Ming edition, National Central Library, in *Guoli zhongyang tushuguan shanben xuba jilu ji bu*, zongji lei, 292.

sixteenth century to the abilities and needs of sixteenth-century readers. One editor, for example, justified his exclusion of pieces lacking “concrete benefit” 實益, like Liu Ling’s 劉伶 (221-300) “Ode to Wine” (*Jiu song* 酒頌) by observing:

People in the past said that reading the ancients’ writings is like going into the mountains in search of treasure: only take away what your strength can bear. It’s also like a cook waiting on fuel: a one inch branch is better than twenty ounces, or someone waiting for a ferry across the river: a single boat is better than a group of ten. It would seem that learning with a practical application in the world and aspirations to lofty transcendence simply cannot be judged according to the same criteria.

昔人云，讀古人文如入山取寶，顧力所能勝者取之；又如爨者待薪，則寸卉賢于百鎰；涉者待濟，則一航勝于十朋；蓋用世之學，高尚之懷，趨舍殊科耳。⁸⁸

As middlemen, anthologists often presented themselves as simply giving the readers what they wanted or needed, as the above anthologist did when he excluded Liu Ling’s “Ode to Wine” due to a lack of “practical application.” But for many readers of the time—for example, literati seeking to build networks at drinking parties—Liu Ling’s “Ode to Wine” would have had a clear practical application. In the almost technocratic, market-based logic anthologists used to explain their selection strategies, they were in reality making normative claims about certain modes of consumption. By acting as the reader’s agent, condensing a bewildering superfluity of text into a smaller, knowable, and therefore more “useful” corpus, they were in reality encouraging certain kinds of uses. These uses, in turn, promoted certain kinds of interpersonal and intertextual relationships.

⁸⁸ Qian Zhongyi 錢鍾義, preface to *Jigu wenying* 集古文英, 1562 edition, National Central Library, in *Guoli zhongyang tushuguan shanben xuba jilu ji bu*, zongji lei, 132.

What were these uses? Judging from prefaces, most were pedagogical in one way or another. Many people compiled anthologies to teach literary composition to their own children or younger relatives. One preface writer recalled how, when he was a child, his father compiled excerpts from the *Finest Blossoms in the Garden of Literature* for him to recite.⁸⁹ Another described how his friend previously compiled a volume of orthodox, morally edifying essays and used it to teach his children. After his children grew up and achieved great success, he agreed to have it printed, thereby “sharing with all the realm that which he used to teach his own children” 以教子者公天下.⁹⁰ A third recorded that he once made a new anthology from two older ones and used it to help his younger family members prepare for the exams. Eventually, he gave it to his son-in-law, the incoming Education Intendant of Huguang 湖廣, who had requested to print it as follows:

These selections are not only a model to your son in law; their benefit to later scholars is limitless. I request that they first serve as a model for the students of Huguang, and thereby become a model for the students of all the realm. Is this permissible?

茲選也，不獨子壻輩所矜式，其嘉惠後學固無窮也，請先以式楚士，而因式四方士，可乎？⁹¹

Many male students compiled anthologies of ancient-style prose while preparing for the civil service examinations. Some of these student anthologists compiled out of a sense of dissatisfaction with more widely used and officially authorized model essay

⁸⁹ Hu Weixin 胡維新, preface to *Wenyuan yinghua* 文苑英華, 1567 edition, National Central Library, in *Guoli zhongyang tushuguan shanben xuba jilu ji bu*, zongji lei, 44-45.

⁹⁰ Xu Tu 徐圖 preface to *Wenzhang zhenglun* 文章正論, 1591 edition, National Central Library, in *Guoli zhongyang tushuguan shanben xuba jilu ji bu*, zongji lei, 116-17.

⁹¹ Shi Ce 施策, preface to *Chongzheng wenxuan* 崇正文選, 1610 edition, National Central Library, in *Guoli zhongyang tushuguan shanben xuba jilu ji bu*, zongji lei, 161.

collections and Neo-Confucian handbooks, as well as the careerist approach to study these materials seemed to encourage. One former student recalled:

After I came of age and began preparing for the exams, whenever I saw the members of my hometown's literary society muttering over their textbooks and practicing their essays, sunken in exam writing and alternately stealing from and plagiarizing one another, in my own heart I abhorred it. Thus I selected from the books handed down by our progenitors, and sought them in old, stored up volumes of famous authors; I freely perused them, categorized them and excerpted the essentials, and copied them by hand into a volume.

余自束髮事舉子業，每見粉榆社佔俾應制者，沉沒時藝，轉相剽竊，私心厭之，迺取先人遺冊，并求諸素藏名家，肆意極覽，分門撮要，手抄成帙。⁹²

Other students compiled ancient-style prose out of a belief that it would give them an edge in the exams, endowing their exam writing with an antique flair that would catch the examiner's eye and distinguish their essay from its competitors. One scholar described how he compiled excerpts from Tang Shunzhi's *Policy and Discourse Essays by Famous Worthies* (*Mingxian celun* 名賢策論), which he viewed as both the “quintessence of ancient-style phraseology” 古文詞之精華 and, borrowing the language of the *Zhuangzi*, a “fish trap and rabbit snare for examinees” 舉業子者之筌蹄.⁹³ Similarly, a printer recorded how the 1526 metropolitan graduate Lu Can 陸燦 (1494-1551) compiled essays by the Tang-Song masters as a student, and called it his “fish trap

⁹² Zhang Guoxi 張國璽, preface to *Huigu jinghua* 匯古菁華, 1596 edition, National Central Library, in *Guoli zhongyang tushuguan shanben xuba jilu ji bu*, zongji lei, 144.

⁹³ Shi Ce, preface to *Chongzheng wenxuan*, in *Guoli zhongyang tushuguan shanben xuba jilu ji bu*, zongji lei, 161. For the *Zhuangzi* passage, see Liu Dianjue 劉殿爵, ed., *Zhuangzi zhuzi suoyin* 莊子逐字索引 (Hong Kong: Shangwu yinshuguan, 2000), 26/79. Translated in Victor H. Mair, trans., *Wandering on the Way: Early Taoist Tales and Parables of Chuang Tzu* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1998), 276-77. I discuss Tang Shunzhi's *Policy and Discourse Essays by Famous Worthies* in chapter 3.

and rabbit snare for exam writing” 舉業之筌蹄。⁹⁴ The meaning of such statements was that, once the examination degree had been caught, the secret weapon for catching it could be discarded, i.e. divulged to the public through the medium of print.

Student compilers did not necessarily compile with the aim of printing. But they traveled often (to take exams; if successful, to take up official posts), and when they traveled, they took their anthologies with them. Anthologies were versatile and portable; they easily fit into traveling book chests (*qie* 篋). For many successful examinees, their anthologies also possessed a sentimental value. One official wrote:

At the age of thirty I traveled all over the realm, and could not bear to cast aside my old exam prep materials, so I often put them in a book chest and took them with me on my travels.

壯之四方，未忍棄故業，則時時置篋中自隨。⁹⁵

Though first compiled as private study aids, the constant movement of students and officials with their anthologies often led to opportunities for printing. Judging from the contents of government school anthologies, this constant movement of people and books also seems to have encouraged the development of an empire-wide core curriculum of ancient-style prose. I will return to this point at the end of this chapter.

Of course, some anthologies were compiled with the intent of printing. This was most obviously the case with commercially printed anthologies and the semi-professional editors who supplied their material. One such editor, after advertising several of his

⁹⁴ Shen Yi 沈億, preface to *Tang-Song si dajia wen chao* 唐宋四大家文鈔, 1567 edition, National Central Library, in *Guoli zhongyang tushuguan shanben xuba jilu ji bu*, zongji lei, 137.

⁹⁵ Ao Kun 敖鯤, preface to *Guwen chongzheng* 古文崇正, 1580 edition, National Central Library, in *Guoli zhongyang tushuguan shanben xuba jilu ji bu*, zongji lei, 129.

previous compilations, humorously contrasted himself with the mass of students preparing for the civil service examinations:

In the late summer and early fall of this year, all the brave, righteous, ambitious ones are looking for dew on the scholar tree's yellow blossoms [i.e., hoping to pass the examinations], and wetting their inkstones to prepare for the examinations. I alone spend all day wielding my brush working on this book. My family mocks it, saying: "This is called not knowing one's proper business."

今年夏末秋初，凡英義有志者，類皆望槐黃之露，滴硯以攻臨場藝，而予獨終日搦管爲此書計，家人笑之曰，是之謂不知務。⁹⁶

Compiling anthologies expressly for printing made compiling into a potentially public, political act. In particular, the issue of whether the exam curriculum should focus on Song Neo-Confucian texts or Qin-Han literature occasioned intense debate among anthologists. One anthology preface concisely expressed the pro-Song position: "Thus, the argument that writing must be as contorted and unreadable as the Goulou Stele before it is truly ancient is false" 乃曰文章必屈曲不可句讀，如峿嶺之刻之爲者，而後爲古，非也, by which he meant that people should write in the more recent, vernacular style of Song dynasty prose.⁹⁷ A Qin-Han partisan fired back in another anthology preface:

Song people had "records of words," and now people take them to be the essence of examination writing. Song people thought the *Zuo Tradition*, the *Discourses of the States*, and the *Strategies of the Warring States* to be the writing of a

⁹⁶ Xu Fenpeng 徐奮鵬, preface to *Qianggu siwen* 千古斯文, 1615 edition, National Central Library, in *Guoli zhongyang tushuguan shanben xuba jilu ji bu*, zongji lei, 184.

⁹⁷ Yao Mozhong 姚鏞重, preface to *Chonggu wenjue* 崇古文訣, 1507 preface to 1533 edition, National Central Library, in *Guoli zhongyang tushuguan shanben xuba jilu ji bu*, zongji lei, 52. Jeffrey Rice uses "a syntactical analysis of the changes made in editing the New Tang History to argue that the grammar of 11th century ancient style prose exhibits syntactic features of more recent Chinese grammar. It does not revive the language of the classical era. Instead it appropriates ideals and rhetorical conventions of ancient texts and expresses them in a more contemporary language." Jeffrey Rice, "Northern Song Reflections on the Tang" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 2013), 62.

fallen age, and now people refuse to even occasionally glance at a line from these books... Following the waves and chasing the ripples, studying their mouths and copying their tongues—these were all just sounds that Song people blew out of their asses, but now people revere them as jade discs. So I say that it was Song people who destroyed literature. 宋人有語錄，今人以爲舉業之髓；宋人以左、國爲衰世之文，今人偶及其句以爲大禁[...]沿波逐瀾，依口學舌，皆宋人發於餘竅之聲，而今人奉爲圭玉，故曰文章之壞，宋人壞之也。⁹⁸

In this preface, the vernacular quality of Southern Song “records of words” becomes associated with the mindless reproduction and spread of what one has heard—perhaps an implicit critique of the Neo-Confucian examination curriculum.⁹⁹

For many literate people in the Ming, copying their favorite essays and poems into separate notebooks was simply part of their everyday study and enjoyment of literature. Parents compiled to teach their children; students compiled to prepare for exams; officials compiled to keep up their studies even after passing the exams. Idealistic students compiled classical literature because they were dissatisfied with the exam curriculum, and pragmatic students because they thought it might give them some special advantage. Sometimes, given the right circumstances, these initially private anthologies ended up being published. The practice of bringing one’s private anthology on one’s travels was an important part of this process, as the road often led to new markets and new readerships. Other times, commercial editors and education officials compiled

⁹⁸ Zhang Mingbi 張明弼, preface to *Hexuan mingwen zhu* 合選明文麈, 1627 edition, National Central Library, in *Guoli zhongyang tushuguan shanben xuba jilu ji bu*, zongji lei, 204.

⁹⁹ Regarding vernacularisms in Song dynasty “records of words,” see Robert Hymes, “Getting the Words Right: Speech, Vernacular Language, and Classical Language in Song Neo-Confucian ‘Records of Words,’” *Journal of Song-Yuan Studies* 36 (2006), 25-55; Daniel Gardner, “Modes of Thinking and Modes of Discourse in the Song: Some Thoughts on the Yulu (‘Recorded Conversations’) Texts,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 50, no. 3 (1991), 574-603.

anthologies in order to have them printed, imbuing the anthologist's editorial choices with polemic, even political meaning.

Printing Ancient-Style Prose Anthologies

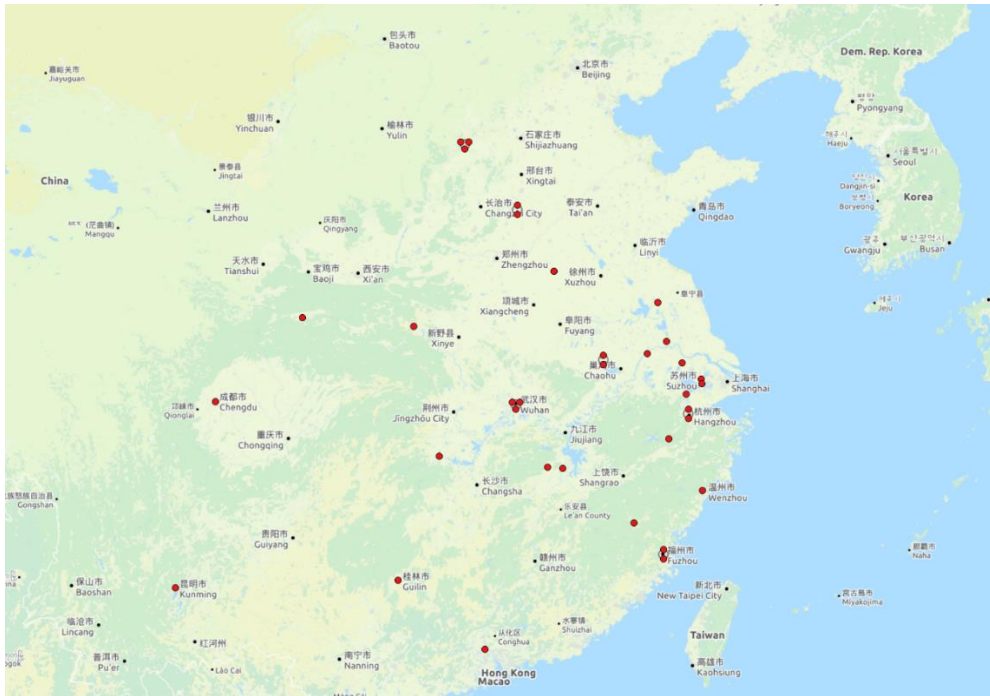
Printing an anthology required scholarly labor (compilation, collation, annotation), manual labor (carving, printing), a manuscript, and some source of funding. The organization of the production process, as well as motivations for printing, varied depending on the type (government, commercial, princely) and geographical location of printing. Of the roughly 100 anthologies I examined, about half were produced by education officials for use in government schools, and half by booksellers in the major commercial printing centers. Furthermore, 63 of these books can be associated with a specific printing site. Because territorial government officials, commercial booksellers, and princely establishments were all involved in anthology production, sometimes separately, sometimes in collaboration, anthology production sites were extremely diverse, encompassing the southern printing centers—mainly Jianyang, Nanjing, and the Jiangnan urban centers—as well as territorial administration centers as far flung as Shanxi, Guangdong, and Yunnan. The following two images show the locations where government and commercial prose anthologies were printed. Each dot represents one printed book. Red dots indicate government printings (34 in total). Blue dots indicate commercial printings (27 in total).¹⁰⁰ The two remaining books, the *Quintessence of Tang*

¹⁰⁰ These images were made using QGIS, which is available for download at <http://qgis.org/en/site/>. I used coordinates from *China Historical GIS*, 2001-2017, <http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~chgis/>.

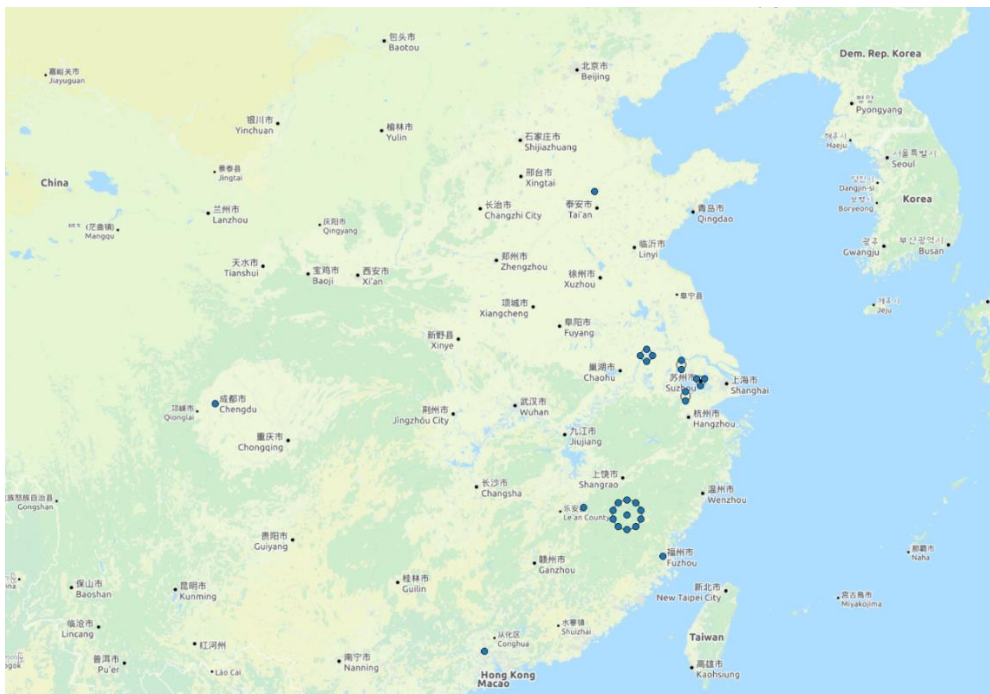
Literature and Aid to Song Literature, were printed by the Prince of Jin Zhu Zhiyang 朱知烱 (1489-1533) at his princely estate in Taiyuan, Shanxi.¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ Regarding these books, see Jerome Kerlouegan, "Printing for Prestige? Publishing and Publications by Ming Princes," *East Asian Publishing and Society* 1 (2011), 59.

Government anthologies



Commercial anthologies



List of Government Anthologies with Printing Locations, sorted by date

Title	Year	Location
Xindiao Song chao wenjian 新雕宋朝文鑑	1464	Yanzhou Prefectural School 嚴州府學
Guwen yuan 古文苑	1499	Fengxin County 奉新縣
Yuzhai xiansheng biaozy Chonggu wenjue 迂齋先生標註崇古文訣	1507	Guilin Prefecture 桂林府
Guwen huibian 古文會編	1510	Southern Metropolitan Region 南直隸
Xishan xiansheng Zhen Wenzhong gong Wenzhang zhengzong 西山先生真文忠公文章正宗	1520	Shanxi 山西
Qin-Han wen 秦漢文	1524	Suzhou Prefecture 蘇州府
Zhen Wenzhong gong xu Wenzhang zhengzong 真文忠公續文章正宗	1532	Yunnan 雲南
Yuzhai xiansheng biaozy Chonggu wenjue 迂齋先生標註崇古文訣	1533	Luzhou Prefecture 廬州府
Guwen leixuan 古文類選	1536	Zhangde Prefecture 彰德府

Wenyuan chunqiu 文苑春秋	1538	Zhangde Prefecture 彰 德府
Xishan xiansheng Zhen Wenzhong gong xu Wenzhang zhengzong 西山先生真文忠公續文章 正宗	1542	Shanxi Provincial Administration Commission 山西布政 使司
Jilu Zhen Xishan Wenzhang zhengzong 集錄真西 山文章正宗	1544	Zhejiang 浙江
Wenzhang bianti 文章辨體	1555	Huzhou Prefecture 湖州 府
Xueyue guwen 學約古文	1556	Huguang 廣東
Wen bian 文編	1556	Fuzhou Prefecture 福州 府
Xinke guwen xuanzheng 新刻古文選正	1556	Hanzhong Prefecture 漢 中府
Jilu Zhen Xishan Wenzhang zhengzong 集錄真西 山文章正宗	1560	Zhejiang 浙江
Lidai wenxuan 歷代文選	1561	Wenzhou Prefecture 溫 州府

Jigu wenying 集古文英	1562	Changde Prefecture 常德府
Wenyuan yinghua 文苑英華	1567	Fujian 福建
Guwen leixuan 古文類選	1572	Guide Prefecture 歸德府
Lidai wenxuan 歷代文選	1572	Yunyang Prefecture 鄖陽府
Wenzhang zhengzong xuanchao 文章正宗選鈔	1521-1572	Huguang 湖廣
Wenzhang zhengzong chao 文章正宗鈔	1575	Guide Prefecture 歸德府
Mingshi wenzong 名世文宗	1577	Luzhou Prefecture 廬州府
Guwen juan 古文雋	1578	Jiangxi Provincial Administration Commission 江西布政使司
Guwen chongzheng 古文崇正	1580	Jianning Prefecture 建寧府

Wenzhang zhenglun 文章正論	1591	Yangzhou Prefecture 揚州府
Wenti mingbian 文體明辯	1591	Wujiang County 吳江縣
Huigu jinghua 匯古菁華	1596	Shanyang County 山陽縣
Wen xuan 文玄	1609	Sichuan 四川
Chongzheng wenxuan 崇正文選	1610	Huguang 湖廣
Wen lüe 文略	1618	Changzhou Prefecture 常州府
Bu duo ji 不多集	1521-1620	Shanxi 山西
Guwen dubian 古文瀆編	1633	Huguang 湖廣

List of Commercial Anthologies with Printing Locations, sorted by date

Title	Year	Location
Guwen yuan 古文苑	1482	Jianyang 建陽縣
Da Song wenjian 大宋文鑑	1518	Jianyang 建陽縣
Chong jiaozheng Tang wen cui 重校正唐文粹	1524	Suzhou 蘇州府
Dajia wenxuan 大家文選	1539	Sichuan 四川
Xinkan pidian Guwen leichao 新刊批點古文類抄	1551	Fujian 福建
Xinkan zhengxu Guwen leichao 新刊正續古文類抄	1561	Jianyang 建陽縣
Xishan xiansheng Zhen Wenzhong gong Wenzhang zhengzong 西山先生真文忠公文章正宗	1561	Jianyang 建陽縣
Jilu Zhen Xishan Wenzhang zhengzong 集錄真西山文 章正宗	1564	Shandong 山東
Xinqie taige jiaozheng zhushi buyi Guwen daquan 新 鋏臺閣校正註釋補遺古文大全	1573	Jianyang 建陽縣
Hui jun Haiyue Xu xiansheng jingxuan Gujin wenzong 徽郡海嶽許先生精選今古文宗	1574	Nanjing 南京
Guwen yuan 古文苑	1593	Wujin 武進縣
Jingban zhushi guwen daquan 京板註釋古文大全	1608	Jianyang 建陽縣
He Dafu xiansheng xueyue guwen 何大復先生學約古 文	1608	Wujin 武進縣

Guwen shibian 古文世編	1609	Guangdong 廣東
Qiangsi wen 千古斯文	1615	Nanjing 南京
Chong jiaozheng Tang wen cui 重校正唐文粹	1618	Jianchang 建昌府
Qin-Han wen chao 秦漢文鈔	1620	Huzhou 湖州府
Guwen pinwai lu 古文品外錄	1573- 1620	Jianyang 建陽縣
Xinkan Li Jiuwo xiansheng bianzuan Dafang wanwen yitong nei wai ji 新刊李九我先生編纂大方萬文一統 內外集	1573- 1620	Jianyang 建陽縣
Xinqie zenbu zhushi Shanhu guwen daquan 新鋟增補 註釋珊瑚古文大全	1573- 1620	Jianyang 建陽縣
Pinglin zhushi yaoshan guwen daquan 評林註釋要刪 古文大全	1573- 1620	Jianyang 建陽縣
Wen zhi 文致	1621	Huzhou 湖州府
Xinjuan Wang Yongqi xiansheng pingxuan gujin wen zhi 新鐫王永啟先生評選古今文致	1623	Jianyang 建陽縣
Zhang Tongchu xiansheng pingxuan Guwen gangmu 張侗初先生評選古文綱目	1626- 1627	Nanjing 南京
Guwen zhengji yibian 古文正集一編	1633	Suzhou 蘇州府
Guwen beiti qichao 古文備體奇鈔	1642	Suzhou 蘇州府

Juan lidai guwen juye biao zhun pinglin 鐫歷代古文舉 業標準評林	1602- 1644	Nanjing 南京
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The printing site data demonstrates, first and foremost, that whereas government anthology production was spread out across the empire, commercial anthology production was concentrated in Jianyang, Nanjing, and Jiangnan urban centers like Suzhou. Indeed, beyond the Jianyang-Nanjing-Zhejiang area, commercial anthology production was almost nonexistent. Of the 27 commercial anthologies I could associate with a printing site, only 3 were printed outside of this area: *Selected Prose of the Great Masters* (*Dajia wenxuan* 大家文選) in Sichuan, a Shandong reprint of Kong Tianyin's *Transcriptions from Zhen Xishan's Orthodox Tradition of Literature*, and *Ancient-Style Prose Arranged by Era* (*Guwen shibian* 古文世編) in Guangdong. Commercial anthologies were also generally printed later in the dynasty than government anthologies. Thus, with regard to commercial anthology printing, the late sixteenth-century expansion of commercial printing centering on the Jiangnan market is clearly evident.

Concrete accounts of the production process, however, are nearly nonexistent in commercial anthologies. Despite frequent attributions to Hanlin academicians and famous literati, in reality the textual labor seems to have usually been supplied by the sort semi-professional editors studied by Kai-Wing Chow.¹⁰² Some editors, however, seem to have felt a sense of pride in their alternative vocation. One described how he kept to the correct way of writing despite repeated failures in the “thorn-ringed exam grounds,” and

¹⁰² Kai-Wing Chow, *Publishing, Culture, and Power in Early Modern China*, 15.

asked his readers: “If a man possesses ten thousand volumes, what need has he to serve as an official!” 丈夫擁書萬卷，何假南面百城。¹⁰³

As I have already suggested, the national market for commercial anthologies was diverse, encompassing the cramped, multi-register, error-ridden pages of Jianyang anthologies as well as the luxurious polychrome printings of the Min family of Huzhou. A title page for *Ancient-Style Prose Collection, Part One* (*Guwen zhengji* 古文正集), a prose anthology of middling quality printed by the Yonghuai tang 永懷堂 of Suzhou in 1633, includes a stamp warning against unauthorized reprinting as well as a price stamp, giving us at least some sense of what an anthology might have cost in early seventeenth-century Zhejiang (assuming that the stamp was not added some time later during the Qing). The warning against unauthorized reprinting reads: “Original printing blocks owned by the Ge Household of Kunshan. Unauthorized reproduction will be thoroughly investigated” 崑山葛衙原板翻刻查知必究. The price stamp reads: “2 taels of fine silver per book” 每部紋銀貳兩.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ Tang Xin 唐昕, preface to *Wenyu* 文腴, Chongzhen edition, National Central Library, in *Guoli zhongyang tushuguan shanben xuba jilu ji bu*, zongji lei, 286.

¹⁰⁴ *Guwen zhengji* 古文正集, Princeton University Gest Collection, title page.

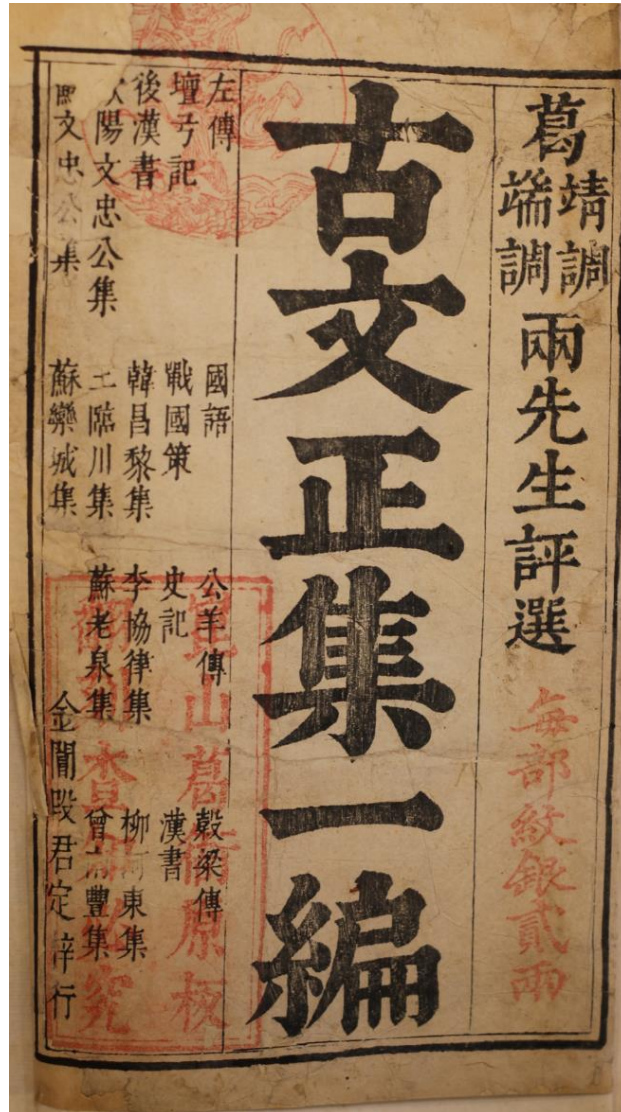


Figure 9: A notice warning against unauthorized reprinting, a price stamp, and, in the upper left-hand corner, a Kuixing stamp. From *Guwen zhengji*, Princeton University Gest Collection, title page.

According to Dorothy Ko's summary of book prices, varying between .225 and 2 ounces of silver, this anthology would have been at the upper end of the market.¹⁰⁵ Indeed, according to Kai-wing Chow's price estimates for food and miscellaneous goods around the same time, this seemingly unremarkable anthology would have been quite

¹⁰⁵ Dorothy Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers*, 36-37.

expensive, roughly equal in price to 100 catties of pork, 40 bottles of wine, or half the price of a pair of European eye glasses.¹⁰⁶

In contrast to the geographically concentrated nature of commercial anthology production, government anthology production was much more diffuse. Roughly half of the 34 government produced anthologies mapped above were printed outside of the Fujian-Nanjing-Zhejiang area. This diffuseness was possible because the administrative infrastructure of each prefectural, sub-prefectural, and county government seat supplied most of the necessary conditions for printing: a manuscript, usually brought by an incoming official in his traveling book chest; funding, usually donated by officials from their salaries in fundraising drives; and editorial labor, usually performed for free by teachers and students at local government schools. Within this administrative hierarchy, anthology printing seems to have usually been organized at the level of the prefecture, or even the provincial administration commission, where production teams could be recruited from several nearby administrative seats. Anthology printing projects were also organized at the county level, as in the case of *Finest Blossoms of Assembled Antiquity* (*Huigu jinghua* 匯古菁華), the printing of which was organized by the Magistrate of Shanyang, but this seems to have been less common.

Also in contrast to commercial anthologies, government printed anthologies carry a great deal of information on their production. Many present lists of editors, including the names, official titles, native places, and editorial roles of those involved. Generally, these lists involve officials and government students from multiple prefectures and

¹⁰⁶ Kai-wing Chow, *Publishing, Culture, and Power in Early Modern China*, 262-63.

counties, and editorial roles reflect their status within these hierarchies. Most of the hard work of collation was left to government students. For example, a cartouche on the last page of *Ancient-Style Prose Selected by Category* (*Guwen leixuan* 古文類選) reads:

知歸德府揭陽鄭旻選	Selected by the Prefect of Guide, Zheng Min of Jieyang
同知歸德府濟南魏宗方校	Collated by the Vice Prefect of Guide, Wei Zongfang of Jinan
商丘縣知縣清河顧知類	Proofread and printed by the Magistrate of Shangqiu, Gu Zhilei of Qinghe, and the Guide Confucian School Instructor, Xu Hong of Linchuan ¹⁰⁷
歸德府教授臨川徐宏同訂刻	

The editor list for the *Finest Blossoms of Assembled Antiquity*—again, a county-level project—even included the examination status of its editors, recording *jinshi* year, *juren* year, and student level:

彙選	Compilers
虞丘藍田張國璽 丁丑進士	Zhang Guoxi (Lantian) of Yuqiu, 1577 metropolitan graduate
於陵頃陽劉一相 丁丑進士	Liu Yixiang (Qingyang) of Yuling, 1577 metropolitan graduate
校正	Proofreaders
河東貞子曹于汴 壬辰進士	Cao Yubian (Zhenzi) of Hedong, 1592 metropolitan graduate

¹⁰⁷ *Guwen leixuan* 古文類選, 1572 edition, National Central Library.

同校	Assistant Collators
西秦藍崗周燧 選貢	Zhou Sui (Langang) of Xiqin, tribute student
莆田聯泉鄭元輔 癸酉舉人	Zheng Yuanfu (Lianquan) of Putian, 1573 provincial graduate
河南海崙何際可 壬辰進士	He Jike (Hailun) of Hedong, 1592 metropolitan graduate
餘姚廉岳陳治本 壬辰進士	Chen Zhiben (Lianyue) of Yuyao, 1592 metropolitan graduate
龍溪龍滙陳從彝 壬午舉人	Chen Congyi (Longhui) of Longxi, 1582 provincial graduate
萊陽澄瀾劉體乾 選貢	Liu Tiqian (Chenglan) of Laiyang, tribute student
清豐矩菴杜從心 選貢	Du Congxin (Ju'an) of Qingfeng, tribute student
盤屋存吾劉一全 丙子舉人	Liu Yiquan (Cunwu) of Zhouzhi, 1576 provincial graduate
東鄉陽岳何東鳳 己卯舉人	He Dongfeng (Yangyue) of Dongxiang, 1579 provincial graduate
應城振軒熊大維 庚午舉人	Yingcheng, Xiong Dawei (Zhenxuan) of Yingcheng, 1570 provincial graduate
澧州東壁吳顯科 壬午舉人	Wu Xianke (Dongbi) of Lizhou, 1582 provincial graduate
編釋	Compilation

淮陰孟深潘蔓 諸生	Pan Man (Mengshen) of Huaiyin, student
任丘近法于憲章 廩生	Yu Xianzhang (Jinfa) of Renqiu, stipend student
檢刻	Printing Supervisors
福清震龍汲鳴雷 經歷	Ji Minglei (Zhenlong) of Fuqing, registrar
富順中菴余道 訓導	Yu Dao (Zhong'an) of Fushun, assistant instructor ¹⁰⁸

Although I have not attempted to plot the native places of the members of these production teams, I suspect that the result would look just as diffuse as the map of government anthology production sites. In these production teams, itinerant officials from all over the empire joined with students, schoolteachers, and clerks from the local region. Because the local administrative machinery was more or less the same from place to place, not to mention the physical production sites (for example, government schools), these teams tended to be assembled in similar ways, and once assembled, tended to produce similar books. As I will discuss in chapter 2, these anthology production teams based around local government schools were key to the development of a core curriculum of ancient-style prose “must-reads” which was more or less uniform across the empire.

As for manual labor, most government anthologies printed individual carvers’ names on the pages they carved, sometimes with the number of characters per page. This was probably done for quality control, or to determine pay. Compiling and comparing lists of carver names can reveal how groups of carvers were hired by local governments for multiple printing projects. For example, between 1563 and 1566 the Prefect of

¹⁰⁸ *Huigu jinghua*, 1596 edition, National Central Library.

Fuzhou Hu Bo 胡帛 (1518-1577) printed the *Prose Compilation* (*Wen bian* 文編), and in 1566 he once more helped organize labor for printing the *Finest Blossoms in the Garden of Literature*.¹⁰⁹ When we compare the two lists of carvers' names, we find a total of 69 identical two-character carver names, indicating that Hu probably kept on most of the carvers for the second project. More research is needed to determine if such comparisons can reliably track groups of carvers and their products.

Sometimes, local governments sent manuscripts away to be printed by booksellers. These arrangements reveal new information about the sometimes close relationship between government and commercial printing, particularly in the Jiangnan region. For example, when Education Intendant Kong Tianyin 孔天胤 (1505-1581) printed the *Collected Transcriptions from Zhen Xishan's Orthodox Tradition of Literature* (*Jilu Zhen Xishan Wenzhang zhengzong* 集錄真西山文章正宗) for Zhejiang government students, he had "scribes and printers assembled from Wu [Suzhou], making it as fine as a Song dynasty book" 以書鏤則鳩諸吳，俾精類宋籍。¹¹⁰ Conversely, when Regional Inspector to Fujian Zhang Shiyong 張世用 arrived at the provincial administration commission office, he showed off his personal copy of the *Garden of Ancient-Style Writing* (*Guwen yuan* 古文苑) and "moreover desired to have it sent to a Jianyang bookseller to have it carved on blocks and broadly circulated, in order to open

¹⁰⁹ *Wen bian* 文編, preface dated 1556, Harvard-Yenching Library; Hu Weixin, preface to *Wenyuan yinghua*, 1567 edition, National Central Library, in *Guoli zhongyang tushuguan shanben xuba jilu ji bu, zongji lei*, 45.

¹¹⁰ Jiang Xiao 江曉, preface to *Jilu Zhen Xishan Wenzhang zhengzong* 集錄真西山文章正宗, 1560 reprint of 1544 edition, National Central Library, in *Guoli zhongyang tushuguan shanben xuba jilu ji bu, zongji lei*, 58.

up a path where people might enter into antiquity” 且欲發諸建陽書肆壽梓廣傳，以開人入古之徑。¹¹¹ Such examples should remind us that the labels “official” 官刻 and “commercial” 坊刻 do not always express the full complexity of how anthology production was organized.

Despite such arrangements, it was more common for local governments to print anthologies on local government premises. As I will discuss further in chapter 2, one of the most common locations was the local government school. One education intendant recorded in a preface to the *Key to Revering Ancient-Style Writing* how, in 1507, “four years after arriving in Guilin, I had the book reprinted in the Guilin school” 予至桂之四年，乃爲嗣刻於桂林學宮。¹¹² The local yamen was also frequently used as a place for printing. In a preface to *Ancient-Style Prose, Selected by Category*, we read how the Prefect of Zhangde 彰德 “printed his selections of ancient-style prose in the prefectural yamen, and sent copies to the school” 乃以所選古文刻之郡齋，布之學宮。¹¹³ This second quote is important because it tells us that anthologies were, at least in some cases, being issued to students in government schools—not simply given to the officials involved in printing as a memento.

Unlike compilation, collation, and proofreading, which was mainly done by government school instructors and students who already received stipends, printing

¹¹¹ Hu Weixin, preface to *Wenyuan yinghua*, in *Guoli zhongyang tushuguan shanben xuba jilu ji bu*, zongji lei, 44.

¹¹² Yao Mozhong, preface to *Chonggu wenjue*, 1507 preface to 1533 edition, National Central Library, in *Guoli zhongyang tushuguan shanben xuba jilu ji bu*, zongji lei, 52.

¹¹³ Lü Diaoyin 呂調音, postface to *Guwen leixuan* 古文類選, 1536 edition, in *Guoli zhongyang tushuguan shanben xuba jilu ji bu*, zongji lei, 127.

required extra funding. This funding could be obtained in a number of ways. As Joseph Dennis has already shown to be the case with local gazetteer production, one common funding strategy was for local officials to simply donate from their salaries.¹¹⁴ For example, the education intendant to Zhejiang described how the regional inspector, upon hearing of the poor state of local exam writing, “took out several strings of cash as a deposit” 出贖金若干緡 and ordered him to reprint an earlier anthology.¹¹⁵ The donations of superior officials often served to jump-start fundraising drives. One regional inspector to Fujian recorded how the military inspector’s dispatch “gave the order and took the lead in donating from his official salary to settle expenses” 故主令率先捐廩奠費，則督撫公之首文也。¹¹⁶ It is unclear whether donors were recognized for their generosity in any way, but the simple fact that their names were publicly listed suggests that they were receiving some kind of benefit.

The major advantage of funding printing with donations was that it avoided the difficulty and potential controversy of using official funds for literary projects. The regional inspector to Fujian, before receiving a donation from the military inspector, recalled how he previously hesitated to print the book in question because he “worried that it was not among his foremost duties as a censor, to say nothing of the trouble of gathering funds and engaging labor” 又恒慮觀風者茲非務之先，而委材命工之須，更

¹¹⁴ Joseph Dennis, *Writing, Publishing, and Reading Local Gazetteers in Imperial China, 1100-1700* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2015), 220-24.

¹¹⁵ Fan Weiyi, preface to *Jilu Zhen Xishan wenzhang zhengzong*, 1560 reprint of 1544 edition, National Central Library, in *Guoli zhongyang tushuguan shanben xuba jilu ji bu*, zongji lei, 60.

¹¹⁶ Hu Weixin, preface to *Wenyuan yinghua*, in *Guoli zhongyang tushuguan shanben xuba jilu ji bu*, zongji lei, 45.

不免於擾者，或有所未敢也。¹¹⁷ Similarly, another preface recorded how the students of Guide Prefecture asked the local prefect to print an anthology he used to teach them, but “[the prefect] worried that it would be laborious and wasteful, and would not allow it” 公重劬費，未可。Eventually, the students contacted the vice prefect of Guide and the magistrate of neighboring Shangqiu County, who “approved the labor and printed it” 贊工梓之。¹¹⁸

That said, there were other channels of funding. In one case, a preface writer recorded that “regular expenses were supplied by calculating and appropriating surplus stipends for student labor” 以經用則稽取學役餼餘。¹¹⁹ Even more interestingly, when a regional inspector to Fujian explained to his censor friend the difficulty of securing funding, the censor replied:

As for requesting funds held in the state treasury, they will be given upon receipt of a censor’s dispatch. Thus, in the past it has been the convention to require an exchange of gifts for disbursement of public funds; if you retain what would have been spent on the exchange of gifts and use it as capital to hire labor, what difficulty could there be?
且屬帑所貯，惟聽御史檄移給焉。故輸公蓄而塞交儀比爲例矣；裒交儀之冗而改爲工作之貲，又何擾也？¹²⁰

This somewhat opaque allusion to a customary “exchange of gifts” 交儀 suggests that local officials who wanted money to pay printers would give kickbacks to censors in

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Li Song 李嵩, preface to *Guwen leixuan* 古文類選, 1572 edition, National Central Library, in *Guoli zhongyang tushuguan shanben xuba jilu ji bu*, zongji lei, 136.

¹¹⁹ Jiang Xiao, preface to *Jilu Zhen Xishan Wenzhang zhengzong*, 1560 reprint of 1544 edition, National Central Library, in *Guoli zhongyang tushuguan shanben xuba jilu ji bu*, zongji lei, 58.

¹²⁰ Hu Weixin, preface to *Wenyuan yinghua*, in *Guoli zhongyang tushuguan shanben xuba jilu ji bu*, zongji lei, 45.

exchange for funding from the state treasury. Essentially, the censor here was saying that he was willing to request funding from the state treasury without receiving a kickback; instead, he advised the regional inspector to use the kickback money to hire labor. Given the riskiness of these funding methods—appropriating “surpluses” and cutting secret deals with superiors—it is not surprising that officials usually seem generally to have opted to fund printing through donations. Of course, such fundraising drives were also an excellent way for officials to network with the local gentry.

Of all the prefaces to government school anthologies I have read, the preface to the 1544 *Collected Transcriptions from the Orthodox Tradition of Literature* (*Jilu Zhen Xishan Wenzhang zhengzong* 集錄真西山文章正宗) contains the most comprehensive and detailed account of the production process:

Censor Sir Shu of Yunchuan, Sir Gao of Yingshan, Sir Chen of Xiaojiang, and Sir Gao of Nanshan, the inspectors and officials from top to bottom respect the statutes and revere culture; they funded and approved it. Regular expenses were supplied by calculating and appropriating surplus stipends for student labor. Collation and revision were performed by rigorously selected teachers and excellent scholars. Scribes and printers were assembled from Wu, making it as fine as a Song dynasty book. Chen Junlu, prefect of Hangzhou, inspected and aided it, attaining lasting renown through publicly illuminating literary forms. By means of this, gentlemen understand the means by which Sir Wengu [Education Intendant to Zhejiang Kong Tianyin] made writing. Could I not record it?

侍御雲川舒公、瀛山高公、小江陳公、南山高公，先後按治，肅紀崇文，咸嘉而允焉。以經用則稽取學役餼餘，以校訂則慎簡學博暨髦士，以書鏤則鳩諸吳，俾精類宋籍。惟杭牧陳君魯得實贊襄焉，誕昭文式以垂不朽，君子以是知文谷公之所以為文也。可無紀乎？¹²¹

¹²¹ Jiang Xiao, preface to *Jilu Zhen Xishan Wenzhang zhengzong*, 1560 reprint of 1544 edition, National Central Library, in *Guoli zhongyang tushuguan shanben xuba jilu ji bu, zongji lei*, 58.

Again, censors and other supervisory officials donated to and approved the project, but “regular expenses” 經用 were appropriated from surplus school stipends. The local prefect organized and supervised the project, specially selected instructors and students from local government schools provided editorial labor, and high quality scribes and printers were brought in from Suzhou.

Government school anthologies were printed for a variety of reasons. I would argue that the most important reason was networking. Anthology printing, particularly when funded by donations, demonstrated the commitment of local administration to classical culture and learning. This commitment was displayed most obviously in the lists of contributing officials described above. Some anthologies aimed to bring honor to or even rehabilitate specific local officials. For example, in a preface to the *Profundities of Prose* (*Wen xuan* 文玄), one Sichuan regional inspector lamented how its compiler, the local education intendant, was recently slandered to the point of retiring from office:

In recent times some talkers baselessly implicated him with one or two statements; is this not what Ziyu called “the destruction of seeking perfection”?¹²² Lord Wu righteously would not accept this offense, and thereafter resolutely sought to retire from office. Sir Qiao and I tried to stop him but could not, and in the end he was allowed to depart. Yet his departure was humble and at ease, and he gave absolutely no thought to his reputation. Might we not call him one who “views gain and loss as equal, and forgets blame and praise”?

邇時言者無端詿誤一二語，毋乃子輿氏所稱求全之毀歟？
吳君義不受辱，遂決意乞歸，不佞與中丞喬公止之而不

¹²² An allusion to the *Mencius*, see He Zhihua 何志華, ed., *Mengzi zhuzi suoyin* 孟子逐字索引 (Hong Kong: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1995), 7.21/39/15.

能得，竟以得請去，而其去也冲然自適，絕不以功名介意，所謂齊得喪，忘毀譽者，非耶？¹²³

Because government school students and sometimes even teachers came from local gentry families, government school anthology production was a powerful way to establish relationships between local officials and local gentry. In remote areas where books were scarce, officials sometimes printed books at the suggestion of students. For example, when the Inspector of the Tea-Horse Trade in Shanxi 陝西 criticized the students of Hanzhong Prefecture 漢中府 for not reading broadly enough in ancient literature, the students replied:

This prefecture is situated at the passes of ten thousand mountains. Gentlemen who live here aspire to what you call “learning through broadly reading in ancient writings,” yet some falter because their strength is not sufficient, and even if they have the right makeup, some despair that books are not circulated here. In this way, they vainly carry a hope for advancement, and are forever held back in this vulgar place. 茲郡介萬山之險，士生其間，所謂博古之學竊有志焉，而或病於力之不給，雖有資焉而或慨於籍之無傳，夫是以徒抱乎求進之望，而恒阻於寡陋之歸矣。¹²⁴

The Inspector recorded that, after hearing this, “I took out several collections of ancient-style prose that I was carrying in my book chest” 即取篋中所攜古文數集 and compiled a new anthology to be printed for the students.

In unstable borderlands, the power of collaborative anthology production projects between local officials and local literati centered on local government schools becomes

¹²³ Qian Huan 錢桓, preface to *Wen xuan* 文玄, 1609 edition, National Central Library, in *Guoli zhongyang tushuguan shanben xuba jilu ji bu*, zongji lei, 159-60.

¹²⁴ Yang Meiyi 楊美益, preface to *Xinke guwen xuanzheng*, 1556 edition, National Central Library, in *Guoli zhongyang tushuguan shanben xuba jilu ji bu*, zongji lei, 133.

especially evident. One official described how, soon after he assisted in putting down an uprising in Sichuan,

Military affairs became less urgent daily, troop dispatch forms were gradually put aside and no longer attended to, and business at the yamen became easier. Then we sought precious writings from all the gentry of Sichuan, and I turned over my book chest and took out the book I had compiled long ago with Liu Yixiang of Qingyang and carried with me on my travels. We proofread these from morning to evening, selected one thousand several hundred titles, and after five months the anthology was complete.

兵事日解嚴，調發之文稍稍停閣不復理，公衙事簡，復就三巴學士大夫徧求寶墨，與頃陽君舊所輯携行者，倒篋而出，朝莫參閱，中選者千幾佰首，越五匝月而成集。

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With literary anthologies that include military texts, the power dynamics of anthology production become even more explicit. In another preface to *Profundities of Prose*, the military inspector to Sichuan, while granting that Sichuan is a “lettered area” 文獻之國, noted that it borders on barbarian lands 地介于番夷, and expressed a hope that the anthology’s inclusion of military texts would spur local gentry to “also practice military strategy” 兼習韜略.¹²⁶

These relationships among officials, students, teachers, and local literati were built through building a core curriculum of must-read ancient-style prose. Most of the time, the production process began when an education official examined student writing, found it deficient, and decided to supplement the school curriculum with ancient-style

¹²⁵ Zhang Guoxi, preface to *Huigu jinghua*, 1596 edition, in *Guoli zhongyang tushuguan shanben xuba jilu ji bu*, zongji lei, 144-45.

¹²⁶ Qian Huan, preface to *Wen xuan*, 1609 edition, National Central Library, in *Guoli zhongyang tushuguan shanben xuba jilu ji bu*, zongji lei, 159-60.

prose. The situation recorded in a preface to *Transcriptions from the Orthodox Tradition of Literature* (*Wenzhang zhengzong chao* 文章正宗鈔), printed inside the office of Guide Prefecture 歸德府 for use in area schools, was typical in this regard:

The Prefect of Huaiqing Jia Daiwen took it as his task to test the local government students, and after choosing out the most talented, he copied down their essays to show me. I immediately praised their talent, but also worried that they were not yet quite suited to the examinations. Thus I began to plan a means to test them.

懷守賈君以職事試諸弟子員，既得其雋者，則錄其文以示余，亟賞其才，而又慮其陪場之未稱也。乃謀所以課之者。¹²⁷

As I will argue in chapter 2, however, there was a critique of the examination curriculum implicit in the very choice to print anthologies of ancient-style prose—rather than, say, collections of recently successful examination essays. The officials who printed anthologies of classical literature for student use wanted these books to be more than examination aids. In contrast to the collections of model eight-legged essays that students spent most of their time reading, these education officials claimed that in their anthologies they had systematized universal laws of literary composition and provided objective standards for literary judgment. We read in a preface to the *Literary Forms Clearly Differentiated* (*Wenti mingbian* 文體明辯), printed by the magistrate of Wujiang County 吳江縣:

It has been said that the potter respects the model, and the smelter respects his mold; one making a square respects the ruler, and one making a circle respects the compass. Forms

¹²⁷ Hu Rujia 胡汝嘉, Colophon to *Wenzhang zhengzong chao* 文章正宗鈔, 1575 edition, Princeton University Gest Collection.

in literary writing are the potter and smelter's model and mold, the square and circle's ruler and compass.

嘗謂陶者尚型，冶者尚範，方者尚規，圓者尚矩，文章之有體也，此陶冶之型範而方圓之規矩也。¹²⁸

Just as craftsmen build useful objects through examining the objective, measurable properties of things, education officials claimed that anthologies would allow students to write in a way conforming to the objective rules of literature. By publicizing universal literary laws, they would make literature into “the public instrument of all the realm” 天下公器.

As I will discuss at greater length in chapters 2 and 3, this shared emphasis among producers of government school anthologies on universal rules of prose was really about consensus building. In contrast to examination prose, in which the stylistic expectations changed from exam cycle to exam cycle and varied from examiner to examiner, most members of any given ancient-style prose anthology production team—even before joining the team—would have generally agreed on the sorts of ancient-style prose essays that students should be reading. Even if one member of the team had a personal fondness for, for example, Sima Xiangru's “Rhapsody on the Beautiful One” (*Meiren fu* 美人賦), the collective goal of fostering agreement and good feeling among everyone involved would have encouraged him to keep this personal predilection to himself, and not derail the project because of it. In other words, the social logic of these production teams would seem to have encouraged a conservative selection strategy, a conservative selection strategy that was repeated over and over again as the members of these production teams

¹²⁸ Gu Erxing 顧爾行, preface to *Wenti mingbian* 文體明辯, 1591 edition, National Central Library, in *Guoli zhongyang tushuguan shanben xuba jilu ji bu*, zongji lei, 117.

moved on to new projects in new location, engendering a high uniformity of content across the vast geographic area dotted by government schools. As we will see in the next section, a preliminary network analysis of these anthologies' contents seems to confirm this hypothesis.

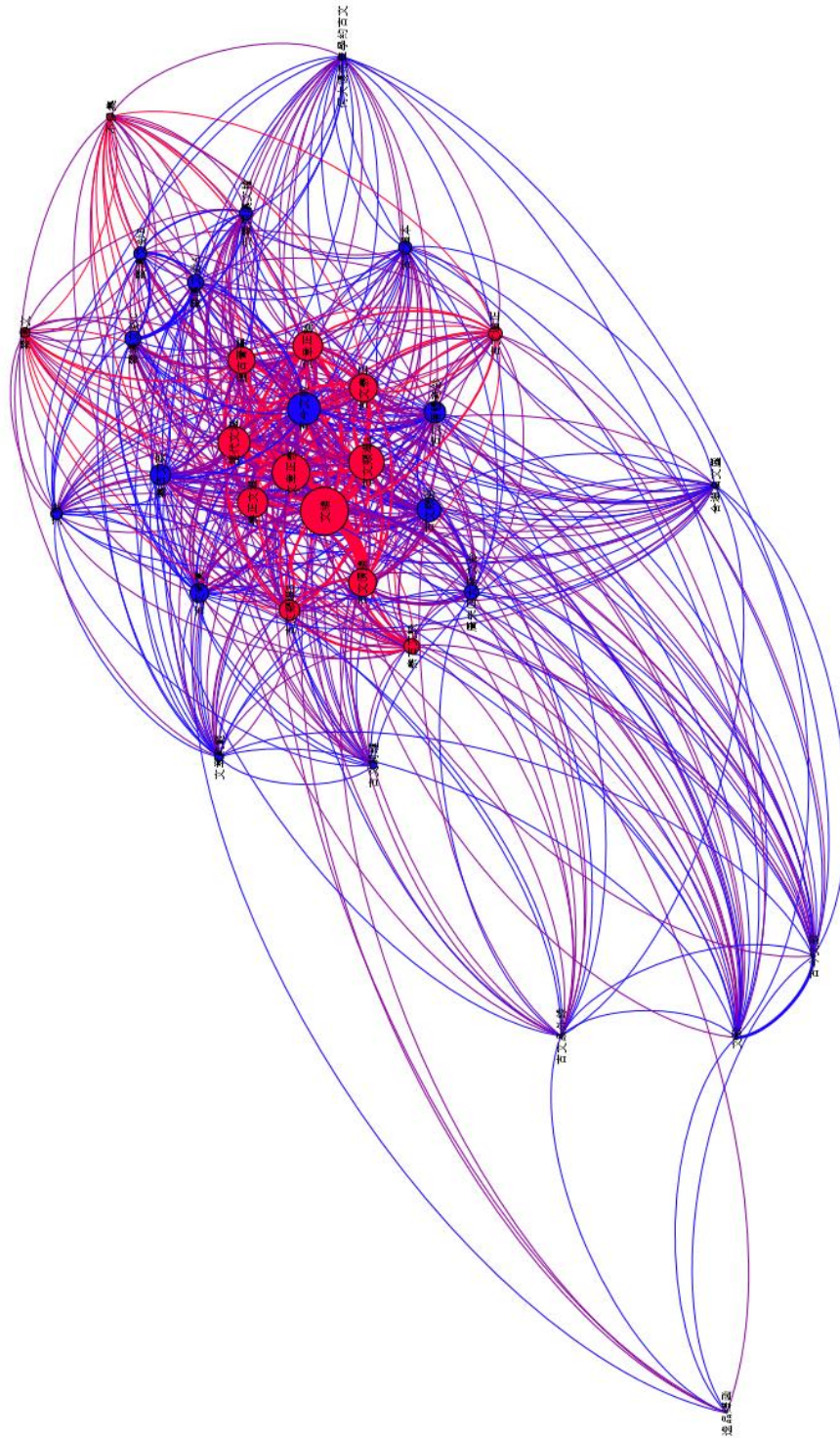
Mapping Shared Editorial Strategies

The prefaces to these anthologies provide us a rich level of detail on compilation and printing processes, but it is difficult and perhaps unsound to develop a typology of editorial strategies based solely on prefatory statements. Accordingly, in the image below, I have used the network analysis and visualization tool Gephi to map 34 anthologies according to shared titles. I made this image by having each anthology's table of contents hand-keyed into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. I then used Excel's Fuzzy Matching tool to compare tables of contents for each pair of anthologies. After identifying and removing false matches, I counted how many titles were shared between each pair of anthologies, and used this data to prepare my "node" and "edge" tables.

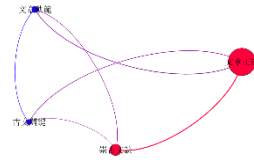
In the image below, each dot, or "node," represents a single anthology. Each two anthologies that share at least one title are connected by a line, or "edge." Edges are weighted by the number of shared titles; for example, *Key to Ancient-Style Prose* (*Guwen guanjian* 古文關鍵) and *Collection of Not Too Much* (*Buduo ji* 不多集) share only 1 title, so their edge weight is 1; *Prose Collection* (*Wen bian* 文編) and *Primary Compilation of Ancient-Style Prose* (*Guwen dubian* 古文瀆編) share 558 titles, so their edge weight is

558.¹²⁹ Nodes with heavy edges are closer together, and nodes with light edges are further apart. Thus, the most central anthologies are the anthologies which share the most titles with the most other anthologies, and this centrality is expressed in both the position and size of the node. Red nodes designate officially printed anthologies; blue nodes designate commercially printed anthologies. Edges are a mixture of the colors of their parent nodes. To give some sense of the chronological breakdown of this network, I have also included a time series filtering the network into pre-Ming anthologies (that is, anthologies which were first produced prior to the Ming, even if the specific edition I used dated from the Ming), anthologies printed prior to the year 1600, and anthologies printed after 1600. Finally, I have included a table of all the anthology editions used in the visualization, distinguishing between commercial and government printing, and recording the printing site, if given.

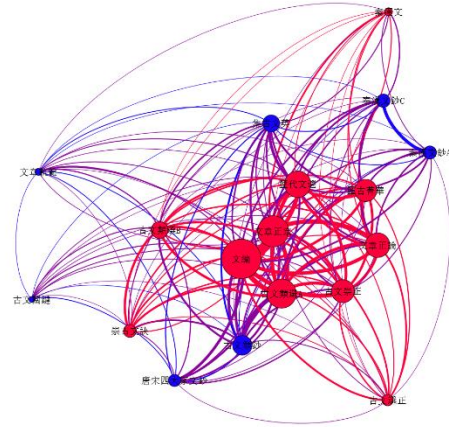
¹²⁹ It should be noted that my edges are at present only weighted with the absolute number of titles shared. The easiest way of normalizing these weights would be to simply calculate the proportion of titles shared. But this method assumes that rare titles should count the same as common titles, and that extremely long anthologies should be treated the same as extremely short anthologies. Before I go through the trouble of normalizing edge weights, I would prefer to find a method that does not eliminate this information from the visualization.

Ming Anthologies, Visualized by Number of Titles Shared (not printing site)

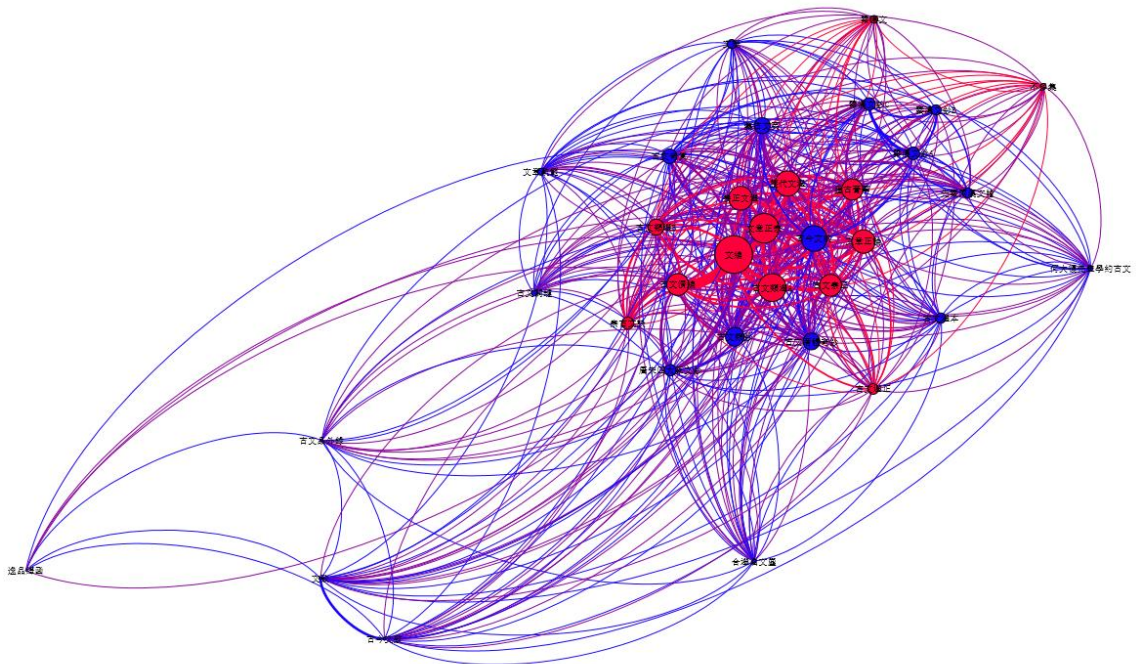
Pre-Ming Anthologies



Anthologies Printed Before 1600



Anthologies Printed After 1600



Anthologies in Visualization

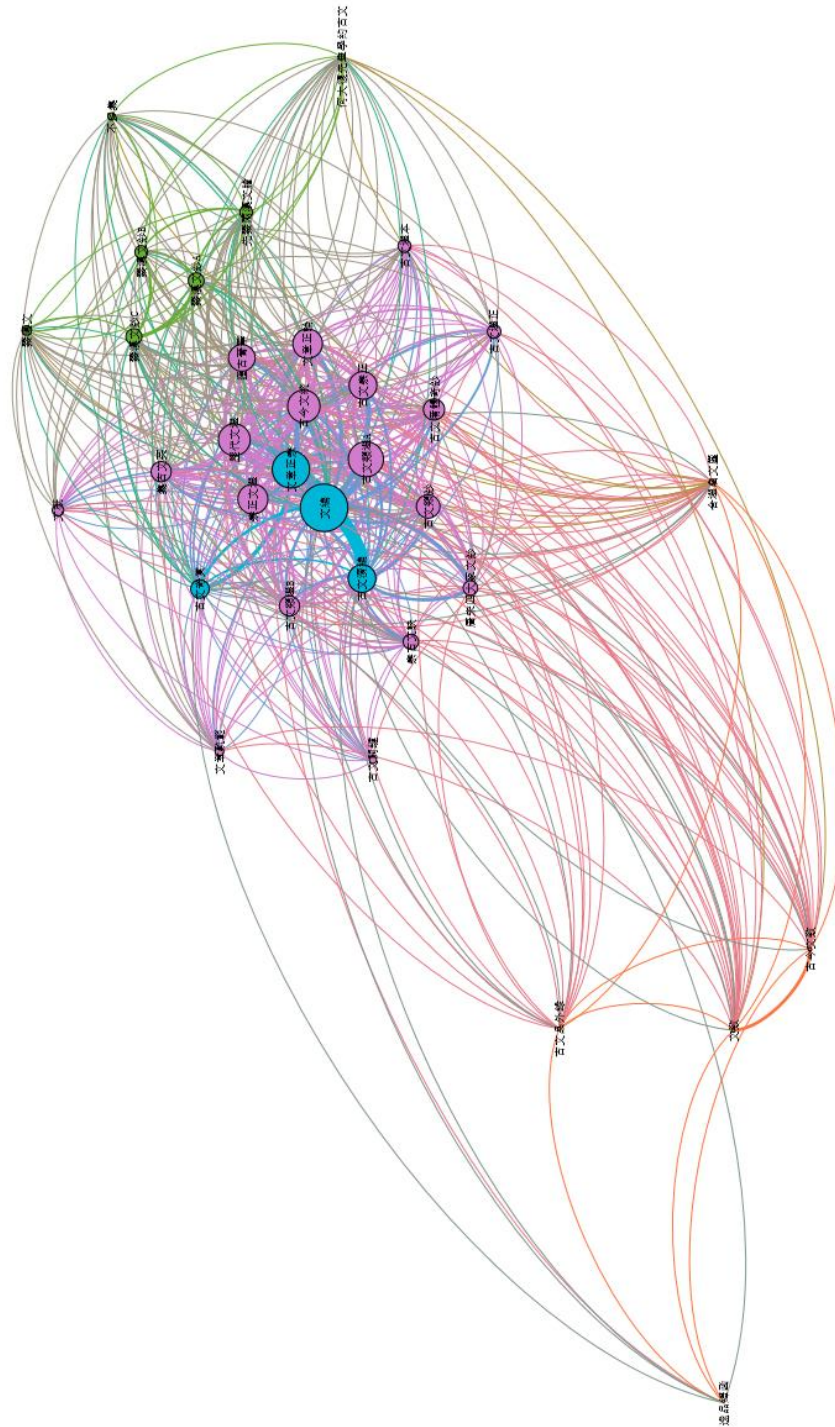
Commercial Printings		Government Printings	
Title	Edition	Title	Edition
Guwen guanjian 古文關鍵	1532, NLC	Wenzhang zhengzong 文章正宗	1520, Shanxi, NCL
Wenzhang guifan 文章軌範	Ming, NCL	Chonggu wenjue 崇古文訣	1533, Luzhou Prefecture, NCL
Guwen leichao 古文類抄	1551, Fujian, Gest	Chongzheng wenxuan 崇正文選	1610, Huguang, NCL
Yipin yihan 逸品繹函	Tianqi-Chongzhen, NCL	Guwen leixuan A 古文類選 A	1536, Zhangde Prefecture, NCL
Guwen xuanben 古文選本	Ming, NCL	Guwen leixuan B 古文類選 B	1572, Guide Prefecture, NCL
Hexuan mingwen zhu 合選名文塵	1627, NCL	Wenzhang zhenglun 文章正論	1591, Yangzhou Prefecture, NCL
Wen gai 文概	1630, NCL	Huigu jinghua 匯古菁華	1596, Shanyang County, NCL
Guwen beiti qichao 古文備體奇鈔	1642, Suzhou, NCL	Buduo ji 不多集	Ming, Shanxi, NCL

Guwen qishang 古 文奇賞	1618, Gest	Lidai wenxuan 歷 代文選	1561, Wenzhou, NCL
Qin-Han wenchao B 秦漢文鈔 B	1620, Huzhou, Harvard-Yenching	Guwen xuanzheng 古文選正	1556, Hanzhong Prefecture, NCL
Guwen pinwai lu 古文品外錄	Wanli-Tianqi, Jianyang, NCL	Guwen chongzheng 古文崇正	1580, Jianning Prefecture, NCL
He Dafu xiansheng Xueyue guwen 何 大復先生學約古文	1608, Wujin, NCL	Qin-Han wen 秦漢 文	1524, Suzhou, NCL
Qin-Han wenchao A 秦漢文鈔 A	1583, Hangzhou, NCL	Wen bian 文編	1556, Fuzhou, Harvard-Yenching
Gujin wentong 古 今文統	Chongzhen, Gest	Guwen dubian 古 文讀編	1633, Huguang, NCL
Tang-Song si dajia wenchao 唐宋四大 家文鈔	1567, NCL		
Xian Qian liang Han wenkuai 先秦 兩漢文臚	Wanli-Tianqi, NCL		

Qin-Han wenchao C 秦漢文鈔 C	1583, Qingyin guan, reprinted in <i>Siku quanshu</i> <i>cunmu congshu</i>		
Jigu wenying 集古 文英	1562, Changde Prefecture, NCL		
Gujin wen zhi 古今 文致	1623, Jianyang, Gest		
Wen zhi 文致	1621, Huzhou, Harvard-Yenching		

Mapping anthologies in this way reveals clusters that we can associate with shared selection strategies. On the following page, I have used Gephi's modularity class feature to identify sub-communities within the network, and have highlighted these sub-communities with different colors. Green corresponds with anthologies of Qin-Han texts; blue and purple messily correspond with both Tang-Song anthologies and “trans-dynastic” 通代 anthologies that include texts from throughout literary history; orange corresponds to “ancient-style *xiaopin*” anthologies.

Modularity Classes and Selection Strategies



Some of what this second image tells us is not new. Scholars have long divided Ming literary criticism into a “Qin-Han school” 秦漢派 and a “Tang-Song school” 唐宋派, and we do indeed see these tastes reflected in the Qin-Han and Tang-Song anthology clusters, although in subsequent chapters I will question the assumption that there existed actual factions corresponding to these tastes. But the image also shows a tight cluster of trans-dynastic literary anthologies, most of them government imprints. These are the *Orthodox Tradition of Literature* (*Wenzhang zhengzong* 文章正宗), *Prose Compilation* (*Wen bian* 文編), *Orthodox Discourse on Literature* (*Wenzhang zhenglun* 文章正論), *Selections of Prose from throughout History* (*Lidai wenxuan* 歷代文選), *Ancient-Style Prose Selected by Category* (*Guwen leixuan* 古文類選), *Finest Blossoms of Assembled Antiquity* (*Huigu jinghua* 匯古菁華), *Selected Prose which Reveres Antiquity* (*Chongzheng wenxuan* 崇正文選), and *Revering Antiquity in Ancient-Style Prose* (*Guwen chongzheng* 古文崇正). The fact that the modularity class feature did not cleanly distinguish between these trans-dynastic anthologies printed by government schools and anthologies of exclusively Tang-Song prose hints at the more prominent place of Tang-Song prose in the official examination curriculum.

The image above also shows a more diffuse, marginal group of “ancient style *xiaopin*” anthologies, all commercial imprints. These are the *Disclosure of the Uninhibited Class* (*Yipin yihan* 逸品繹函), *Finest Specimens of Prose* (*Wenzhi* 文致) and *Finest Specimens of Prose, Ancient and Modern* (*Gujin wenzhi* 古今文致), *Transcribed Ancient-Style Prose from Beyond the Rankings* (*Guwen pinwai lu* 古文品外

錄), and *Collected Selections from the Foremost Leaders in Prose* (*Hexuan mingwen zhu* 合選名文塵).

These clusters clarify several of the broader arguments I have begun to develop over the course of this chapter. First, the contents of trans-dynastic government school anthologies show that the modular anthology production teams centered on state schools really did create a more or less uniform, empire-wide canon of ancient-style prose. Indeed, even their titles display high uniformity, with the character *zheng* 正 (“orthodox,” “correct”) being included in four, and the binome *chongzheng* 崇正 (“revering orthodoxy”) in two. Their central position in between the Qin-Han and Tang-Song groups in some sense reflects the obvious fact that, as trans-dynastic anthologies, they included both Qin-Han and Tang-Song works. But again, implicit in this editorial choice is the claim that trans-dynastic anthologies are above petty Qin-Han versus Tang-Song polemics, and are instead concerned with universal laws of literary composition that transcend individual historical periods.

Similarly, the titles of the ancient-style *xiaopin* anthologies, through emphasizing their own marginal position with terms like *yi* 逸 (“uninhibited”) and *pinwai* 品外 (“beyond the rankings”), claim to exist beyond the standards of judgment embodied in the trans-dynastic anthologies. They offered readers a means to transcend an increasingly uniform view of literary history, and see it from a completely new perspective.

Before I move on, in chapter 2, to a more focused case study of the modular canon-building projects of geographically disparate government schools, I would like to end this chapter by briefly considering the portable book chest (*qie* 篋). Several of the

prefaces I have quoted above mention book chests. Below, I have translated another one, in which a peripatetic official wondered at survival of an anthology he originally compiled with a friend in Sichuan over the course of his many travels:

Through ten thousand miles of barbarian fog, I've sent my wanderer's tracks hither and thither. In a book chest half filled with silverfish, I've fretted over great works of literature in remote lands. If those who read it see reflected our two hearts, then perhaps this collection may escape ridicule.

蠻煙萬里，寄萍踪於反側，蠹魚半篋，悵鴻翻於修阻，
觀之者鑒余二人之心，則斯集或免於嗤已。¹³⁰

The book chest was one of the most pervasive and poignant motifs in the prefaces authored by education official-anthologists; it was also one of the most important material instruments in their construction of an empire-wide canon of ancient-style prose. Book chests, offering more protection than paper covers and wooden planks as well as more mobility than book shelves and libraries, enabled officials to transport books more or less intact (apart from the occasional

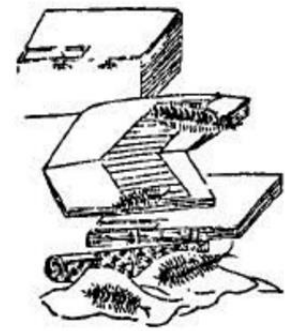


Figure 10: Silverfish eating books. From *Sancai tuhui* 三才圖會, modern facsimile of Ming edition (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1995-1999), 3.2289.

silverfish, as seen in Figure 10 to the right) across vast distances. If government schools were the material nodes of ancient-style prose canon building, book chests were the material edges that allowed members of these production teams to carry their anthologies to new production sites, each anthology embodying a web of relationships—as the anthologist above wrote, “our two hearts”—established through the canon-building book

¹³⁰ Zhang Guoxi, preface to *Huigu jinghua*, 1596 edition, in *Guoli zhongyang tushuguan shanben xuba jilu ji bu*, zongji lei, 144.

production process. Book chests offered decent protection, but only the constant renewal of this production process and the relationships it engendered could truly preserve the integrity of the ancient-style core curriculum. Now, let us examine this process in greater detail.

CHAPTER 2: RECONSTRUCTING THE ORTHODOX TRADITION OF LITERATURE IN MING GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

The year was 1475, and newly appointed teacher Li Zheng 李正 was in a difficult spot, caught between his students and his superintendent. It had been just three months since Li was selected as a tribute student and sent to Fuping County 阜平縣, in modern-day Hebei Province, to serve as an assistant instructor at the local government school. Assistant instructor at a county-level school was a humble position, but for Li—the poor, thirty-five year old son of a merchant who died in jail after protesting official corruption—it was a stroke of luck. But now the new provincial education intendant was demanding the impossible of him and his colleagues.

As Li's son, the famed poet Li Mengyang 李夢陽 (1473-1529), would later write, incoming education intendants were generally expected to regularly visit all of the government schools in the province in person, test students on their writing, and, when necessary, tell them to “straighten things up” 稍井井. This new education intendant, in contrast, did not continue to personally monitor student progress after his first inspection tour, and instead put sole blame for poor student performance on local school officials.¹³¹

In perhaps the only surviving document of its type, Li Mengyang recorded his father's stinging response to this absentee intendant. In this memorial, Li Zheng argued that blaming recently assigned teachers for not civilizing a backwater area like Fuping

¹³¹ Li Mengyang 李夢陽, “Zupu 族譜,” in *Kongtong ji* 空同集, Wenyuange Siku quanshu edition, 38.10. See also L. Carrington Goodrich and Chaoying Fang, eds., *Dictionary of Ming Biography, 1368-1644* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), 1:841-45.

County overnight is unfair, and that truly transformative teaching takes time, patience, and sensitivity. Li Zheng made this point in a memorable way, by comparing his students to parrots:

Now, there is a bird on Long Mountain called the parrot. Everyone knows that this bird can learn to speak the language of men. But if you do not keep it tied in a cage, and thoughtfully instruct it, then even after a year, it's unlikely that the bird will be able to speak. Therefore you must keep it tied in a cage in order to shape its nature, and thoughtfully instruct it so that it achieves understanding, and if you give it a year to transform, all will be complete, and then you can gauge its success and grade its achievement. Now to merely look at its red beak and green plumage and then right away angrily demand: "Why doesn't this bird speak human language?"—how can you do this?

今夫隴山有鳥，其名曰鵲，孰不謂其能人語也。然不籠繼之，不宛轉相道，假以年歲，鳥鮮有能語者焉。故籠繼之以制性也，宛轉相道以發明也。假以年歲俟其變也，夫三者備矣，然後可以責效而議功。今徒見其朱喙而綠裳也，乃輒怒曰鳥奚不人語也，是惡可哉？¹³²

Li Zheng's response works on three levels. First, Li was drawing an analogy between the process whereby a parrot learns to speak human language and the process of moral transformation which government schools were ideally supposed to effect. This analogy is made clear in Li's shift into Neo-Confucian language in the phrases *zhi xing* 制性 ("shape its nature") and *fa ming* 發明 ("achieve understanding" or "start the process of illumination"). Second, on a more literal level, it was the function of government schools and education officials, like the parrot cage and the parrot keeper, to inculcate a certain mode of written expression—examination prose—in students; likewise, it was the

¹³² Li Mengyang, "Zupu," 38:11b. Cited in Yoshikawa Kōjirō, "Ri Bo-Yo no Ichi Sokumen: Kobunji no Shominsei," 190-208.

role of education intendants to measure the ability of students to generate this form of prose. Third, Li's invocation of the parrot, whether deliberately or not, cast doubt on the stated mission of government schools. After all, parrots do not actually understand what they are saying; their speech is only a simulation of human language. Were government schools really effecting moral transformation in students, or was their examination prose-focused curriculum simply leading students to engage in mindless "learning of the mouth and ear" (*kou er zhi xue* 口耳之學), as many authorities feared?¹³³

Li Zheng appears quite principled in this account—understandably so, given that it was composed by his son. But, as I will discuss further below, other documents from the same period apportion the blame for poor student writing and behavior differently. These documents eviscerated students for trying to guess the topic of their next examination, memorizing old examination essays on that topic, and plagiarizing from them; these documents also blamed school instructors and even some education intendants for unseemly fraternizing with students, not only failing to expel the failures, but even permitting them to "form separate academies (*shuyuan*) in which to assemble hosts of colleagues and summon local ne'er-do-wells to chatter emptily and neglect their occupations, thereby forming cliques of place seekers and establishing a pattern of patronage."¹³⁴ Some of these supposed overseers of local government schools would

¹³³ The phrase "learning of the mouth and ear" is used to disparage recent student trends in the 1462 education intendant regulations. See *Da Ming hui dian* 大明會典, Wenyuange Siku quanshu edition, 76:18; Tilemann Grimm, "Ming Educational Intendants," in *Chinese Government in Ming Times, Seven Studies*, ed. Charles Hucker (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), 135.

¹³⁴ Translated in Tilemann Grimm, "Ming Educational Intendants," 135.

even, authorities alleged, “invite poetry friends and drinking buddies on pleasure excursions among the mountains and rivers” 招邀詩朋酒友，遊山翫水。¹³⁵

Roughly two decades after Li Zheng composed his memorial, his son Li Mengyang placed first in the Shanxi 陝西 provincial exam of 1492 and obtained his *jinshi* degree the following year. Like many of the men he came to know in the capital at the time, he was deeply influenced by the Grand Secretary Li Dongyang’s emphasis on the formal aspect of poetry.¹³⁶ Like many of these men, Li also became part of the political opposition to the eunuch Liu Jin 劉瑾 (1451-1510) in the early years of the sixteenth century.¹³⁷ Furthermore, like many of these men, Li served as a provincial education intendant, a position in which, like many of his colleagues, he combined his literary and political ideals in an activist approach to the education of provincial literati.

In contrast to the absentee education intendant criticized by Li’s father, activist education intendants like Li Mengyang, He Jingming 何景明 (1483-1521), Shao Bao 邵寶 (1460-1527) did much more than test students: they personally lectured to and developed close relationships with students (a practice which some authorities looked upon with suspicion); they built academies where lecturing, study, and discussion, as opposed to testing, could take place (another practice which would be attacked and

¹³⁵ *Da Ming huidian*, 78:18b. Wang Shizhen similarly described the activities of the erstwhile education intendant (and compiler of the archaist anthology *Qin Han wen* 秦漢文), Hu Zuanzong 胡纘宗 (1480-1560) while he was prefect of Wu: “In his free time from official work would often go traveling among the lakes and mountains, gardens and pavilions, and would go cup for cup and verse for verse with renowned scholars, wetting their brushes with ink and writing all over the walls and stones.” 公暇多游行湖山園亭間，從諸名士一觴一詠，題墨淋漓，遍於壁石。See Wang Shizhen, *Yanzhou sibu gao* 弇州四部稿, Wenyuange Siku quanshu edition, 150:4b.

¹³⁶ Daniel Bryant, *The Great Recreation*, 393-94.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 121-23.

ultimately forbidden by the Grand Secretary Zhang Juzheng 張居正); they printed books for students to read and consult—not just collections of model essays, crucially, but selections of great works of ancient-style prose which would inspire and transform students, in addition to improving their examination prose.¹³⁸

This chapter focuses specifically on the printing of ancient-style prose anthologies for student use by education intendants and other officials affiliated with local (by which I mean prefectural, sub-prefectural, and county level) government schools. As demonstrated in chapter 1, most of the Ming anthologies of ancient-style prose surviving from before 1600 were produced by local government schools, usually under the auspices of an education intendant. Although these anthologies were produced diffusely over the vast geographical area served for the first time by government schools in the Ming—from Yunnan in the southwest, to Shanxi in the north, to Fujian in the southeast, their contents display a surprising degree of uniformity. This uniformity was likely due to the constant movement of education intendants, the tastes they internalized during their ascent through the examination system, and the manuscripts they carried in their portable bookchests.

In this chapter, I use these anthologies to revise the twentieth-century narrative of the Ming “archaist movement” 復古運動. As discussed at length in the introduction to this dissertation, twentieth-century scholars tended to understand literary archaism retrospectively, in terms of a rising appreciation for individual expression which would culminate in the early twentieth-century New Literature Movement. For historical

¹³⁸ On the academy building projects of Li Mengyang and other activist education intendants, see John Meskill, *Academies in Ming China: A Historical Essay* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1982), 32-34.

support, these scholars cited writers like Xu Wei 徐渭 (1521-1593), who criticized imitative writers by comparing them to birds imitating human language: “A human being who has learned the speech of birds may sound like a bird but is by nature a human being. A bird who mimics human speech may sound like a human being but is by nature still a bird. This should surely be the standard by which to tell human beings from birds!”¹³⁹ Such views seemed to mark Xu Wei, as one scholar has written, “as an early challenger of the dominant influence of the Archaist School.”¹⁴⁰ In my view, however, Xu Wei did not make the above statement to criticize his contemporaries for failing to express their authentic selves; rather, he was arguing that stylistic imitation cannot effect self-transformation—a problem that activist education intendants were faced with every day.

Just as academy building by activist education intendants represented, to paraphrase John Meskill, an alternative to official examination pedagogy which did not preclude examination success, we might think of the ancient-style prose canon developed in these anthologies as an alternative curriculum meant to both inspire students to self-transformation and to provide students with standards for examination prose—in other words, to fulfill both the ideal and practical aims of the government school system.¹⁴¹ Because of this impetus to standardize prose style, education official anthologists constantly emphasized the underlying “coherence” (*li* 理) that unified the diverse period styles included in their books, and compared it to the shared “feeling” (*qing* 情) linking

¹³⁹ Translated in Yang Ye, *Vignettes from the Late Ming*, 19.

¹⁴⁰ Chou Chih-p'ing, *Yüan Hung-Tao and the Kung-an School*, 17.

¹⁴¹ John Meskill, *Academies in Ming China*, 25.

the varied historical instruments of court music. At the same time, however, this model of coherence-in-diversity encouraged an attention to historical variation in style that expressed itself in increasingly unorthodox selection strategies toward the end of the sixteenth century. Indeed, as I will discuss in chapter 4, particularly for Jiangnan readers it was precisely these texts on the margins of canon that felt most inspiring.

It should be noted that, as is often the case with sources for studying local schools, these anthologies tell us more about how education officials modeled certain ways of engaging with ancient-style prose than how or what government students were actually reading. Nevertheless, as I discuss in chapter 3, correspondences between Tang Shunzhi's 唐順之 (1507-1560) mature views on prose composition and those expressed in the prose textbook printed by his own education intendant suggest that these anthologies, even if they were not being flipped through by students, did embody a certain pedagogical environment created by archaist education intendants which imprinted itself on students in a variety of ways.

Furthermore, I would argue that the public influence of government school anthologies was felt just as much, if not more, in the act of production rather than the act of consumption. As the editor lists discussed in chapter 1 attest, the exchange of manuscripts, the organization of fundraising drives, and the solicitation of prefaces created official networks founded on a shared and publicly displayed commitment to classical literary standards; similarly, the most technical aspects of anthology production were usually handled by teams of instructors and students from neighboring schools, and in themselves represented an important form of literary education. Officials with

experience in these technical roles, after being promoted, often went on to spearhead their own anthology printing projects. In this constant reconstruction of an orthodox literary tradition in government schools across the empire, the social organization of production was also being constantly reconstructed.

To clarify the social and institutional contexts of anthology production, this chapter opens with a brief overview of Ming government schools and the role that provincial education intendants played in them. One of the primary responsibilities of education intendants was to test students and weed out poor examination writing. Because education intendants could not feasibly meet with individual students more than a few days per year, it became common for education intendants and other local officials to collaboratively print anthologies of classical literature for student use. In contrast to the collections of recently successful examination essays that students spent much of their time studying, these anthologies provided comprehensive, systematic overviews of classical literature from throughout history (I refer to them as “trans-dynastic” 通代), usually beginning with selections from the *Zuo Tradition* (*Zuozhuan* 左傳) and *Discourses of the States* (*Guoyu* 國語), and continuing through the great essayists of the Tang and Song dynasties.

After clarifying these institutional contexts, I turn my attention to one especially important anthology: the *Orthodox Tradition of Literature* (*Wenzhang zhengzong* 文章正宗). *Orthodox Tradition of Literature* is simultaneously one of the oldest and most central anthologies in the network visualization included in chapter 1. Originally compiled by the Neo-Confucian scholar-official Zhen Dexiu 真德秀 (1178-1235) in the thirteenth

century, *Orthodox Tradition of Literature* attracted the attention of archaist educators searching for the deep, universal laws of literary writing because, as Hilde De Weerdts has shown, it was the first anthology to define “literature” or “literary composition” (*wenzhang* 文章) as a legitimate field of learning within Neo-Confucianism and to apply the concept of *Daotong* 道統 (“orthodox transmission of the Way”) to the history of literature.¹⁴² The canonical status of *Orthodox Tradition of Literature* is evident in how sixteenth-century education officials reprinted, re-adapted, and imitated it more than any other anthology. In the final part of this chapter, I examine several prefaces to these sixteenth-century versions of *Orthodox Tradition of Literature*, highlighting the tendency of their prefaces to emphasize the underlying sameness of prose composition throughout history, even as later sixteenth-century adaptations and imitations of the same book began to include an increasingly unorthodox range of texts.

The Structure of Government Schools

The Ming system of government schools was extensive and complex—the first dynasty in which every prefecture, sub-prefecture, and county had its own government

¹⁴² Hilde De Weerdts, “Canon Formation and Examination Culture: The Construction of ‘Guwen’ and ‘Daoxue’ Canons,” *Journal of Song-Yuan Studies* 29 (1999), 119-20; Hilde De Weerdts, *Competition over Content*, 309-14. Cf. Richard John Lynn’s account of the role of Yan Yu’s 嚴羽 *Canglang shihua* 滄浪詩話 and Gao Bing’s 高棅 *Tangshi pinhui* 唐詩品匯 in the Ming archaist movement in Richard John Lynn, “Poetry as Self-Cultivation: Neo-Confucianism in Yan Yu and Gao Bing,” in *Wisdom in China and the West: Essays in Honour of Julia Ching*, ed. Vincent Shen (Council for Research in Values & Philosophy, 2004), 215-34. On the concept of *Daotong*, see Charles Hartman, *Han Yü and the T’ang Search for Unity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 159-66; Peter Bol, *“This Culture of Ours”: Intellectual Transitions in T’ang and Sung China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), 28.

school. These schools doubled as Confucian temples, and were referred to as *Ru xue* 儒學 (“Confucian schools”) or, more colloquially, *xuegong* 學宮.¹⁴³

Like ancient-style prose anthologies, physical school buildings shared many typical features despite being produced in widely disparate geographical locations, as did their visual representations in printed territorial gazetteers. Figure 11 below, a map of the Zhanping 漳平 county school in Fujian Province, shows several of the typical features of local government schools.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³ The basic primary source for the structure of Ming government schools is the *Xuanju zhi* 選舉志 (Treatise on Recruitment for the Civil Service) in *juan* 69-71 of the *History of the Ming*. Guo Peigui 郭培贵, *Mingdai keju shishi biannian kaozheng* 明代科举史事编年考证 (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe, 2008) and Wu Bosen 吴柏森, Li Guoxiang 李国祥, and Yang Chang 杨昶, eds., *Ming shilu leizuan: wenjiao keji juan* 明實錄類纂 文教科卷 (Wuhan: Wuhan chubanshe, 1992) compile relevant memorials and edicts from the *Ming shilu* and other sources. The most comprehensive and authoritative work on Ming civil service examinations remains Benjamin Elman, *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations in Late Imperial China*. For overviews of Ming government schools, see Xu Yongwen 徐永文, *Mingdai difang ruxue yanjiu* 明代地方儒学研究 (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2012); Gong Duqing 龚笃清, *Mingdai keju tujian* 明代科举图鉴 (Changsha: Yuelu shushe, 2007). For a more a more detailed analysis of government students’ role in local society, see Chen Baoliang 陈宝良, *Mingdai ruxue shengyuan yu difang shehui* 明代儒学生员与地方社会 (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2005). On the relationship between Ming Confucian learning and education, see Willard Peterson, “Confucian Learning in Late Ming Thought,” in *The Cambridge History of China, The Ming Dynasty, 1368-1644, Part 2*, ed. Denis Twitchett and Frederick Mote, vol. 8 (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 708-88.

¹⁴⁴ For a general overview of the physical layout of Ming government schools, see Xu Yongwen, *Mingdai difang ruxue yanjiu*, 10-14. Cf. the Qing school described in Stephan Feuchtwang, “School-Temple and City God,” in *The City in Late Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1977), 592.

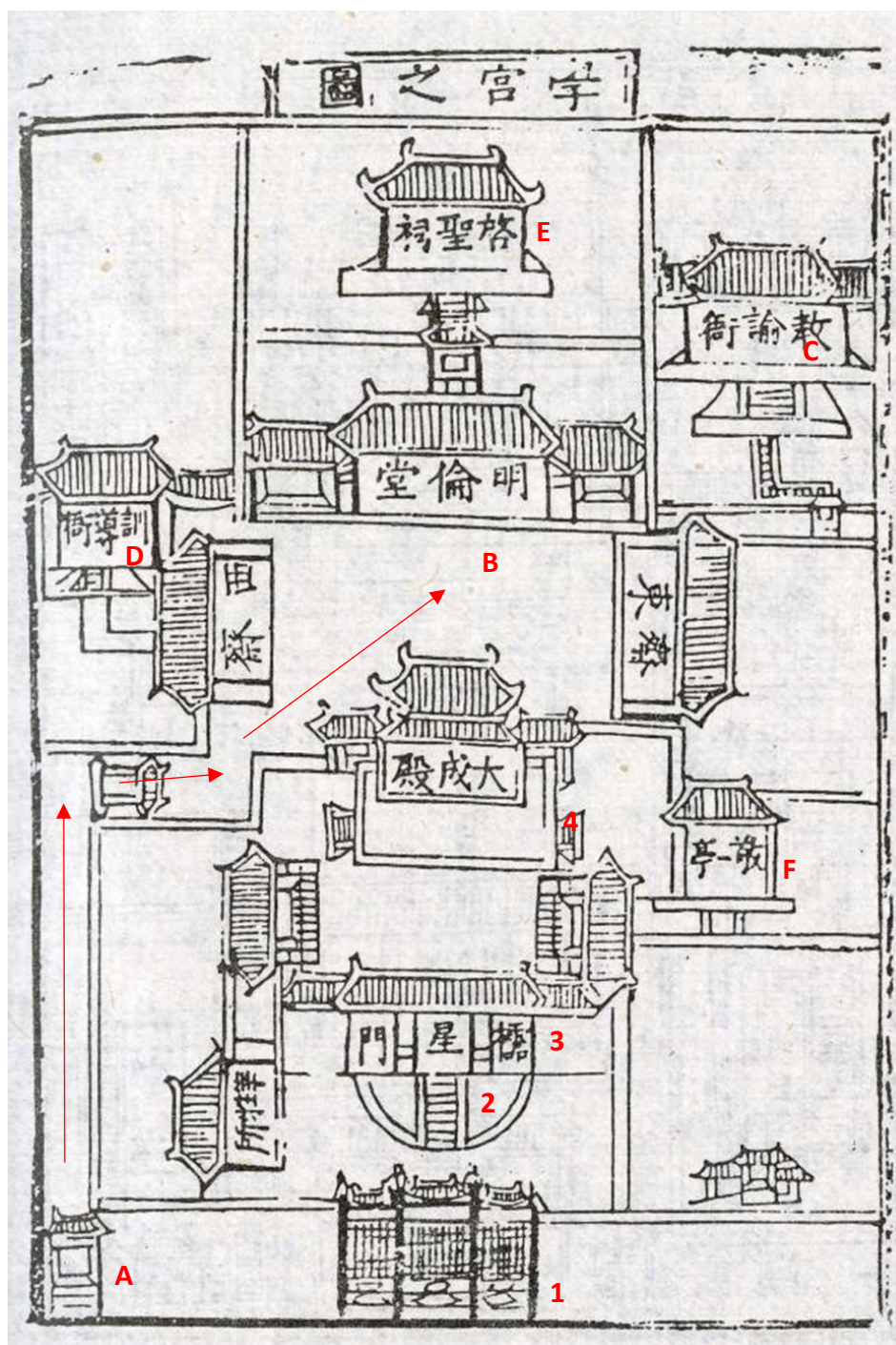


Figure 11: “Xuegong zhi tu 學宮之圖,” from *Zhangping xian zhi* 漳平縣志, Jiajing edition, in *Tianyige cang Ming dai fangzhi xuankan xubian* 天一閣藏明代方志選刊續編, v. 38 (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 1990). Digitized by the University of Minnesota.

Imagine that you are a male government student walking into the school. Your initial encounter with the school would have been a series of physical borders

demarcating the space inside the school, where the *shi* 士 (“gentry”) study, from the space outside the school, where the *min* 民 (“common people”) live. In some school maps, for example in Figure 12 to the right, this boundary was explicitly labeled as *minju dijie* 民居地界 (“boundary of the common people’s living area”). The first such border would have been a simple wall with several gates, one leading to the Confucian temple, one leading perhaps to a standalone archery range, and one leading to the school. In the Zhanping School, this outer wall was represented as a simple border line. If you wished to enter into the Confucian temple, you would have first passed through an outer gate studded with dulled spear tips (called

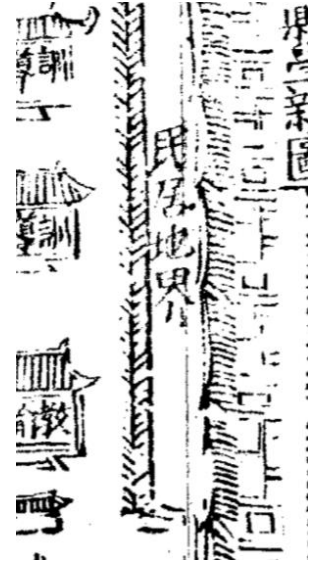


Figure 12: The common people’s living area boundary. Detail from “Xian xue xin tu 縣學新圖,” in *Longxi xian zhi* 龍溪縣志, Jiajing edition, in *Tianyige cang Ming dai fangzhi xuankan*, v.32. Digitized by the University of Minnesota.

jimen 戟門, see label 1 above), then climbed a bridge over a semicircular pool (label 2 above, Figure 13 below), then passed through another gate called the *lingxing men* 櫺星門 (label 3) which opened up to the *dacheng dian* 大成殿 (label 4), the main sacrificial hall containing Confucius’s spirit tablet.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁵ These pools, referred to as *panshui* 泮水, had long been associated with schools and served as topographic allusions to the *Odes Classic* (*Shijing* 詩經) poem *Panshui* 泮水. See He Zhihua, ed., *Maoshi zhuzi suoyin*, 299.

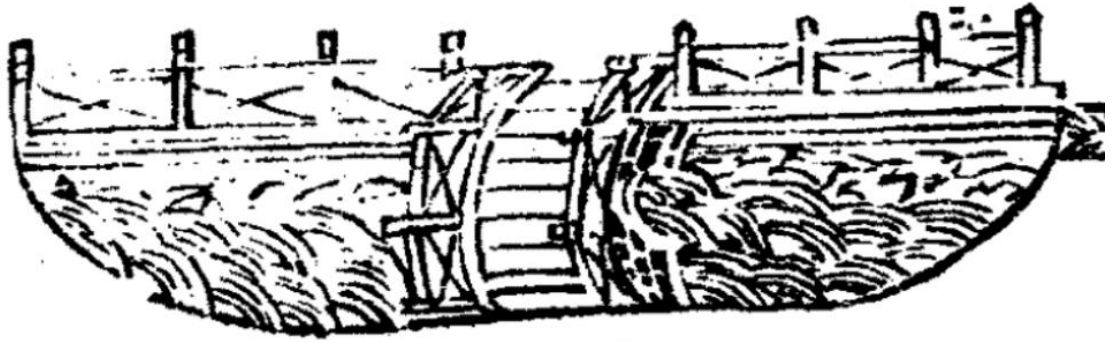


Figure 13: A half-moon *panshui* pool and bridge. Detail from “Xian xue xin tu 縣學新圖,” in *Longxi xian zhi* 龍溪縣志, Jiajing edition, in *Tianyige cang Ming dai fangzhi xuankan*, v.32. Digitized by the University of Minnesota.

Conversely, if you wished to enter the school section, you would have instead entered through the side gate (label A), sometimes labeled *Ru xue*, which in the Zhanping School led somewhat circuitously to the lecture hall, called the *minglun tang* 明倫堂 (“hall for illuminating human relationships,” label B), which was usually flanked by two structures serving as assembly areas, and beyond these the Instructor and Assistant Instructors’ offices (*jiaoyu ya* 教育衙 and *xundao ya* 訓導衙, labels C and D).¹⁴⁶ In the Zhanping School, the *qisheng ci* 啓聖祠 (label E), a temple for sacrificing to Confucius’s ancestors, was located behind the lecture hall, but in many government school this was the location of the library, generally referred to as the *zunjing ge* 尊經閣 (“hall for revering the classics,” see Figure 14 below). In schools without libraries, books were

¹⁴⁶ *Minglun*, “illuminating human relations,” comes from a *Mencius* passage describing the purpose of ancient educational institutions. See He Zhihua, ed., *Mengzi zhuzi suoyin*, 5.3/26/23.

simply stored in a given room in another, non-designated building, although, as Timothy Brook observes, during the Ming even county level schools were expected to have libraries.¹⁴⁷

Besides this more or less uniform array of buildings, you would have also seen the same kinds of writing at government schools throughout the empire.

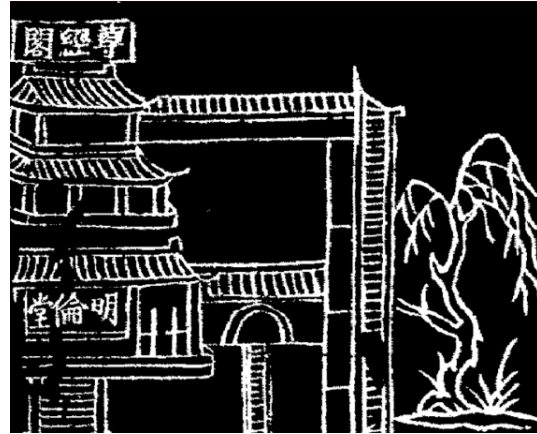


Figure 14: A school library (top left), lecture hall (lower left), and tree. Detail from “Xuegong tu di qi 學宮圖第七,” in *Yizhen xian zhi* 儀真縣志, Longqing edition, in *Tianyige cang Ming dai fang zhi xuan kan*, v.15.

Most obviously, the names of buildings and gates inscribed on plaques and printed in gazetteer maps would have been the same. In addition to these, there were also certain inscriptions that were present in most government schools. For example, in the Zhanping school, you would have noticed the *jingyi ting* 敬一亭 (label F), a pavilion built to house a stone stele inscribed with the Jiajing Emperor’s “Admonition on Reverential Focus” (*Jingyi zhen* 敬一箴). Most importantly, beside the lecture hall you would have seen the so-called “resting stele” (*wobei* 臥碑) inscribed with the Hongwu Emperor’s twelve school regulations, featuring such injunctions as “In pursuing study, you must respect your teachers. Everything that they say you must accept with a sincere heart. You are not to frivolously dispute with them in an attempt to benefit yourself” 為學之道，必尊敬其師。凡講說須誠心聽受，毋恃己長妄為辯難。¹⁴⁸ Likewise, within all school libraries

¹⁴⁷ Timothy Brook, “Edifying Knowledge: The Building of School Libraries in Ming China,” *Late Imperial China* 17, no. 1 (1996), 94, 111.

¹⁴⁸ *Ming Taizu shilu*, 147:2.

you would have found the same core group of imperially promulgated books.¹⁴⁹ Although ancient-style prose anthologies, as products of local governments, were not exact facsimiles of one another, they would have been recognizable to educators and students throughout the empire, in much the same way that, although the precise layout of buildings, walls, and gates differed from school to school, they would have been recognizable and navigable to all students and educators regardless of location. At the same time, it is important to reiterate that this seemingly universal legibility was in reality the exclusive provenance of the writing elite, of those with access to the world within the school's walls.

Nowadays many cities in China and Taiwan offer public tours of Confucian school-temples, but in the Ming it was considerably more difficult to gain admittance. At the lowest level of the examination system, preparatory students competed for entry in a rigorous licensing examination administered biennially by the provincial education intendant.¹⁵⁰ Although these preparatory students were called “child students” (*tongsheng* 童生), they came in all ages, young and old. Many literate men never advanced beyond the status of preparatory student. Because there were no quotas for preparatory students, it is difficult to say how many there were. Willard Peterson estimates on the basis of Frederick Mote, Miyazaki Ichisada, and Ho Ping-ti's earlier work that “between 1 million

¹⁴⁹ For a list of these “core texts,” see Timothy Brook, “Edifying Knowledge,” 107.

¹⁵⁰ Benjamin Elman, *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations in Late Imperial China*, 133-38; Xu Yongwen, *Mingdai difang ruxue yanjiu*, 35-42. Cf. the overview of the Qing system in Miyazaki Ichisada, *China's Examination Hell*, 18-38.

and 10 million men” had gained some basic proficiency in the eight-legged essay, and so could register as preparatory students.¹⁵¹

If admitted by the education intendant, preparatory students became students at their local government school, and were referred to generally as *shengyuan* 生員 or *zhusheng* 諸生. Within these schools, students were further classified as stipend students (*linsheng* 廩生), added students (*zengguangsheng* 增廣生), and, after a 1447 edict, “adjunct students” (*fuxuesheng* 附學生), as Meskill translates the term.¹⁵² There were limits on the number of stipend students and added students depending on the territorial level of the school: forty for prefectural schools, thirty for sub-prefectural schools, and twenty for county schools. There were no limits on the number of supplementary students, probably because supplementary students received neither stipends nor corvée exemption. Again, this makes it difficult to say how many government students there were. Xu Yongwen accepts Keum-sung Oh’s estimate that the national student population increased from 60,000 to 310,000 between the early fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, as well as Chen Baoliang’s estimate that, by the end of the Ming, the number of students enrolled in government schools was greater than 600,000.¹⁵³

This system of schools was essentially a funnel for the imperial civil service examinations, marking the first time that “bureaucratic channels of selection by

¹⁵¹ Willard Peterson, “Confucian Learning in Late Ming Thought,” 714-16.

¹⁵² Xu Yongwen, *Mingdai difang ruxue yanjiu*, 197; John Meskill, *Academies in Ming China*, 23.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 196-98. Chen Baoliang calculates that this number of students accounted for 0.38%-0.46% of the total population in the late Ming, which is roughly the same percentage Thomas H. C. Lee gives for the Song, and views these figures as supporting William Skinner’s argument that the national population outstripped the expansion of national institutions from the Tang through the Qing, see Chen Baoliang, *Mingdai ruxue shengyuan yu difang shehui*, 210-16.

examination...penetrated beyond the imperial and provincial capitals down to all counties and prefectures.”¹⁵⁴ Every two years students had to retake the licensing exam (this exam was somewhat misleadingly called the “yearly exam” 歲考) to retain their student status, as well as a “qualifying exam” (*kekao* 科考) for the triennial provincial exam. Again, both of these exams were personally overseen by the provincial education intendant. The “yearly exam” in particular entailed intense mental pressure, physical discomfort, mistreatment, surveillance, and submission to the intendant’s oftentimes rigid stylistic dogmatism.¹⁵⁵ High scorers were rewarded with promotion to a higher student status, or sent to study at the National University as a “tribute student” (*gongsheng* 貢生). Middling scorers simply retained their current student status. Low scorers could be demoted or expelled.¹⁵⁶

Understandably, given that government schools functioned mainly as testing centers, their day-to-day curriculum also focused on systematic, intensive training in examination prose.¹⁵⁷ Wang Tingxiang’s 王廷相 (1474-1544) schedule of monthly and seasonal testing graded by student level, developed while he was serving as education intendant to Sichuan, provides some sense of this day-to-day curriculum:

At the end of each month, education officials are to assemble their students and test them once. For those already proficient in exam writing: a Four Books essay, a classics

¹⁵⁴ Benjamin Elman, *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations in Late Imperial China*, 133. Cf. the Ming *shexue* 社學 (“community school”) system, whose students were to “return to their families’ occupations” after completing their studies, rather than participate in civil service exams (although some officials apparently did have community school students sit for the exams). See Sarah Schneewind, *Community Schools and the State in Ming China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 14, 97.

¹⁵⁵ See Ai Nanying’s 艾南英 (1583-1646) vivid recollection of the yearly exam, cited in Xu Yongwen, *Mingdai difang ruxue yanjiu*, 57-58.

¹⁵⁶ *Mingshi*, 69.1687.

¹⁵⁷ See Benjamin Elman, *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations in Late Imperial China*, 42.

essay, a discourse essay, and a policy essay. For those not yet proficient: a Four Books essay and a classics essay. For beginning students: three “breaking the topics,” three “continuing the topics,” and three parallel couplets. At the end of each season, the education intendant is to assemble the students and test them once, with the same topics as the monthly exam. For months with a seasonal test, the monthly test can be skipped. Once the test is complete, compare and rank the students, determine rewards and penalties, and write the results on a small placard to hang in the lecture hall.

教官每月降終，會集生員，當堂考試一次。其已成材者，四書、經義、論、策各一篇；未成材者，四書、經義各一篇。初學，破、承、對句各三首。每一季將終，提調官會集生員，當堂考試一次，出題與月考同。凡遇季考之月，免其月考，考畢各較定次第高下，量示勸懲，仍書小榜，於明倫堂張挂。¹⁵⁸

Although the specifics of the testing routine differed from education intendant to education intendant—some of them making yearly tours of the province to personally engage with students, others simply having test papers mailed to their office in the provincial capital—the goal of written tests was to maintain a certain standard in student writing, just as the physical layout of government schools was meant to maintain a certain standard of student behavior.¹⁵⁹ As we will see in the following section, however, the results of testing were unpredictable, at once too uniform, due to students plagiarizing from existing essays, and not uniform enough, due to students plagiarizing from an increasingly varied range of texts.

¹⁵⁸ Cited in Gong Duqing, *Mingdai keju tujian*, 220.

¹⁵⁹ Tilemann Grimm, “Ming Educational Intendants,” 141.

The Problem of Student Writing

To retain the social privileges that went along with enrollment in a government school (a stipend, some degree of corvée exemption, prestige within the local community), students had to navigate an educational system that judged them on their ability to compose literary prose. From the day-to-day curriculum, all the way to the provincial and metropolitan examinations, students were tested on the following prose forms: 1) classical essays on the Four Books and whichever one of the Five Classics they had chosen as their specialty, 2) discourse, documentary style, and legal terms, and 3) policy questions.¹⁶⁰ Students not yet proficient in these forms were tested on individual sections of the classical essay: the introductory *poti* 破題 and *chengti* 承題, as well as the series parallel couplets which constituted the eight legs of the “eight-legged essay” 八股文.

Composition models played a crucial role within this system. From early in the dynasty, official collections of successful essays with examiners’ comments were compiled and printed within exam compounds.¹⁶¹ Beginning in the late fifteenth century, commercial printers also began to publish collections of model essays.¹⁶² And in the late sixteenth century, literary societies/political activist groups like the *Fu she* 復社 (Revival Society) began to print collections of their essay drafts in a deliberate attempt to influence

¹⁶⁰ See Benjamin Elman, *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations*, 42.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 400-11.

¹⁶² Sim Chuin Peng, *Juye jinliang*, 6-7.

examiners' judgment, place more of their members in officialdom, and further their political goals.¹⁶³

One example of the kind of model book students used to prepare for examinations is Yuan Huang's 袁黃 (1533-1606) early seventeenth-century exam essay manual *Literary Regulations from the School for Cultivating the Arts* (*Youyi shu wengui* 游藝塾文規). The main body of Yuan's book consists of discussions of each essay section and lists of models. These lists are categorized and ordered according to the sections of the exam essay, beginning with the *poti* 破題 ("breaking the topic"), then proceeding through the *chengti* 承題 ("continuing the topic"), *qijiang* 起講 ("taking up the discussion"), and seven-part *zhengjiang* 正講 ("main discussion"). Some of sections are sub-categorized according to essay topic, as in the image below, showing "breaking the topic" models for the topic phrase "Earnest in practicing the ordinary virtues..." 庸德之行, taken from the *Zhongyong* 中庸. Each essay's author's name is printed in subscript.

¹⁶³ Kai-wing Chow, *Publishing, Culture, and Power in Early Modern China*, 233-40; William Atwell, "From Education to Politics: The Fu She," in *The Unfolding of Neo-Confucianism*, ed. W.T. DeBary (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975), 333-67.

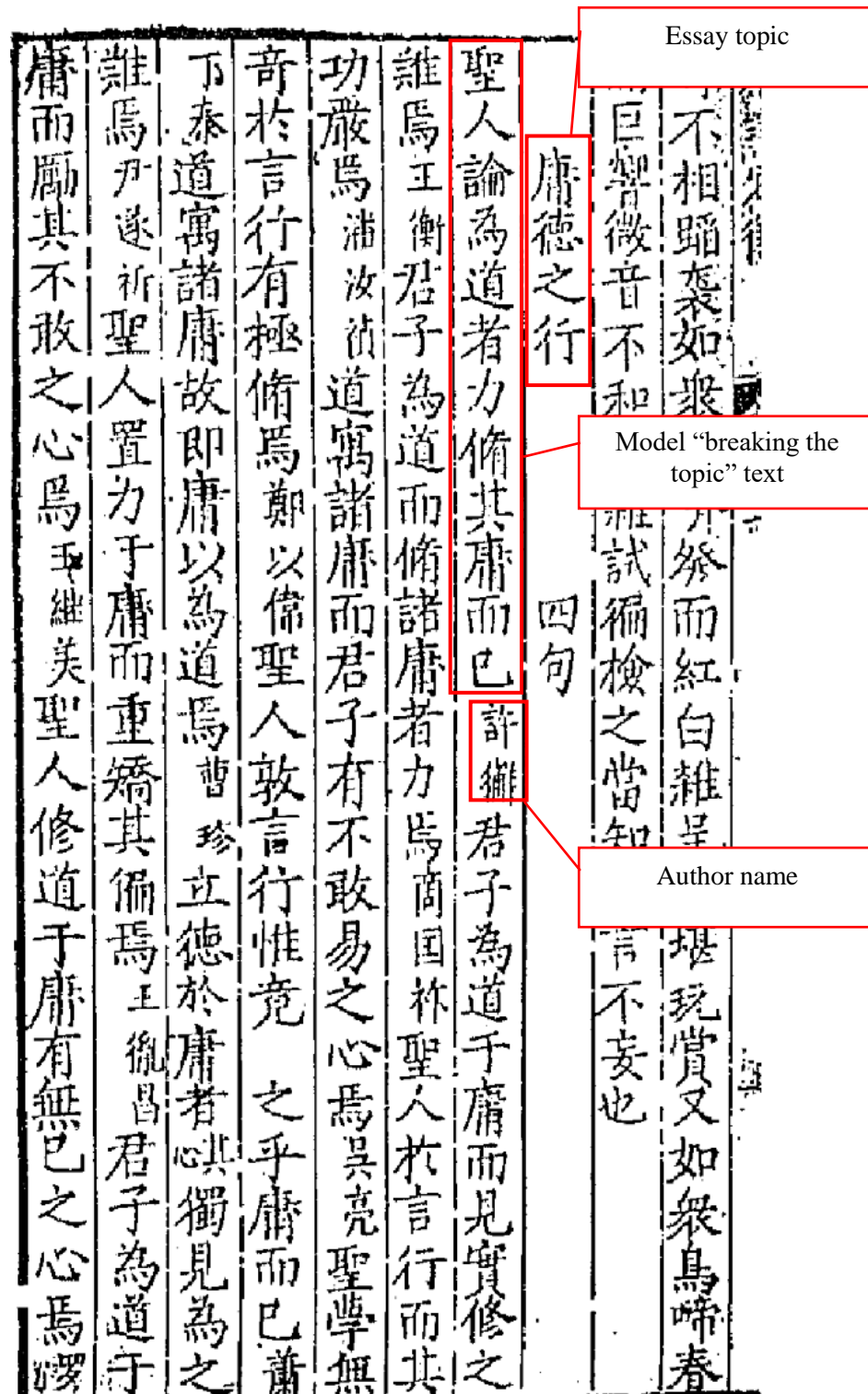


Figure 15: "Breaking the topic" models. From Yuan Huang 袁黃, *Youyi shu wengui* 游藝塾文規, 1602 edition, 2.3b.

As model essays and essay sections became available for nearly every possible topic phrase from the classics, students started trying to game the system by guessing the topics they were likely to be given in advance and memorizing model essays on those topics, a practice referred to as *niti* 擬題 (“guessing the topic”).¹⁶⁴ As early as 1436, the Zhengtong Emperor stated:

In recent years, government school students everywhere are unwilling to thoroughly read the Four Books, classics, and histories; in their Neo-Confucian studies they merely memorize old essays and wait to be tested, planning to pass by sheer luck.

近年以來，各處儒學生員不肯熟讀四書經史，講義理惟記誦舊文，待開科入試以圖幸中。¹⁶⁵

A 1462 edict reiterated this problem:

There is one class of student who, unwilling to expend real effort, simply memorizes old essays, planning to pass the exams by sheer luck. Now this flaw should be thoroughly eradicated. Student essays on the Four Books, Five Classics, policy questions and discourses must be substantial and straightforward; they must speak rationally and clearly; pretentiousness and absurdity are not to be permitted.

有等生徒、不肯實下工夫、惟記誦舊文、意圖僥倖出身。今宜痛革此弊。其所作四書經義策論等文、務要典實平順、說理詳明、不許浮誇怪誕。¹⁶⁶

The last line of the 1462 edict, “pretentiousness and absurdity are not to be permitted,” reveals a second problem: not only were students plagiarizing models, they were increasingly plagiarizing the wrong kinds of models. As commercial printing entered a period of rapid development in the early sixteenth century and more books

¹⁶⁴ Gong Duqing 龚笃清, *Mingdai baguwen shitan* 明代八股文史探 (Changsha: Hunan renmin chubanshe, 2005), 83-89.

¹⁶⁵ *Ming Yingzong shilu*, 17:10.

¹⁶⁶ *Da Ming huidian*, Wenyuange Siku quanshu edition, 76:18.

became available to students, educators feared that students were imitating an increasingly diverse and unorthodox array of texts. A memorial from 1587 observed:

At the beginning of the dynasty examination writers used the language of the Six Classics. Afterward they began quoting from the *Zuo Tradition* and *Discourses of the States*, then they began quoting from the *Records of the Grand Historian* and *Book of the Han*. When the *Records of the Grand Historian* and *Book of the Han* were used up they began using the *Six Trigrams*, and when the *Six Trigrams* were used up they began using the philosophers. They even went so far as to use excerpts from the Buddhist sutras and the Daoist Canon. When will this degeneration end?

國初舉業有用六經語者，其後引左傳、國語矣，又引史記、漢書矣。史記窮而用六子，六子窮而用百家，甚至佛經、道藏摘而用之，流弊安窮。¹⁶⁷

The answer to this question at the time would have been “not anytime soon.” Students were not writing “strangely” because they lacked knowledge of correct models; such statements reflected a perhaps willful misunderstanding of how the increasing prevalence of “strange” student writing reflected the reality that the examination system rewarded examinees who were able to stylistically stand out from the crowd.¹⁶⁸

To provide an example of the highly original exam writing produced in this context, I have translated Qiu Zhaolin’s 丘兆麟 (1572-1629) essay on the line “When it rests, it knows where to rest” (*Yu zhi zhi qi suo zhi* 於止知其所止) from the *Greater Learning* section by section.¹⁶⁹ The section names are noted in parentheses at the beginning of each section.

¹⁶⁷ *Mingshi*, 69.1689.

¹⁶⁸ Cf. the claim, in the context of the Qing system, that: “Since officials were content as long as there were no serious errors and their fairness was not challenged, and since candidates feared that they would fail if they wrote something too different from run-of-the-mill sorts of answers, both groups stifled any tendencies toward originality.” Miyazaki Ichisada, *China’s Examination Hell*, 22.

¹⁶⁹ For the topic phrase, see *Sishu zhangju jizhu* 四書章句集注 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), 5.

[Breaking the topic:] When we discuss “resting” in regard to things, we find that their knowledge is considerable. A bird is a kind of thing, and rests where it may rest. Can we overlook the bird’s knowledge therein?

論止於物，其知亦足多矣。夫鳥一物也，可止而止，鳥之知且得以忽乎哉。

[Continuing the topic:] It has been said that, among all affairs in the realm, there are none that do not arise from knowledge. Knowledge is attached to resting; therefore things which can rest are not lacking in knowledge. Resting is due to knowledge; therefore things which possess knowledge are not lacking in the ability to rest.

嘗謂天下之事，莫不從知而起。知附於止，故能止者自不窮於知。止因乎知，故抱知者自不窮於止。

[Taking up the argument:] When the Odes speak of the “yellow bird,” they necessarily say that it “rests on a corner of the hill.” This being so, the bird also has the ability to rest. This being so, the bird also knows where it may rest.

詩之言黃鳥也，而必曰止於丘隅。有是哉，鳥也，而亦有止耶。有是哉，鳥也，而亦知所止耶。

[First pair of legs:] Because the heavens are empty, it may freely fly; sensing an opportunity, it travels far abroad. Because the mountain is secluded, it may lodge there; having spent its will, it knows to return.

天空而可以任飛，機觸即長往。

山僻而可以托宿，意倦自知還。

[Second pair of legs:] The bird has no calculating selfishness. It allows its will to go where it may, and often seems to predict the movements of vital energy. Therefore when it rests it knows, because it can thereby escape the suffering of the net. With this one rest, it brings no suffering to itself, and has no conflict with men.

Nor does the bird have any restricting intent. It allows its feeling to do as it pleases, and often seems to move in a cosmic vastness. Therefore when it knows it rests, because it can thereby retain its regular sustenance. With this one rest, it does not restrain its joyful gatherings and happy music.

鳥無億逆之私，任其意之所向，而常若得乎氣機之先，故止在則知，蓋苟可以避夫繒繳之患，將此一止也，彼亦自以爲無患，與人無爭也。

鳥亦無縻係之意，恣其情之所取，而常若處夫宇宙之寬，故知在則止，蓋苟可以不失吾啄飲之常，將此一止也，彼方不勝其栩栩然集，姁姁然樂也。

[Third pair of legs:] In terms of the yellow bird's repose: its resting places are not necessarily all "hill corners," but wherever the bird gives free rein to its will, everywhere is a "hill corner." Therefore the bird's "hill corners" have a limit, but the bird's ability to rest has no limit.

In terms of the yellow bird's wandering: what it knows is not entirely where it may rest, but whenever the bird finds something that suits its will, it can rest anywhere. Therefore the bird's ability to rest is limited, but its knowledge has no limit.

論黃鳥之棲遲，所止不必皆丘隅，而鳥之任意處，則無地而無非丘隅也，故鳥之丘隅有涯，而鳥之止無涯。

論黃鳥之遨遊，所知亦不皆可止，而鳥之適意處，則無地而無非可止也，故鳥之止有涯，而鳥之知無涯。

[Fourth pair of legs:] The mountain emphasizes stilling the root; its vast breadth presents no obstacle to the flying bird's use.

The bird emphasizes moving the self; wheeling about and inspecting, it alone finds tranquility in the human world.

山主乎靜本，廣大寬平，不禁飛鳥之取。

鳥主乎動自，廻翔審視，獨處人世之安。

[Conclusion:] Knowledgeable is the bird! Could man be its inferior?

知哉鳥乎，人可以不如乎。¹⁷⁰

Qiu's essay actually adheres quite closely to the standard eight-legged form.¹⁷¹ It is built upon two antithetical pairs. The first pairing, *zhi* 知 ("knowledge") and *zhi* 止 ("rest"), is apparent already in the first line, and reinforced by the homophony of the two words. The second pairing, *niao* 鳥 ("bird") and *ren* 人 ("man"), though implicit throughout the entire essay, does not become explicit until the concluding rhetorical question: "Knowledgeable is the bird! Could man be its inferior?" In the stylistic jargon of examination prose, this technique of indirection was called *yi ke xing zhu* 以客形主

¹⁷⁰ From *Ming wen chao* 明文鈔, Qianlong edition, Harvard-Yenching Library, 1.1.

¹⁷¹ For an overview of this form, see Tu Ching-i, "The Chinese Examination Essay: Some Literary Considerations," *Monumenta Serica* 31 (1974-75), 393-406.

(“using the secondary point to delineate the primary point”), and I will discuss it at greater length in chapter 3. Here, it is sufficient to note how focusing almost the entirety of the essay on the bird rather than man allows the author to develop his argument about the unity of knowledge and resting in a poetic, almost painterly way, vividly rendering the solitary bird, the empty sky, and the remote mountain. It is possible, moreover, that its argument about the unity of knowledge and rest was meant to be read as a playful reappraisal of Wang Yangming’s 王陽明 (1472-1529) theory of the “unity of knowledge and action” 知行合一. In the context of what Gong Duqing calls the sixteenth-century “literary-fiction” 文學化 of examination prose, it was this ability to write with originality that won Qiu Zhaolin his 1610 *jinshi* and made him a model essayist.¹⁷²

Education Intendants, Literary Standards, and Anthology Production

The office of education intendant (*tixue guan* 提學官) was created to combat both plagiarism and weird student writing. Established in 1436, temporarily abolished in 1450, and reinstated in 1462, education intendants wielded primary responsibility for admitting, expelling, and monitoring students.¹⁷³ As members of the censorate, each education intendant was assigned to a province for a three year term, during which he was to inspect every prefectural, sub-prefectural, and county school at least twice, administer

¹⁷² Gong Duqing, *Mingdai keju tujian*, 686-715. Cf. Andrew Plaks, “The Prose of Our Time,” in *The Power of Culture*, ed. Willard Peterson, Andrew Plaks, and Ying-shih Yü (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1994), 206–17.

¹⁷³ For an overview of the office of education intendant, see Tilemann Grimm, “Ming Educational Intendants,” in *Chinese Government in Ming Times, Seven Studies*, ed. Charles Hucker (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), 129-47. See also Benjamin Elman, *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations in Late Imperial China*, 136, 148; Xu Yongwen, *Mingdai difang ruxue yanjiu*, 63-78.

licensing and re-qualifying examinations, select tribute students, and observe teacher quality. Furthermore, unlike examiners in the provincial and metropolitan exams, who were prevented from knowing the identity of examinees by the anti-fraud policy of anonymous grading, education intendants had the authority to investigate student conduct as well as their writing, enabling a more personal and friendly student-examiner relationship, as well as a greater potential for corruption.¹⁷⁴ For most of Ming dynasty, education intendants served as the key interface between local schools and the central state.

In numerous edicts from throughout the sixteenth century, education intendants were enjoined to “promote the lofty and expel the frivolous” 崇雅黜浮, and “rectify literary form; transform gentry behavior” 正文體, 變士習. The guiding principle of these documents was that it is impossible to separate the form (*ti* 體) of exam prose from student behavior and the governance of the empire (student activism was always a concern for the Ming state). These aims were most concisely stated in a 1530 edict:

The nation selects members of the gentry by means of their prose. The integrity of prose form completely rests with the education intendants. They must promote the lofty and expel the frivolous, only then may the behavior of the gentry be transformed.

國家以文取士，文體所係，全在提學一官，必須崇雅黜浮，然後士習可變。¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁴ For a discussion of this important distinction, see Tang Shunzhi, “You yu ying Jingan junshou 又與應警菴郡守,” in *Tang Shunzhi ji*, 1.236-37.

¹⁷⁵ *Ming Shizong shilu*, 115:3a. The same edict also criticizes education intendants for admitting supplementary students beyond the quotas for stipend and added students merely to curry favor with locals desiring to avoid corvée labor, and orders that education intendants expel all those “senile, mediocre students who are unwilling to cultivate themselves.” For other edicts on the same theme, see *Ming Shizong shilu*, 19:6a, 26:2a, 134:5a-6a, 232:4a-b. When we turn to late Ming memorial collections, we see that memorials calling for the rectification of prose frequently cite one another. For example, a 1644 memorial recorded in the *Libu zhigao* 禮部志稿 cites four previous memorials on the same topic before

However, education intendants faced a considerable difficulty: how to rectify student writing when education intendants only saw each individual student at most a couple of days per year? One option was to simply be more ruthless in expelling students, but to some this strategy appeared to “lack a sense of supportive affection” 無愛惜之意.¹⁷⁶ Another option was to use a kind of essay prompt called *xiaoti* 小題 (“little prompts”) in local licensing exams. *Xiaoti* presented passages from the classics in either a highly abbreviated (sometimes just one or two characters) or wrongly parsed form.¹⁷⁷ For example, the *xiaoti* prompt for Qiu Zhaolin’s essay translated above was not given in its full form as “When it rests, it knows where to rest” 於止知其所止, but instead abbreviated to the *xiaoti* form “When it rests, it knows its” 於止知其.¹⁷⁸ The purpose of *xiaoti* was to catch students off guard and prevent them from regurgitating memorized or cribbed essays, but as more and more education intendants began to employ *xiaoti*, they in turn came under criticism for “breaking apart the meaning of the classics” 破析經義.¹⁷⁹ What was an education intendant to do?

One popular solution was to print classical literary anthologies for student use: if education intendants could not be there in person to help their students learn to write good classical prose, at least they could be there in print. Both national leaders of the

recapitulating the familiar story of Ming exam writing’s fall from grace. See *Libu zhigao*, Wenyuange Siku quanshu edition, 49.10b-13b.

¹⁷⁶ *Ming Shizong shilu*, 133.7.

¹⁷⁷ On *xiaoti*, see Gong Duqing, *Mingdai baguwen shitan*, 83-89.

¹⁷⁸ *Ming wen chao*, Qianlong edition, Harvard-Yenching Library, table of contents, 1. I am grateful to Alex Des Forges for bringing this type of prompt to my attention.

¹⁷⁹ *Ming Shizong shilu*, 133.7.

archaist movement, Li Mengyang and He Jingming, served as education intendants.

Although Li Mengyang does not seem to have printed any anthologies, He Jingming did compile and print an anthology for student use titled *Ancient-Style Prose for the Curriculum* (*Xueyue guwen* 學約古文) while serving as education intendant of Shanxi in the early sixteenth century. In his preface, He Jingming wrote:

When I first arrived in Guanzhong, I prepared a curriculum and showed it to the students. Those who were already Cultivated Talents were to read in the Classics, philosophers, and historians as they pleased and not in any particular order, with neither a fixed sequence nor any limits. For those who were not yet Cultivated Talents, I ordered the school officials to supply them as necessary so as to teach and drill them. Things went on like this for two years, during which it was my constant hope that the students would profit by it. And yet it was uncommon for them to understand the sequence of advance and withdrawal, and in paying visits some of them lost their way. They were as men wandering in distress only to return covered in sweat. Was this not my fault? Now I have laid everything out as a curriculum. It is to begin in the spring of the sixteenth year [of Zhengde, 1521], with examinations each season. The Classics are to be read through each year. The Philosophy, History, and other readings are to be read in succession, year after year. They are to complete their training in three years. Beyond their proper recitations, they are also to read some literary works by famous writers, the emphasis being on their getting a sense of the general significance without necessarily reading complete works. If they apply their minds to this, they will perceive the meaning and sequence of the ancients and both the nature of the warp and weft of this culture of ours, and its evolution will be evident.¹⁸⁰

The actual curriculum alluded to in this preface survives in the front matter to a 1556 reprint of *Ancient-Style Prose for the Curriculum* (see the following page).¹⁸¹ In

¹⁸⁰ Translated in Daniel Bryant, *The Great Recreation*, 490-91.

¹⁸¹ *Xueyue guwen* 學約古文, 1556 edition, Princeton University Gest Collection.

Figure 16, we see He's primary Confucian curriculum. It begins in the first year, proceeding through each of the four seasons, with selections from the *Classic of Changes*, *Classic of Odes*, *Record of Rites*, as well as the historical text *Outline to the Comprehensive Mirror in Aid of Governance* (*Zizhi tongjian gangmu* 資治通鑒綱目). Year two and three both focus on Neo-Confucian texts included in the Yongle Emperor's *Great Compendium of Nature and Principle*. In Figure 17, we see He's secondary literary curriculum, which is in effect the table of contents for *Ancient-Style Prose for the Curriculum*. Also broken up by year and season, this curriculum begins with Han dynasty works such as Yang Xiong's 揚雄 (53 BCE-18 CE) "Justification against Ridicule" (*Jie chao* 解嘲) and continues through Northern Song works such as Zeng Gong's 曾鞏 (1019-1083) "First Letter to Academician Ouyang" (*Shang Ouyang xueshi diyi shu* 上歐陽學士第一書).

學約書程	
第二年	
春三月	
四書大學上論語	易上經
書虞書	詩國風王風
春秋隱桓莊三公	禮記曲禮五禮器
性理大極圖	通鑑綱目戰國秦
夏三月	
四書中庸上論語	易下經
書夏商書	詩小雅
春秋閔僖文三公	禮記郊特牲至祭統
性理通書	通鑑綱目前漢
秋三月	
四書上五字	易上下繫
書泰誓至多士	詩大雅
春秋宣成襄三公	禮記經解至三年間
性理西銘至正蒙一	通鑑綱目後漢
冬三月	
四書下五字	易說卦至雜卦
書無逸至秦誓	詩頌
春秋昭定哀三公	禮記祭統至喪服
性理正蒙一	通鑑綱目三國
第三年	
春三月	
四書經同前	性理皇極經世一至二
通鑑綱目東西晉	
夏三月	
四書經同前	性理皇極經世三至四
通鑑綱目宋齊梁陳	
秋三月	
四書經同前	性理皇極經世五至六
通鑑綱目隋	
冬三月	
四書經同前	性理皇極經世七
通鑑綱目唐	
第三年	
春三月	
內書經同前	性理易學肇蒙
通鑑綱目五代	
夏三月	
四書經同前	性理象禮
通鑑綱目宋	
秋三月	
四書經同前	性理律呂新書
通鑑綱目遼金	
冬三月	
四書經同前	性理洪範皇極內篇
通鑑綱目元	

Figure 16: He Jingming's Confucian curriculum.

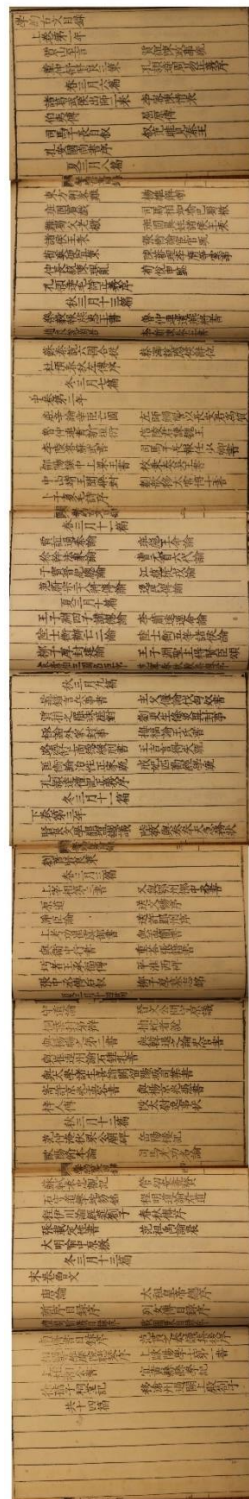


Figure 17: He Jingming's literary curriculum.

In their prefaces to anthologies like *Ancient-Style Prose for the Curriculum*, education intendants and other local officials consistently portrayed themselves as supplying a gracious and reverent student public with much needed food for thought. Many anthology prefaces record students begging local officials to print books, particularly in remote or frontier areas where books were scarce.¹⁸² At the same time, education intendants knew from personal experience the deep dissatisfaction many students felt with most state-issued and commercial collections of Neo-Confucian philosophy and model examination essays, and often criticized these texts in anthology prefaces as *chanbi* 佔畢 (“mindless reading materials”) and *tiekuo* 帖括 (“fill-in-the-blanks exercises”).¹⁸³

How should we situate these anthology printing projects in relation to imperially promulgated works like the Yongle Emperor’s *Great Compendia*, on the one hand, and the rapidly development commercial printing industry, on the other? Were education officials printing anthologies to excite students bored with imperially-issued textbooks, or to rein in students making indiscriminate use of commercial examination aids? I would say that neither statement captures the key concern of activist educators. As one preface to an education intendant-sponsored anthology put it:

¹⁸² See, for example, Li Song’s 李嵩 preface to the *Guwen leixuan* 古文類選, in *Guoli zhongyang tushuguan shanben xuba jilu ji bu*, zongji lei, 136; as well as Yang Meiyi’s 楊美益 preface to *Xinke Guwen xuanzheng* 新刻古文選正, in *Guoli zhongyang tushuguan shanben xuba jilu ji bu*, zongji lei, 133.

¹⁸³ *Tiekuo*, or *tiejing* 帖經, refers to a Tang dynasty examination procedure where “examiners tested students by covering phrases of a page from the Classics...and requiring the candidate either to write the entire text from memory or to write the missing characters on tags placed over the text.” See Benjamin Elman, *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations*, 10. The term *chanbi* is an allusion to a *Liji* 禮記 passage describing the degeneration of education. See Liu Dianjue 劉殿爵 and Chen Fangzheng 陳方正, eds., *Liji zhuzi suoyin* 禮記逐字索引 (Hong Kong: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1992), 18.4/97/1. *Chanbi* was also written as 佔俾 or 佔嗶.

The world's arbiters of writing only teach people to fill in the blanks and take phrases from the examination hall as shortcuts. Only education intendants teach people to love antiquity. Alas! If the gentry are not ancient and do not know the Way, how can they write?

世之衡文者，止教人辦帖括、取闢屋間語以爲捷，而學使獨教人好古。嗟乎！士不古，不知道，何能文？¹⁸⁴

In this passage, the term “arbiters of writing” (*hengwenzhe* 衡文者) might refer either to official examiners or to the semi-professional annotators of commercially published essay collections. In fact, within the examination system, the depersonalized relationship between examinee and examiner came more and more to resemble a buyer-seller relationship, with the alienated examinee constantly devising new strategies to make his product (his essays) stand out, instead of seeking moral self-transformation through, as Mencius put it, “befriending people from the past” (*shangyou* 尚友). In promoting a more personal relationship with the ancients, archaist education intendants were drawing on their unique institutional relationship to government students in order to recreate an imagined past, before the examination system converted literature into a means of fame and fortune.

The Orthodox Tradition of Literature

When it was first compiled in the 1230s, the *Orthodox Tradition of Literature* was a daring experiment. At the time, anthologies like *Key Points of Ancient-Style Prose* (*Guwen guanjian* 古文關鍵) and *Standards of Literary Composition* (*Wenzhang guifan*

¹⁸⁴ Anonymous, Preface to *Buduo ji* 不多集, Ming edition, National Central Library, in *Guoli zhongyang tushuguan shanben xuba jilu ji bu*, zongji lei, 291.

文章軌範) used Tang-Song prose to illustrate strategies for exam writing; the *Quintessence of Tang Dynasty Literature* (*Tang wen cui* 唐文粹) and *Mirror to Aid Song Dynasty Literature* (*Song wen jian* 宋文鑒) presented the highest literary achievements of individual dynasties; the *Selections of Refined Literature* (*Wen xuan* 文選) and *Finest Blossoms in the Garden of Literature* (*Wenyuan yinghua* 文苑英華) preserved belles-lettres from throughout the ages. In contrast, the *Orthodox Tradition of Literature* was the first anthology to give full expression to what Hilde De Weerdt has called a “rapprochement” between ancient-style prose and Neo-Confucianism within late Southern Song exam culture.¹⁸⁵

The book’s compiler, Zhen Dexiu 真德秀 (1178-1235), was one of the best known Neo-Confucian scholar-officials of the Southern Song. Zhen studied with Zhu Xi’s 朱熹 (1130-1200) student Zhan Tiren 詹體仁 (1143-1206), obtained his *jinshi* degree in 1199, passed the *boxue hongci* 博學鴻辭 exam in 1205, and went on to a tumultuous but distinguished career.¹⁸⁶ Besides *Orthodox Tradition of Literature*, Zhen’s scholarly works included the *Extended Meaning of the Greater Learning* (*Daxue yanyi* 大學衍義), a commentary on the *Greater Learning* for the aid of young emperors, and *Classic of the Heart-Mind* (*Xin jing* 心經), a collection of excerpts from the Confucian classics on the subject of the heart-mind which served as a Neo-Confucian counterpart to

¹⁸⁵ Hilde De Weerdt, “Canon Formation and Examination Culture: The Construction of ‘Guwen’ and ‘Daoxue’ Canons,” 119-20; Hilde De Weerdt, *Competition over Content*, 309-14.

¹⁸⁶ Herbert Franke, ed., *Sung Biographies*, (Taipei: Nantian shuju, 1988), 1.88-90

the Buddhist *Heart Sūtra*.¹⁸⁷ Zhen also composed a set of “Instructions for Children,” whose descriptions of how students should practice rites, sit, walk, stand, speak, bow, recite, and write strongly influenced later school regulations.¹⁸⁸

In a prefatory “outline” 綱目 to *Orthodox Tradition of Literature*, Zhen explains his intent in compiling the book:

I use the term “orthodox tradition” because, given the manifold deviations of literary writing in later eras, I want students to recognize the orthodox nature of its source. Since antiquity, compilers of literature have been many. The collections of Du Yu, Zhi Yu, and various other masters sank into oblivion and were not transmitted. The only collections circulating in modern times are Prince Zhaoming of Liang’s *Selections of Refined Literature* and Yao Xuan’s *Quintessence of Tang Literature*. When we examine them now, we find that their contents indeed fully obtain the orthodox source. To the scholar-official, study is the means by which one investigates coherence and achieves practical results. Although literature is but one aspect of study, it is necessarily not an exception. Therefore, in this book that I have compiled, I have taken illuminating moral principle and keeping relevant to practical affairs as my primary goal; I only selected works which were in form rooted in antiquity and in intent close to the classics; if not, then even if their literary style was exquisite, I still did not include them.

正宗云者，以後世文辭之多變，欲學者識其源流之正也。自昔集錄文章者，眾矣，若杜預、摯虞諸家，往往湮沒弗傳。今行於世者，惟梁昭明文選、姚鉉文粹而已，繇今視之，二書所錄，果皆得源流之正乎。夫士之於學，所以窮理而致用也。文雖學之一事，要亦不外乎此。故今所輯，以明義理、切世用為主；其體本乎古，其指近乎經者，然後取焉；否則辭雖工亦不錄。¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁷ For translated selections from these works, see William Theodore De Bary et al., eds., *Sources of Chinese Tradition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 757-64.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 811-12.

¹⁸⁹ Zhen Dexiu, “Wenzhang zhengzong gangmu 文章正宗綱目,” in *Wenzhang zhengzong*, Wenyuange Siku quanshu edition, 1a. Cf. the partial translation in Hilde De Weerd, *Competition over Content*, 311.

Inside the *Orthodox Tradition of Literature*, we find 1,026 individual selections dating from the *Zuo Tradition* and *Discourses of the States* through the Tang dynasty. These selections are classified into four genres: “edicts and decrees” 辭命 (197 pieces), “discourses and remonstrations” 議論 (379 pieces), “narratives of affairs” 敘事 (123 pieces), and “poems and rhapsodies” 詩賦 (327 pieces). The *Continuation of the Orthodox Tradition of Literature*, discovered in the Zhen family home in the mid-thirteenth century, adds an additional 272 works from the Song dynasty, and classifies them into three genres: “discourses on coherence” 論理 (42 pieces), “narratives of affairs” 敘事 (206 pieces), and “discourses on affairs” 論事 (24 pieces).

The Ming National University in Nanjing seems to have acquired a set of printing blocks for the *Orthodox Tradition of Literature* early in the dynasty, but it was not until the emergence of activist education intendant anthologists in the early sixteenth century that the book began to attract more widespread attention.¹⁹⁰ By 1504, many of the

¹⁹⁰ The pre-Ming textual history of *Orthodox Tradition of Literature* remains somewhat opaque. In a preface to *Orthodox Tradition of Literature*, the poet Liu Kezhuang 劉克莊 (1187-1269) records that he, Tang Jin 湯巾, and Tang Han 湯漢 were all students of Zhen Dexiu. After Zhen completed the book he gave a copy to the two Tangs, and then an unnamed person gave a copy to Liu. Not long after 1241, Liu printed the book “to benefit students” 以淑後學 while an official in Guangdong. According to Liu, however, this edition was full of errors due to poor collation (while in Guangdong he lacked access to the Tangs’ copy, as well as reliable National University editions of other books). Sometime after 1252, the education official Wang Geng 王庚 printed another edition for use in the Putian 莆田 prefectural school. In his preface, Liu Kezhuang praises this edition as far superior to the Guangdong edition. Meanwhile, an associate of Zhen Dexiu’s son discovered an unfinished continuation to *Orthodox Tradition of Literature* in the Zhen family home, copied out “only the titles and the parts that Sir Zhen had annotated or commented on” 僅錄篇目與公批點評論評處, returned home to Lishui 麗水, and showed the book to the local education officials Ni Cheng 倪澄 and Zheng Gui 鄭圭. In 1266 Ni and Zheng printed the continuation, titled *Xu Wenzhang zhengzong* 續文章正宗, and the original together for use in the Chuzhou prefectural school. See Liu Kezhuang 劉克莊, *Houcun xiansheng da quanji* 後村先生大全集, Sibu congkan chubian edition, 106.7-8; Ni Cheng 倪澄, colophon to *Xu wenzhang zhengzong*, in *Guoli zhongyang tushuguan shanben xuba jilu ji bu*, zongji lei, 55; Liang Yi 梁椅, colophon to *Xu wenzhang zhengzong*, in *Guoli*

printing blocks for *Orthodox Tradition of Literature* held in the Nanjing National University were damaged or missing. National University Head Zhang Mao 章懋 (1437-1522) and Director of Studies Luo Qinsun 羅欽順 (1465-1547) ordered the Proctor Dai Yong 戴鏞 to select a fine edition of *Orthodox Tradition of Literature* and use it to fill in parts missing from the National University blocks.¹⁹¹ In the preface to this repaired edition, an anonymous National University official outlined his understanding of the book's purpose:

If the intent of the former sages did not quite perish over time, it is because, as Mencius said, "If the king loved music greatly, the kingdom of Qi would be near to a state of good government."¹⁹² The music of modern times resembles the music of antiquity; thus, if one obtains the feeling of music, then even if the sounds and instruments are different, this does not do harm to their sameness; if one understands the coherence of literature, then even if the verbosity and conciseness, the ornamentation and substance are dissimilar, how could this lessen its ancientness? As for that petty imitation which does not seek feeling and merely resembles form, that is mere trivia! Mere trivia!

先聖之意庶幾不遂殞絕，蓋孟子有言，王之好樂甚，則齊其庶幾乎。今之樂猶古之樂也，故苟得樂之情，雖聲器有異，無害其同；苟會文之理，即雖繁簡文質故爾殊，亦惡損其古哉！彼區區擬襲，不務求得其情，而第肖其形，焉者末矣！末矣！¹⁹³

zhongyang tushuguan shanben xuba jilu ji bu, zongji lei, 55-56; Zheng Gui 鄭圭, colophon to *Xu wenzhang zhengzong*, in *Guoli zhongyang tushuguan shanben xuba jilu ji bu, zongji lei*, 56.

¹⁹¹ See *Zhen Wenzhong gong xu Wenzhang zhengzong* 真文忠公續文章正宗, facsimile of 1504 National University repaired edition (Beijing: Xianzhuang shuju, 2004), postface, 7. The entry in the *Ming Nanyong jingji kao* 明南雍經籍考 records that the *Orthodox Tradition of Literature* comprised of 1,128 intact block faces and 65 damaged block faces; the *Continuation* comprised 523 intact block faces and 46 damaged block faces. See Huang Zuo 黃佐, *Ming Nanyong jingji kao* 明南雍經籍考, 1902 edition collated by Mr. Ye of Changsha, in *Guangu tang shumu congkan* 觀古堂書目叢刻, 2.25a. Cf. Timothy Brook, "A Bibliography of Books Published by the Ming State," 193.

¹⁹² See He Zhihua, ed., *Mengzi zhuzi suoyin*, 2.1/7/12.

¹⁹³ *Zhen Wenzhong gong xu Wenzhang zhengzong* 真文忠公續文章正宗, facsimile of 1504 National University repaired edition (Beijing: Xianzhuang shuju, 2004), preface, 1.

Through distinguishing “form” 形 from “feeling” 情 and “coherence” 理, this preface enjoined students to hear a common “feeling” within the sounds of diverse instruments, and see a common “coherence” within diverse historical styles. Like many other education official anthologists, its anonymous author aimed to stem the problem of plagiarism as well as the deliberate use of strange writing by students seeking self-distinction—both of which he referred to as “petty imitation”—by encouraging students to apprehend the deep sameness of the tradition within its historical mutations. In part, this stress on the act of viewing texts rather than the texts themselves did reflect what Craig Clunas describes as a broader commodification of the capacity for making “judgments about things,” embodied in the “connoisseurly gaze.”¹⁹⁴ But, at the same time, the superficial differences among the texts were just as important to the development of this gaze as their presumed underlying sameness. Indeed, in contrast to anthologies which limited their selections to either Qin-Han texts or Tang-Song texts, in official reprints of trans-dynastic anthologies like *Orthodox Tradition of Literature* there seemed to be an assumption that the eye could only be trained to recognize this deep sameness through encountering stylistic diversity.

Government schools across the empire served as both production sites and captive audiences for this mode of visual training. Even in the borderlands of Yunnan, we find education officials printing anthologies for the same reasons. In 1530, Gu Yingxiang 顧

¹⁹⁴ Craig Clunas, *Superfluous Things: Material Culture and Social Status in Early Modern China* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004), 12; Craig Clunas, *Pictures and Visuality in Early Modern China* (London: Reaktion Books, 1997), 116. Cf. Wai-Yee Li, “The Collector, the Connoisseur, and Late-Ming Sensibility,” *T’oung Pao* 81, no. 4/5 (1995), 269-302.

應祥 (1483-1565) was appointed Grand Coordinator of Yunnan.¹⁹⁵ Gu was, according to the local education intendant, “an official of a radiant age, with an elegant love for cultured learning” 明時冠冕，雅好文學。¹⁹⁶ He displayed this love for learning by bringing a copy of the *Continuation to the Orthodox Tradition of Literature* with him to his new post, noting that “only the National University has printing blocks for this book, and it is not easy for students in the provinces to obtain it” 今惟胄監有板，四方之士弗易得也。 In his preface, he recorded how, when he showed the book to his students, they asked him: “Why not broaden its circulation in order to benefit distant people?” 盍廣厥傳以淑遠人。 Gu agreed, and gave it to the Sub-Prefect of Jinning 晉寧 Sun Heng 孫衡 to print.¹⁹⁷ If the National Academy and the Jinning Sub-Prefectural School were two centers of textual production, we might imagine Gu as the link between them, transporting the *Continuation to the Orthodox Tradition of Literature* from one node to another, and arranging for the reproduction of the canon and the mode of vision it enabled in this new locale. Gu wrote in his preface:

I am not one who knows much of language, but from what I have heard, the Way is but one. Embodied in one's body and heart-mind it is called learning; employed in governmental affairs it is called achievement; manifested in writing it is called literature. Therefore learning is its root, achievement is its application, and literature is its surplus. Only after the root is established will its application be outstanding; then, when you diffuse the surplus and make literature, it will not be deleterious. When the *Book of Changes* says “cultivate words and establish sincerity” it is talking about establishing the root. As for taking copying as skill, plagiarism as wealth,

¹⁹⁵ *Ming Shizong shilu*, 119.12.

¹⁹⁶ *Zhen Wenzhong gong xu Wenzhang zhengzong* 真文忠公續文章正宗, 1532 edition, Harvard-Yenching Library, postface, 3a.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, preface, 1b-2a.

and ornate phraseology as extraordinariness, in recent days such practices have tended ever more toward mere fakery. Truly, this is what Yang Jian 楊簡 (1141-1226) referred to as “purveyors of crafty words”; how could it be called literature?

予非知言者也，竊聞之，道一而已。體諸身心之謂學術，措諸政事之謂功業，見諸著作之謂文章。是故學術其本也，功業其用也，文章其緒餘也。夫惟本植也，而後厥用孔彰；出其緒餘而爲文，則庶乎其弗畔矣。易曰，修辭立其誠，植本之謂也。乃若模擬以爲工，剽竊以爲富，雕刻鍛鍊以爲奇，祇日趨於僞焉爾矣。正慈湖氏所謂巧言之流也，而豈文之云哉？¹⁹⁸

Particularly in areas far removed from the centers of commercial printing, education officials were well-positioned to define and regulate access to the tradition because they had almost exclusive access to printing. We are reminded of this in the lists of contributing officials included in most sixteenth-century editions of *Orthodox Tradition of Literature*. For example, in 1520 the Education Intendant to Shanxi Ma Lu 馬錄 (1477-1544) printed the *Orthodox Tradition of Literature* and its *Continuation* for the benefit of students.¹⁹⁹ Again, as with most anthologies printed for use in government schools, numerous local officials were involved in the production process at varying levels: Censor in Chief Zhang Ruyan 張汝言, Censor Sun Jiezhi 孫節之, Zhou Yantong

¹⁹⁸ *Zhen Wenzhong gong xu Wenzhang zhengzong* 真文忠公續文章正宗, 1532 edition, Harvard-Yenching Library, preface, 2.

¹⁹⁹ Only a few years later, Ma Lu became caught up in the so-called “great case” when he, as Regional Inspector to Shanxi, judged Zhang Yin—whose sons made drugs for the Marquis Guo Xun, a powerful ally of Zhang Cong and the Jiajing Emperor in the Great Rites Controversy—to be an assumed identity of the former White Lotus cult leader and bandit Li Fuda. As John Dardess narrates, due to the Guo Xun connection the case “metastasized into something of a referendum on the Great Rites,” and ended with Ma Lu confessing under torture that he fabricated the charges, and subsequently being exiled to a “malarial frontier garrison.” See John Dardess, *Four Seasons: A Ming Emperor and His Grand Secretaries in Sixteenth-Century China* (Lanham Boulder, New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 29-32; Denis Twitchett and Frederick Mote, eds., *The Cambridge History of China: Volume 7, The Ming Dynasty (1368-1644)* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1998), 453-57.

周彥通, and Ning Yao 甯堯 all approved the project, and Surveillance Commissioner Zhang Ruqi 張汝器, Surveillance Vice Commissioner Qin Shiguan 秦世觀, Wu Congmin 吳從岷, Assistant [Surveillance] Commissioner Tian Qinfu 田勤父, Liu Tianchang 劉天常, Yin Zhaozhi 尹兆之, Pan Yuxuan 潘玉選, and Jin Shiyue 金時躍 all assisted in the labor. Cui Xian 崔銑 (1478-1541), a well-known upright official and friend of the archaist poets and activist education intendants Li Mengyang and He Jingming, composed a preface for the book. In this preface, Cui described how, having rectified every ritual misstep, literary deviation, degenerate custom, and administrative deficiency, Education Intendant Ma “printed this compilation in order to rectify the vulgarity of examination writing” 刻是編以振時文之陋. Cui explained the need for literary rectification in what by now should be familiar terms:

When things are born they have feelings, and when they have feelings they long to express them: this is why there are words. Clumsy speakers lack verbal skill, so they have no means to narrate events and describe things: this is why there is literature. Literature is the best of speech, and stresses correcting the feelings... To merely rely on diligent imitation and abundant memorization, and hope thereby to be selected one out of a hundred million—I’ve never seen this work.

夫物生而有情，情而思宣之，斯生言矣；訥者弗達，陋者亡采，則亡以敷事而喻物，斯生文矣。文，言之善者也，而貴於正其情。[...] 而徒以模襲之勤，記問之富，億中暗投，吾未見其可也。²⁰⁰

²⁰⁰ Cui Xian, preface to *Xishan xiansheng Zhen Wenzhong gong Wenzhang zhengzong* 西山先生真文忠公文章正宗, 1520, National Central Library, in *Guoli zhongyang tushuguan shanben xuba jilu ji bu, zongji lei*, 54-55.

Officials took books with them when they traveled from post to post, with each post representing a potential printing site. Officials also sent books elsewhere to be printed, or sent for books they wanted to print from elsewhere. In 1542, the former education intendant Hu Song 胡松 (1503-1566) reprinted the National University *Continuation of the Orthodox Tradition of Literature* for Shanxi students, and described in a short preface how he shared the inhabitants of Shanxi's "profound love for This Culture" 雅愛斯文. Two years later, the Vice Commissioner of Zhejiang Kong Tianyin 孔天胤 (1505-1581) wrote to Shanxi requesting a copy of the *Orthodox Tradition of Literature* so that he could print it in Zhejiang. One preface writer claimed that, prior to this, the book had "only been printed in Shanxi, and not all the students of Zhejiang had seen it" 第梓于晉，而浙之士未之盡覲也。²⁰¹ Kong Tianyin was a native of Fenzhou 汾州 in Shanxi, and had possibly used Education Intendant Ma Lu's 1520 edition as a student at his local government school.

Like many education officials before him, Kong Tianyin saw his book as part of a broader rectification of examination writing. One preface to this book recorded how Kong helped government students with their writing practice, "always intending to enlighten students' behavior and transform it to the orthodox" 固將迪士習而變之正也 (this sentence is a rewording of the official slogan "rectify literary form; transform

²⁰¹ Jiang Xiao's 江曉, preface to *Jilu Zhen Xishan Wenzhang zhengzong* 集錄真西山文章正宗, 1544 edition, Princeton University Gest Collection.

student behavior!” 正文體，變士習).²⁰² Kong colorfully addressed his students in his preface,

Listen up! You look at empty ornament every day and delight in it; this empty ornamentation is prose lacking tradition. Anything without tradition is like an unmoored boat, bobbing and drifting on the waves. Thus, with scholars who delight in empty ornament, there are none who do not bob and drift. They only want to use writing as a means to “trim themselves with vermilion and purple.”²⁰³ If you can’t even get this straight, then how are you going to write anything?

聽聽焉！日見虛華而悅之，夫虛華者無宗之文也。凡物無宗，猶之乎不繫之舟，與行潦之水易爲飄蕩，故學者悅之無不飄蕩其心志者，直欲假之以要紆青紫耳。即茲意已不成章，尚奚復他文有耶？²⁰⁴

Unlike previous officials, however, Kong did not simply reprint the *Orthodox Tradition of Literature*; he adapted it for his audience. Mostly, this entailed reordering pieces in a more precise historical order and removing Zhen Dexiu’s comments where they were confusing or unnecessary.²⁰⁵ Kong’s alterations seem to have been well-received, as his version of the *Orthodox Tradition of Literature* was reprinted twice for use in government schools: first in Zhejiang in 1560, then again in Shandong in 1564.²⁰⁶

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ This line comes from Yang Xiong’s “Justification against Ridicule (*Jie chao* 解嘲), an extremely popular piece in Ming ancient-style prose anthologies. See *Hanshu* 漢書, Wenyuange Siku quanshu edition, 87.2.9. Translated in David Knechtges, *The Han Rhapsody: A Study of the Fu of Yang Hsiung*, 53 B.C.-A.D. 18 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 97-103.

²⁰⁴ Kong Tianyin, preface to *Jilu Zhen Xishan Wenzhang zhengzong*, 1544 edition, Princeton University Gest Collection.

²⁰⁵ These changes are described in the book’s front matter, see *Jilu Zhen Xishan Wenzhang zhengzong*, 1544 edition, Princeton University Gest Collection.

²⁰⁶ *Jilu Zhen Xishan Wenzhang zhengzong* 集錄真西山文章正宗, 1560 edition, National Central Library; *Jilu Zhen Xishan Wenzhang zhengzong* 集錄真西山文章正宗, 1564 edition, National Central Library.

In the late sixteenth century, as students began to draw on an ever wider range of models in their exam prose, provincial education officials began to make more extreme alterations to *Orthodox Tradition of Literature*. These alterations may have reflected the expectations of intended readers, or they may have reflected the tastes of production teams. Again, local teachers and students belonged to both. For example, when the 1568 *jinshi* and Qiantang 錢塘 native Jin Xueceng 金學曾 served as Education Intendant to Huguang, he was dismayed to find that students' writing "could not even glimpse the boundary of the Tang and Song authors, to say nothing of the Qin and Han" 無論西京而上, 即不能窺唐宋作者之藩籬.²⁰⁷ Jin wanted to print *Orthodox Tradition of Literature* to help students with their writing, but worried that available copies were in too poor a condition. As a solution, Jin took an abridged version of *Orthodox Tradition of Literature* he had compiled as a student, and sent it to nearby Jiangxia 江夏 for printing. When we examine the finished product, titled *Selected Transcriptions from the Orthodox Tradition of Literature* (*Wenzhang zhengzong xuanchao* 文章正宗選鈔), we find that, in effect, Jin had compiled an altogether new book: most of the annotations were Jin's own rather than Zhen Dexiu's, and whereas *Orthodox Tradition of Literature* contained 1,026 pieces, Jin's abridged version contained 98—less than 10% of the original.

Another adaptation of *Orthodox Tradition of Literature* printed in 1575 makes even more extensive alterations to Zhen Dexiu's original. This book, titled *Transcriptions from the Orthodox Tradition of Literature* (*Wenzhang zhengzong chao* 文章正宗鈔), was

²⁰⁷ *Wenzhang zhengzong xuanchao* 文章正宗選鈔, c. 1575-76 edition, National Library of China, preface.

produced by a team headed by the Assistant Administration Commissioner of Henan Hu Rujia 胡汝嘉. Like Jin Xueceng, Hu had compiled the manuscript when he was himself a student. He brought this manuscript with him in a chest to his new post, and had it printed in Huaiqing for the benefit of local government students. In his preface, Hu explained how he shortened the original because “students are preoccupied with their essays on the classics; they do not have time to read the entire book” 諸生方務明經，不暇徧覽, and excised “poetry, lyrics, and narrative writing” because “they are not important to students today” 詩、詞、敘事又非今日所急.²⁰⁸ The Education Intendant to Henan Zhong Zhenji 衷貞吉 also emphasized the book’s practical aims, noting that whereas Zhen Dexiu “cut away the weeds and expelled the strange, only including works which assisted the classics and rectified one’s conduct” 希元氏芟蕪屏異惟翼經正術者取之, Hu Rujia “expelled the excessive and pursued simplicity, only transcribing works important for beginning students—if not, then even if they were orthodox, he did not include them” 復去煩就簡，惟初學所急者鈔之，不則雖正弗錄.²⁰⁹

Although Zhong Zhenji emphasized Hu Rujia’s role as head compiler, effectively granting him equal status to Zhen Dexiu, we should note, again, that the total production process was a collaborative project which built relationships among regional officials centered on local government schools. A list of editors included in the book reveals that the Prefect of Huaiqing 懷慶 Jia Daiwen 賈待問 and Prefectural Judge Ao Kun 敖鯤

²⁰⁸ Hu Rujia 胡汝嘉, preface to *Wenzhang zhengzong chao* 文章正宗鈔, 1575 edition, Princeton University Gest Collection.

²⁰⁹ Zhong Zhenji 衷貞吉, colophon to *Wenzhang zhengzong chao*, 1575 edition, Princeton University Gest Collection.

served as head collators. The Vice Prefect Zhang Zuliang 張祖良 and Assistant Prefect Yan Jiamo 閻嘉謨 served as “assistant” collators; the Magistrate of Anyang 安陽 Zhang Xuedao 張學道 and the Magistrate of Henei 河內 Zhou Daodong 周道東 handled the transcribing and printing of a fair copy (*shan zi* 繕梓); and a man named Zheng Jian 鄭鑑 (either a clerk or a District Jailor working under one of the magistrates) supervised the labor of the carvers and printers.²¹⁰ A postscript authored by the Prefect of nearby Guide 歸德, moreover, recorded how Education Intendant Zhong Zhenji had ordered students from all prefectures to go pick up a copy in Huaiqing 督學豫章袁公檄八郡士往就梓焉.²¹¹ The Prefect of Guide, apparently fearing that students would not comply with this order, took the initiative to reprint the book in his prefectural office, presumably to distribute to Guide students. In effect, the modularity of local government printing made it easier to bring the book to the Guide students.

How was *Orthodox Tradition of Literature* adapted for these student readers? Notably, Hu Rujia’s version was not only considerably shorter than Zhen Dexiu’s original (Hu’s version comprised 100 titles to the original’s 1,026), and Hu’s version also included 13 new texts. Several of these additions, such as Yang Xiong’s 揚雄 “Justification against Ridicule” and Dongfang Shuo’s 東方朔 “Responding to the Guest’s Objections” (*Da ke nan* 答客難), are immediately recognizable as favorites among sixteenth-century student writers (both were included in He Jingming’s *Ancient-Style*

²¹⁰ For this editor list, see Wang Zhongmin, *Zhongguo shanben shu tiyao*, 442.

²¹¹ Lai Tinggui 賴庭檣, postface to *Wenzhang zhengzong chao*, 1575 edition, Princeton University Gest Collection.

Prose for the Curriculum). Indeed, as I will discuss in chapter 4, only a few decades later, more fashionable Jiangnan readers were mocking these two pieces as “so familiar they lack freshness” 數見不鮮.²¹² Such alterations seem to bear out the preface writers’ claims that the book was produced for a local student readership.

Other additions, such as Tao Qian’s 陶潛 “Record of the Peach Blossom Spring” (*Taohua yuan ji* 桃花源記) and “*Ci* on Returning Home” (*Gui qu lai ci* 歸去來辭), reflect the reality that students were using more literary, even lyrical prose as a model for their eight-legged essays. At the same time, a note at the end of “*Ci* on Returning Home” justifying the inclusion of these two pieces suggests that the book’s editors understood the pedagogical benefit of these essays less in terms of providing a model to imitate, and more in terms of generating a less careerist approach to literature in student writers:

These two works by Sir Tao [Qian] are not necessarily relevant to practical application, but the ideas expressed in them are lofty and remote, and their manner of expression is free and unrestrained. If students chant and intone them in their free time, they may thereby cleanse themselves of worldly scheming and generate transcendent thought.

陶公二篇非必有切實用，但其興寄高遠，韻度蕭散。學者游息之暇，諷之詠之，可以滌塵襟而生逸思云爾。²¹³

Figure 18 below shows how “*Ci* on Returning Home” was marked up for student reading with emphatic dabs and circles.

²¹² See the front matter to *Guwen heshan* 古文合刪, c. 1621-1644 edition, Princeton University Gest Collection.

²¹³ *Wenzhang zhengzong chao*, 1575 edition, Princeton University Gest Collection, 2.81a.

陶潛歸去來辭

歸去來兮。田園將蕪。胡不歸。旣自以心爲形役。奚
惆悵而獨悲。悟已往之不諫。知來者之可追。實迷
途。其未遠。覺今是而昨非。舟搖搖以輕颺。風飄飄
而吹衣。問征夫以前路。恨晨光之熹微。乃瞻衡宇。
載欣載奔。童僕攬迎。稚子候門。三徑就荒。松菊猶
存。携幼入室。有酒盈樽。引壺觴以自酌。眄庭柯以
怡顏。倚南窗以寄傲。審容膝之易安。園日涉以成
趣。門雖設而常關。策扶老以留憩。時矯首而遊觀。

Figure 18: Tao Qian's *Ci on Returning Home*, marked up for student reading. From *Wenzhang zhengzong chao*, 1575 edition, Princeton University Gest Collection, 2:81a.

As the officials involved in the 1575 printing of *Transcriptions from the Orthodox Tradition of Literature* moved on to other official positions, they used their experience in the production process to spearhead the printing of more ancient-style prose anthologies. For example, in 1580 the former Prefectural Judge Ao Kun was assigned to inspect the schools of Fuzhou prefecture. He found their writing substandard, and printed this anthology, titled *Revering the Orthodox in Ancient-Style Prose* (*Guwen chongzheng* 古文崇正), for their benefit. In his preface to the book, Ao Kun made it very clear that this anthology represented an extension of his censorial duties, as well as a broader political program of “returning to antiquity” (*fugu* 復古):

I believe that observing customs and correcting the gentry are the censor's duties. Imperial edicts have tirelessly sought to unite the direction of the gentry through elevating orthodox learning; if the gentry do not tend toward antiquity but rather hold to their shallow understanding, and moreover pursue strangeness and teach themselves, then what becomes of the imperial edicts? And so the censor's duty has perished. For this reason I took out the pieces in the ancient style that I had compiled and humbly had them printed, so as to give them to the gentry.

余伏念觀風校士，御史職也，崇正術以壹士趨，則明詔所諄諄也，士不趨古而守其固陋，且奇僻自師，將明詔之謂何？而觀風者溺其職矣。因出余先後所輯古文詞，謬付諸梓，以畀多士。²¹⁴

Whereas Ao Kun stressed stylistic orthodoxy, other officials involved in the printing of *Transcriptions from the Orthodox Tradition of Literature* went on to assemble even more diverse literary traditions. For example, in 1596 one former editor of

²¹⁴ Ao Kun 敖鯤, preface to *Guwen chongzheng* 古文崇正, 1580 edition, National Central Library, in *Guoli zhongyang tushuguan shanben xuba jilu ji bu, zongji lei*, 129.

Transcriptions from the Orthodox Tradition of Literature Chu Zhi 褚鉞 (not included in the book's editor list, indicating that these lists were not always exhaustive) assisted the district magistrate of Shanyang 山陽 in the printing of a literary anthology titled *Collected Quintessence of Antiquity* (*Huigu jinghua* 匯古菁華). The diversity of titles included in *Collected Quintessence of Antiquity* makes *Transcriptions from the Orthodox Tradition of Literature* appear quite tame. Not only does *Collected Quintessence of Antiquity* include excerpts from the Five Classics—a practice which Zhen Dexiu explicitly condemned in his original preface to *Orthodox Tradition of Literature*—it includes them alongside selections from Daoist texts such as the *Dao de jing* 道德經, *Zhuangzi*, and *Perfect Classic of the Origin of Scripture* (*Wenshi zhenjing* 文始真經).

Unfortunately, as Chu's anthology includes neither annotation nor commentary, we have no way of knowing how students were meant to read, for example, selections from *Perfect Classic of the Origin of Scripture* as models for examination prose. What we do know is that, to Chu Zhi, what these seemingly incommensurable texts shared was their ability to inculcate the same literary competence possessed by the ancients, a competence which would enable modern readers to manifest the patterning of their own heart-minds. Chu Zhi wrote in his preface:

When one reads the prose of the ancients, one sees the heart-mind of the ancients; when one obtains the heart-mind of the ancients, one emanates the prose of one's own heart-mind.

讀古人之文，見古人之心；得古人之心，發吾心之文。

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²¹⁵ Chu Zhi 褚鉞, preface to *Huigu jinghua* 匯古菁華, 1596 edition, Princeton University Gest Collection, see *Guoli zhongyang tushuguan shanben xuba jilu ji bu, zongji lei*, 143-46.

This chapter has proposed a new way of understanding how prefectural, sub-prefectural, and county level government schools constructed a more or less uniform national reading public. In contrast to the standard textbooks issued to government schools by the Yongle Emperor and later the Kangxi Emperor, which sought to impose a certain model of learning on the student population from the top down, the anthologies examined in this chapter are better understood as drawing on shared experiences centering on the modular world of the government school and civil examinations in order to create a core curriculum of ancient-style prose which, although more or less uniform across geographical space, nevertheless changed over the course of the sixteenth century.

Because of this evolving consensus, constantly re-affirmed in the shared work of anthology production and re-presented in the physical anthology itself, literati living in disparate geographic locations would have had a more or less uniform conception of the “must-read” works of ancient-style prose. But this was also true for other kinds of books being produced in government schools. Perhaps what was most special about government school ancient-style prose anthologies, then, was how they became an instrument for activist education intendants to create an alternative curriculum (of course, they thought of it as recreating) which would allow students to relate to past authors in a more personal, moral, and less careerist fashion.

CHAPTER 3: THE RULES OF PROSE AND THE PRIVILEGE OF SELF- EXPRESSION: TANG SHUNZHI AS AN ANTHOLOGIST

The two most central nodes in the anthology networked I visualized in chapter one were the *Orthodox Tradition of Literature* (*Wenzhang zhengzong* 文章正宗) and *Prose Compilation* (*Wen bian* 文編). *Prose Compilation* was compiled and printed in the mid-sixteenth century, and was probably modeled to some extent on *Orthodox Tradition of Literature*.²¹⁶ Its central position in the network mirrors the central position of its compiler, Tang Shunzhi 唐順之 (1507-1560), in Ming literary history. This chapter is a study of Tang Shunzhi as a writer, anthologist, and theorist of classical prose.

To his contemporaries, Tang Shunzhi seemed to possess a godlike sense for the classical essay.²¹⁷ Tang was born in 1507 in Wujin County 武進縣, part of Changzhou

²¹⁶ In a preface to his 1621 revised edition of *Prose Compilation*, the printer Chen Yuansu 陳元素 recorded Li Yu's 李愚 statement that Tang Shunzhi took *Orthodox Tradition of Literature* as his model for *Prose Compilation*. See *Wen bian* 文編, 1621 edition, Princeton University Gest Collection, second preface, 2-3. The *Siku quanshu* editors disagreed with this assessment on the basis that "Dexiu's book is primarily concerned with coherence, whereas this book is primarily concerned with literature." 然德秀書主於論理，而此書主於論文。 *Siku quanshu zongmu*, 189:17. My own comparison of the two books reveals that *Prose Compilation* shares about 400 titles with *Orthodox Tradition* and 130 titles with its sequel *Continuation of Orthodox Tradition*. In other words, roughly 37% of the works included in *Prose Compilation* were also included in *Orthodox Tradition* and *Continuation of Orthodox Tradition*; by the same token, 400 of the 700 prose works (57%) of *Orthodox Tradition* and 48% of *Continuation of Orthodox Tradition* are reproduced in *Prose Compilation*. Given this high degree of overlap between *Prose Compilation* and *Orthodox Tradition*, combined with the fact that Tang had produced an annotated version of *Orthodox Tradition*, I would tend to agree with Li Yu's original statement, that *Prose Compilation* was to some extent modeled on *Orthodox Tradition*.

²¹⁷ For biographies of Tang Shunzhi, see Li Kaixian 李開先, "Jingchuan Tang duyushi zhuan 荆川唐都御史傳," in *Li Zhonglu xianju ji* 李中麓閒居集, Jiajing edition, 10.78-92; L. Carrington Goodrich and Chaoying Fang, eds., *Dictionary of Ming Biography*, 2:1252-56. Modern studies of Tang include Huang Yi 黃毅, *Mingdai Tang-Song pai yanjiu* 明代唐宋派研究 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2008); Wu Jin'e 吳金娥, *Tang Jingchuan xiansheng yanjiu* 唐荆川先生研究 (Taipei: Wenjin chubanshe, 1986); Ching-i Tu, "Neo-Confucianism and Literary Criticism in Ming China: The Case of T'ang Shun-Chih (1507-1560)," *Tamkang Review* 15, nos. 1-4 (Autumn 1984-Summer 1985), 547-60. For Tang's collected

Prefecture 常州府 in the Southern Metropolitan Region. Changzhou was a highly literary region, second only to Suzhou in dominating the local provincial exam.²¹⁸ Boasting several generations of degree holders and officials, the Wujin Tangs were, in the early sixteenth century, one of the most prestigious lineages in Changzhou, a status further bolstered by Tang Shunzhi's marriage to a daughter of the rising Zhuang lineage.²¹⁹

Tang's meteoric rise through the civil service examinations marked the zenith of his lineage's influence. At 22 *sui* Tang passed sixth on the 1528 provincial exam, then at 23 *sui* scored first in the 1529 metropolitan exam and first in second class in the subsequent palace exam. His exam essays immediately became a stylistic model for examinees across the empire. Li Kaixian 李開先 (1502-1568) wrote: "Among students there were none young or old, far or near, who did not completely follow their form. It was like how in making a circle one cannot exceed the compass; it was like how in making a square one cannot exceed the carpenter's line" 學者無長幼遠近，悉宗其體，如圓不能加於規，方不能加於矩矣。²²⁰

In contrast to his examination success, however, Tang's life as an official was marked by repeated setbacks and failures. After the 1529 exams concluded, Grand Secretary Zhang Cong 張璁 (1475-1539), who had served as Tang's head examiner,

writings, this chapter cites Ma Meixin 馬美信 and Huang Yi 黃毅, ed., *Tang Shunzhi ji* 唐順之集 (Hangzhou: Zhejiang guji chubanshe, 2014).

²¹⁸ Benjamin Elman, *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 693.

²¹⁹ Benjamin Elman, *Classicism, Politics, and Kinship: The Ch'ang-Chou School of New Text Confucianism in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 40-42.

²²⁰ Li Kaixian, "Jingchuan Tang duyushi zhuan," in *Li Zhonglu xianju ji*, 10.79a. Cited in Liao Kebin, *Fugu pai yu Mingdai wenxue sichao*, 1.304.

appointed Tang to the Hanlin Academy as a bachelor. Planning to pack the Hanlin Academy with scholars who accepted the Jiajing Emperor's position in the Great Rites Controversy (*Dali yi* 大禮議), Zhang moved to transfer all Hanlin bachelors to other bureaus, leaving only his protégé Tang behind.²²¹ Tang refused to remain, was named Secretary of War, and immediately requested leave to return home on account of illness. Although behind this "illness" there was a clear desire to dissociate himself from Zhang Cong's maneuverings, Tang did in fact suffer from chronic poor health. In 1530, after another short stint as record keeper and Inspector of Official Titles in the Ministry of Rites, Tang again requested leave on account of illness, and subsequently spent three years at his studio in Yixing County 宜興縣.

In 1533 Tang returned to the Hanlin Academy to assist in the compilation of the veritable records. However, when the project was nearly finished, Tang submitted yet another memorial requesting leave on account of illness. Zhang Cong, while initially unwilling to let Tang go, was soon informed that Tang wished to distance himself from Zhang. The enraged Zhang composed an imperial edict dismissing Tang from the Ministry of Rites and ordering that he never be granted another official position.

In 1539, following the death of Zhang Cong, Tang resumed his old position in the Hanlin Academy with the added responsibility of Secretariat of the Heir Apparent. In 1540, however, Tang fell afoul of the Jiajing Emperor when he, together with his comrades Luo Hongxian 羅洪先 (1504-1564, a fellow 1529 *jinshi*) and Zhao Shichun 趙

²²¹ For an overview of this controversy, see Denis Twitchett and Frederick Mote, eds., *The Cambridge History of China: Volume 7, The Ming Dynasty (1368-1644)* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1998), 457-61.

時春 (1509-1567), submitted a joint memorial requesting that the heir apparent make a New Year's court appearance in place of the Jiajing Emperor, who had taken ill.²²² And so Tang found himself dismissed from the Hanlin Academy yet again at the age of 33.

Following this apparently irreversible removal from official life, Tang again retired to his studio in Yixing and lived in studious seclusion for ten years. In 1547, as he was approaching 40 years of age, Tang moved his residence to the more remote and scenic area of Jingxi 荊溪 (hence his sobriquet Jingchuan 荊川), where he began a regimen of self-care, meditation, and study that culminated in what Tang would subsequently describe as a self-transformation. The thoroughness of this transformation is evident in one of Tang's letters to Mao Kun 茅坤 (1512-1601), in which Tang asked: "What you have seen of me is mostly the old me, but have you never once seen the me with withered form and ashen heart-mind?" 鹿門所見於吾者，殆故吾也，而未嘗見夫槁形灰心之吾乎？²²³

Later scholars saw in this self-transformation a broader shift in Ming literary culture. As I have already discussed in the introduction to this dissertation, Qing scholars believed that Tang had rediscovered "orthodox tradition of literature" 文章正宗 or "orthodox transmission of literature" 文統 after it had been disrupted by the followers of Li Mengyang.²²⁴ Building on this view, the twentieth-century scholar Xia Chongpu 夏崇

²²² John Dardess, *A Political Life in Ming China: A Grand Secretary and His Times* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2013), 16-17.

²²³ Tang Shunzhi, "Da Mao Lumen zhixian er 答茅鹿門知縣二," in *Tang Shunzhi ji*, 1.294.

²²⁴ The early Qing Hanlin academician Xu Qianxue expresses the mainstream Qing understanding of Tang's place in literary history when he writes, "The writers of the Hongzhi (1487-1505) and Zhengde (1505-1521) reigns disliked the calm ease [of the secretariat style] and wished to go back to the Qin and Han dynasties. They established a reputation for themselves as the "seven masters," and miscellaneously

璞 described Tang as the progenitor of the so-called “Tang-Song school” 唐宋派 and an opponent of Li Mengyang’s “archaist” 復古 movement.²²⁵ In contrast, Chih-p’ing Chou read Tang’s transformation from a “formalist” to an “expressionist” as evidence of archaism’s own inherent tendency toward self-expression, which Chou viewed as the proper function of literature. For this reason, Chou listed Tang Shunzhi alongside Xu Wei and Li Zhi as “predecessors of the Gongan school” and, by extension, modern Chinese literature.²²⁶

When Tang described “the me with withered form and ashen heart-mind” to Mao Kun, he was probably thinking of several passages from the *Zhuangzi* 莊子 which describe immortals as possessing a body like withered wood or flesh, and a mind like dead ashes.²²⁷ Likewise, in playfully pointing out Mao Kun’s inability to distinguish

arrayed the genuine and the counterfeit, [establishing] a degenerate manner of writing. It was Tang Shunzhi and Gui Youguang in the Jiajing and Longqing (1567–1562) reigns who obtained the orthodox tradition of literature.” 弘、正間之爲文者，病其平易而欲反之於秦漢以上，自立名號稱爲才子，真贋雜陳，波頹風靡，惟嘉、隆間唐順之、歸有光輩得文章之正宗。See Xu Qianxue 徐乾學, *Danyuan wenji* 憺園文集, Wenyuange Siku quanshu edition, 35.8.

²²⁵ Xia Chongpu 夏崇璞, “Mingdai fugu pai yu Tang-Song wen pai zhi chaoliu 明代復古派與唐宋文派之潮流,” *Xueheng* 9 (September 1922), 1-10.

²²⁶ Chou Chih-p’ing, *Yüan Hung-Tao and the Kung-an School*, 14. In contrast, Huang Yi notes us that terminological similarities between Tang Shunzhi and the Gong’an School writers—particularly their common emphasis on “authenticity” 真—serve to mask substantive differences in belief. For example, when Tang Shunzhi enjoins his friend to “directly express your innermost thoughts, and casually write them out” 直抒胸臆，信手寫出，he is assuming à la Wang Yangming that these thoughts will spontaneously conform to the teachings of Confucius and Mencius; Yuan Hongdao, in contrast, is more willing to sanction expressions of violent emotion, desire, and obsession that Tang Shunzhi would dismiss as corruptions of the original heart-mind. Despite this more nuanced comparison, however, Huang Yi still views Tang Shunzhi as caught in a historical contradiction between the constraints of a retrograde Neo-Confucianism and the progressive concept of “native color”—a contradiction which, we can only assume, would remain unresolved until the May Fourth movement. See Huang Yi, *Mingdai Tang-Song pai yanjiu*, 94, 106.

²²⁷ For example: “How can we explain this? Can the body really be made to become like withered wood? Can the mind really be made to become like dead ashes?” 形固可使如槁木，而心固可使如死灰乎？“His form is like a withered carcass, / His mind is like dead ashes.” 形若槁骸，心若死灰。“Its body is like a branch of withered wood and its mind is like dead ashes.” 身若槁木之枝而心若死灰。See Liu

between this new “me” and that “old me,” Tang was probably thinking of another *Zhuangzi* passage in which a “magus” (*wu* 巫), famous for his spirit-like ability to know everything about a person simply by looking at them, meets his match in a certain Master Hu 壺子. In the story, this Master Hu is able to show different versions of himself to the magus at will, leading the magus to remark “Your master is unstable. There's nothing I can do to read his features.” Finally, after Master Hu shows himself “emptily intertwined with [primordial chaos] so that one could not discern who was who,” the magus flees.²²⁸

Tang's invocation of the *Zhuangzi* supplies a helpful starting point for reappraising the twentieth-century view of Tang as a mere midpoint between the archaist and expressionist movements. I will argue, in contrast, that Tang's self-reinvention only makes sense when we understand it as part of an ongoing strategy of self-distinction within the unstable hierarchies of the literary marketplace I began to outline in chapters one and two. Underlying Tang's distinction between the old me and the new me is a recognition that his position in the literary field granted him the authority to, like Master Hu, display new personas at will.

In this chapter, I first situate Tang's rapid rise to fame as an exam essayist and classical prose anthologist within broader efforts to define universal standards of prose composition. After briefly examining Tang's *Prose Compilation*, I highlight conceptual similarities between Tang's preface and the preface to an ancient-style prose anthology printed by the Southern Metropolitan Region education intendant, especially their

Dianjue, ed., *Zhuangzi zhuzi suoyin*, 2/3/15, 22/61/1, 23/65/23. Translated in Victor H. Mair, trans., *Wandering on the Way*, 10, 214, 231.

²²⁸ Liu Dianjue, ed., *Zhuangzi zhuzi suoyin*, 7/20-21; Victor H. Mair, trans., *Wandering on the Way*, 68-70.

universalistic understanding of the “rules” (*fa* 法) of prose. I then trace Tang’s road to success on the examinations, and show how this exam success led to the identification of Tang’s composition method with the prose standards being formulated for the government school public described in chapter 2.

Having described Tang’s persona as public arbiter of prose standards, I then turn to Tang’s correspondence after his self-transformation at the age of 40. Here, I show how Tang used the idea of heightened consciousness or sensitivity to the text (the term Tang used was *shenming* 神明, which in the context of the *Xunzi* Paul Goldin has translated as “godlike insight”; I follow Goldin’s translation in this chapter) to elevate himself above the very rules of prose he helped define for the writing public.²²⁹ Tang, because he supposedly possessed this heightened sensitivity, was able to redefine a new persona for himself without its authenticity being questioned; at the same time, similar attempts at self-reinvention by his contemporaries lacking such a sense were dismissed as laughable imposture. In effect, by publicly divulging universal literary laws in his work as an anthologist, and by positing an even deeper realm of sensibility not accessible to the general public in his later writings, Tang effectively created a niche market of connoisseurs who sought to experience literature not as a set of uniform laws, but rather as an ever-more refined array of pleasurable differences.

²²⁹ Paul R. Goldin, *Confucianism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 96.

Prose Compilation

Prose Compilation (*Wen bian* 文編) was one of Tang's six major "compilations" (*bian* 編), and like most of these other compilations, it was printed after Tang's death in 1560 by one of his former associates.²³⁰ Although the *Siku quanshu* edition was based on a later "revised" version printed in the 1620s by Chen Yuansu 陳元素, *Prose Compilation* was first prepared for printing by Tang's former student Jiang Bao 姜寶 (1553 *jinshi*), and printed by the Prefect of Fuzhou Hu Bo 胡帛 (1518-1577, 1556 *jinshi*).²³¹ Given that Jiang Bao was Education Intendant to Fujian from 1563-1566, and that Hu Bo was also Prefect of Fuzhou during this time, it seems likely that *Prose*

²³⁰ Besides *Prose Compilation*, *Left Compilation* (*Zuo bian* 左編) assembled accounts of historical personalities from dynastic histories. *Right Compilation* (*You bian* 右編) collected political essays by officials throughout history. The titles *Left Compilation* and *Right Compilation* refer to a passage in the *Zhonglun* 中論: "In the rites of the former kings, the left historian would record events, and the right historian would record words." 先王之禮, 左史記事, 右史記言。See Liu Dianjue, ed., *Zhonglun zhuzi suoyin* 中論逐字索引 (Hong Kong: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1995), 4/6/26. *Military Compilation* (*Wu bian* 武編) was an anthology of excerpts from military texts, *Confucian Compilation* (*Ru bian* 儒編, also titled *Zhuru yuyao* 諸儒語要) assembled writings by Confucians throughout history, and *Polished Rice Compilation* (*Bai bian* 稗編) was an encyclopedia (*leishu* 類書).

²³¹ Comparison of the two editions quickly reveals the extent of Chen Yuansu's alterations. Although Chen retains the 64 *juan* division as well as the Hu edition's system of 30 literary forms, he deletes many of the individual works included Hu edition. For example, Chen deletes all three pieces included in *juan* 40 of the Hu edition (namely Ouyang Xiu's "Yi tongzi wen 易童子問," Zeng Gong's "Hongfan zhuan 洪範傳," and Wang Anshi's "Hongfan zhuan 洪範傳"), and makes the latter half of the Hu edition's *juan* 39 his new *juan* 40, thereby retaining the 64 *juan* arrangement. I can discern no pattern or preference in his deletions, besides a preference for a shorter book. More importantly, the Chen edition's annotations bear almost no resemblance to those of the Hu edition. For example, hollow and filled vertical lines appear often in the Hu edition, but the Chen edition does not use vertical lines at all, employing only hollow circles (○) and dabs (、). Simply put, the annotations are no longer Tang's; they are Chen's with a sprinkling of Tang's interlinear comments. For this reason, although the Chen edition is helpful for understanding the reception of *Prose Compilation*, the Hu edition is preferable for a critical study of Tang Shunzhi as an anthologist. Needless to say, scholars should beware the *Siku quanshu* edition, which was based exclusively on the Chen Yuansu edition. The *Siku* editors themselves admitted that they did not have access to the earlier edition, and had no way to know the extent of Chen's alterations. See *Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao*, 189.18.

Compilation was printed in the mid-1560s.²³² These circumstances also suggest that Jiang and Hu printed *Prose Compilation* in order to supply local students with ancient-style prose models for examination writing. Indeed, editorial signatures printed throughout the book show that Jiang and Hu recruited local school instructors for the production team (see Figure 19 to the right), making the book a typical example of the government school anthologies discussed in chapter 2.²³³

This edition of *Prose Compilation* contains 1,418 titles in 30 genres. The majority of these titles and genres are official documentary forms—various kinds of policy essays, memorials, and discourse essays—that would have been useful for students preparing for the civil service exams. The remainder consists mainly of letters, prefaces, travel records, and various kinds of funerary writing related more to the world of literati social writing, commonly referred to as *yingchou* 應酬,

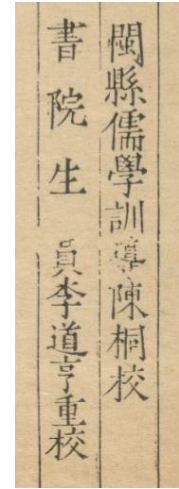


Figure 19: Editorial note with the names of a Min County School Assistant Instructor and a local academy student. Detail from *Wen bian* 文編, c. mid-1560s, Harvard-Yenching Library, 8.12b.

²³² Jiang passed the metropolitan exams in 1553, and was made as a Hanlin bachelor through the influence of the grand secretary Xu Jie 徐階 (1503-1583), a longtime friend of Tang's who happened to be serving as one of Jiang's examiners. In Jiang's mind this was no mere lucky coincidence, but rather indicated heaven's intent to realize Tang's political will. Several letters from Jiang to Tang reveal how Jiang conspired with Xu to bring Tang out of retirement, a process which culminated in Tang's assignment in 1558 to assist Hu Zongxian in defending the Zhejiang coast against pirates. See Jiang Bao 姜寶, *Jiang Feng'a wenji* 姜鳳阿文集, facsimile of Wanli edition, in *Siku quanshu cunmu conshu* 四庫全書存目叢書, jibu 集部 vol. 127-128 (Tainan: Zhuangyan wenhua, 1997), 1.29b-30a, 2.24b-25, 6.3-9. On Xu Jie's correspondence with Jiang while Jiang was in Sichuan, see John Dardess, *A Political Life in Ming China*, 38. In 1560 Jiang was promoted from Hanlin Academy assistant compiler to assistant surveillance commissioner. He served as education intendant to Sichuan from 1560 to 1563, and education intendant to Fujian from 1563-1566. See *Ming Shizong shilu*, 484.4; 550.4. For Hu Bo, see *Ming Muzong shilu*, 14.11.

²³³ A note on the final page of *juan* 8 reads: "Collated by Assistant Instructor for Min county school Chen Tong 閩縣學訓導陳桐校, re-collated by academy student Li Daoheng 書院生員李道亨重校. A note on the final page of *juan* 17 reads: "Re-collated by Yan Xueyan" 嚴學顏重校. A note on the final page of *juan* 64 reads: "Re-collated by the Labor Supervisor and Assistant Instructor for Min county school Chen Tong" 督工閩縣學訓導陳桐重校. Furthermore, as was often the procedure with anthologies printed for government schools, individual block carvers signed the blocks they carved in the bottom center page.

rather than exams. For this reason, although the book was printed for exam use, its potential applications ran the complete gamut of literati social life.

Even more importantly for the book's users, the individual texts in *Prose Compilation* were marked up with Tang Shunzhi's distinctive method of annotation. These annotations were sparse in comparison to other annotated anthologies of the time, and used lines as well as circles and dabs to highlight long passages, in the manner of the Southern Song ancient-style prose anthologies. In Figure 20 below I have placed two pages side by side to show how the great essayist Han Yu's 韓愈 (768-824) "Explanation of Obtaining the Unicorn" (*Huo lin jie* 獲麟解) was annotated in Tang's *Prose Compilation*:

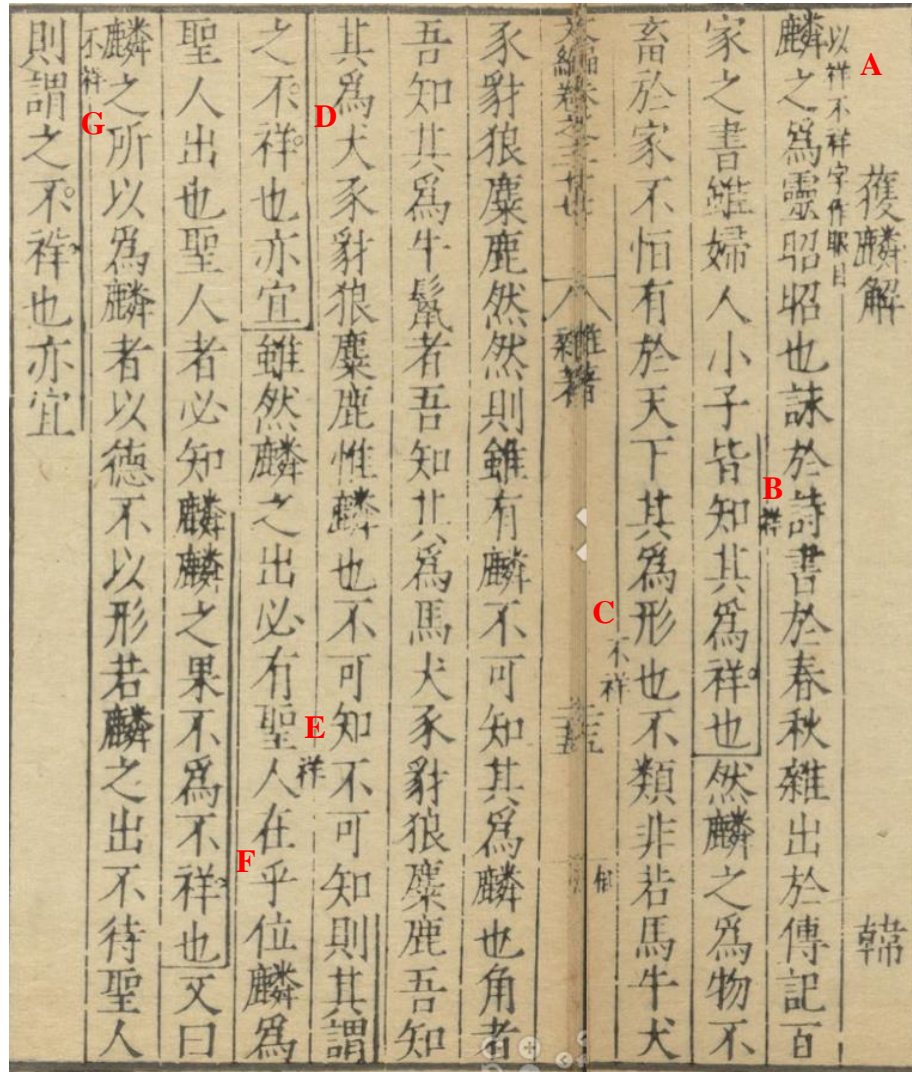


Figure 20: Han Yu's "Explanation of Obtaining the Unicorn" with Tang Shunzhi's annotations. From *Wen bian* 文編, c. mid-1560s, Harvard-Yenching Library, 37.25.

This piece demonstrates one of Tang's most typical methods of analysis, in which he traced a given composition's antithetical alternation between point and counterpoint, often referred to in examination essay stylistics as *zhu* 主 and *ke* 客. In his reading of "Explanation of Obtaining the Unicorn," Tang began by pointing out the antithetical pair, writing that "the characters 'auspicious' and 'inauspicious' act as the key words" 以祥不祥字作眼目 (see label A). Having established this pair of "key words" (literally the

“eyes” 眼目 of the essay), Tang used interlinear comments, lines, and circles to highlight their alternations. For example, at the end of the line “Even women and children know that [the unicorn] is auspicious” 雖婦人小子皆知其為祥也, Tang marked the passage with a line, added a circle beside the character *xiang* 祥 (“auspicious”), and also wrote *xiang* as an interlinear comment (label B). Likewise, next to the line “its form does not belong to any category” 其為形不類, we find the interlinear comment *bu xiang* 不祥 (“inauspicious,” label C). And so on through the rest of the essay (labels D, E, F, and G).

The aim of Tang’s reading method was show how objective, universal rules of prose, which expressed themselves most rigidly in the precise syntactic parallelism of the examination essay, were also present in Tang and Song dynasty prose in a more supple, dynamic form. Indeed, Tang wrote, the same rules were present even in Qin-Han prose, which superficially appears quite different from post-Tang prose. The difference between the two periods, Tang argued, was that Tang and later writers wrote with an explicit awareness of these rules, and so rarely departed from them. Qin-Han writers, in contrast, wrote with only an implicit understanding of the rules, and adhered to them unconsciously, with less regularity.²³⁴ This belief perhaps explains why, although *Prose Compilation* includes numerous Han and pre-Han texts—for example, unsurprisingly, it includes several chapters from the *Zhuangzi*—these more ancient texts are rarely subjected to the level of meticulous analysis we see in later texts like “Explanation of Obtaining the Unicorn.”

²³⁴ Tang Shunzhi, “Dong Zhongfeng shilang wenji xu 董中峯侍郎文集序,” in *Tang Shunzhi ji*, 2.465-66.

In Tang's collected writings we find numerous discussions of the "rules" (*fa* 法) of literary composition, but none more systematic than his preface to *Prose Compilation*.

I have translated the preface in full below:

Ouyang Xiu quoted Yang Xiong's words, and wrote: "Cutting wood to make a chessboard and cutting hides to make a ball, these kinds of activities all have rules'—how much more so with calligraphy!"²³⁵ This being so, how much more so with prose! When one attains godlike insight in one's heart-mind and comes to rest, then even the markings of Qian and Kun are superfluous; however, these markings are not superfluous because they are necessary to the applications of godlike insight. Because the markings are not superfluous, this is why we say one and one make two, and two and one make three, and continuing on in this manner the permutations do not end, nor can they be exhausted. When prose reaches a state of inexhaustibility, is this not also because it cannot help but be so?²³⁶ Thus we cannot lack prose, and prose cannot lack rules. This compilation is the master craftsman of prose and the supreme rule. The sages expressed themselves in prose by means of their godlike insight, and cultured scholars painstakingly researched prose in order to glimpse the profundity of this godlike insight. Some of these glimpses were partial and some full, some smaller and some greater, some motley and some pure, yet all obtained something, and in all of them godlike insight was never once not present.

²³⁵ In the original passage, Yang Xiong referenced the manufacture of chessboards and balls to illustrate the necessity of attending to the moral standards set by former rulers. See Michael Nylan, trans., *Exemplary Figures: Fayan* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2013), 29. Likewise, albeit with tongue in cheek, Ouyang Xiu cited this passage to argue for the necessity of calligraphic models. See Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修, "Yong bi zhi fa 用筆之法," in *Wenzhong ji* 文忠集, Wenyuange Siku quanshu edition, 130.5a.

²³⁶ In addition to the *Classic of Changes*, which Tang was clearly invoking, we might also compare this passage with Victor H. Mair, trans., *The Art of War: Sun Zi's Military Methods* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 92: "There are only five notes, yet the transformations of these five notes afford infinite aural pleasure. There are only five colors, yet the transformations of these five colors afford infinite visual pleasure. There are only five flavors, yet the transformations of these five flavors afford infinite gustatory pleasure. The basic battle configurations are only the conventional and the unconventional, yet the transformations of these two types of tactics afford infinite possibilities. The conventional and the unconventional give rise to each other, like a circle that has neither beginning nor end. Who could ever exhaust their potential?" For the original passage, see Liu Dianjue, ed., *Bingshu si zhong* (*Sunzi, Wei Liaozi, Wuzi, Sima fa*) *zhuzi suoyin* 兵書四種 (孫子, 尉繚子, 吳子, 司馬法) 逐字索引 (Hong Kong: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1992), A5/4. Indeed, we find several chapters of the *Sunzi* in Tang's *Prose Compilation*, including the chapter titled *Bingshi* 兵勢 which contains the above passage.

What I mean by “rules” are the transformations of godlike insight. The *Changes* says: firmness and fluidity intermixing illustrate the patterning of heaven. When patterning is illuminated so that people come to rest, this is human patterning. When students observe these patterns, they can thus understand what I mean by “rules.” Written by Tang Shunzhi of Wujin on June 22nd, 1556.

歐陽子述揚子雲之言曰：斷木爲棋，攄革爲鞠，莫不有法，而況於書乎？然則又況於文乎？以爲神明乎吾心而止矣，則三三之畫亦贅矣，然而畫非贅也，神明之用所不得已也。畫非贅則所謂一與言爲二，二與一爲三，自茲以往，巧歷不能盡，而又不可勝窮矣。文而至於不可勝窮，其亦有不得已而然者乎？然則不能無文，而文不能無法，是編者文之工匠而法之至也。聖人以神明而達之於文，文士研精于文以窺神明之奧，其窺之也有偏有全，有小有大，有駁有醇，而皆有得也，而神明未嘗不在焉。所謂法者，神明之變化也，易曰，剛柔交錯，天文也，文明以止，人文也。學者觀之，可以知所謂法矣。嘉靖丙辰夏五月既望，武進唐順之應德甫書。²³⁷

This preface is abstract nearly to the point of unintelligibility, but it is basically an argument for a certain understanding of the “rules” (*fa* 法) of prose and their relationship to the heightened mental state of “godlike insight” (*shenming* 神明). While both of these terms occurred in ancient texts, by the sixteenth century the concept of literary *fa* had become associated with the archaist poetics of Li Mengyang and He Jingming, whereas *shenming* belonged more to the world of Neo-Confucian teaching (we find it used

²³⁷ Tang Shunzhi, “Wen bian xu 文編序,” in *Tang Shunzhi ji*, 2.450. Tang composed this preface in 1556, during the mourning period for his father, and only four years before his own death. One year earlier, Zhao Wenhua 趙文華 (?-1557), whom Grand Secretary Yan Song 嚴嵩 (1480-1567) had put in charge of dealing with the pirate crisis, had won Tang a position as secretary in the Nanjing office of the ministry of war, a duty which Tang postponed due to the death of his father. In 1558, his mourning period complete, Tang resumed his military office and was subsequently dispatched to assist Hu Zongxian 胡宗憲 (1512-1565) in the defense of Zhejiang against pirate incursions. In 1559, having won several risky victories over the pirates, Tang was promoted to several positions including Inspector of Fengyang Prefecture in the Southern Metropolitan Region. In 1560 Tang died in nearby Tongzhou 通州, in Yangzhou prefecture.

frequently to refer to a quality of the human heart-mind, for example, in both Zhu Xi's *Zhuzi yulei* 朱子語類 and Wang Yangming's *Chuanxi lu* 傳習錄).²³⁸ In explaining the relationship between these two phenomena, Tang was effectively redefining the relationship between two historically antithetical traditions.

The key question for Tang was how literary *fa*, seemingly rigid and fixed, could be commensurate with *shenming*, that perceptual power which allowed the ancient sages to observe the essential principles of the universe and adapt their behavior to them. Unsurprisingly, Tang saw a preexisting analogue to this problem in the trigrams from the *Classic of Changes*, observing that, once one's heart-mind has achieved a state of godlike insight, the trigrams of course become "superfluous" (*zhui* 贅), yet at the same time cautioning that the trigrams are not really superfluous because they are necessary to the "applications," or concrete instantiations, of godlike insight.²³⁹

Drawing on his time spent with the mathematician Gu Yingxiang 顧應祥 (1483-1565) and his own interest in geometry, Tang saw another analogue to the relationship between *fa* and *shenming* in mathematics.²⁴⁰ Because the trigrams emanated from the

²³⁸ On the meaning of *fa* in classical texts, see Chad Hansen, "Fa (Standards: Laws) and Meaning Changes in Chinese Philosophy," *Philosophy East and West* 44, no. 3 (July 1994), 435-88; Paul Goldin, "Persistent Misconceptions about Chinese 'Legalism,'" *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 38, 1 (2011), 88-104. On *shenming* in classical texts, see Sándor P. Szabó, "The Term Shenming--Its Meaning in the Ancient Chinese Thought and in a Recently Discovered Manuscript," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 56, no. 2/4 (2003), 251-74. For an overview of Li Mengyang and He Jingming's thoughts on literary *fa* and their similarity to calligraphic *fa*, see Daniel Bryant, *The Great Recreation*, 400-15. Cf. the contrast between Li Mengyang's "objective" understanding of *fa* and Wang Shizhen's "subjective" understanding, where "it was the writer who dictated the rules for his writing, the rules did not govern the writer," in Chou Chih-p'ing, *Yüan Hung-Tao and the Kung-an School*, 12.

²³⁹ This mention of the trigrams' "superfluity" once the mental state of *shenming* has been achieved recalls Zhuang Zhou's famous comparison of words to "fish-traps" and "rabbit-snares," which I discussed in chapter 1. See p. 32n.

²⁴⁰ L. Carrington Goodrich and Chaoying Fang, eds., *Dictionary of Ming Biography*, 2.1253; Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilization in China*, vol. 3, *Mathematics and the Sciences of the Heavens and the*

ancient sages “godlike perception,” Tang argued, although they may superficially appear to be no more than static digits, their permutations are in fact commensurate with the endless transformations of phenomena. Likewise, Tang reasoned, the rules of writing—though seemingly static—can also be used to generate a fluent and therefore inexhaustible prose. Therefore, later people were able to access the sages’ mental state of “godlike” insight through the seemingly fixed forms of writing they left behind, and although these later scholars could only obtain partial and varied “glimpses” (*kui* 窺) of the sages’ original insight, they nevertheless all partook of the same mental state in varying degrees and manifested it in their own writings. This underlying identity between the sages’ mental state and the varied forms of later writings was possible, Tang concluded, because “What I mean by ‘rules’ are the transformations of godlike insight.”

This preface, written late in Tang’s life, represented his final word on the rules of prose. In the next section, I will go back in time, long before Tang’s self-reinvention at the age of 40, to consider one possible early influence on Tang’s understanding of the rules of prose: an anthology of ancient-style prose printed by the Education Intendant to the Southern Metropolitan Region. I will then trace Tang’s road to examination success, beginning in the Changzhou prefectural school and culminating in his first-place metropolitan examination victory. In doing so, my goal is to show how Tang’s own examination writing and reading method came to be identified with the universal rules of prose expressed in government school anthologies of ancient-style prose.

Earth (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1959), 51. Tang authored a series of treatises on mathematical topics which were included in the “miscellaneous works” 雜著 chapter at the end of his collected writings, and in which we frequently find the term *fa*.

Examination Prose and Anthologies

In 1510, only a few years after Tang's birth, Education Intendant to the Southern Metropolitan Region Huang Rujin 黃如金 (1505 *jinshi*) printed an anthology titled *Assembled Works of Ancient-Style Prose* (*Guwen huibian* 古文會編). The contents of this book are similar to other trans-dynastic anthologies compiled by education officials: it includes 265 prose works from the *Zuo Tradition* through the Northern Song masters, and categorizes them into roughly 30 genres. The preface to *Assembled Works of Ancient-Style Prose* was written by Shao Bao 邵寶 (1460-1527), a former Hanlin academician and education intendant to Jiangxi, then living in temporary retirement in his native Wuxi County 無錫縣, close to Tang's native Wujin in Changzhou Prefecture.

In Shao Bao's preface to *Assembled Works of Ancient-Style Prose* we find a fully developed argument about the "rules" (*fa*) of prose and how to use ancient-style prose to improve one's examination prose with numerous which resembles the government school anthologies discussed in chapter 2, as well as Tang's own later preface to *Prose Compilation*, translated above. Shao wrote:

Prose is but one. In recent times the world has viewed examination writing as "current prose," and this is why we have the term "ancient prose." The relationship of current prose to ancient prose might be different forms and the same phrasing, or different phrasing and the same principles. If the principles are the same, then even though the phrasing is different, the underlying sameness is retained. Thus, when characters emerge according to sound then the rules are the same; when phrases assemble according to characters then the rules are the same; when sections are constituted according to phrases then the rules are the same. If you do

not attain these principles, then you will not be able to communicate. Even if you wanted to differ from the principles, how could you? People, merely because the forms are different, claim that practicing ancient prose harms one's exam prose. Whenever someone asks me about the rules of exam prose, I correct their way of thinking, and always respond to them with ancient style prose. I tell them that one might thus improve one's *qi*, develop one's talent, and arouse one's creativity. Those who listen to my words and believe them only amount to one or two in ten, yet they are often the ones who pass the exams. Didn't people in the past achieve lasting renown by means of what they studied, which was first of all the classics, then the traditions, and then the various masters? One might liken it to water: if the source is deep then the stream will be long. Thus the branches are tiny compared to the Jiang and Han rivers, and the rivulets are puny compared to the streams—their tendencies have always been so. Thus if you do not probe the source and follow the orthodox tradition, then how will you reach the realm of the ancients? This being so, people nowadays who compose current prose must work on all the classics, traditions, and masters. This is really what I mean by "source." If you carefully attend to it, then the rules will be yours. Yet some abandon this and seek elsewhere; this is to know that current prose writers should study antiquity, but not that ancient prose writers should study antiquity even more—what use are they? Others give free rein to their brushes and trust in themselves, and even state that literature has no fixed forms—this is even more implausible. What unifies prose are its rules.

文一而已矣。自近世以舉業爲時文，於是有古文之名。時文之於古文，異體而同辭，異辭而同理。理既同則其辭雖異，中有同者存焉。故字以聲出則法同，句以字成則法同，章以句屬則法同，不如是理不能達也。雖欲異之，夫焉得而異之？人徒以其體之異也，遂謂習古文者妨時文。或以時文之法問予，予矯其意，每以古文對之，謂可以昌吾氣也，可以發吾才也，可以起吾思致也。聞吾言而信之者什纔一二，然往往有得第。不知古之人登文籙而傳不朽者，由其所學，上則經，次則傳，又次則諸子。譬之水焉，其源深則其流長，故沱汜藐於江漢，潢潦蔑於澗溪，其勢固然也。苟不窮其源，而惟委是宗，則何以造夫古人之地哉？然今爲時文者，凡經傳以及諸子皆有事焉，此正吾所謂源者。即加之意，則法在我矣。

乃或舍是而他求之，是知時文之當師古，而不知古文之尤當師古也，亦奚取哉？厥或肆筆自信，至謂文無定體，是又不然。文之所同者法耳。²⁴¹

To make sense of this preface, it is first necessary to note that Shao Bao was both a former student of the Grand Secretary Li Dongyang, who promoted a careful, formally-grounded poetics, and a teacher of Li Mengyang.²⁴² Similarly, as with Li Mengyang, Shao took an activist approach to education in his official career, giving personal lectures to prefectural school students while serving as prefect and commissioning the repair of the White Deer Grotto Academy 白鹿洞書院 in 1501 as an education intendant.²⁴³ Providing a preface to a government school ancient-style prose anthology was in line with this general outlook.

It should not surprise us, then, the argument Shao presented in the above preface is similar in many ways to the prefaces discussed in chapter 2. Like those educators, Shao believed that the underlying principles of ancient prose and exam prose were the same, and on this basis promoted a back-to-basics, standards-based prose curriculum where students would trace this “tradition” 宗, “source” 源, or “sameness” 同 throughout literary history. Shao’s originality, however, lay in identifying this “sameness” with universal “rules” 法 of prose composition (“what stays the same in literature are the rules”). As with Tang’s preface, this universal set of composition rules was what made ancient-style prose and examination prose compatible.

²⁴¹ Shao Bao 邵寶, preface to *Guwen huibian* 古文會編, 1510 edition, National Diet Library, 1-2.

²⁴² Daniel Bryant, *The Great Recreation*, 47.

²⁴³ John Meskill, *Academies in Ming China*, 32-33.

Therefore, although Tang came to be identified with the method of “using ancient-style prose to write examination prose” (*yi guwen wei shiwen* 以古文為時文) following his examination success, as I will discuss below, Shao Bao’s preface shows that Tang did not invent this method. Rather, Tang received the method through the medium of an ancient-style prose based pedagogy which was then being promoted through anthology production projects in government schools across the empire. Given the centrality of universal, almost geometric rules within Tang’s own theory of prose, I would suggest that Tang probably read *Assembled Works of Ancient-Style Prose* while he was enrolled as a supplementary student at the Changzhou prefectural school, one of the schools under Education Intendant Huang Rujin’s jurisdiction.²⁴⁴

At the same time, it is important to note that, whereas Shao Bao defined *fa* in terms of “that which unifies” 所同者, Tang, writing later in life, defined *fa* in terms of “transformations” 變. As I will discuss at greater length in chapter 4, Tang’s subtle shift in emphasis reflected a broader shift in the tastes of the Jiangnan reading public, a growing appreciation for stylistic difference and historical variation, a shift already evident, for example, in Shao Bao’s brief attack on those who “give free rein to their brushes and trust in themselves, and even state that literature has no fixed forms.”

²⁴⁴ Although neither 1513 edition nor the 1618 edition of the *Changzhou fuzhi* 常州府志 includes a list of the books in the prefectural school library, the *Gujin shuke* 古今書刻 catalog for the Nanjing National University does include a book titled *Gujin huibian* 古今會編. Given that this book was listed as a “literary collection” 詩文集, and that no other records exist of a book titled *Gujin huibian*, I suspect that this book was in fact the *Guwen huibian*, with the *wen* 文 transcribed wrongly as *jin* 今. See Zhou Hongzu 周弘祖, *Gujin shuke* 古今書刻, 1906 Guangu tang edition, 1.6a. In addition, *Guwen huibian* was also listed in the Jiajing-era *Jianyang xianzhi* 建陽縣志 catalog of bookseller’s books, suggesting that a commercial reprint of the book was also circulating.

Eighteen years after Education Intendant Huang Rujin commissioned the publication of *Assembled Works of Ancient-Style Prose*, Tang Shunzhi (then a young supplementary student in the Changzhou prefectural school) scored sixth place in the 1528 Southern Metropolitan Region provincial exam. One of his winning essays was subsequently revised by the examiners and included in the government-issued results of this examination. In these officially printed results, we find that Tang, a specialist in the *Poetry Classic* (*Shi jing* 詩經), was given an essay topic excerpted from the poem *Na* 那

²⁴⁵

Thematically speaking, *Na* was oddly suited to the recent efforts of educators like Shao Bao to delineate the ancient, universal laws of prose underlying diverse period styles. *Na* is the first piece recorded in the *Hymns of Shang* (*Shang song* 商頌), which in the *Maoshi zhengyi* 毛詩正義 we read were recovered by a ritual expert to reverse the decline of the former Shang dynasty's rites and music in the state of Song 宋. Its title is glossed in the *Mao shi zhengyi* as “many” (*duo* 多).²⁴⁶ The body of the text describes the harmonious blending of many different instruments (drums, flutes, and bells) in an ancestral sacrifice to Cheng Tang 成湯, the first ruler of the Shang. Tang's exposition read as follows:

[Breaking the topic:] In the Shang people's sacrifices to their ancestors, when the music reached its climax it relied

²⁴⁵ In the Ming examination system, examinees were allowed to specialize in one of the Five Classics, and in the classics portion of the examination would only receive questions on their selected classic. See Benjamin Elman, *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations*, 280-85. For *Na*, see *Mao shi zhengyi* 毛詩正義, in *Shi san jing zhu shu (zheng li ben)* 十三經注疏(整理本), vol. 6 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2000), 1684-90.

²⁴⁶ *Mao shi zhengyi* 毛詩正義, in *Shi san jing zhu shu (zheng li ben)* 十三經注疏(整理本), vol. 6 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2000), 1685.

on the sacrificial leader, and when it was complete it evoked a sympathetic response among the sacrificial assistants.

商人之祀先，樂盛而歸之主祭者，樂成而感乎助祭者。

[Continuing the topic:] Profound was Shang's concern with the sacrifices! The beauty of the music they made evoked a sympathetic response in gods and men, and the way of filial piety and reverence was illuminated. This is why the music of Cheng Tang was supreme.

甚矣，商之重祭也。作樂之美至于感神人，而孝敬之道昭矣，此蓋祀成湯之樂至。

[Taking up the discussion:] This is to say, the Shang viewed the realization of their thoughts as filial piety, and in making music viewed the great care they gave to sound as reverence. Only after the three performances were broadly heard were the sacrificial animals offered and cooked.

此意謂，我商以思成爲孝，而作樂以尚聲爲恭，方其三闕正稀廣，牡初薦而始作之也，

[First pair of legs:] When the eight types of instruments were all present, even the small hand drums sounded deep.

When the many types of music were played together, then even the slight flutes sounded sharp.

八音備矣，小而鞀鼓，其亦淵淵乎；

衆樂陳矣，微而管箭，其亦嘒嘒乎。

[Second pair of legs:] Played on the lower platform, they were “all harmonious and blending together,” and aided one another like the five flavors.

Joined on the upper platform, they “accorded with the notes of the sonorous chime,” and were the fundamental image of the four seasons.

作于堂下而有既和且平之休，其相濟如五味也；

協之堂上而有依我磬聲之美，其有母象四時也。

In leading the sacrifices, what child was [unclear]; this was the descendant of Tang. And in performing the rites and playing the music, they captured its feeling oh so reverentially; this was the sound of the music. And possessing the fullness of the virtue that is proclaimed, and receiving what is called the “realization of our thoughts,” does it not lie here? Thus, the ten relationships being fully present, the nine tributes are thereby complete and fulfill their final purpose.

主是祭者，伊誰子於[unclear]哉，此湯孫也。而制禮作樂之得其情穆穆哉，此樂聲也。而美德告功之有其具，

所謂思成之賁而有，不在是哉。殆夫十倫既備，九獻以畢，而其成終也。

[Third pair of legs:] The great bell is sounded and the regulations therefore do not become disordered.

The standing drums are alternately beaten, and the rhythm therefore is always clear.

洪鍾既宣，而條理爲之不濫；

楹鼓交作，而音節爲之常明。

[Fourth pair of legs:] In peace, culture was employed; thus they used banners of bird feathers and animal tails in their adornment, and they had regularity in their “movement and speed.”

In disorder, military was employed; thus they used spears and hatchets in their movement, and they had energy in their “violent movement of the arms and stamping fiercely with the feet.”

泰以文也，則飾以羽旄，而有綴兆舒疾之度；

亂以武也，則動以干戚，而有發揚蹈厲之風。

Those assisting the sacrifices were harmonious. This is because, although:

助是祭者和如乎，蓋雖

[Fifth pair of legs:] The descendants of former generations guests to the king, they nevertheless all took joy in hearing the music.

The gentry holding office yield their power to the court, they nevertheless forget the sorrow of differing generations.

先代之後作賓于王，而皆以聞樂爲喜矣，

在位之士讓德于廟，而忘其異代之悲矣，

[Conclusion:] Could they set themselves before the glorious gods and not look to them as a standard for themselves? Thus, the beginning and end were complete and gods and men were happy. The music of the Shang can be called the supreme music. If you were not sincerely filial, how could you be worthy to participate in it? According to the Record of Rites: “In the wisdom and completeness of their rites and music we see the directing power of heaven and earth.” The poem Na met the sacrificial animal with drums, began the sacrifice with hand-drums, flutes, and bells, and when the sacrifice was complete it employed drums and myriad dances. How could one thing in itself bring all to completion? In this way, when we savor its words, it is like seeing [the Shang people] face to face, and it possesses a lingering tone. This is why Song hymns were simple and antique, and

Zengzi sang them. Nevertheless, Hu was originally Wu. Ji Zha said: “This is the greatness of the sage, but still there something lacking in its virtue.” Confucius discussed the Shao and Wu but did not broach it; he was a man of Yin, so he viewed it as taboo.

況於烈祖之神，而顧不我格哉。是則始終咸備，而神人胥悅。商之樂可謂至樂也。苟非誠孝，亦烏足以與此。抑考記曰，禮樂明備天地官矣。那之詩迎牲以鼓，始祭以鞀，以管，以磬，祭成以庸鼓萬舞，豈一事自爲一成乎。然味其詞，乃若互見，而有餘音者。此商頌所以簡古而曾子歌之也。雖然濩固武也，季札曰聖人之弘也，而猶有慚德。夫子論韶、武而不及者，殷人也，故諱之也。²⁴⁷

Tang’s essay is notable for two reasons. First, in the parallel “legs” of his essay Tang was not so much concerned with advancing an argument as with using verbal euphony to recreate the feeling of the original musical performance—for example, reusing the reduplications *yuanyuan* 淵淵 (“sonorous”) and *huihui* 嘒嘒 (“shrill”) to recreate the sound of blending instruments—leading one overworked examiner to write, “The rhythm is clear and pleasing; reading it makes one forget his weariness” 音節歷歷可聽，讀之令人忘倦。²⁴⁸ Second, in contrast to this euphonious parallelism, Tang concluded his essay with a lengthy section of non-parallel prose, in which he displayed his broad knowledge of the classics outside of his specialty, history, and the philosophers by quoting the *Record of Rites* and then citing discussions of Shang sacrificial music in the *Analects*, the *Zuo Tradition*, and the *Zhuangzi*. Here we have a concrete example of

²⁴⁷ *Jiajing qi nian Yingtian fu xiangshi lu* 嘉靖七年應天府鄉試錄, in *Tianyi ge cang Mingdai keju lu xuankan, xiangshi lu* 天一閣藏明代科舉錄選刊 鄉試錄, vol. 8 (Ningbo: Ningbo chubanshe, 2010), 38-40.

²⁴⁸ *Jiajing qi nian Yingtian fu xiangshi lu*, 38b.

“using ancient-style prose to write exam prose,” in which the varied sources of his non-parallel prose matched the varied sounds of his parallel prose.

Tang fared even better on the subsequent metropolitan exam of 1529, taking first place out of 320 passing students (see Figure 21 to the right) and having five of his essays included in the officially printed exam results. These included a Four Books essay, an essay on the *Poetry Classic*, a memorial announcing the completion of an imperially commissioned poetry anthology, and two policy essays. Because it reveals much about the complex political circumstances surrounding Tang’s success, I would like to especially focus on the first policy essay here. First of all, it should be noted that Tang’s head examiner was Grand Secretary Zhang Cong 张璁 (1475-1539).²⁴⁹ Zhang’s recent rise to power was due to the erudition and loyalty he demonstrated as leader of the pro-Jiajing minority in the Great Rites Controversy (*Da li yi* 大禮議), which hinged on whether the Jiajing Emperor should or should not be posthumously adopted by the Zhengde Emperor, who had recently passed due to complications following a drunk boating accident on the Grand Canal.²⁵⁰ The 1529 metropolitan examination was the first that Zhang presided over as head examiner, and in

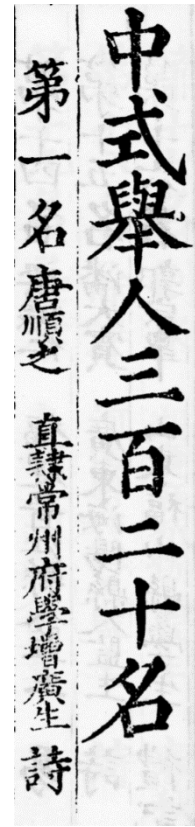


Figure 21: Printed notice of Tang’s first-place finish, featuring his name, school registration, student status, and specialty classic. Detail from *Jiajing ba nian huishi lu*, 15.

²⁴⁹ Tang’s head examiner in the 1528 Southern Metropolitan Region provincial exam was Zhang Cong’s older brother, Zhang Hu 張瑚 (written as Hu 湖 in the record). It is unclear if this played any role in Tang’s success in the metropolitan exam. See *Jiajing qi nian Yingtian fu xiangshi lu*, 1a.

²⁵⁰ For a brief overview of the Great Rites Controversy and Zhang Cong’s role in it, see John Dardess, *Four Seasons: A Ming Emperor and His Grand Secretaries in Sixteenth-Century China* (Lanham Boulder New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 21-26.

his first policy question there was an unmistakable subtext that he wanted experts in ritual texts who recognized the correctness of Jiajing's position in the controversy.

This four-part question may be summarized as follows: First, out of the five major categories of rituals included in the *Rituals of Zhou* (*Zhouli* 周禮), why do only the “military rites” 軍禮 not reappear in the *Etiquette and Ritual* (*Yili* 儀禮)? Second, give a critical appraisal of two Song dynasty compendia of ancient ritual texts.²⁵¹ Third, give a critical appraisal of the *Collected Rites of the Great Ming* (*Da Ming jili* 大明集禮), compiled at the command of the Hongwu Emperor. Fourth (here the politics of the question become quite explicit, if they were not already), discuss in detail the importance of ritual instruction in service of the emperor, who “governs the realm according to filial piety” 皇上以孝治天下.²⁵²

Tang's response to this question showcased his literary skill, classical erudition, knowledge of recent events, and political savvy. Its overall structure mirrors Zhang's question, while simultaneously interweaving complex parallel passages based on its four-part topic sentence:

The sages, in instituting the rites, modeled them on heaven's order, rectified earth's regulations, fixed human relations, and consummated the systematization of all things, thereby establishing the norm of the realm, state, and family.

聖人之制禮也，法天之經也，正地之紀也，定人之倫也，盡物之制也，以建天下國家之極也。²⁵³

²⁵¹ These were the *Yili jingzhuan tongjie* 儀禮經傳通解 (Comprehensive Explication of the Classic and Tradition of Etiquette and Ritual) and *Yili yijing* 儀禮逸經 (Lacunae of the Classic Etiquette and Ritual).

²⁵² *Jiajing ba nian huishi lu* 嘉靖八年會試錄, in *Tianyi ge cang Mingdai keju lu xuankan, huishi lu* 天一閣藏明代科舉錄選刊 會試錄, vol. 4 (Ningbo: Ningbo chubanshe, 2007), 9-10.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, *luwen* 錄文, 29a.

Equally as important as the intricate structure of Tang's policy essay, however, was the explicit endorsement of the *Great Classic for Illuminating Human Relationships* (*Minglun dadian* 明倫大典) that we find in its conclusion. The *Great Classic for Illuminating Human Relationships* was a casebook of the Great Rites Controversy compiled by imperial command under Zhang Cong's supervision, and just completed in the summer of 1528. In the final section of his essay, Tang wrote: "Recently the emperor ordered his Confucian ministers to compile the *Great Classic for Illuminating Human Relationships*. In this book, the meaning [of the rituals] has been illuminated, and their root established" 邇者皇上簡命儒臣纂修明倫大典，是明其義矣，是禮之本立矣。²⁵⁴ It is not hard to see why Zhang Cong came to view Tang as his protégé.

This political background is important because Zhang Cong, in his preface to the officially printed examination results, explicitly connected the Jiajing Emperor's desire to rectify ritual to the efforts by provincial education officials, discussed in chapter 2, to stem plagiarism and strange writing. Zhang's preface outlined three goals for the 1529 metropolitan examination: "First, rectify prose form; second, clarify reliable records; third, make the examiners more discriminating" 一曰正文體，二曰明實錄，三曰慎考官。²⁵⁵ Zhang further explained that "if prose form is not rectified, then reliable records will be difficult to clarify; if the examiners are not discriminating, then prose form will be hard to rectify" 夫文體不正，則實錄難明；考官不慎，則文體難正。²⁵⁶ Zhang viewed

²⁵⁴ Ibid., *luwen* 錄文, 33b.

²⁵⁵ Ibid., preface, 1b-2a.

²⁵⁶ Ibid., preface, 2b.

the enforcement of stylistic standards by examiners as an integral part of establishing control over how and what information circulated among the literati.

Zhang judged the 1529 metropolitan exam a spectacular achievement of these goals, and proof of the Jiajing Emperor's power to transform the gentry. He described the nature of this transformation exam session by exam session:

When we examine the classical essays, we find many achieving understanding in fine points of principle rather than seeking pomposity; thus we know the first session has been transformed. When we examine the documentary, discourse, and legal essays, we find many citing evidence from classical texts rather than seeking strangeness; thus we know that the second session has been transformed. When we examine the responses to the five policy questions, we find many engaging with current events rather than seeking to plagiarize from other essays; thus we know that the third session has been transformed.

觀經義之文，多發明理致，不事浮夸，知初試之變也。
觀詔誥表論判之文，多率循典實，不事奇怪，知再試之變也。觀五策之文，多經略世故，不事剽竊，知三試之變也。²⁵⁷

Tang's new fame as first place metropolitan graduate, referred to as *huiyuan* 會元, placed him at the forefront of this transformation—he had written both how and what the head examiner Zhang wanted him to write. But this fame that Zhang bestowed on Tang would outlive their relationship, and indeed, even Zhang Cong himself. By framing the 1529 metropolitan exam as the successful rectification of exam prose, Zhang Cong helped ensure that Tang Shunzhi would come to represent more than just the most recently successful style; his writing would come to be identified with the objective, universal rules of prose.

²⁵⁷ Ibid., preface, 3a.

Following the 1529 metropolitan exam, printers made Tang's prose into a model for examinees throughout the provinces, a process which seems to have started in Tang's native Changzhou. Besides the officially printed exam results discussed above, non-government printers also began to publish collections of Tang's draft essays, one of the earliest being a collection collaboratively printed by Tang's wife's family and one of his students. The lifelong exam failure Li Yu 李詡 (1506-1593) identified Tang's examination success as a turning point in the circulation of draft exam essay collections, from manuscript to print:

While studying exam writing in my youth, we had no printed draft collections at all. When some bookseller thought to make a profit, he would travel to and from households of government school students, transcribe several tens of their draft essays, and copy out each essay twenty or thirty times. He would come to my family's school, we would choose several of the essays, and for each essay we would pay two or three *wen*. I remember that when Jingchuan [Tang Shunzhi] won first place in the metropolitan exams, his drafts were also printed by his student Cai Ying from Wuxi County, Changzhou, in collaboration with Tang's wife's family.

余少時學舉子業，並無刊本窗稿。有書賈在利考，朋友家往來，鈔得鐙窗下課數十篇，每篇謄寫二三十紙，到余家塾，揀其幾篇，每篇酬錢或二文或三文。憶荊川中會元，其稿亦是無錫門人蔡瀛與一姻家同刻。²⁵⁸

Although this and other early collections of Tang's draft essays do not—to my knowledge—survive, they were likely used as sources for later collections such as the Kangxi-era (c. 1661-1722) *Draft Examination Essays Left by Master Tang Jingchuan* (*Tang Jingchuan xiansheng chuangao* 唐荊川先生傳稿). The editor of this collection

²⁵⁸ Li Yu 李詡, *Jie an laoren manbi* 戒庵老人漫筆, Shunzhi reprint of Wanli edition, juan 8. Cited in Sim Chuin Peng, *Juye jinliang*, 7.

recorded how, in compiling this collection, he started with ninety works from his own household, obtained seventy more from Sheng Yiyun's 盛奕雲 family collection, and then three more from a "large-character edition" 大字本 sent to him by Qian Xiangling 錢湘靈, together representing what he hoped was a more or less complete collection of Tang's draft essays.²⁵⁹

Even more significant than collections of Tang's examination essays were the profusion of ancient-style prose anthologies purporting to bear his annotations, for it was in these anthologies that Tang's examination essay style was converted into a reading method. First place metropolitan graduate Tang became something like a brand name for a transposable way of visually analyzing texts, an anthologist's gaze with the power to reveal the principles of examination prose operating in a wide variety of ancient-style prose. We see this new persona on display in examination aids from the period such as *Correct Account of the Sea of Policy Essays* (*Cehai zhengjuan* 策海正傳), attributed to Tang, and *Quintessence of Policy and Discourse Essays by Famous Worthies of the Tang and Song, Selected and Annotated by Number One Metropolitan Graduate Tang* (*Tang Huiyuan jingxuan pidian Tang-Song mingxian celun wencui* 唐會元精選批點唐宋名賢策論文粹). The latter book was first printed, again, in Tang's native Changzhou by a bookseller surnamed Hu in 1549 (by which time Tang had retired to Jingxi), but due to the integrated Jiangnan book market it was reprinted just a few years later by Ye Jinquan

²⁵⁹ *Tang Jingchuan xiansheng chuanguao* 唐荊川先生傳稿, facsimile of Kangxi-era edition, in *Siku jinhui shu congkan* 四庫禁燬書叢刊, bubian vol. 1 (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 2005), preface, 4a.

葉錦泉, a commercial printer operating on Nanjing's nationally renowned Three Mountain Street 三山街 book market.²⁶⁰

The transposable way of visually analyzing texts which Tang's name came to represent was partly systematized in a key to Tang's annotation method included in the front matter to *Quintessence of Policy and Discourse Essays*. This key is similar to another punctuation key included in a Yuan edition of Zhen Dexiu's *Orthodox Tradition of Literature* titled "The Method of Marking up the Text with Vermilion and White" 用丹鉛法.²⁶¹ Indeed, five decades later the two keys were reprinted side-by-side in the 1591 *Clear Distinctions among Literary Genres* (*Wenti mingbian* 文體明辯), suggesting a belief that Tang, like Zhen Dexiu, had tapped into the orthodox source of literary composition. I have included the key from Ye Jinquan's *Quintessence of Policy and Discourse Essays* in Figure 22 below.

²⁶⁰ Ye's reprint included a "notice to gentlemen scholars" 告白士夫君子 which recorded that the book was circulating in a number of down market reprints: "Notice to Gentlemen Scholars: This book was personally annotated and proofread by Sir Tang. There are no mistakes in how the characters were written. However, those which now circulate in this market have been reprinted on the cheap by unreliable scoundrels, and there are a great many mistakes in the annotations and character forms, nor have they been proofread. They have cheated people out of their money, and besides ordinary book buying gentlemen, I fear they have wasted Sir Tang's effort in finely selecting and annotating. Be sure that you know the genuine article. This cartouche serves as a record. Printed by Ye Jinquan of Zhejiang, residing in Three Mountain Street." 告白士夫君子。此書迺唐公親自批點校正。字樣無差。今被本行。無籍棍徒省價翻刻。批點字畫。差錯甚多。亦無校正。哄騙人財。況價一般買書君子。恐費唐公精選。批點之功。務要辯認端的。此牌爲記。見住三山街。浙江葉氏錦泉。印行 *Tang Huiyuan jingxuan pidian Tang-Song mingxian celun wencui* 唐會元精選批點唐宋名賢策論文粹, late Ming impression of 1549 edition, Princeton University Gest Collection, front matter. On Three Mountain Street, see Lucille Chia, "Of Three Mountains Street: The Commercial Publishers of Ming Nanjing," in *Printing and Book Culture in Late Imperial China*, ed. Cynthia Brokaw and Kai-wing Chow (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 107-51.

²⁶¹ I viewed this punctuation key in the early Ming *Xishan xiansheng Zhen Wenzhong gong Wenzhang zhengzong* 西山先生真文忠公文章正宗 owned by the National Library of China, Beijing. It is translated in Hilde De Weerd, "The Construction of Examination Standards: Daoxue and Southern Song Dynasty Examination Culture" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Harvard University, 1998), 192-93. The two keys are also included in Kuo Shao-yu 郭紹虞, ed., *Wenti mingbian xushuo* 文體明辨序說, (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1998).

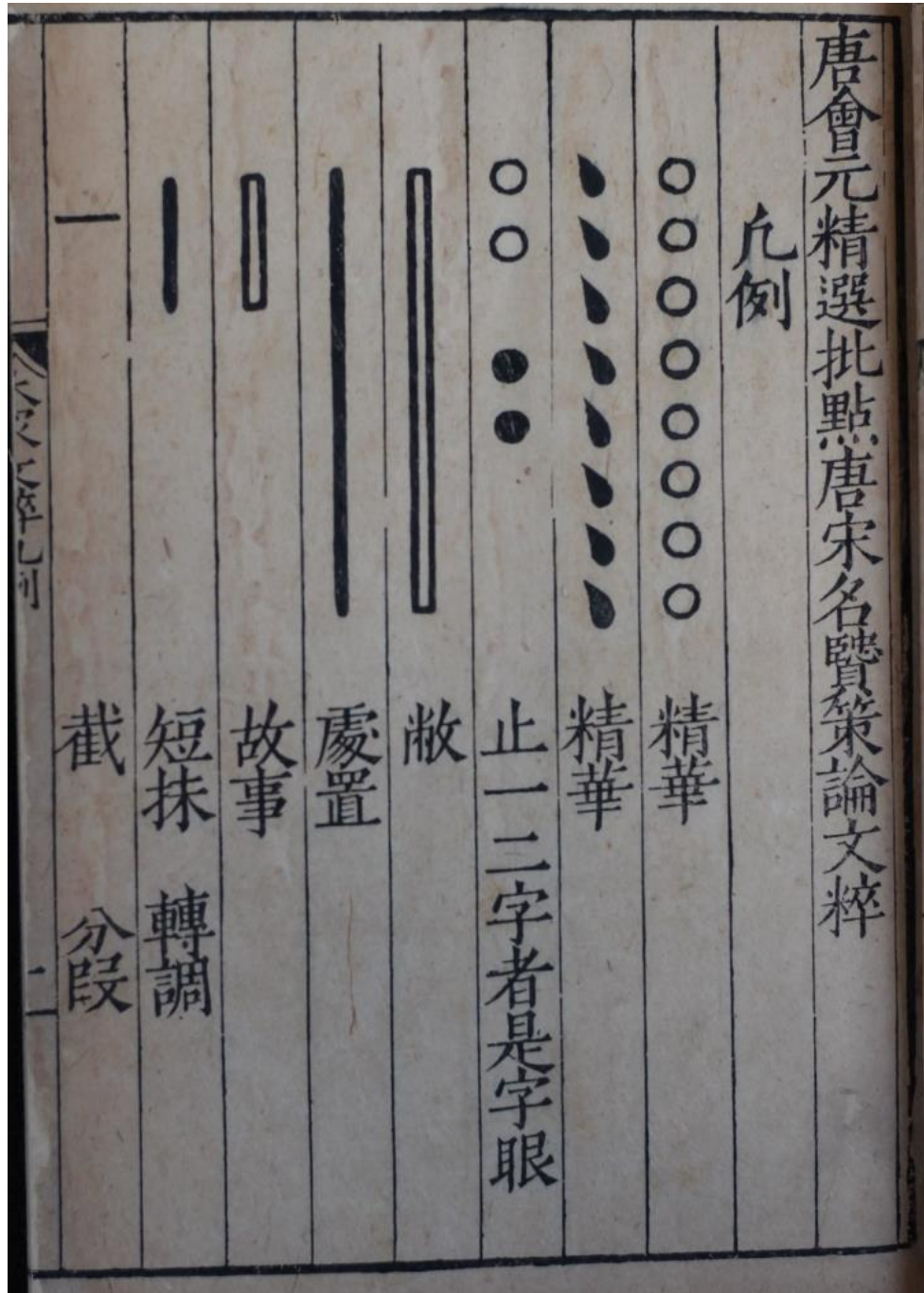


Figure 22: Key to Tang Shunzhi's annotation method. From *Tang Huiyuan jingxuan pidian Tang-Song mingxian celun wencui* 唐會元精選批點唐宋名賢策論文粹, late Ming impression of 1549 edition, Princeton University Gest Collection, front matter.

I have translated this key as follows:

○○○○○○○○	Fine part
、 、 、 、 、	Fine part
○○ ●●	If only applied to one or two characters: key words
▬	Shift
▬	Good arrangement
▭	Allusion
▬	Short line: transition
	Cut: section break

Tang's reading method, visually represented in these annotations, allowed readers to see the basic logic of ancient-style prose as Tang himself saw it; likewise, this key allowed readers to see the logic of Tang's annotation method, and perhaps even incorporate it into their own reading practice. In addition to these marks, *Quintessence of Policy and Discourse Essays* also included numerous interlinear comments by Tang highlighting introductory sentences (*maozi* 冒子), argument (*zheng* 証), and most importantly the antithetical structure of point and counterpoint, or indirect and direct argumentation. As with examination essay analysis, this antithetical structure was described in terms of *qi* 奇 and *zheng* 正 ("indirect" and "direct"), *zhuan* 轉 and *zhi* 直 ("oblique" and "straightforward"), and most commonly *ke* 客 and *zhu* 主 ("guest" and "host"). In contrast to the examination essay, however, this antithetical structure did not explicitly express itself in syntactic parallelism, but rather a more supple parallelism of thought, or lines of argument.

The image below shows how this guest-host analytic method was applied to the essay “Proposal for Not Causing the Good to Become Dispirited” (*Wu ju shan ce* 無沮善策) by the great prose stylist Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037-1101). In Figure 23 below, I have used red to highlight the relevant annotations.

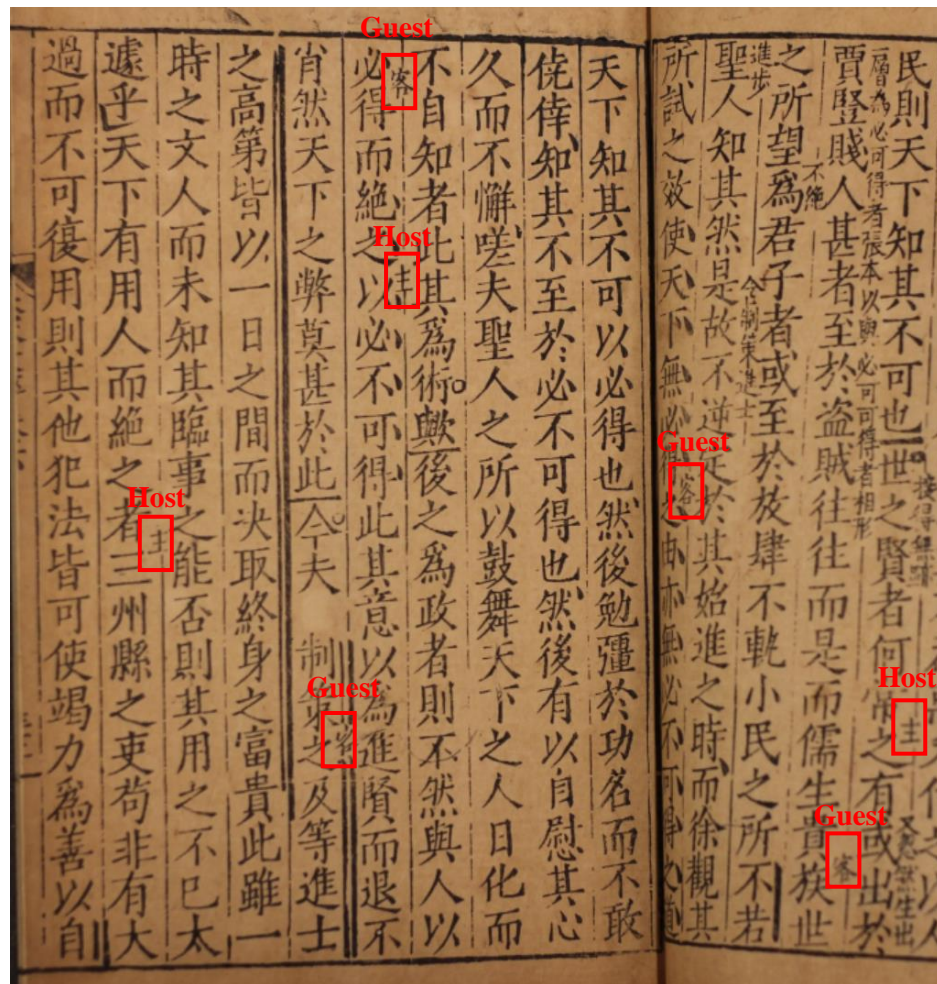


Figure 23: Tang Shunzhi's “guest-host” analysis of Su Shi's “Proposal for Not Causing the Good to Become Dispirited.” From *Tang Huiyuan jingxuan pidian Tang-Song mingxian celun wencui* 唐會元精選批點唐宋名賢策論文粹, late Ming impression of 1549 edition, Princeton University Gest Collection, 6.32b-33a.

Below, I have translated this passage, bolding the “host” line of argument, italicizing the “guest” line of argument, and leaving intermediate sections in regular type:

What constancy is there in the world's worthies? Sometimes they emerge from merchants and lowly people, and even oftentimes from bandits. In contrast, the world views the lofty class of Confucian scholars as gentlemen, yet sometimes they become so wanton and heedless that they are not even the equals of the common people. The sages knew this was so. Therefore, they did not prearrange a time for Confucian scholars to take office, but rather waited to see the results of the examinations, making it so that **no one had a guarantee of obtaining office, nor were they necessarily precluded from obtaining office. Once everyone knew that they would not necessarily obtain office, they all strove for merit and fame, not daring to hope for what they didn't deserve. Once they knew that they were not necessarily precluded from obtaining office, they had a means to console their hearts, and not become lax over time.** Oh! This was the technique by which the sages energized everyone in the realm to daily transform without knowing it themselves. Those who governed in later times were not so. **They gave guarantees of office as favors, and cut people off by precluding them from office.** Their intent was to **bring in the worthy** and *push away the unworthy*, but this was a great error. *Nowadays, when a policy essay is approved and a presented scholar is passed, the space of a single day decides who gets wealth and high status for the rest of his life. Although this is the literatus of the day (sic.), it is not yet known whether he will be able to handle affairs. Is it not too rash to hire him?*

Two of Tang's introductory notes to this essay, not pictured above, describe it as an "interlinked argument" 互說 and observe that "this essay is really interwoven" 此文甚錯綜. The two lines of argument that are interwoven, as Tang's annotations describe, are:

A) not guaranteeing office, and B) not precluding from office. Tang's annotations trace these two lines of argument through Su Shi's historical narrative, beginning with the sages' ancient meritocracy of neither guaranteeing nor precluding, through the lesser rulers of later times who guaranteed office to some and precluded others in a mistaken attempt to "bring in the worthy and push away the unworthy," to Su Shi's own time in

which the granting or withholding of office were determined by a single examination centering on the policy essay. Through guiding the reader's eye through this antithetical structure, anthologies like *Quintessence of Policy and Discourse Essays* used Tang's distinctive reading method to reveal the basic principles of the Ming examination essay operating within the deep structure of past works of ancient-style prose.

We find this same method of annotation in other ancient-style prose anthologies attributed to Tang. For example, in many of the texts included in *Master Xishan, Sir Zhen Wenzhong's Orthodox Tradition of Literature, with Annotations by Master Tang Jingchuan* (*Tang Jingchuan xiansheng pidian Xishan xiansheng Zhen Wenzhong gong Wenzhang zhengzong* 唐荆川先生批點西山先生真文忠公文章正宗), a rather crude edition of *Orthodox Tradition of Literature* produced by the Jianyang commercial printer Guiren zhai 歸仁齋 in the year after Tang's death, we find the same annotations delineating the same discursive structures seen in *Quintessence of Policy and Discourse Essays*, as well as *Prose Compilation*.²⁶² Indeed, some of the annotations are exactly the same as those added to the corresponding texts in *Prose Compilation* (as I have already demonstrated, there was significant overlap between the two anthologies), suggesting the possibility that the Guiren zhai printers had produced *Orthodox Tradition of Literature*,

²⁶² Lucille Chia identifies the Yang shi Guiren zhai 楊氏歸仁齋 as a commercial printer active in the Jianyang area around the Longqing reign period (1567-1572). This would seem to be the same Yang shi Guiren zhai that the bibliophile Ye Dehui 葉德輝 (1864-1927) records as having printed the *Shiwen leiju* 事文類聚 (Classified Collection of Events and Writings) in 1557, as well as a number of other books related to the *Zizhi tongjian* 資治通鑒 (Comprehensive Mirror to Aid in Governance). Ye further records that the Yang shi Guiren zhai published with the studio name Qingbai tang 清白堂, but Lucille Chia's list of several Yangs printing in Jianyang with studio names based on variations of Guiren and Qingbai from the Jiajing period through the late Ming suggests a complexity of organization that would require a separate study to flesh out. Lucille Chia, *Printing for Profit*, 297, 190.

with Annotations by Master Tang Jingchuan by simply excerpting annotations from *Prose Compilation*. In the image below, note how the annotations tracing the alternation between “auspicious” and “inauspicious” in Han Yu’s “Explanation of Capturing the Unicorn” (labels A through G in Figure 24, below) are identical to those already shown in *Prose Compilation* (Figure 20, above):

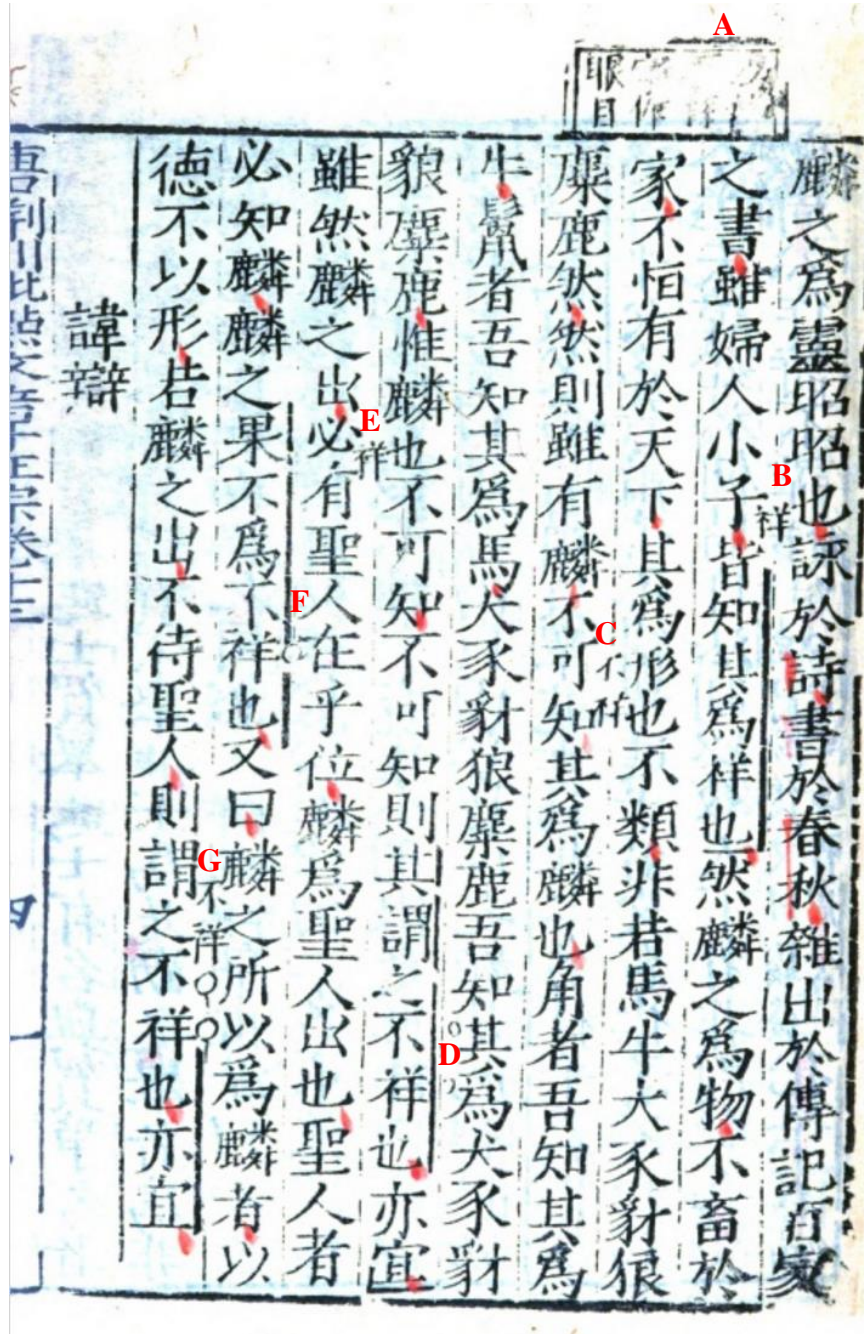


Figure 24: Tang Shunzhi's method of reading Han Yu's "Explanation of Capturing the Unicorn." From *Xishan xiansheng Zhen Wenzhong gong Wenzhang zhengzong* 西山先生真文忠公文章正宗, Ming edition, Keio University, 13:4a.

The power of Tang's analytic method lay, in theory, in its ability to go below the surface of the text and reveal there the unchanging forms operating in the very minds of

the ancients. Wang Ji 王畿 (1498-1583), a prominent disciple of Wang Yangming with whom Tang studied in Beijing, wrote in a preface to *Records of the Grand Historian, Finely Selected and Annotated by Master Tang Jingchuan* (*Tang Jingchuan xiansheng pidian jingxuan Shiji* 唐荊川先生批點精選史記):

I once heard that ancient prose and contemporary prose seem to differ greatly in their styles, but the key point of similarity and difference between them cannot thereby be grasped. What's important lies completely in opening up the aperture of empty illumination. Those who are not illuminated cannot discern this. Thus it is said: "Imitate the meaning; don't imitate the phrasing." I obtained much from this statement. If the reader can awaken to the author's meaning, without losing the manner in which he investigates the facts, leisurely unfolds his argument, shifting and transforming, then contemporary prose is like ancient prose. If the reader does not obtain the meaning and merely follows its phrasing, scrutinizing it sentence by sentence, comparing it character by character, imitating and plagiarizing, like an actor playing Sun Shu'ao by the book, then those who are illuminated will just laugh at him. My friend Master Jingchuan [Tang Shunzhi] once read *Records of the Grand Historian* and *Book of the Han*, selected several tens of pieces exemplifying the finest and most varied aspects of their styles, annotated them, and arranged them as models for exam essay writing.

嘗聞之古文之與時文，其體裁相去若甚遠，而其間同異之機不能以寸。要皆於虛明一竅發之，非明者莫能辨也。故曰，師其意，不師其辭，吾有取焉爾。讀者悟夫作者之意，而不失其用稽實紆徐縱閉變化之態，時文猶古文也。不得其意而徒辭之徇，句句而研之，字字而按之，模擬摘拾，如優人之學孫叔敖適足以來，明者之一噓而已。予友荊川子嘗讀史、漢書，取其體裁之精且變者數十篇，批抹點截以爲藝文之則。²⁶³

²⁶³ *Tang Jingchuan xiansheng pidian jingxuan Shiji* 唐荊川先生批點精選史記, c. 1556-1560 edition, Princeton University Gest Collection, preface.

I wish to suggest, however, that this heavy emphasis on going below superficial form and discovering universal within the living thought of the ancients concealed an anxiety that the ease and speed with which printers reproduced Tang's reading method, combined with the prestige that this reading method enjoyed among examinees, had effectively made the central feature of Tang's identity—his knowledge of prose composition—an instrument that examinees could put on or take off at will, like a pair of eyeglasses. Even after Tang fell from official grace and went into retirement, this second, printed Tang (the "old me," as he called it) continued semi-independently to grow in influence and pre-process an ever broader swatch of ancient-style prose for use in examination study. How did the fleshly Tang respond to this strange fusion between his printed persona and the student reading public?

Above the Rules

In the years following his forced retirement, Tang claimed to have undergone a mental and physical breakdown, and repeatedly described this breakdown in his correspondence as a legacy of the approach to literary composition he learned as an examinee. In a letter to Liu Lin 劉麟 (1475-1561), for example, Tang wrote:

My endowment of *qi* is meager and weak, and what's more, in my early years I gallivanted in the field of letters and art, my sole basis for establishing myself being no more than belabored displays of virtuous conduct—it would seem that I had no understanding yet of the ancients' learning of human nature and destiny. And as for the saying "heart like the spider's strands blowing in the sky, and body like the cicada's shell becoming the withered branch"—thereby dissipating one's essence and spirit amidst old sheets of paper, knowing no other recourse—this sort of thing I

engaged in this day and night. This is why I have grown ill before growing old, and my health declines even when I am not ill. The fact that you were worried for me really might be called “apprehending my own heart-mind before me”! When my years approached forty, amidst a surfeit of illness and anxiety, I finally began to see that the fundamental intent of the learning of the ancients only lies in the apprehension of coherence in one’s nature and feeling, and the key point is no more than the phrase “emphasize stillness.”²⁶⁴ I also consulted the words of the masters of nourishing life [i.e., Daoist self-cultivation texts], and none of their teachings—for example “return to the root,” “recover destiny,” and so on—go beyond this. This is why for these past several years I ceased my studies and discarded my books, I quit my travels and sat in silence, and my essence and spirit began to feel somewhat recovered. But when your entire house is breaking apart and collapsing, it is difficult to repair. One might liken the situation to a profligate rambler who in his early years totally dissipates himself in women and song, dog fighting and horse racing, engaging in every conceivable kind of waste until he turns his head to find that his purse and chest are all empty.

僕稟氣素弱，兼以早年馳騁於文詞技藝之域，而所恃以立身者，又不過強自努力於氣節行義之間，其於古人性命之學，蓋殊未之有見也。至如所謂心似蛛絲游碧落，身如蝸甲化枯枝，以耗散其精神於故紙間不知返者，則日夜有之，是以未老而病，無病亦衰，蓋明公之所以為僕慮者，真可謂先得我心矣。年近四十，疾疢憂患之餘，乃始稍見古人學問宗旨，只在性情上理會，而其要不過主靜之一言。又參之養生家言，所謂歸根複命云云者，亦止如此。是以數年來絕學捐書，息游嘿坐，精神稍覺有收拾處。然宅舍摧塌，修補為難。譬如敗家蕩子，早年終浪於聲色狗馬，糜費百端，及至轉頭，而囊篋枵然矣。²⁶⁵

²⁶⁴ This is an allusion to Zhou Dunyi’s *Explanation of the Diagram of the Supreme Polarity* (*Taijitu shuo* 太極圖說). The full passage reads “Only humans receive the finest and most spiritually efficacious [*qi*]. Once formed, they are born; when spirit (*shen*) is manifested, they have intelligence; when their fivefold natures are stimulated into activity, good and evil are distinguished and the myriad affairs ensue. The sage settles these [affairs] with centrality, correctness, humaneness, and rightness...and emphasizes stillness.” William Theodore De Bary et al., eds., *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, vol. 1 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 675.

²⁶⁵ Tang Shunzhi, “Ji Liu Nantan 寄劉南坦,” in *Tang Shunzhi ji*, 1.185-86. The recipient of the letter, Liu Lin, was a former Minister of Works who, like Tang, suffered from poor health as an official and was

Undoubtedly, Tang did suffer from chronic poor health, and his apparently irreversible failure as an official following his examination success must have caused him great stress. But narrating this breakdown over and over again in his correspondence was also a way for Tang to reinvent himself, to create a new persona distinct from the printed Tang who was then colonizing the literary marketplace. While this printed Tang was incorporating an ever wider and more varied range of ancient-style prose into its insatiable gaze, as well as constantly traveling along merchant routes to new readers, the fleshly Tang, in contrast, “ceased my studies and discarded my books, I quit my travels and sat in silence.”

This self-reinvention, which Tang at times presented as an abandonment of literature, was in reality a literary reorientation, a way of transcending the universal literary laws that the printed Tang was then in the process of divulging. In the spring of 1547 Tang moved his family to the more remote Jingxi 荆溪, where he began a program of appreciating the scenery, “quiet sitting” 靜坐, and fortifying his diet.²⁶⁶ Most importantly, Tang changed his reading habits. He wrote in another letter:

Since the spring I’ve taken up residence in Yangxian. It’s extremely quiet here in the mountains and rivers, and there’s no annoyance of carts and horses coming and going. I go outdoors to climb mountains and visit rivers with a few other people; I come back inside, eat, drink, sleep, and dream. If I have extra leisure, then I do some studying. However, the wide-ranging and miscellaneous memorization of poetry, prose, and the Six Arts that I once forced myself to enjoy,

forced into early retirement. See L. Carrington Goodrich and Chaoying Fang, eds., *Dictionary of Ming Biography*, 1.953-56.

²⁶⁶ See Tang Shunzhi, “Zeng Yanzhong laoseng seng jie xiangren shu shao chang youli Jiangnan wan gui Yanzhong 贈菴中老僧僧解相人術少嘗遊歷江南晚歸菴中,” in *Tang Shunzhi ji*, 1:116; “Da Jiang Wupo tixue 答江五坡提學,” in *Tang Shunzhi ji*, 1:230;

recently I have come to view as a penchant for “lamb-date and salted sweet flag”—not enough to sate one’s hunger, nor what the ancients meant by “inquiring with earnestness and reflecting on things at hand.”²⁶⁷ So I took up Cheng and Zhu’s writings and read them with a calm heart-mind. At first I didn’t enjoy them. Only after reading them for half a month did I come to know their lingering import and flavor, how every character illuminates the profundities of the ancient sages and worthies, and the subtlest and most wonderful principle of all heaven and earth—besides this, there’s not one idle phrase or statement. I regret that I’m by nature slow-witted, and unable to deeply ponder and vigorously practice their words; nevertheless, I enjoy them with all my heart, and will never again dare to lay them aside. Recently, talented and quick-witted gentlemen have come to regard these books as the rotten clichés of aged students, and when they make it to the Hanlin Academy they’re unwilling to look at them. Despite their exacting and bitter efforts in the field of letters, in the end these gentlemen grow old without knowing anything. There’s something distressing in this.

春來卜居陽羨，此中山水絕清，無車馬迎送之煩。出門則從二三子登山臨水，歸來閉門食飲寢夢，尚有餘閒，復稍從事於問學。然詩文六藝與博襍記問，昔嘗強力好之，近始覺其羊棗昌歎之嗜，不足饑飽于人，非古人切問近思之義。于是取程、朱諸先生之書，降心而讀焉。初未嘗覺其好也，讀之半月矣，乃知其旨味雋永，字字發明古聖賢之蘊，凡天地間至精至妙之理，更無一閒句閒語。所恨資性蒙迷，不能深思力踐於其言焉耳。然一心好之，固不敢復奪焉。此類之書，皆近世英敏材辨之士以為老生爛語，至東閣不肯觀。雖其苦心敝精於文字間，而竟不免老而無所聞，有可痛者。²⁶⁸

Just as the printed Tang was venturing farther and farther beyond the official examination curriculum, converting an ever broader range of ancient-style prose into examination prose models for the student public and allowing the student public to

²⁶⁷ An allusion to the *Analects*. See He Zhihua, ed., *Lunyu zhuzi suoyin* 論語逐字索引 (Hong Kong: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1995), 19.6/54/18.

²⁶⁸ Tang Shunzhi, “Yu Wang Yaoqu shu 與王堯衢書,” in *Tang Shunzhi ji*, 1.213-14.

engage, like the old Tang once did, in “wide-ranging and miscellaneous memorization of poetry, prose, and the Six Arts,” the new Tang was developing a new appreciation for the old Cheng-Zhu core of the examination curriculum.

Once the widespread printed reproduction of Tang’s reading method had divulged the rules of ancient-style prose operating across a wide spectrum of texts, Tang discovered a deeper realm of sensibility and a more authentic form of writing in this previously despised Cheng-Zhu corpus. In another letter, he wrote:

Recently, since I have come to dwell in the mountains, I’ve experienced this heart-mind in my daily activities, and feel its significance and savor much more deeply than before. For reasons of social intercourse, I’ve also sometimes found myself unable to avoid writing, but whenever I express my thoughts it’s like I clearly see the ancients’ intent in writing, and so have come to understand that there’s a “treasury of the true eye of the dharma” independent of all the authors throughout history. From beginning to end, there’s a natural regularity to its rhythm which is spontaneously without misstep, but its intent can only be apprehended beyond the tracks of brush and ink, so you can only talk about it with one who possesses godlike understanding. Those literati of recent times who talk about the Qin and Han, and Ban Gu and Sima Qian, they’re mostly talking in their sleep.
惟近來山中間居，體念此心於日用間，覺意味比舊來頗深長耳。以應酬之故，亦時不免於為文，每一抽思，了了如見古人為文之意，乃知千古作家別自有正法眼藏在。蓋其首尾節奏，天然之度，自不可差，而得意於筆墨溪徑之外，則惟神解者而後可以語此。近時文人說秦說漢，說班說馬，多是寢語耳。²⁶⁹

Note Tang’s emphasis on the exclusivity of this realm: “you can only talk about it with one who possesses godlike understanding,” with “godlike understanding” (*shenjie* 神解) recalling “godlike insight” (*shenming* 神明) from his *Prose Compilation* preface.

²⁶⁹ Tang Shunzhi, “Yu Lianghu shu 與兩湖書,” in *Tang Shunzhi ji*, 1.222.

Indeed, godlike powers of perception are not only required to access this realm, they also seem to be a prerequisite for authentic self-expression.

Tang took up this topic at greater length in a letter to Mao Kun 茅坤 (1512-1601), the future compiler of *Transcribed Prose of the Eight Masters of the Tang and Song* (*Tang-Song ba da jia wen chao* 唐宋八大家文鈔). Mao had previously written to Tang asking for his secret to writing, and enclosing a few writings of his own for Tang to comment on, as was customary. Tang responded:

I have carefully read through your writings, and when it comes to the letters in which you discuss writing with others, your method is quite similar to my own, and although in them there are small points of difference, in time these should work themselves out—we need not chatter on about them. As for your suspicions that I formerly was someone who desired to be skilled in writing, but will not tell people how to seek skill at writing—I can explain this. What you have seen of me is mostly the old me, but have you never once seen the me with withered form and ashen heart-mind? How could I deceive you! By not telling people how to seek skill in writing, I do not mean to say that it should be completely abandoned, or take writing as something that is totally unnecessary. Rather, all I'm saying is that in the primary task of a scholar there must be a distinction between beginning and end, root and branch. [Confucius said:] “In letters I am perhaps equal to other men, but have not yet attained to the comportment of the superior man”—for the time being I dare not discuss this case; I will merely discuss the matter from the perspective of a litterateur.²⁷⁰ Although the rules of arrangement and alternations between indirection and direct statement [in a piece of writing] have their own special method by which they may be reproduced, when it comes to the internal essence, veins, and marrow [of a piece of writing], then unless you have purified the original spring of your heart-mind, stand independent of external

²⁷⁰ This is an allusion to Confucius's statement that “In matters of culture I might be the equal of other men, but as for moral comportment I have not yet attained the status of a gentleman.” 文，莫吾猶人也。躬行君子，則吾未之有得。 See He Zhihua, ed., *Lunyu zhuzi suoyin*, 7.33/17/23.

appearances, and possess vision with peerless powers of discernment, you won't be able to partake. Now here are two people: the one person's heart-mind base is transcendent, and he is what I have called someone who possesses vision with peerless powers of discernment, even if he never once wields the paper and brush, intones, and studies how to compose, and instead only directly expresses his inner thoughts, casually writing them out as if he were writing a letter to a family member, although it may perhaps be coarse and clumsy, nevertheless it will completely lack that smoke-fire, sour-salty manner, and so will be a peerless piece of writing. The other person remains a man of the mundane world, even if he studies writing with single mind and purpose, and is totally correct in the regular layout of his writing, yet when we turn it all around and examine it we find that it's just a few phrases from some old granny's tongue, and if we seek what is called authentic essence and timeless vision, we find it totally lacking. Thus although it is skillfully written it unavoidably must be placed in the low class. This is the original color of writing.

熟觀鹿門之文，及鹿門與人論文之書，門庭路徑與鄙意殊有契合，雖中間小小異同，異日當自融釋，不待喋喋也。至如鹿門所疑於我本是欲工文字之人，而不語人以求工文字者，此則有說。鹿門所見於吾者，殆故吾也，而未嘗見夫槁形灰心之吾乎？吾豈欺鹿門者哉！其不語人以求工文字者，非謂一切抹殺，以文字絕不足為也；蓋謂學者先務有源委本末之別耳。文莫猶人，躬行未得，此一段公案，姑不敢論，只就文章家論之。雖其繩墨佈置，奇正轉摺，自有專門師法；至於中一段精神命脈骨髓，則非洗滌心源、獨立物表、具古今隻眼者，不足以與此。今有兩人，其一人心地超然，所謂具千古隻眼人也，即使未嘗操紙筆呻吟學為文章，但直抒胸臆，信手寫出，如寫家書，雖或疏鹵，然絕無烟火酸餡習氣，便是宇宙間一樣絕好文字；其一人猶然塵中人也，雖其專學為文章，其於所謂繩墨佈置，則盡是矣，然番來覆去，不過是這幾句婆子舌頭語，索其所謂真精神與千古不可磨滅之見，絕無有也，則文雖工而不免為下格。此文章本色也。²⁷¹

²⁷¹ Tang Shunzhi, "Da Mao Lumen zhixian er," in *Tang Shunzhi ji*, 1.294-95.

In asking Tang to divulge the secret of composition he discovered in his youth, when he “formerly was someone who desired to be skilled in writing,” Mao Kun was essentially addressing the printed Tang—what the Tang in this very letter calls “the old me.” The old Tang would have measured Mao’s writings against a universal prose, and pointed out where Mao deviated. The new Tang, in contrast, immediately dismisses the reproducible aspects of composition (the “rules of arrangement” and “alternations between indirection and direct statement” which the printed Tang traced in his annotations) as superficial, of secondary importance to the text’s “internal essence, veins, and marrow.” To access this level of the text, however, the reader must be a special kind of reader, with a special sense for the text.

Rather than explain how to cultivate a sense for the deep form of the text, Tang instead emphasized differences between people who have this sense and people who do not have this sense. Those who have this sense are able to write well effortlessly, dashing off their thoughts “as if writing a letter to a family member.” Those who lack this sense exert great effort in following the rules and regulations, yet produce only an awkward, inferior prose. Note how Tang took advantage of the private letter’s generic tolerance for non-classical diction and syntax to exemplify the former kind of writing—effortless to the point of “coarseness” (*shulu* 疏鹵)—in the perfectly deployed vernacular insult “it’s just a few phrases from some old granny’s tongue” 不過是這幾句婆子舌頭語.

For Tang, only those with a heightened sensitivity to the text—“godlike insight,” or “godlike understanding”—could access the deep structure of literary composition, and express themselves without violating the laws of prose, which Tang wrote “proceed from

nature, cannot be altered, and brook no deviation” 出乎自然而不可易者，則不容異也

.²⁷² This model of sensibility denied the privilege of self-expression, on the one hand, to the student public which sought composition models in anthologies. Tang dismissed this sort of imitation by comparing its practitioners to poor farmers dressing up as rich merchants:

If what one gathers and stores within oneself is not pure, then one will never really have vision that will endure through the ages. And those who trace shadows and copy what others say, who “conceal the introduction and steal the conclusion” are like poor people borrowing the clothing of rich people, or rustic farmers adorning themselves in the manner of great merchants. In exerting the utmost effort to adorn themselves, they completely reveal their repugnant bearing.

然非其涵養畜聚之素，非真有一段千古不可磨滅之見，而影響勦說，蓋頭竊尾，如貧人借富人之衣，莊農作大賈之飾，極力裝做，醜態盡露。²⁷³

At the other extreme, Tang also denied the privilege of self-expression to those who, lacking the sensibility required to perceive the rules of prose, assumed that they did not exist. In one letter, he compared them to incompetent musicians:

There are incompetent apprentices who perceive that master musicians seem to not vary [their breath and tone], but mistakenly believe that they really do not vary [their breath and tone]. Thus [these incompetents] directly blow forth their breath and tone, and just forcibly proceed in one direction never turning back the other way—this is pounding out the sound of rotten wood on a wet drum!

有賤工者，見夫善為樂者之若無所轉，而以為果無所轉也，於是直其氣與聲而出之，戛戛然一往而不復，是擊腐木濕鼓之音也。²⁷⁴

²⁷² Tang Shunzhi, “Dong Zhongfeng shilang wenji xu,” in *Tang Shunzhi ji*, 2.466.

²⁷³ Tang Shunzhi, “Da Mao Lumen zhixian er,” in *Tang Shunzhi ji*, ed. Ma Meixin and Huang Yi (Hangzhou: Zhejiang guji chubanshe, 2014), 1.295.

²⁷⁴ Tang Shunzhi, “Dong Zhongfeng shilang wenji xu,” in *Tang Shunzhi ji*, 2.466.

In both examples, those lacking sensibility not only fail to achieve their aims and humiliate themselves in front of those in the know, even worse, they cannot even perceive their own failure and humiliation. And so the more effort they exert, the more shamefully they expose their own ineptitude. In both cases—with those who appropriate rules without the requisite qualifications as well as with those who deny the real existence of rules—Tang is repositioning himself as an authority on how to read and write. In this way, although later scholars would extol Tang for promoting literary “expressionism,” Tang was in fact reserving the privilege of self-expression for those who, like himself, possessed the refined sensibility necessary to access the deep rules of prose; by the same token, Tang was also attempting to neutralize the socially destabilizing potential of archaism by dismissing most of his contemporaries as mere posers, incapable of authentic literary expression.

In short, Tang’s emphasis on sensibility did not evince loyalty to some actual faction of writers that really existed in the world—a “Tang-Song school,” or an “expressionist” school—rather, it was a form of gatekeeping, of limiting access to authentic literary experience and thereby distinguishing himself within the literary marketplace. At the same time, due to the fame Tang won in the 1529 metropolitan exams and sustained through his social writing and anthologizing, the language and logic of Tang’s strategy of self-distinction rapidly spread through the world of examination writing, as well as literati society more broadly.

Within the realm of examination writing, Tang’s influence is evident in Yuan Huang’s 袁黃 (1533-1606) examination essay manual *Literary Regulations from the*

School for Cultivating the Arts (Youyi shu wengui 游藝塾文規). Yuan had studied exam writing with Tang himself, an experience he described in the chapter “In Prose, You Must Seek Instruction from an Eminent Worthy” 文須請教前修:

All the world’s myriad affairs have laws and starting points. Even with trivial arts, you must learn them from the right person in order to become a famous master—how much more so with literature! I recall, when I was eighteen *sui* old, I saw Master Tang Jingchuan at the Zen hall in Tianning Temple, in Jiaying, immediately made obeisance to him as my teacher, and went back and forth to Hangzhou with him for two months. The master’s learning generally took coherence as its basis, and whenever he wrote an essay, it would always have some timeless idea. When you watched him develop the meaning of the prompt, he would always approach the authentic and penetrate the subtle. From morning to night, I took up my books and studied exam writing with him.

世間萬事皆有法度，皆有起源。即小小技藝亦須得人傳授，方可名家，況文章乎。憶予十八歲見荊川唐先生于嘉興天寧寺之禪堂。即禮之為師，相隨至杭往返幾兩月。先生之學，大率以理為宗。每作一文，必要一段千古不可磨滅之意。見其闡發題意，往往皆逼真入微。我朝夕執書問業學。²⁷⁵

In some respects, Yuan’s was a typical exam essay model book, providing lists of extracts from draft essays categorized by essay section, as shown already in chapter 2.

But Yuan’s manual also included chapters such as “The Samadhi of Exam Writing” 舉業

三昧, in which Yuan recommended improving one’s exam prose through a half year

program of “quiet sitting” 靜坐 similar to Tang’s own program of self-care in Jingxi.

Through this program, Yuan wrote, one might “expunge vulgar impurities and savor

²⁷⁵ *Youyi shu wengui 游藝塾文規*, 1602 edition, 1.5.

one's personality" 掃除鄙穢，涵泳性靈, eventually attaining a state wherein, having appreciated a wide range of ancient texts, the distinction between antiquity and modernity disappears in the act of expressing "authentic feeling" 真情.²⁷⁶ Thus the strategy of self-distinction Tang developed to transcend his former public persona as Tang the number one metropolitan graduate was in the end re-appropriated by the student reading public.

Beyond the world of examination writing, however, the effects of Tang's "discovery" of a new realm of sensibility in ancient prose were even more extensive, and helped generate a new, distinctively late Ming counter-canon. In the next chapter, this point will take us from the center of the anthology market to its most remote margins.

²⁷⁶ Ibid., 1.4.

CHAPTER 4: ON THE MARGINS OF CANON: ANCIENT-STYLE *XIAOPIN*

ANTHOLOGIES AND JIANGNAN PRINT CULTURE

In a preface to the Ming essay anthology *Literary Amusements from the Charming Remote Boudoir* (*Meiyou ge wenyu* 媚幽閣文娛), the seventeenth-century literatus Tang Xianyue 唐顯悅 (1622 *jinshi*) wrote:

In antiquity there were no selections [i.e. anthologies] of prose. Only after *Selections of Refined Literature* was there the genre of selections. The mental labors of the various masters [of writing] are all gathered together in the selector's vision, just as the luster of the moon and stars all come to rest in the stilled water, and bright red and deep green are all received in the opened mirror. One might say that the sky is vast and the stars scarce; the earth is deep and the blossoms few. For this reason, the difficulty of selection is several times that of composition.

文古無選；自昭明始，而後世因有選體。蓋諸家之心力，以選者之眼光注焉。正如月輝星燦，水止而咸歸；紅豔綠濃，鏡開而俱受。即謂廣昊靡繫，厚地鮮葩可也。故選之難，倍於作。²⁷⁷

In this preface, Tang set out to compare “composition” 作 and “selection” 選 and determine which is more valuable. The passage above represents Tang's main point. After tracing the origin of the “selection” genre to the *Selections of Refined Literature* (*Wenxuan* 文選) and illustrating the relationship between composition and selection through a series of poetic images (just as mirror and water reflect blossoms and stars, the

²⁷⁷ *Meiyou ge wenyu chuji* 媚幽閣文娛初集, facsimile of late Ming edition, in *Siku jinhui shu congkan* 四庫禁燬書叢刊, jibu vol. 172 (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 1997), 1. Tang's preface is transcribed and punctuated in Zhu Jianxin 朱劍心, ed., *Wan Ming xiaopin xuanzhu* 晚明小品選注 (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1936), 67.

anthologist's vision encompasses the labors of many authors), Tang laid out his argument: that selection is harder than composition.

In good exam essay style, Tang continued to develop this argument through a series of counterpoints. After asking how the “single lines and lone phrases” 隻句單詞 collected in Liu Yiqing's 劉義慶 (403-444) *A New Account of Tales of the World* (*Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語) could hope to usurp the place of the great works of Sima Qian 司馬遷 (135 or 145 BCE-86 BCE) and Ban Gu 班固 (32 CE-92 CE), Tang proceeded to make a case for those “single lines and lone phrases.”²⁷⁸ Comparing them to the piece of calligraphy that Wen Yuke 文與可 (1018-1079) showed Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037-1101), which “was only a few *chi* in length, but possessed the force of one thousand *chi*,” Tang argued that “one character can be taken as a teacher, and three phrases can be taken as an official.”²⁷⁹ Tang believed that these *xiaopin* 小品 (as Zheng Yuanxun 鄭元勳 [1604-1645], the actual compiler of *Literary Amusements*, called them in his preface) were every bit the equal of Sima Qian and Ban Gu, writing: “[Yuanxun] once said: ‘The *xiaopin* school has flourished in the Ming: short in length yet remote in spirit; sparing in ink but with lasting import.’”²⁸⁰

²⁷⁸ I use Richard Mather's translation of the title. See Richard Mather, trans., *A New Account of Tales of the World*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1976).

²⁷⁹ For the Su Shi passage, see Su Shi, *Dongpo quanji* 東坡全集, Wenyuange Siku quanshu edition, 36.22b.

²⁸⁰ Chen Jiru also quotes Zheng Chaozong referring to the book's contents as *xiaopin* in his preface. See Yang Ye, trans., *Vignettes from the Late Ming*, xvii-xix.

Twentieth-century scholars expended much energy trying to explain what the word *xiaopin* meant to Tang Xianyue's contemporaries.²⁸¹ As I argued in the introduction to this dissertation, this academic project was closely linked to the centrality of *xiaopin* in the New Literature movement, as well as a broader tendency among May Fourth intellectuals to cast themselves as heirs to what they saw as liberal trends in late Ming society.²⁸² The 1920s saw the publication of essay collections such as Zhou Zuoren's 周作人 (1885-1967) *One's own Garden* (*Ziji de yuandi* 自己的園地) and Bingxin's 冰心 (1900-1999) *To the Young Reader* (*Ji xiao duzhe* 寄小讀者), as well as influential critical essays such as Zhou Zuoren's 1921 article "Belles-Lettres" (*Meiwen* 美文) and Lu Xun's 1925 translation of Kurigawa Hakuson's 廚川白村 *Out of the Ivory Tower* (*Zōge no tōwo dete* 象牙の塔を出て, translated as *Chule xiangya zhi ta* 出了象牙之塔), with its description of the essay form as an intimate conversation between slipper-wearing friends in front of a fireplace.²⁸³ Around the same time the famous Japanophile Lafcadio Hearn

²⁸¹ As several scholars have noted, Ming people borrowed the word *xiaopin* from *A New Account of Tales of the World*, where it referred to the "shorter version of the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra*" 小品般若波羅蜜經. Richard Mather, trans., *A New Account of Tales of the World*, 114: "There was a monk who had just arrived from the North who was fond of virtuoso discussion. He encountered Zhi Dun at the Waguan Temple while the latter was lecturing on the 'Smaller Version' of the *Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* [小品]." See also Ts'ao Shu-chuan 曹淑娟, *Wan Ming xingling xiaopin yanjiu* 晚明性靈小品研究 (Taipei: Wenjin chubanshe, 1988), 21-30; Yang Ye, trans., *Vignettes from the Late Ming*, xviii; Victor Mair, ed., *The Columbia History of Chinese Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 6-7; Philip Kafalas, *In Limpid Dream*, 129-30. As Craig Clunas has noted, the word *zhangwu* 長物 ("superfluous things") was also borrowed from *A New Account of Tales of the World* and applied to contemporary phenomena in a similar manner, see Craig Clunas, *Superfluous Things: Material Culture and Social Status in Early Modern China* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004), 78-9.

²⁸² Wu Chengxue 吴承学 and Li Guangmo 李光摩, eds., *20 Shiji Zhongguo xueshu wencun: Wan Ming wenxue sichao yanjiu* 20 世纪中国学术文存 晚明文学思潮研究 (Hubei jiaoyu chubanshe, 2002), 1-56; Lynn Struve, "Modern China's Liberal Muse: The Late Ming," *Ming Studies* 63 (April 2011), 38-68.

²⁸³ David Pollard, *A Chinese Look at Literature*, 117; David Pollard, *The Chinese Essay* (London: Hurst & Company, 2000), 15-16; Susan Daruvala, *Zhou Zuoren and an Alternative Chinese Response to Modernity*, 229.

pronounced the novel “dead” and identified the “sketch” as the signature literary form of modern life.²⁸⁴ By 1928, *xiaopin* had become so popular among urban readers that Zhu Ziqing 朱自清 (1898-1948) would conclude that the “*xiaopin* essay” 小品散文 had become the most successful and popular modern Chinese literary genre.²⁸⁵

The 1930s proved Zhu doubly correct, as literary polemics came to center on the political status and function of the *xiaopin* essay. On the one side, Lin Yutang’s 林語堂 (1895-1976) magazines *Analects* (*Lunyu* 論語) and *The Human World* (*Renjian shi* 人間世) achieved great popularity among urban youth with their distinctive brand of apolitical, urbane humor. On the other, writers for the leftist magazine *Taibai* 太白 used the *xiaopin* essay alongside Lu Xun’s polemic *zawen* 雜文 to promote socially and politically engaged prose. For these writers, as Lu Xun put it in his 1933 article “The Crisis of the Xiaopin Essay” (*Xiaopinwen de weiji* 小品文的危機), *xiaopin* essays should be deployed like “daggers and spears” 匕首與投槍 against the enemy.²⁸⁶

Within this context, to reiterate, there was essentially no distinction between historical scholarship on Ming literature and contemporary literary polemics. Reading literature was necessarily presentist, and the history of literature necessarily teleological. For example, Zhu Ziqing explained the success of modern *xiaopin* historically, arguing that that prose was, after all, the most orthodox form of literature in premodern China,

²⁸⁴ On Lafcadio Hearn, see David Pollard, *A Chinese Look at Literature*, 116.

²⁸⁵ Zhu Ziqing 朱自清, “Lun Zhongguo xiandai de xiaopin sanwen 论中国现代的小品散文,” in *Xiaopinwen yishu tan* 小品文艺术谈, ed. Li Ning 李宁 (Beijing: Zhongguo guangbo dianshi chubanshe, 1990), 35-40. For an excellent overview of the rise of *xiaopin* in the 1920s and 30s, see Charles Laughlin, *The Literature of Leisure and Chinese Modernity* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2008).

²⁸⁶ Charles Laughlin, *The Literature of Leisure and Chinese Modernity*, chapters 4 and 5.

and that this “historical tendency” had simply persisted into the modern period.²⁸⁷

Conversely, Zhou Zuoren described late Ming *xiaopin* as a manifestation of literature’s inherent tendency toward self-expression (particularly in times of corrupted or fragmented political power), a tendency which was only fully realized in the May Fourth literary reforms.²⁸⁸

This confluence of new literature polemics and academic scholarship set the agenda for research on Ming literature throughout the twentieth century. For example, in a widely cited study of Yuan Hongdao 袁宏道 (1568-1610) and the Gong’an 公安 school, Chou Chih-p’ing overtly channels Zhou’s work to argue that “[t]he true significance of Yuan Hongdao’s literary theory lies precisely in this coincidental similarity to Hu Shi’s views, for it is just this kind of historical coincidence that convinces me that the trend of self-expression which originated with the Gong’an school had never ceased to develop during the past four centuries. Like a subterranean current flowing beneath the vast desert of classicism in the Qing dynasty, the trend emerged like a great fountain in the early twentieth century.”²⁸⁹

It is not hard to imagine why Zhou Zuoren’s defense of literary liberalism still felt relevant in the 1980s—even today, it remains a moving work of literary criticism—but scholars have begun to chafe at the presentist blind spots of the May Fourth approach to *xiaopin* that it exemplifies. For example, Rivi Handler-Spitz has argued for a comparative

²⁸⁷ Zhu Ziqing, “Lun Zhongguo xiandai de xiaopin sanwen,” in *Xiaopinwen yishu tan*, ed. Li Ning, 35-40.

²⁸⁸ Zhou Zuoren, *Zhongguo xin wenxue de yuanliu* (Shanghai: Huadong shifan daxue chubanshe, 1995), 13; Susan Daruvala, *Zhou Zuoren and an Alternative Chinese Response to Modernity*, 114; Liu Lu 刘璐, “‘Jiang’ chulai de ‘yuanliu’—Zhou Zuoren *Zhongguo xin wenxue de yuanliu* ‘讲’出来的‘源流’——周作人《中国新文学的源流》,” *Wenshi zhishi* no. 10 (2013), 76-84.

²⁸⁹ Chou Chih-p’ing, *Yuan Hung-tao and the Kung’an school*, 121-122.

study of early modern *xiaopin* and the Western essay.²⁹⁰ Philip Kafalas goes so far as to doubt “that there was a thing called late-Ming *xiaopin*,” arguing that “it is almost entirely a retroactive creation of twentieth-century readers and essayists and anthologizers who defined it largely through their own process of selecting scattered texts from amongst the collected works of Ming (and earlier) writers.”²⁹¹ Instead, Kafalas chooses to read the seventeenth-century *xiaopin* classic *Tao'an mengyi* 陶庵夢憶 (*Dream Reminiscences of Tao'an*) as “a particular mode of memory,” concluding that the category of *xiaopin* “seems necessarily under-defined and obscuring of all the more complex (and more interesting) roles that the content of *Dream Reminiscences* served for its author and its readers.”²⁹²

In this chapter, I will make two basic arguments. First, I will argue the modern meaning of *xiaopin* as a short, informal essay on a private or trivial subject was not a modern invention, but a late Ming invention. In chapter 1, my anthology network visualization revealed the existence of a marginal sub-network of what I called “ancient-style *xiaopin*” anthologies. I refer to these books as “ancient-style *xiaopin*” anthologies, first, because their editors selected from a fairly narrow range of texts, texts which were very seldom included in government school ancient-style prose anthologies, and second, because several of the editors’ prefaces to these books explicitly refer to their selections

²⁹⁰ Rivi Handler-Spitz, “Short Prose Forms in a Global Sixteenth-Century Context,” *Prose Studies: History, Theory, Criticism* 32, no. 2 (2010), 112. See also Rivi Handler-Spitz, “Diversity, Deception, and Discernment in the Late Sixteenth Century: A Comparative Study of Li Zhi’s ‘Book to Burn’ and Montaigne’s ‘Essays’” (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Chicago, 2009).

²⁹¹ Philip Kafalas, *In Limpid Dream*, 8.

²⁹² Ibid., 139. Cf. Philip Kafalas, “Weighty Matters, Weightless Form: Politics and the Late Ming Xiaopin Writer,” *Ming Studies* 39 (1998), 52, where Kafalas argues, in the vein of Zhou Zuoren, that late Ming *xiaopin* were “part of a larger emerging conceptual mode which act[ed] to legitimize a realm of personal being apart from political activity.”

as *xiaopin* or *guwenci xiaopin* 古文辭小品 (“ancient-style *xiaopin*”). In other words, these anthologists were not only practically favoring the same, distinctive type of text, they also shared a name for this type of text: *xiaopin*.

Second, I will argue that the emergence of this new textual category was closely linked to the efforts of commercial anthology makers to shape the development of what I, following Dorothy Ko, refer to as the Jiangnan reading public. While “[i]n geographical terms,” Ko writes, “the heart of seventeenth-century Jiangnan coincided with the drainage area of lake Tai in the provinces of Zhejiang and Jiangsu,” and “[i]n the administrative hierarchy, the prefectures of Suzhou, Songjiang, Changzhou, Jiading, and Huzhou...with the occasional inclusion of the neighboring Zhenjiang,” nevertheless “[i]t was less a physical area with unequivocal boundaries than an economic way of life and a cultural identity” associated with “affluence and urbanity.”²⁹³

In the sixteenth-century, the rapid development of commercial printing in the Jiangnan region’s urban centers (as well as in nearby Jianyang and Nanjing, both of which were integrated into Jiangnan markets) coincided with a rise in demand for books, a drop in price, and an expansion and diversification in readership.²⁹⁴ Ko hesitates to go so far as to call this readership an “emerging culture” or “counterculture,” preferring instead to emphasize continuity between “the Confucian tradition and the urban culture that arose in late Ming Jiangnan.” Nevertheless, the unmistakably “subversive wit” that Yuming He has highlighted in Jiangnan print culture does provide some support for

²⁹³ Dorothy Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers*, 20.

²⁹⁴ Ibid., 34-37. On Jiangnan-Jianyang-Nanjing market integration, see Lucille Chia, *Printing for Profit*, 19-21, 31, 141, 149-53.

viewing the Jiangnan reading public as a counterculture, by which I mean sharing a worldview self-consciously opposed to a perceived mainstream.²⁹⁵ In this chapter, I will generally refer to the intended audience of ancient-style *xiaopin* anthologies as the Jiangnan reading public; however, I will also highlight how, by promoting and enjoying an explicitly “minor” (*xiao* 小) tradition, anthologists and printers were encouraging this public to think of itself as a counterculture.

Before we begin, we should note a few general characteristics of these anthologies, how they differ from the anthologies discussed in chapters 2 and 3, and how these differences reflect a different reading public. First, the books discussed in chapters 2 and 3 were generally produced earlier, predominately in the sixteenth century; in contrast, the books I will discuss in this chapter were all produced in the late-sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Second, most of the books discussed in chapters 2 and 3 were produced by networks of local officials, students and teachers from local schools, and sometimes local literati; in contrast, the books I will discuss in this chapter were commercially printed. Third, the anthology printing projects discussed in chapters 2 and 3 were generally spearheaded by provincial education intendants, who wished to provide ancient-style prose textbooks for a government student population diffused over a vast geographic area; in contrast, the books I will discuss in this chapter were produced and read by the residents of Jiangnan urban centers. In short, this chapter’s focus on ancient-style *xiaopin* anthologies takes us to a new world, historically, geographically, and socially.

²⁹⁵ Dorothy Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers*, 66; Yuming He, *Home and the World*, 52.

At the same time, the world of government schools, examination writing, and universal rules of prose always remained (negatively) present in the selection strategies of ancient-style *xiaopin* anthologies, and indeed, in the term *xiaopin* itself. One collector of ancient-style *xiaopin* noted how, in contrast to most ancient-style prose anthologies, which contain only “solemn, great works” (*chongrong dapian* 春容大篇), his anthology contains *xiaopin*.²⁹⁶ Here, the clear juxtaposition of *dapian* and *xiaopin* (already noted by Ts’ao Shu-chuan) necessitates reading *xiaopin* as something like “minor works.”²⁹⁷ In this use of the term *xiaopin*, we see the Jiangnan reading public ironically adopting the dominant system of literary values in order to transcend this system and define a new set of literary values unassimilable by the the dominant system.²⁹⁸ If we could show the network visualization from chapter 1 to the makers of ancient-style *xiaopin* anthologies, they would not have been surprised at the marginal position of their products; they were deliberately and self-consciously creating a counter-canon that both reflected and contributed to the development of an imagined counterculture. We can only make sense of their editorial choices by recognizing them as a communal act of differentiation from a national mainstream. In other words, ancient-style *xiaopin* anthologies did not just reflect the differentiation of a self-aware Jiangnan reading public; they served as instruments for

²⁹⁶ Zhang Mingbi 張明弼, preface to *Hexuan mingwen zhu* 合選明文廬, 1627 edition, National Central Library, in *Guoli zhongyang tushuguan shanben xuba jilu ji bu*, zongji lei, 204.

²⁹⁷ Ts’ao Shu-chuan, *Wan Ming xingling xiaopin yanjiu*, 39-41.

²⁹⁸ Wai-Yee Li, citing Zhang Yanyuan’s 張彥遠 words from his *Lidai minghua ji* 歷代名畫記, summarizes this attitude: “Only the category of the useless can establish the individual’s freedom to define a private realm of significance, which is in turn a response to mortality.” See Wai-Yee Li, “The Late Ming Courtesan: Invention of a Cultural Ideal,” in *Writing Women in Late Imperial China*, ed. Ellen Widmer and Kang-I Sun Chang (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 52. Cf. Zhou Zuoren’s claim that “literature is a useless thing” 文學是無用的東西 in Zhou Zuoren, *Zhongguo xin wenxue de yuanliu*, 14.

engineering that differentiation.

In the first section of this chapter, I will look at several prefaces to ancient-style *xiaopin* anthologies, paying particular attention to the famous late Ming literatus Chen Jiru's 陳繼儒 (1558-1639) prefatory remarks to his *Ancient Writings from Beyond the Ranks* (*Guwen pinwai lu* 古文品外錄), in order to highlight the desire for new ways of seeing, feeling, and responding to literary texts. Next, I will turn to the actual contents of one ancient-style *xiaopin* anthology, titled *Finest Specimens of Prose* (*Wen zhi* 文致), in order to show how editors and printers developed these new forms of affect, first, through constructing a new corpus of ancient-style prose—an ancient-style *xiaopin* counter-canon—and second, by using paratexts to prime new kinds of readings. Finally, I will connect the prominent place of women's writing in ancient-style *xiaopin* anthologies with the prominent place of writing women in the Jiangnan reading public, while also showing how the gaze of the male anthologist reproduced male control over the public world of literature within the textual realm.

New Literary Experiences

Throughout the sixteenth century, anthologists of ancient-style prose collected more or less the same corpus of texts and annotated them in more or less the same ways. Particularly in government schools, the ceaseless movement of education intendants and the books they carried with them over time produced a surprising uniformity of ancient-style prose reading materials in government schools across a vast geographic area. As shown in chapter 1, students in Yunnan, Guangdong, Fuzhou, and Shanxi were reading

more or less the same classical essays. Moreover, students who scored high in the civil service examinations tended, like Tang Shunzhi, to become nationally famous annotators of prose, their distinctive methods of annotation identified with these seemingly objective, universal rules of prose composition.

As these rules and methods of prose composition became widely disseminated, giving form to and permeating the national writing public, they began to lose prestige in the highly literate and economically developed area of Jiangnan. In contrast to the consensus-building social logic of government school anthology production teams, Jiangnan commercial printers began looking for ways to distinguish their anthologies from the pack and create new niche markets. We see one example of this strategy in the front matter of the Tianqi-Chongzhen era (c. 1620-1644) anthology *Ancient-Style Prose, Compiled and Abridged* (*Guwen heshan* 古文合刪):

When certain delicacies are already spread out, continuing to serve them over and over can make you lose your appetite. Nowadays, commercial anthologies of ancient prose have emerged in droves, and those [essays] which are already widely appreciated inevitably come to be mocked as “good songs sung too many times.” Thus pieces like [Dongfang Shuo’s] “Responding to the guest’s objections,” [Yang Xiong’s] “Justification against ridicule,” [Ban Gu’s] “Response to a guest’s jest,” [Zhuge Liang’s] “Memorial on sending out the troops,” and [Li Mi’s] “Memorial expressing my feelings” are so familiar that they are no longer fresh, and so none of them will be included.

珍饈既錯，再陳易厭。古文至今，坊本疊出，已經膾炙未免有好曲多唱之譏，是以客難、解嘲、賓戲，出師、陳情等文，數見不鮮，概不載入。²⁹⁹

²⁹⁹ *Guwen heshan* 古文合刪, 1621-1644 edition, Princeton University Gest Collection, front matter.

Analysis of the 34 anthology tables of contents visualized in chapter one mostly bears out these criticisms: “Responding to the Guest’s Objections” was included in 15 of the 34 anthologies, “Justification Against Ridicule” in 16, “Memorial Expressing My Feelings” in 20, and “Memorial on Sending Out the Troops” in 25 (strangely, “Response to a Guest’s Jest” was included in only 3). Note also how the dismissal of these works—first, as delicacies served too often, and then as “good songs sung too many times”—evokes the atmosphere of an urbane party, where connoisseurs have come expecting something new and interesting.

Already, in the mid-sixteenth century, Tang Shunzhi had noted how more and more literati seemed to be living out their lives with a total insensibility to pain and discomfort, a “full body numbness” 遍身麻木 sapping them of the strength to cultivate themselves and transform their environments.³⁰⁰ Likewise, ancient-style *xiaopin* anthologists emphasized the inability of the “great works” which filled mainstream literary anthologies to move and excite readers. Prolonged exposure to the same essays exemplifying the same rules seemed to cause only a numbing of the senses and a depressive boredom. One anthologist wrote that, while reading great works, “you always want to toss them aside and take a quick nap” 輒欲擲去，覓一快睡, but when you read *xiaopin*, “your heart opens and your eyes become bright” 便心開目明.³⁰¹ Another described how, when he read Su Shi’s informal essays, “my thoughts and interest overflowed tirelessly” 意趣津津不倦, but when he was faced with discourse essays and

³⁰⁰ Tang Shunzhi, “Yu Cai Baishi langzhong er 與蔡白石郎中二,” in *Tang Shunzhi ji*, 1.254.

³⁰¹ Zhu Zhijun 朱之俊, preface to *Hexuan mingwen zhu* 合選名文麈, 1627 edition, National Central Library, in *Guoli zhongyang tushuguan shanben xuba jilu ji bu*, zongji lei, 203.

“words of ‘rectifying one’s heart-mind’ and ‘making one’s intent sincere’” 正心誠意之言 (a reference to the *Greater Learning*, as well as the Neo-Confucian curriculum of government schools more broadly), “then my eyes would become glazed and my spirit depressed, and in a stupor I would wish to sleep” 則目眩神煩，昏昏欲睡。³⁰²

So what was the intended emotional impact of reading *xiaopin*? Some anthologists described this impact in an extremely bombastic way, one claiming that *xiaopin*

...are able to make people live and make people die; they are able to make people laugh and make people cry; they are able to make lands as distant as the four seas and nine continents, and even people living a thousand autumns and a hundred generations later want to go wild, want to leap, want to bow, want to kill, without being able to restrain themselves.

能令人生，能令人死，能令人笑，能令人泣，能令四海九州之遠，及千秋百祀之後之人，欲狂、欲躍、欲拜、欲殺、而不能自禁。³⁰³

We should not be surprised by the resemblance between this passage and, for example, the playwright Tang Xianzu’s 湯顯祖 (1550-1616) claim that even dreamt feeling can bring the dead back to life, or the commercial editor Feng Menglong’s 馮夢龍 (1574-1646) claim that reading *xiaoshuo* 小說 narratives “will gladden you, astonish you, move you to sad tears, rouse you to song and dance; they will prompt you to draw a sword, bow

³⁰² Liu Shilin 劉士麟, preface to *Wen zhi* 文致, 1621 edition, National Central Library, in *Guoli zhongyang tushuguan shanben xuba jilu ji bu*, zongji lei, 273.

³⁰³ Zhu Zhijun 朱之俊, preface to *Hexuan mingwen zhu* 合選明文麈, 1627 edition, National Central Library, in *Guoli zhongyang tushuguan shanben xuba jilu ji bu*, zongji lei, 203.

in reverence, cut off a head, or donate money.”³⁰⁴ All of these texts were produced by and for a writing public that was seeking new ways of feeling, new ways of seeing the world, and new ways of acting.

We should also note that there was a distinct cultural politics—perhaps even snobbery, depending on who you asked—operating in these types of statements, which we are in danger of missing if we uncritically rely on May Fourth liberation narratives. To *xiaopin* anthologists, these two kinds of reading materials—texts that depress, numb, and put to sleep, versus texts that excite, stimulate, and spur to action—occupied different social spheres, and spoke to different sensibilities. The former kind of text was usually associated with the world of “village pedants” 村學究 and examination writing. For example, one anthologist contrasted his selection strategy against that village pedants who, “mired in the language of examination writing” 泥於舉業之說, pathetically “pluck one or two ornate terms—like ‘a solitary duck in rosy clouds’—and deem them the finest prose of all time” 拾一二綺語，如落霞孤鶩等句，遂謂千古致文。³⁰⁵ Again, recall Tang Shunzhi’s statement to Mao Kun, that the essential rules of prose were only accessible to those with an extremely refined sensibility. As with Tang Shunzhi’s image of the poor farmer gussied up in the clothes of the rich merchant, what made the figure of the village pedant “laughable” 可矚 to *xiaopin* aficionados was his inability to recognize the banality and triteness of what he was reading. In contrast, the *xiaopin* aficionado

³⁰⁴ Translated in Feng Menglong, *Stories Old and New: A Ming Dynasty Collection*, trans. Shuhui Yang and Yunqin Yang (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000), 6.

³⁰⁵ Liu Shilin 劉士麟, preface to *Wen zhi* 文致, 1621 edition, National Central Library, in *Guoli zhongyang tushuguan shanben xuba jilu ji bu*, zongji lei, 273.

commanded a twice-removed vantage point, from which he could laugh at both the text itself as well as the mindless way it was consumed. Ancient-style *xiaopin* anthologies made this seemingly extra-exclusive vantage point generally available to the Jiangnan reading public.

One ancient-style *xiaopin* anthology preface is particularly worthy of attention, because rather than simply reifying unequal sensibilities to reinforce a shared sense of Jiangnan cultural superiority, as the prefaces quoted above do, it explores how poor taste is produced historically through an ongoing process of anthologizing. This preface was written by Wang Heng 王衡 (1562-1609), a native of Taicang 太倉 and son of the former grand secretary Wang Xijue 王錫爵 (1534-1614), but most of the preface consists of Wang quoting a speech by his friend and teacher, the famous literatus Chen Jiru 陳繼儒 (1558-1639).³⁰⁶ In this speech, Chen describes his goal in compiling the book that Wang was authoring a preface to, the ancient-style *xiaopin* anthology *Ancient Writings from Beyond the Ranks*.

Chen begins his speech with the statement that “there are no people who do not eat and drink, but few are able to know flavor” 人莫不飲食也，鮮能知味也, an allusion to the *Greater Learning* passage “When the mind is not present, we look and do not see; we hear and do not understand; we eat and do not know the taste of what we eat” 心不在焉，視而不見，聽而不聞，食而不知其味。³⁰⁷ But whereas the *Greater Learning*

³⁰⁶ The close relationship between Wang and Chen is touched upon numerous times in Jamie Greenbaum, *Chen Jiru (1558-1639): The Background to Development and Subsequent Uses of Literary Personae* (Boston: Brill, 2007).

³⁰⁷ Wang Heng 王衡, preface to *Guwen pinwai lu* 古文品外錄, Ming edition, Harvard-Yenching Library, 1b; Zhu Xi, *Sishu zhangju jizhu*, 8.

passage promotes “self-cultivation” 修身 through stilling the passions, Chen is worried that literature seems to have less and less power to stir the passions—less and less flavor, in keeping with the gastronomic metaphor.

Rather than naturalize the difference between those who can taste flavor in literature and those who cannot, Chen seeks the origins of this difference historically:

The practice of annotating and selecting [literary texts] began with Zhaoming’s *Selections of Refined Literature*, and after Zhaoming selections [i.e. anthologies] were never more numerous than in the Song dynasty. Nevertheless, the fact that Zhaoming selected ancient writings according to [the tastes of] the Six Dynasties is due to the Six Dynasties, and the fact that the gentlemen of the Song selected ancient writings according to [the tastes of] the Song is due to the Song. The important point is that writing is restricted by the times, and discernment is restricted by writing—it’s not just one person restricting his or her own discernment.
雌黃而去取之，自昭明文選始，昭明以降選者莫煩於宋。然昭明以六朝選古文也，猶之乎六朝也；宋諸公之以宋選古文也，猶之乎宋也。要之乎世囿文，文囿識矣，非但自囿其識。³⁰⁸

Chen’s argument here is that individuals, for example village pedants, do not individually choose to place limits on their literary “knowledge” (*shi* 識), and thus embarrass themselves by praising common clichés as extraordinary works of genius. Rather, the individual’s literary knowledge always comes to him or her twice “restricted” (*you* 囿): the times restrict writing, and writing restricts knowledge of writing. These nested restrictions are most evident in literary anthologies, which for Chen always express the tastes and textual resources of finite historical periods, rather than universal laws of

³⁰⁸ Ibid., 1-2.

literature.

Thus, whereas the anthologist Zhen Dexiu saw in the history of “literary writing” 文辭 a tendency toward ever greater “transformation” 變, Chen Jiru saw in the history of literary anthologizing a tendency toward ever greater homogeneity, tedium, and narrow-mindedness.³⁰⁹ Chen describes this process as a conditioning of readers’ senses over time:

When what is delivered to the ears and eyes is ever more restricted and limited, then over the course of a hundred generations, it’s not just that the judgment of readers becomes limited; it’s that the wondrousness of the authors from before those hundred generations—all their expressions and smiles and muscles and bones and veins—will also be limited therein, with no way out.

通耳而通目之抑且囿，百世以下，讀者之識非但囿讀者之識，抑百世以前，作者之神情笑貌筋骸脈絡，種種生動之妙亦囿焉，而不得出矣。³¹⁰

For Chen, as anthologies include a narrower and narrower range of texts, they not only inculcate a narrower and narrower knowledge of literature in readers, they also imprison past authors in the obscurity of literary history, where narrow-minded readers have neither the capability nor the desire to seek them out. Eventually, this loss of diversity from the tradition (here Chen adopts an almost ecological tone) and narrowing of readers’ judgment leads to reading becoming a monotonous, mindless, mechanical repetition of the already familiar, common knowledge, until the very ability to sense flavor seems to atrophy and disappear.

³⁰⁹ Zhen Dexiu, “Wenzhang zhengzong gangmu,” in *Wenzhang zhengzong*, Wenyuange Siku quanshu edition, 1a.

³¹⁰ Wang Heng 王衡, preface to *Guwen pinwai lu* 古文品外錄, Ming edition, Harvard-Yenching Library, 1b; Zhu Xi, *Sishu zhangju jizhu*, 2.

Obviously, as an anthologist, Chen did not believe that anthologies necessarily had to play this restricting, homogenizing, numbing role. Chen was deeply interested in the relative, shifting quality of what seems “new” (*xin* 新) and what seems “stale” (*chen* 陳) to a community of readers:

What constancy is there in the transformations of newness and staleness into one another—so that when the new becomes stale, the stale once more becomes new? The common people deeply enjoy newness. To not have them “renew themselves daily” amongst empty discussions and displays of petty intelligence, the learning of belabored disputation, but rather have them “renew daily” their enjoyment amongst the writings of the ancients, is this not what was meant by “ascending to consider [the ancients]”? 新陳之相化，其亦何常之有，至於新者陳，而陳者乃始復為新，民之好新甚矣。不使之日新於虛談小慧、剽剝離跂之學，而使日新其好於古人之文章，亦猶尚論之遺意也。³¹¹

Here, Chen shifts back into the language of the *Greater Learning*, specifically its famous first line: “The Way of greater learning lies in illuminating one’s brilliant virtue, renewing the people, and coming to rest in supreme goodness” 大學之道，在明明德，在親民，在止於至善, as well as the inscription on the ruler Cheng Tang’s 成湯 bath tub urging “daily renewal” (*ri xin* 日新).³¹² Ironically, here Chen follows Zhu Xi’s older and orthodox reading of *qin* 親 (“stay close to”) in the phrase *qin min* as *xin* 新 (“renew”), rather than Wang Yangming’s newer literal reading, in order to argue for “renewing the

³¹¹ Wang Heng 王衡, preface to *Guwen pinwai lu* 古文品外錄, Ming edition, Harvard-Yenching Library, 1b; Zhu Xi, *Sishu zhangju jizhu*, 3.

³¹² Ibid., 3, 5.

people” by means of their very love for the new.³¹³ That is, Chen uses the very language of the examination curriculum to dismiss that curriculum as “empty discussions and displays of petty intelligence.”

Mired in this recently invented “learning of belabored disputation,” Chen argues, readers have forgotten many ancient works, but this very process of forgetting has in turn invested those ancient works with the power of novelty. Citing Mencius’s famous passage on “making friends with the ancients” 尚友, Chen implies that his readers to use this feeling of novelty to disengage from their contemporary, horizontal community, and realign themselves with another community extending vertically back through time.³¹⁴ At the same time, this desire to disengage was shared among the readers of Chen’s anthology, and served as the basis for a new community.

In the conclusion to his speech, Chen describes the feeling of newness he wishes his anthology to convey in more detail:

Thus I selected essays from the Han dynasty on which had not been collected by any previous anthologist, and which were of remote import and profound feeling, and obtained three hundred pieces. Perhaps, even beyond their verbal beauty, they capture the transformations of historical eras...In all of this, my primary desire was simply for students to know that beyond the nine provinces there are another nine provinces, and beyond the nine realms there are another nine realms, and so kindle their intelligence and prevent them from becoming bored.³¹⁵

余故擇兩漢以來之文，未經前人採拾，而旨遠情深者，得三百篇。其或詞章之外，別具世變。[...] 凡余所以如

³¹³ For Wang Yangming’s reading, see Wang Yangming, *Instructions for Practical Living, and Other Neo-Confucian Writings*, trans. Wing-tsit Chan (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), 5.

³¹⁴ For the Mencius passage, see He Zhihua, ed., *Mengzi zhuzi suoyin*, 10.8/55/25.

³¹⁵ The reference to “nine realms” seems to be an allusion to the *Avatamsaka Sutra*, or *Huayan jing* 華嚴經, translated in Thomas Cleary, trans., *The Flower Ornament Scripture: A Translation of the Avatamsaka Sutra* (Shambhala, 1993), 405-06.

是者，要欲學者知九州之外復有九州，九畧之外復有九畧，引伸鼓舞其聰明，使之不倦而已。³¹⁶

Here, the feeling of disengaging from the present and traveling back into a defamiliarized past is reimagined spatially, as a sudden realization that what you supposed were the borders of the world were only “restrictions” (*you* 囿, to use Chen’s earlier word) placed on your knowledge, and that, in reality, the world is much more extensive and complex than these limits would have you believe.

Throughout Chen’s speech, we see him praising the revivifying effects of experiencing temporal and spatial displacement. Another preface to Chen’s anthology deftly combines these two aspects, the spatial and the temporal, in the image of the Peach Blossom Spring, a physical space created by refugees from a past world:

[Reading this book] causes the eyes of readers to be filled with a brilliant light, so that, with hearts aflutter, they want to enter into it. It’s like if you were on some normal riverbank, and then suddenly arrived at the Peach Blossom Spring of Wulin, and as you awoke to the dissimilarity of their institutions and rituals, you could not bear to depart.
令見者煥爛滿眼，便欲跳心而入，如處尋常川陸，忽到武陵桃花源，祇覺其禮數不同、尊俎異，而不認去也。³¹⁷

Over and over again, Chen urges his readers to seek self-renewal through reading novel literary works, recognizing the limits of their received knowledge, and thereby allowing themselves to be imaginatively transported to alien cultures. In all of these statements—which often deceptively seem to be directed at individuals seeking individual self-

³¹⁶ Wang Heng 王衡, preface to *Guwen pinwai lu* 古文品外錄, Ming edition, Harvard-Yenching Library, 1b.

³¹⁷ Yao Shilin 姚士粦, preface to *Guwen pinwai lu* 古文品外錄, Ming edition, Harvard-Yenching Library, 7a.

definition, rather than a reading public seeking collective definition—Chen was deliberately and self-consciously using the anthology form to create a new reading public, one with an awareness of historical variations in taste, with an appreciation for marginalized works, and with a desire for self-renewal through novel literary experiences.

Finally, before turning to the actual contents of one of these anthologies, I wish to highlight once more the resemblance between the logic of Chen's speech and the logic of commercial printing. In contrast to the literary anthologies printed by territorial education officials, who were always looking to build networks through building an ancient-style prose common core for the student reading public, and so tended to be conservative in their selection and annotation strategies, commercial anthology printers were more likely to seek to distinguish themselves in the market by offering readers new texts and new experiences. At the same time, just as a superficial emphasis on uniformity in some government school anthologies masked an increasing diversity of content, with some commercial anthologies a superficial emphasis on novelty masked a high uniformity of content within the ancient-style *xiaopin* anthology subnetwork.

This contradictory aspect of Jiangnan print culture, where praise for originality and genuineness in itself became a hackneyed cliché, is evident, for example, in how the printer of one ancient-style *xiaopin* anthology combined together passages from the two prefaces quoted above and falsely attributed the finished product to another famous

ancient-style prose anthologist, Chen Renxi 陳仁錫 (1581-1636).³¹⁸ Nor do the contents of this anthology, titled *A Disclosure of the Uninhibited Class* (*Yipin yihan* 逸品繹函), differ much from Chen Jiru's *Ancient Writing from Beyond the Ranks*—even the titles are similar. Thus, the tastes of the Jiangnan reading public, while always defined in an adversarial way against the mainstream, also demonstrated a high degree of internal uniformity.

New Texts

What did these tastes look like? Let us consider one self-identified ancient-style *xiaopin* anthology. *Finest Specimens of Prose* was compiled in the early seventeenth century by Liu Shilin 劉士麟. In a preface dated 1612, Liu expressed many of the same motivations that we saw in the prefaces above: boredom with the exam-focused, neo-Confucian prose of “village pedants” 村學究, and a preference for seemingly trivial, historically overlooked, but emotionally stimulating—perhaps even therapeutic—prose. Liu summarized his selection strategy:

In going through present and past, I have not attempted a comprehensive view of all the universe. Rather, I am obsessed with the trivial. If this collection attains the full extent of prose then so be it. Have I not left behind the famous flowers to tarry among rarer blossoms?

予下上今古，不爲宇宙大觀，而乃嗜淺淺，是集致則致矣，不幾舍名花而耽幽卉乎？³¹⁹

³¹⁸ Attributed to Chen Renxi 陳仁錫, preface to *Yipin yihan* 逸品繹函, late Ming edition, National Central Library, in *Guoli zhongyang tushuguan shanben xuba jilu ji bu*, zongji lei, 225.

³¹⁹ Liu Shilin 劉士麟, preface to *Wen zhi* 文致, 1621 edition, National Central Library, in *Guoli zhongyang tushuguan shanben xuba jilu ji bu*, zongji lei, 274.

In another undated preface by a friend of Liu's, this friend described Liu as "obsessed with antiquity, and even more obsessed with ancient-style *xiaopin*" 嗜古，尤嗜古文辭小品，and compared this obsession to the Song dynasty eccentric Mi Fu's 米芾 (1051-1107) obsession with a small, strange rock that he kept in his sleeve.³²⁰ Again, in contrast to anthologies claiming to contain universal laws of prose, the emphasis here is on the idiosyncratic, private value of the selections for one individual, or at most a coterie of "aficionados" 同好者.

Liu's anthology was printed twice in the 1620s. The first of these was a polychrome edition printed by the Min 閔 family of Wuxing 吳興 (hereafter referred to as the Min edition).³²¹ Like most of the Min family polychrome printings, *Finest Specimens of Prose* was luxuriously produced. The main text, printed in black ink, was arranged on the page in eight rows with eighteen characters per row, within a printed area

³²⁰ Jin Weicheng 金維城, preface to *Xinjuan Wang Yongqi xiansheng pingxuan gujin wenzhi* 新鐫王永啟先生評選古今文致, late Ming edition, National Central Library, in *Guoli zhongyang tushuguan shanben xuba jilu ji bu, zongji lei*, 274. "Mad Mi's stone obsession" 米顛[癲]嗜石 refers to an anecdote about Mi Fu, in which the inspector Yang Jie 楊傑 reprimands Mi for spending all his time admiring strange stones instead of attending to his official duties. After Mi Fu takes several strange stones from his sleeve and shows them to Yang, asking about each in turn "how could you not love such a stone?" 如此石安得不愛, Yang suddenly confesses "it's not just you who loves them, I also love them" 非獨公愛我亦愛也, snatches the stone from Mi's hand, and immediately leaves in his cart. The tale is recorded in a Ming dynasty *Shishuo xinyu*-style anecdote collection: He Liangjun 何良俊, *Heshi yulin* 何氏語林, Wenyuange Siku quanshu edition, 26.21-2.

³²¹ In his 1621 preface, Min Yuanqu 閔元衢 writes that he "once read *Finest Specimens of Prose* and admired the beauty of its titles/topics and the grace of its phrasing," but regretted that it contained many orthographic errors and was "excessively short" 致短. Before he could enlarge it, however, he found that his relatives Min Yiping 閔以平 and Min Botao 閔伯弢 had already done so. Shen Shengqi's 沈聖岐 1621 preface also records that after Liu Shilin presented his selections to his "fellow aficionados" 貽諸同好, Min Yiping and Min Botao added their comments and then requested a preface from Shen, who also made numerous comments on the selections. See *Wen zhi* 文致, 1621 edition, Harvard-Yenching Library, preface. For a short catalogue and overview of Min family editions, see Tao Xiang 陶湘, ed., "Ming Wuxing Minban shumu 明吳興閔板書目," in *Taoshi shumu congkan* 陶氏書目叢刊 (Wujin Taoshi, 1933). Cf. Sören Edgren, "Chinese Rare Books and Color Printing," 33-7.

of 20.5 x 13.9 cm. This left ample blank space between characters, makes the book easier and more pleasurable to read, and prevented the page from feeling crowded despite the frequent use of interlinear annotations. Visible overprinting indicates that it was printed using two sets of blocks, one for black ink and one for red, and so would have been extremely expensive to purchase.

Shortly after the Min edition, a second edition of *Finest Specimens of Prose* was printed by Wang Yu 王宇 (dates unclear), a native of Fujian.³²² Wang made several significant changes to the Min edition. First, the Wang edition was printed in only black ink. By eliminating one whole set of blocks, this choice alone would have reduced production costs immensely. Second, the printed area of each folio in the Wang edition is slightly smaller than the Min edition (the Wang edition is 280.8 square cm.; the Min edition is 284.95 square cm.), but in the Wang edition 36 more characters of main text are crammed onto each half folio page (the Wang edition's half folio layout has 9 rows with 20 characters per row; the Min edition's half folio layout has 8 rows with 18 characters per row). The Wang edition also includes many more comments, some of them equal in length to the essay on which they comment. The overall effect is much more text on much less book; the Min edition's luxurious white space has disappeared, and instead we are left with text and annotation all crowded together and printed in the same color. The

³²² In his preface, dated 1623, Wang claimed that during his year as an “urban recluse” 市隱 in Hangzhou he made the acquaintance of Liu Shilin, “perceived that he was a scholar of elegance and charm” 識爲韻士, and was deeply moved by his writing. Subsequently he obtained a copy of *Finest Specimens of Prose*, made revisions to it, and printed it. Although Wang does not tell us how or where he obtained his copy, the fact that it includes annotations from the Min edition suggests that Wang was working from the Min edition. Wang Yu, preface to *Xinjuan Wang Yongqi xiansheng pingxuan gujin wenzhi* 新鐫王永啟先生評選古今文致, late Ming edition, National Central Library, in *Guoli zhongyang tushuguan shanben xuba jilu ji bu, zongji lei*, 275.

fact that *Finest Specimens of Prose* migrated down market within a few years of its first appearance should tell us that the exclusive literary sensibility embodied in it was by no means economically exclusive. In other words, while the physical qualities of the book might have stratified along economic lines, the tastes expressed in the book were shared across the economically diverse Jiangnan reading public. Figures 25 and 26 below show how Su Shi's "Red Cliff Rhapsody" (*Chibi fu* 赤壁賦) appears in each of the two editions, to illustrate the above comparison.

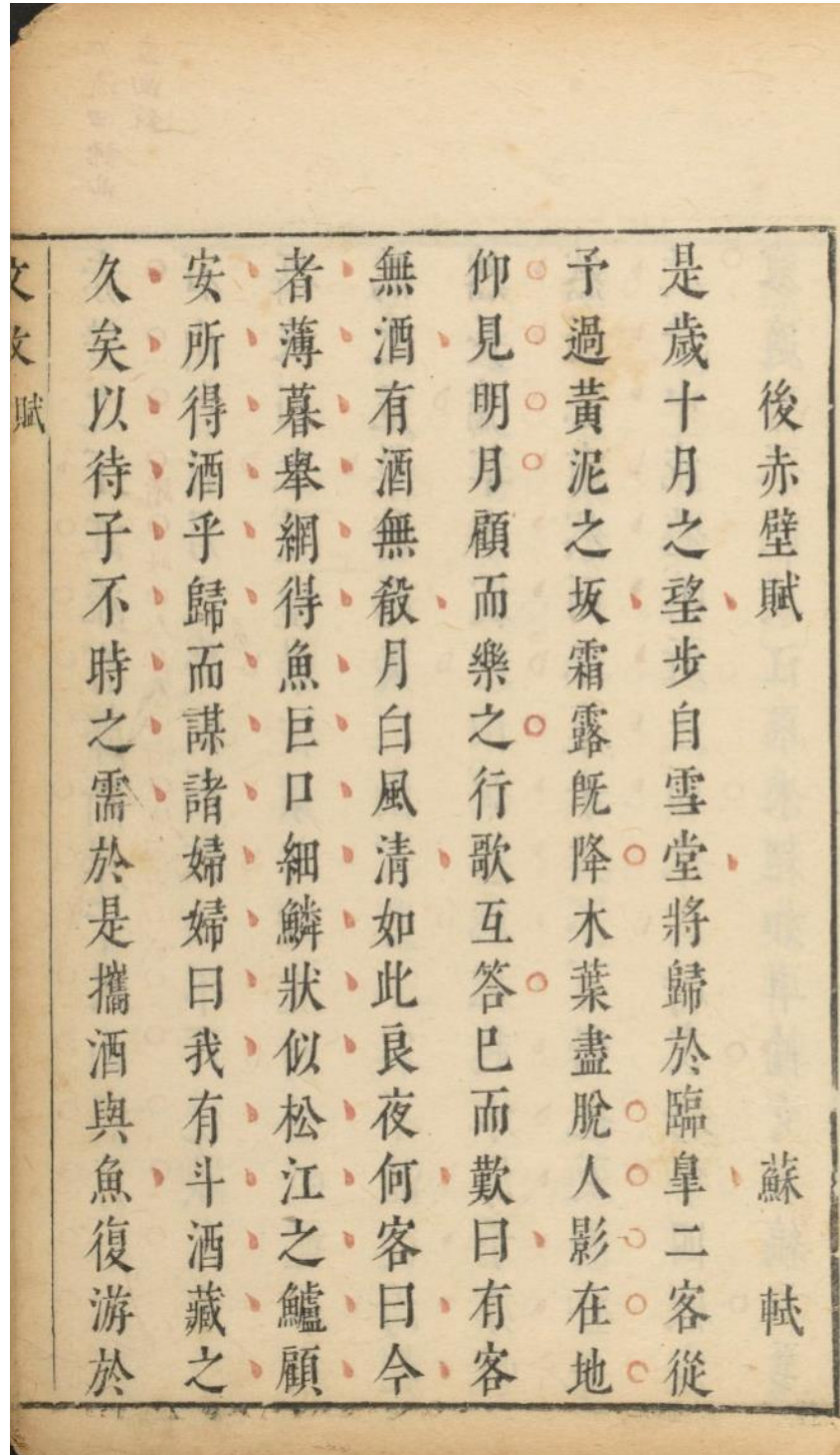


Figure 25: Su Shi's "Second Red Cliff Rhapsody" in the Min edition of *Finest Specimens of Prose*. From *Wen zhi* 文致, 1621 edition, Harvard-Yenching Library, n.p.

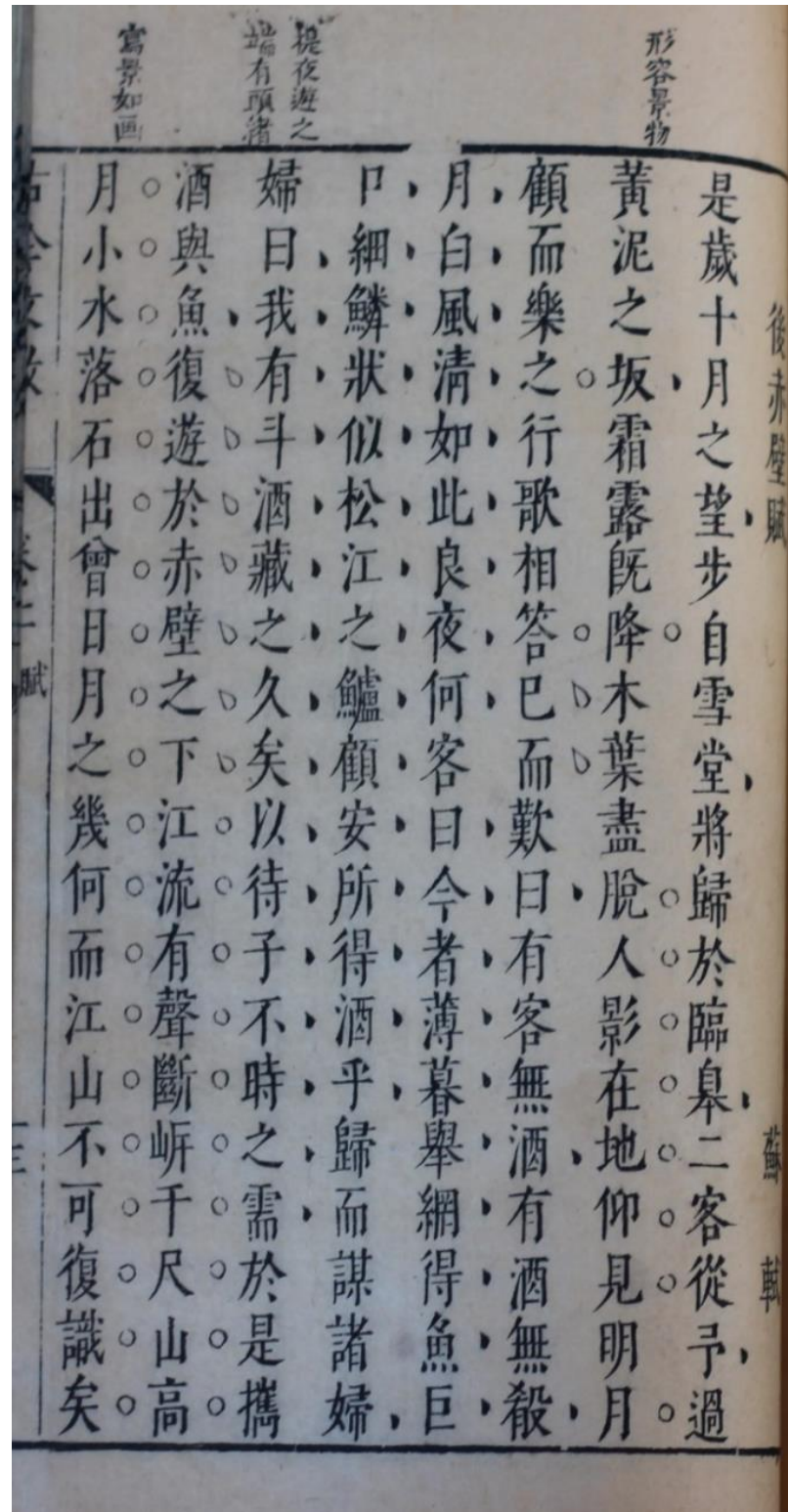


Figure 26: Su Shi's "Second Red Cliff Rhapsody" in the Wang edition of *Finest Specimens of Prose*. From *Shanbu gujin wen zhi* 刪補古今文致, late Ming edition, Princeton University Gest Collection, 1.13a.

The contents of the Min edition are arranged in 17 genres, beginning with the prosimetric genres *fu* 賦, *ci* 辭, and *sao* 騷, proceeding through *xu* 序, *zhuan* 傳, *shu* 書, and other important types of literati occasional writing, then a set of funerary genres, before finally ending with the miscellaneous genres of *jishi* 紀事 and *tiba* 題跋. In the Wang edition this system is enlarged to 46 genres, adding categories for “recorded speech” *jiyu* 記語, “emotional speech” *ganyu* 感語, “imitative letters” *nishu* 擬書, “critiques” *ping* 評, and “appraisals” *pin* 品, among others. The table below outlines the generic arrangement of each edition, as well as how many works were included under each genre heading.

Genre comparison of Min edition and Wang edition

Min edition		Wang edition	
Genres (17 total)	Number of works (153 total)	Genres (46 total)	Number of works (218 total)
fu 賦	31	fu 賦	47
ci 辭	6	xu 序	22
sao 騷	1	yin 引	1
xu 序	17	ji 記	26
ji 記	26	shu 書	24
zhuan 傳	10	zhuan 傳	10
bei 碑	3	shu 疏	1
shu 書	22	xi 檄	1
biao 表	1	ge 歌	3
wen 文	4	xing 行	2
zan 贊	4	wen 文	6

ming 銘	5	ci 詞	3
muming 墓銘	5	pian 篇	3
lei 誄	1	ji 紀	3
aiwen 哀文	6	ming 銘	6
jishi 紀事	4	yu 喻	1
tiba 題跋	7	biao 表	1
		sao 騷	1
		fan 反	1
		muming 墓銘	5
		jiwen 祭文	6
		lei 誄	1
		zhi 誌	2
		bei 碑	1
		song 頌	1

		jie 碣	1
		lue 略	1
		shuhou 書後	4
		jiyu 記語	1
		ti 題	2
		ba 跋	1
		ping 評	5
		pin 品	1
		lun 論	2
		jie 解	1
		shu 述	1
		zan 贊	4
		shui 說	3
		nishu 擬書	2

		dui 對	3
		wenda 問答	2
		bian 辯	2
		yan 言	1
		gao 誥	1
		ganyu 感語	1
		lubu 露布	1

What is most notable about the generic arrangement of both editions, in contrast to the government school anthologies discussed in chapters 2 and 3, is the almost total absence of genres associated with civil service examinations and political life. Indeed, the few memorials and discourse essays included only reinforce this impression of a deliberate unconcern with the world of the male examinee and aspiring official. In the Min edition, the only memorial (*biao* 表) included is the “Memorial Declining Marriage” (*Rang hun biao* 讓婚表), a text composed at the command of Emperor Ming of the Liu Song dynasty 劉宋明帝 (439-472) on behalf of a certain Jiang Xiao 江勳 (452-495), outlining his reasons for declining marriage to a princess. Clearly, this text was not included for its relevance to would-be officials, but rather its sentimental and scandalous

content.³²³ As for discourse essays (*lun* 論)—254 of which were included in Tang Shunzhi's *Prose Compilation*—we find the genre completely absent in the Min edition.

The Wang edition does include two discourse essays (*lun* 論), but like “Memorial Declining Marriage,” their contents and paratexts reveal a self-conscious trivializing of “serious” literary genres. The first, “Liulang’s Face Resembles the Lotus Flower” (*Liulang si lianhua* 六郎似蓮花), is the famous Suzhou literatus Tang Yin’s 唐寅 (1470-1524) discussion of a historical anecdote about Empress Wu Zetian 武則天 (624-705), her lover Zhang Changzong 張昌宗 (?-705), and the sycophant Yang Zaisi 楊再思 (?-709, in which Wu Zetian praises Zhang Changzong’s beauty by comparing it to the lotus flower, but Yang Zaisi, wishing to curry favor with the empress, claims that it is in fact the lotus flower which resembles Zhang Changzong.

Tang’s discourse essay proceeds, like a piece of exam writing, in antithetical sets of points and counterpoints, each section of which unfolds in a tripartite structure. The first section criticizes the moral degeneracy of Empress Wu, Zhang Changzong, and Yang Zaisi. This moralistic argument is then reversed in the next section, which reads as follows (I have added parentheses in my translation to highlight the nested tripartite structure):

[Introduction] In springing from fecund alluvium and standing erect in jade water, we might call the lotus lofty, above worldly things. How could it be compared to Changzong’s wanton debauchery? Likening Changzong to the lotus is merely attending to its material form.³²⁴ It is like

³²³ See Lily Xiao Hong Lee et al., eds., *Biographical Dictionary of Chinese Women* (Armonk, N.Y: M. E. Sharpe, 1998), 313-4.

³²⁴ A possible allusion to the “story of an overindulgent husband from the Three Kingdoms period,” Xun Fengqian, discussed in Dorothy Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers*, 160: “Xun Fengqian was also

saying that [1a] the empress can play with the lotus's reddish blush to forget her worries; [1b] she can draw out its pure fragrance to quell her anger; [1c] she can partake of its delicateness and join in conjugal bliss. [2a] Together, she can suck the dew from its golden stem; [2b] together, she can sing the flowers on its jade stalk; [2c] together, she can bathe in the water from its rosy blossoms. [3a] When spring grows warm in the imperial garden the lotus has not yet bloomed, if we compare it to a person and the lotus has already bloomed, it may thereby awaken the apple flower's slumber. [3b] When fall grows cold by the imperial pool the lotus has already fallen, if we compare it to a person then the lotus has not yet fallen, it may thereby add to the nocturnal bliss's fragrance. [3c] All those ways in which the Personal Guard [Zhang Changzong] amused the empress—what do they resemble, if not the lotus flower? [Conclusion] Here we see that the empress's esteem and favor could not be any greater. 夫蓮之脫青泥，標綠水，可謂亭亭物外矣，豈六郎之嫋穢可比耶。彼似之者，取其色耳。若曰，蓮之紅艷，后可玩之而忘憂矣；蓮之清芳，后可挹之而蠲忿矣；蓮之綽約，后可與之而合歡矣。金莖之露，可共吸焉；玉樹之花，可共歌焉；薔薇之水，可共浴焉。上林春暖蓮未開也，對若人而蓮已開，可以醒海棠之睡矣。太液秋殘蓮已謝也，對若人而蓮未謝，可以增夜合之香矣。一切奉宸游娛聖意，非蓮花其誰與歸。此其尊之寵之之意極矣。³²⁵

In the paratexts that frame this essay, we can identify two distinct reading strategies. The first reading strategy is expressed in an endnote following the essay: "The arrangement of the piece is tightly interconnected. It possesses the charm of nested bamboo shoots and forked branches, and whenever it employs the three-layer method, its creativity becomes even more evident." 篇中布置絡繹。有鬥筍連枝之趣。而每用三壘

supposed to have declared: 'Neither talent or virtue is relevant to a woman. She should be signified primarily by her beauty [*se*, 'colors' or 'appearance']'."

³²⁵ *Shanbu gujin wen zhi* 刪補古今文致, late Ming edition, Princeton University Gest Collection, 9.33b-34a.

法。更見新機。³²⁶ This reading strategy focused on identifying certain compositional strategies, for example the “three-layer method,” or the method of “using the supplementary point to give form to the main point” 以客形主 discussed in chapter 3.

The second reading strategy, in contrast, is seen most prominently in eyebrow comments. Above the section translated above, one comment notes how the image of the lotus flower is used throughout the rest of the essay to express the psychology of the empress’s sexual desire 一以蓮花道武后心事。³²⁷ Another comment notes that Tang Yin’s descriptions of what Empress Wu obtained from the relationship—“forgetting worries,” “quelling anger,” “conjugal bliss,” and so on—are “so disgraceful that one falls over laughing” 醜態絕倒。³²⁸ Subsequent comments continue to emphasize how Tang’s deliberately purple prose transforms Empress Wu and Zhang Changzong’s relationship into a “Western Chamber tryst” 西廂行徑。³²⁹

This second reading strategy was finely attuned to ironic reworkings of earlier pieces, satirical inversions of generic conventions, and reversals of ruler-minister, husband-wife hierarchies. For example, the first text included in *Finest Specimens of Prose* is Sima Xiangru’s 司馬相如 (179-117 BCE) “Rhapsody on the Beautiful One” (*Meiren fu* 美人賦). In “Rhapsody on the Beautiful One,” we witness Sima Xiangru’s extended answer to the king of Liang’s 梁王 question “Are you lascivious?” 子好色乎, which the king poses after the minister Zou Yang 鄒陽 suggests that Sima Xiangru has

³²⁶ Ibid., 9.37a.

³²⁷ Ibid., 34a.

³²⁸ Ibid., 34a.

³²⁹ Ibid., 9.35b.

used his handsome appearance and palace access to form liaisons with the king's concubines. To prove his invulnerability to sexual temptation, Sima Xiangru describes a woman that possesses seemingly irresistible sexual attraction yet remains powerless to move him.

The Min edition juxtaposes "Rhapsody on the Beautiful One" with the famous Ming literatus Wang Shizhen's 王世貞 (1526-1590) "Rhapsody on the Old Woman" (*Laofu fu* 老婦賦). In "Rhapsody on the Old Woman," Wang Shizhen adopted the voice of Song Yu 宋玉 (319-298 BCE), who within the text is criticizing the King of Chu's excessive partiality to senior officials by comparing these senior officials to an old, ugly concubine. By first describing the old woman as a fantastic pastiche of ugly objects, and then narrating how she nevertheless was able to usurp her husband's authority and squander his fortune on orgies, Wang inverted the sexual politics of "Rhapsody on the Beautiful One." One particularly vivid passage reads as follows:

She had a scorpionfly nose and bearlike shoulders, crooked knees and protruding elbows. Her forehead was like the mengqi; her cheeks were like clusters of pearls; her ears were like spread bat wings; her teeth were like rhinoceros horns; her fingers were like grubs; her heels were like taro corms; her tongue was like the slender dragonfly; her eyes were like beads in her head; her hair was like a prickly shrew; her eyebrows were like joined weeds; the top of her head was like a towering earthen mound; her buttocks was like a flat desk; when she tried to stroke her bosom it looked like she was about to vomit; when she tried to step daintily she looked lame; when she smiled as if her teeth hurt she looked like she was crying; when she shook her sleeves she looked naked; when she coughed and spat she emitted a foul smell, and her saliva and sweat would fall like rain. In the middle of the night she would suddenly arise and wash her hair without combing it, plunder the kitchen, and make a racket in the sewing room. She understood none of the various arts;

her only slight talent was engaging in lewd behavior. At night she would seduce her master, coercing with her shoulders and making war with her flesh, offering her cheeks and presenting her body, acting submissive and pliant. Sweet phrases would overflow to join in her master's feasts, and jealous words would fly out to enter her master's chamber. Flogging him and applying hot irons, she also employed myriad perverse punishments: looking askance and denying him, shutting her mouth and refusing to speak, driving away his children, and throwing out his wives. Thus she gained access to her master's stores, and laid out his savings.

曷鼻魑肩，攣膝昂肘，額若蒙箕，頰若叢璣，耳若張蝠，齒若焦犀，指若螭螭，踵若蹲鴟，舌若裊薑，目若含彈，髮若刺蝟，眉若結蔓，頂若峨阜，尻若承案，捫心若嘔，學步若跛，齟笑若哭，振袖若裸，咳唾猶發，津汗潦墮。高春乍起，沐不及櫛，剽攘中厨，嘈雜織室，百藝莫解，小善淫佚。夜媚主父，肩脅膚戰，捐輔屬體，披靡婉戀。甘辭泉湧投主之宴，媚言猋出乘主之間。捶撈炮烙，淫刑百端，側目搖手，噤曷敢言，嫡孽流離，淑美棄捐。乃發主藏，臚積資。³³⁰

One way of reading this piece would be to treat the inversion of gender hierarchy as a metaphor for the inversion of political hierarchy. At the most literal level, then, we witness an old, ugly woman use sexual and emotional manipulation to overthrow the patriarchal order and appropriate the household's financial resources. The dramatic context of Song Yu remonstrating with the King of Chu in turn makes this literal narrative into a political metaphor, wherein the husband represents the emperor and the old concubine represents his sycophantic senior ministers. Finally, the biographical context of Wang Shizhen's life invites us to read Song Yu's evisceration of the old, useless ministers as Wang Shizhen's own evisceration of the grand secretary Yan Song 嚴嵩 (1480-1567), who ordered the imprisonment and execution of Wang's father.

³³⁰ *Wen zhi*, 1621 edition, Harvard-Yenching Library, n.p.

Despite the possibility of these multi-layered readings, however, the paratexts of *Finest Specimens of Prose* focus almost exclusively on the literal, gender relations narrative of Wang's rhapsody. An endnote frames the piece as an inversion of Sima Xiangru's "Rhapsody on the Beautiful One": "In its depiction of an ugly woman, there is nowhere in which it does not fully convey her appearance. It and Sima Xiangru's 'Rhapsody on the Beautiful One' are both extraordinary sights" 形容醜婦無不盡態，與長卿美人賦并是奇觀.³³¹ Highlighting Wang's almost perverse exploitation of the rhapsody's generic propensity for lush, sensuous description, eyebrow comments such as "reading this makes you plug your nose!" 讀此令人掩鼻 and "reading this makes your hair stand on end!" 讀此使人髮豎 model a visceral but also tongue in cheek response to the text.³³² As with Tang Yin's "Liulang's Face Resembles the Lotus Flower," the appeal of Wang Shizhen's piece was its edginess, shock value, and receptiveness to a reading strategy that fetishized inversions of stereotypically male and female ways of speaking and acting, as seen in Zhang Changzong becoming a boudoir beauty, and the eponymous old woman becoming a master of male concubines.

Again, in *Finest Specimens of Prose*, we see two reading strategies coexisting in tension. The first reading strategy focused on the same kinds of formal techniques that Tang Shunzhi the anthologist emphasized. The second strategy was more interested in how writers combined styles and subjects of discourse in deliberately ironic ways, where

³³¹ *Wen zhi*, 1621 edition, Harvard-Yenching Library, n.p.

³³² David Knechtges, who translates *fu* as "epideictic rhapsody," has discussed the dual nature of the form as it developed in the Han, emphasizing both excess of verbal stimulation and moral reprimand, even critique. See Knechtges's introduction to Gong Kechang, *Studies on the Han Fu*, David Knechtges, trans. (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1997).

subversion of stylistic hierarchies often coincided with inversions of gender hierarchies. Whereas the first reading strategy had long been practiced in government schools across the empire, the second was more emblematic of the emergent Jiangnan print counterculture, where women readers and women writers were playing an increasingly important role.

An Alignment of Separate Spheres

By and large, ancient-style *xiaopin* anthologies were compiled by men who had reached a plateau within or simply dropped out of the civil service examination system, and—making a virtue of necessity—were seeking to establish themselves as tastemakers within a new, distinct reading public. Given that women and poetry were both excluded from the examinations, it is not surprising that the dropout editors of ancient-style *xiaopin* anthologies tended not only to conflate the two, but use them to articulate a new system of literary values for the Jiangnan reading public.

Again, this trend is already apparent in the mid-sixteenth-century writings of Tang Shunzhi, who once correlated the sphere of poetry to the sphere of women in a preface to a set of mourning poems commemorating a certain Madame Wu 吳孺人:

Even wives from farmhouses and alleyways, like in the airs “Grass Insects,” “Rooster’s Crow,” and “Quiet Girl,” none of their names could have made it into history books, nor was there anything extraordinary about their deeds, yet they are all recorded in the *Poetry Classic*. Isn’t this because history emphasizes recording the great, and omits the minor, and poetry emphasizes probing the hidden and subtle? Both are instructive, and they differ only in form. However, poetry doesn’t just fill in what history does not reach; poetry is actually more important for women’s history. In the Han

dynasty Liu Gengsheng was good at poetry, and in compiling his Biographies of Exemplary Women based it upon the *Poetry Classic*. How could one not trust that poetry is integral to women's history?

雖以田墅間巷之婦人，若草蟲、雞鳴、靜女，其名姓絕不登史冊，其事亦無特異者，而皆得見之于詩。豈史主于紀大而畧小，詩主于闡幽探賾。其為教一，而其為體則異耶。然則詩非特以助史之不及，其于女史尤要也。漢時劉更生善為詩，其所輯列女傳率本之詩，謂詩之繫乎女史也，豈不信乎。³³³

Joanna Handlin has argued that, for sixteenth-century literati like Tang Shunzhi, a growth in women's literacy effectively "obliterated the distinctions between the sexes," leading to a conservative reaction attacking talented/learned women as unvirtuous.³³⁴ But as we see in the passage above, for male literati disillusioned with the careerist world of exam writing, as Dorothy Ko has argued, "women's exclusion from the examination system" seemed more and more like "a blessing in disguise. Not expected to conform to conventions and spared from the rote memorization of the Classics, a woman was free to create literature purely as an expression of her true self...Not only was a female writer different from a male, she was better."³³⁵

Ancient-style *xiaopin* anthologies—distinctive products of the Jiangnan reading public—do indeed display this attitude. The printer Min Yuanqu 閔元衢 wrote in his preface to *Finest Specimens of Prose*:

"Finest specimens" means "earnestness." If one is not earnest in feeling, then how can writing be produced? Since antiquity, feeling has accumulated in poets and writers, as

³³³ Tang Shunzhi, "Wu ruren wanshi xu 吳孺人輓詩序," in *Tang Shunzhi ji*, ed. Ma Meixin and Huang Yi, 2.462.

³³⁴ Joanna F. Handlin, "Lu Kun's New Audience: The Influence of Women's Literacy on Sixteenth-Century Thought," 27-28.

³³⁵ Dorothy Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers*, 52.

well as husbands who love talent and women in secluded boudoirs. Mountains and rivers have opened their fresh *qi* and rosy clouds have purified their insides. They shake their clothing and produce wind, they brandish their whisk and possess flavor. How could they resemble those pedantic fuddy-duddies, those trite Confucian fussbudgets whose lengthy tracts and piles of documents do not differ in the least respect, and cause people to shut their books and take their leave?

致者摯也，非摯于情，文曷由生？從古騷人墨客，以及好才之主、幽閨之婦，情之所鍾，山川開其爽氣，雲霞盪其心胸，拂袖生風，揮塵有味，豈似酸子陳俗，腐儒矜嚴，長篇累牘，了不異人，令人掩卷而却走也。³³⁶

Min's first move in this preface was to gloss the *zhi* 致 ("finest specimens") of the books title as the homophone *zhi* 摯, which might be translated as "earnestness," but which also likely connoted the seventeenth-century ideal of *zhi qing* 至情, which Katherine Carlitz defines as "both the experience of the extremity of qing and the *realization* of qing to its fullest."³³⁷ For Min Yuanqu, this earnestness and depth of feeling was "concentrated" (*zhong* 鍾) in good writers, as well as "husbands who love talent and women in secluded boudoirs," which I read as a reference to companionate marriages. The compound *qingzhong* 情鍾 ("where feeling is concentrated"), again, referred to the seventeenth-century ideal of a person of deep feeling. As with the term *xiaopin* itself, the locus classicus of *qingzhong* is *A New Account of Tales of the World*, and, likewise, Min's phrase "brandishing the whisk" was an allusion to the unconventional scholars depicted

³³⁶ Min Yuanqu 閔元衢, preface to *Wen zhi*, 1621 edition, National Central Library, in *Guoli zhongyang tushuguan shanben xuba jilu ji bu*, zongji lei, 274.

³³⁷ Katherine Carlitz, "Desire and Writing in the Late Ming Play 'Parrot Island,'" in *Writing Women in Late Imperial China*, ed. Kang-I Sun Chang and Ellen Widmer (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 129-29.

in that book (late-Ming Jiangnan literati liked to imagine themselves as the modern version of those scholars).³³⁸ Again, as was conventional, Min ended the preface by contrasting these vibrant, eloquent men and women of feeling with the laughably dull village pedant.

A connection between lyrical earnestness of feeling and women writers—or at least writing with some kind of connection to women, whether real, legendary, or fictional—is also evident in the contents of ancient-style *xiaopin* anthologies. All the ancient-style *xiaopin* anthologies I have seen include texts by both men and women. For example, in the edition of *Finest Specimens of Prose* printed by Min Yuanqu, we find 10 works attributed to historical and fictional female authors. These works were not placed in a separate woman's chapter, as they were in the *Collection of Poetry from Throughout the Dynasty* (*Liechao shiji* 列朝詩集) compiled by Liu Rushi 柳如是 (1618-1664) and Qian Qianyi 錢謙益 (1582-1664); instead, they were scattered throughout the book according to generic category, just as men's works were.³³⁹ I have listed these works in the table below:

³³⁸ Cf. Wai-Yee Li, "The Late Ming Courtesan: Invention of a Cultural Ideal," 54.

³³⁹ Kang-I Sun Chang, "Ming and Qing Anthologies of Women's Poetry and their Selection Strategies," 153-56.

Works Attributed to Historical Female Authors in Min Yuanqu's *Finest Specimens of Prose*, in order of appearance

Genre	Author	Title
Fu 賦	Consort Ban Jieyu 班婕妤	Daosu fu 擣素賦
	Jiang Caipin 江彩蘋	Loudong fu 樓東賦
Ci 辭	Xiao Guanyin 蕭觀音	Huixin yuan ci 回心院詞
Xu 序	Li Qingzhao 李清照	Jinshi lu houxu 金石錄後序
Ji 記	Empress Wu Zetian 武則天	Su shi zhimian huiwen ji 蘇氏織綿迴文記
Shu 書	Zhuo Wenjun 卓文君	Yu Xiangru shu 與相如書
	Xu Shu 徐淑	Da fu Qin Jia shu 答夫秦嘉書
		Zaida fu Qin Jia shu 再答夫秦嘉書
	Cui Yingying 崔鶯鶯	Da wei zhi shu 答微之書
	Bu Feiyan 步非煙	Da Zhao Xiang shu 答趙象書
Lei 誄	Zhuo Wenjun 卓文君	Sima Xiangru lei 司馬相如誄

Notably, none of these women writers were from the Ming dynasty, perhaps evincing in this case more of a desire to create an alternate history of feminine and therefore emotionally authentic ancient-style prose better suited to the tastes of the Jiangnan reading public, rather than preserve the works of contemporary women writers (*Finest Specimens of Prose* does include works by male Ming writers). But this cutoff was by no means insurmountable. As we see in Figure 27 below, one reader of *Finest Specimens of Prose* took it upon themselves to append a short preface and suite of verses titled “Rhymes Left Behind while passing by the Haoliang Post-Station” (*Guo Haoliang yi yiyun* 過濠梁驛遺韻), authored by a Ming woman known simply as “a woman from Kuaiji” (*Kuaiji nüzi* 會稽女子), i.e. from the Jiangnan area. According to the anthology of women’s prose *Women Scholars, Past and Present* (*Gujin nüshi* 古今女史), this woman studied the classics in her youth, was sent north at the age of 15, and vented her frustrations (*yuan* 怨) on the wall of a post-station where she was lodging.³⁴⁰ Such emendations remind us that the process of anthologizing was never done; there were always gaps for the reader to fill in.

³⁴⁰ *Gujin nüshi* 古今女史, c. 1628-1644 edition, Harvard-Yenching Library, xingshi 姓氏, 90a.

過濠梁驛遺韻
 妾本會稽人，幼習經史。雖無林下之風味，嘗侍負腹
 之將軍。河東獅子日吼，數聲薄言於前。楚樂交下，今
 上壬戌從將軍之任，道出濠梁。妾命薄如葉，身轉如
 蓬。與其虛生人世，何如掩恨重泉。然又委身草莽，猶
 恐淹沒無聞。含淚染墨，情見乎辭。冀仁人君子少助
 塵談，妾死且不朽。

淡黃衫子半生塵，羞對菱花靜掩門。爐篆暗
 消，金鎖落月明古驛，又黃昏。

Figure 27: A Woman from Kuaiji's "Rhymes Left Behind while passing by the Haoliang Post-Station," hand-copied onto an extra page appended to *Finest Specimens of Prose* by an anonymous reader. From *Gujin wen zhi*, late Ming edition, Princeton University Gest Collection, last page.

In addition to works by historical women, we also find works attributed to female characters in classical tales, and even legendary women. For example, the letters (*shu* 書) chapter of *Finest Specimens of Prose* includes an excerpt from Yuan Zhen's 元稹 (779-831) famous *chuanqi* 傳奇 tale "Biography of Yingying" (*Yingying zhuan* 鶯鶯傳), attributed in *Finest Specimens of Prose* to the narrative's female protagonist Cui Yingying 崔鶯鶯. The letter consists of Yingying's reply to her absentee lover student Zhang after he broke off their relationship in order to stay in the capital and prepare for the examinations. In *Finest Specimens of Prose* the letter is titled "Reply to Weizhi" (*Da Weizhi shu* 答微之書), thus explicitly identifying the character Zhang as Yuan Zhen himself (Yuan's courtesy name was Weizhi 微之), and Yingying's letter as the actual words of an actual woman with whom Yuan had an actual love affair. This belief is expressed in Chen Jiru's comment on the piece: "Its feeling and verbal beauty are both profound; could it possibly have been fabricated by Weizhi?" 情文俱深，將無微之狡猾所成。³⁴¹

This comment by Chen and the reading strategy it exemplifies needs some unpacking, because it recurs again and again in *Finest Specimens of Prose* and other ancient-style *xiaopin* anthologies, and complicates the attitude of those male editors whom Kang-I Sun Chang praises as "male-feminists" toward women's writing.³⁴² Yingying's letter to student Zhang/Yuan Zhen is a paradigmatic expression of faithfulness by a spurned female lover. Yingying writes: "If you, out of kindness, would

³⁴¹ *Wen zhi*, 1621 edition, Harvard-Yenching Library, n.p.

³⁴² Kang-I Sun Chang, "Ming and Qing Anthologies of Women's Poetry," 156.

condescend to fulfill my selfish wish, though it came on my dying day it would seem to be a new lease on life. But if, as a man of the world, you curtail your feelings, sacrificing the lesser to the more important, and look on this connection as shameful, so that your solemn vow can be dispensed with, still my true love will not vanish though my bones decay and my frame dissolve; in wind and dew it will seek out the ground you walk on.”³⁴³ Chen Jiru’s comment claims that the earnestness of the feeling (*qing zhi suo zhi* 情之所摯, to reuse Min Yuanqu’s words) expressed in such passages proves that the letter could not possibly have been “fabricated” (*jiaohua* 狡狴) by the male author Yuan Zhen. However, implicit in this claim, I would argue, is an anxiety that the feminine sincerity of expression embodied in such selections is in fact a “fabrication” of male anthologists—a male fantasy where the sincere, genuine feelings of women are inevitably and exclusively focused on their male lovers.

This male fantasy is particularly evident in the letters chapter of *Finest Specimens of Prose*, which, in addition to Yingying’s letter, also includes Zhuo Wenjun’s 卓文君 (2nd century BCE) letters to Sima Xiangru, Xu Shu’s 徐淑 letters to Qin Jia 秦嘉, and Bu Feiyan’s 步非煙 letter to Zhao Xiang 趙象, the last of which was excerpted from the Tang scholar Huangfu Mei’s 皇甫枚 classical tale “Biography of Feiyan” (*Feiyan zhuan* 非煙傳). Often, as Dorothy Ko suggests, the male desire to know this hidden world of genuine, feminine feeling verged on a kind of voyeurism, where the disclosure of female feeling and female writings were erotically conflated with the uncovering of the female

³⁴³ Translated in James R. Hightower, “Yüan Chen and ‘The Story of Ying-Ying,’” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 33 (1973), 98-99.

body.³⁴⁴

The best example of this voyeuristic tendency in *Finest Specimens of Prose* is the inclusion of the mysterious text *Han zashi mixin* 漢雜事秘辛, translated by Lin Yutang as “Miscellanies, Secret H.”³⁴⁵ This excerpt dates itself to 147 CE and presents itself as a “secret report” 秘緘 written by the supervising concubine Wu Xu 吳姁 for Emperor Huan of the Eastern Han (132-168 CE). In this report, Wu presents in detail the findings of her imperial mission to inspect the body of a potential imperial concubine, in reality the future empress. The text first cites the edict ordering the inspection, then narrates her arrival at the girl’s family’s house and entrance into her private chamber, the girl’s reluctance to undress, and finally enumerates the features and dimensions of the girl’s nude body. Wu’s qualitative observations center on the girl’s genitals and bound feet: “Her ankles and arches were round and full, her soles smooth, and her toes small. The tight silk and closefitting socks were gathered in as with ladies in the palace” (the description of her feet indicates that the text was a later forgery).³⁴⁶ Her quantitative

³⁴⁴ Dorothy Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers*, 64.

³⁴⁵ Translated in Lin Yutang, *The Importance of Understanding: Translations from the Chinese* (Cleveland: World Pub. Co., 1960), 225-28.

³⁴⁶ Lin Yutang, *The Importance of Understanding*, 227 erroneously cites the description of “smooth soles” as proof that the woman’s feet were not bound: “Bound feet cannot have smooth soles, for the soles were bent and folded over.” Actually, Ming people valued smooth soles on bound feet. For an example, see Dorothy Ko’s translation of a discussion of footbinding aesthetics in the Ming erotic novel *Rouputuan* 肉蒲團 (Carnal Prayer Mat), in Dorothy Ko, “The Written Word and the Bound Foot: A History of the Courtesan’s Aura,” in *Writing Women in Late Imperial China*, ed. Ellen Widmer and Kang-I Sun Chang, 98: “When a female binds her feet, she is most concerned with keeping the bottom of the foot smooth...” Indeed, Yang Shen 楊慎 (1488-1559), the probable author/forgery of the text, dryly noted in a preface that “Judging from the line ‘the tight silk and closefitting socks were gathered in as with ladies in the palace,’ it would seem that footbinding already existed in the Eastern Han” 及見約縑迫襪，收束微如禁中語，則纏足後漢已自有之。 Yang himself claimed that “a local/aboriginal governor in Anning Sub-Prefecture, Yunnan surnamed Dong” 安寧州土知州董氏 gave him a copy of *Miscellanies, Secret H* bearing the seal of the early Ming official Wang Hui 王禕 (1322-1374). For Yang’s preface, see *Guwen pinwai lu*, late Ming 24 juan edition, Harvard-Yenching Library, 1.30-31.

observations convert the girl's body into a series of length and width measurements: height, shoulder width, hip width, shoulder-fingertip length, palm-fingertip length, etc.

The mode of vision employed in "Miscellanies, Secret H" resembles the mode of vision employed in *Quintessence of Prose* more broadly. Like the girl under examination, the contents of *Quintessence of Prose* are hidden, undiscovered, uncirculated. On their own, readers have neither the knowledge to locate these texts, nor the power of vision to make them reveal the subtle contours of their bodies, the ineffable manner of their movements. Just as Wu Xu's vision becomes an extension of the emperor's, the anthologist's vision becomes an extension of the readers'. Wu Xu conveys the emperor's gaze into Ying's inner chambers, where it commands Ying expose herself to it, offer herself up for assessment, and in the end even thank it for its attention; similarly, the anthologist conveys his readers' gaze into the inner chambers of literary history, where he not only reveals a series of "extraordinary sights" to readers, but also measures them, appraises them, and vouches for their quality.

This mode of vision is clearly a kind of male gaze.³⁴⁷ Not only does it exclusively depict women in relation to their male husbands, lords, and lovers, usually either expressing love for them or reproaching them for being unfaithful, it also attributes an essential helplessness and lack of agency to feminine prose. Textual annotations constantly note the loneliness of feminine prose, which languishes forgotten and hidden in the boudoir of history, "every word a fragile reproach, depicting an appearance of unsettled loneliness" 語語嬌怨，寫出躊躇寂寞之態, until a sympathetic male

³⁴⁷ On the male gaze, see Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," in *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 833-44.

anthologist/reader rediscovers, assembles it, and makes sense of it.³⁴⁸ Thus, within the context of the Jiangnan reading public, the anthologist's authority to interpret and construct an alternate literary history was reimagined in the language of companionate marriage and scholar-beauty romance, where the male anthologist, as a "lover of talent," wielded exclusive power to construct literary history and shape the reading public's tastes.

³⁴⁸ *Wen zhi*, 1621 edition, Harvard-Yenching Library, n.p.

CONCLUSION

In this dissertation, I have argued against the twentieth-century narrative of Ming literary history as the revolt of individual expression against neo-classical imitation. What twentieth-century scholars viewed as neo-classical imitation is better understood, I have argued, as an effort among the overseers of local government schools to define universal standards of prose—an effort which, due to the constant movement of education officials and their anthologies, encompassed the entire empire. Likewise, what twentieth-century scholars viewed as an increasing emphasis on individual expression in the late Ming is better understood as a strategy among Jiangnan commercial printers and editors to create an ancient-style prose counter-canon both catering to and giving definition to the tastes of an emergent Jiangnan reading public. Tang Shunzhi, a Jiangnan literatus whose two print personas simultaneously embodied the “universal” rules of government school anthologies and transcended them, achieved fame as an essayist and anthologist amidst this process.

This line of argument raises many questions that I have been unable to address in this dissertation. First of all, I began my introduction by contrasting the Kangxi Emperor’s direct intervention in ancient-style prose stylistics against the apparent lack of interest among Ming emperors. But was this contrast sound? Or did Ming emperors exert influence on literary matters in other ways, for instance, through bestowing fine editions as gifts upon princely establishments who subsequently reprinted them?

A second unanswered question concerns the actual book consumption practices of local government school students. In chapter 2 I downplayed the question of consumption by emphasizing the collaborative production process and the frequent use of student labor. But it should be noted that even the largest such production teams included no more than three or four students from any one school—a small percentage of the total number of stipend students, to say nothing of the rapidly expanding adjunct student population. Did students not on the production team have any contact with these books? Some prefaces mention anthologies being promulgated or made available to students, but reading such statements against the grain suggests that students were either reading other kinds of books or simply doing other things with their time. I argued in chapter 4 that the *xiaopin* anthologies produced by Jiangnan printers represented a subversion of the government school ancient-style prose canon, but was this canon already being subverted on a smaller scale in schools throughout the empire?

A third unanswered question concerns the circulation of ancient-style prose anthologies abroad, and the role these books played for classical Chinese reading communities outside of China. This is an important question because many of the anthologies discussed in this dissertation also served as textbooks for students of literary Chinese outside of China. During the Ming, for example, *True Treasures of Ancient Style Writing* (*Guwen zhenbao* 古文真寶) and *Standards of Literary Composition* (*Wenzhang guifan* 文章軌範) were already being read in Japan, Korea, and the Ryukyu Islands, and would remain popular—indeed, even more popular than in the Qing Empire, where they were eclipsed by newer anthologies—through the national vernacular movements of the

late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Even nowadays, *True Treasures of Ancient Style Writing* and *Standards of Literary Composition* continue to be used as textbooks in South Korea and Japan.

In modern China, Taiwan as well as the West, in contrast, the *Comprehensive Overview of Ancient-Style Prose* (*Guwen guan zhi* 古文觀止) came to assume preeminence in classical Chinese classrooms. I would like to conclude the dissertation with a brief discussion of this book and the nationalization of ancient-style prose it embodied. By “nationalization,” I mean the transformation of the universal category of *guwen* or *wenzhang* into “classical Chinese literature,” the essence of a national culture (*guocui* 國粹) distinct from but on par with (indeed, even in competition with) a world of other national cultures.

On October 2nd, 1889 the Qing diplomat Zhang Deyi 張德彝 (1847-1918) visited an academy in Berlin’s historical Nikolaiviertel (later destroyed during the Battle of Berlin). In his diary, Zhang described this library’s academy in minute detail, noting the placement of desks in the reading room, the banisters of spiraled iron, even the procedure for checking out books. Zhang paid particular attention to the arrangement of books on the shelves according to national provenance:

The books therein were divided up by nation as well as by subject. Those of each Western nation were of course numerous, but there were also a considerable number from India and Tibet. Japanese books numbered no more than 300, and although there were enough Chinese books to fill four walls, they were merely things like the *Collected Statutes of the Great Qing*, the *Great Qing Legal Code*, the *Zhongshu zhengkao*, the *Bogu tu*, the *Comprehensive Mirror to Aid in Governance*, the *Comprehensive Overview of Ancient-Style Prose*, the Four Books and Five Classics, the *Materia*

Medica, and certain local gazetteers—nothing too extraordinary.

間分國書，亦按類分，列泰西各國者固多，而印度西番者亦屬不少，日本書籍不滿三百部，而中國書雖盈列四壁，無非大清會典、大清律例、中書正考、博古圖、資治通鑒、古文觀止、四書五經、本草綱目、某州縣誌等類而已，無甚奇異者。³⁴⁹

In this bibliographic microcosm of the emerging national world order, “China”

(*Zhongguo* 中國) was represented mainly by the administrative and legal texts of the Qing empire as well as by what Cynthia Brokaw calls the “best-sellers of the nineteenth century,” among which *Comprehensive Overview of Ancient-Style Prose* had become the sole embodiment of Chinese literature in a foreign land.³⁵⁰

Zhang’s summary description of *Comprehensive Overview of Ancient-Style Prose*, along with its fellow printed representatives, as “nothing too extraordinary” reflected the anthology’s by then long-established status as a staple of the village classroom. For such a popular book, however, the early process of popularization is surprisingly difficult to trace.³⁵¹ In their 1698 joint preface, the teachers Wu Chucai 吳楚材 and Wu Diaohou 吳調侯 recorded how they compiled the book from “a number of pieces that we regularly used in our teaching” 平日之所課業者若干首。³⁵² By the mid-

³⁴⁹ Zhang Deyi 張德彝, *Gaoben Hanghai shuqi huibian* 稿本航海述奇匯編, vol. 5 (Beijing: Beijing tushuguan chubanshe, 1997), *juan* 8.

³⁵⁰ Cynthia Brokaw, “Reading the Best-Sellers of the Nineteenth Century: Commercial Publishing in Sibao,” in *Printing and Book Culture in Late Imperial China*, ed. Cynthia Brokaw and Kai-wing Chow (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 184–231.

³⁵¹ For two significant attempts, see An Pingqiu 安平秋, “Guwen guanzhi banben kaolun 《古文觀止》版本考論,” *Zhongguo gudian wenxue luncong* 4 (October 1986), 360–369; Jyrki Kallio, “Confucian Education and Enlightenment for the Masses in the Manner of Guwen Guanzhi” (Licentiate thesis, University of Helsinki, Faculty of Arts, Institute for Asian and African Studies, 2009).

³⁵² Wu Chucai 吳楚材 and Wu Diaohou 吳調侯, eds., *Guwen guanzhi* 古文觀止 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1959), 1.1.

eighteenth century, literati were already referring to it as if it was generally known. Wu Maozheng 吳懋政 (1718-1793), for example, recommended that students read it to improve their examination prose, and the compiler of a collection of Gui Youguang's 歸有光 (1507-1571) examination prose recorded that he first came across Gui's writings in "the schoolchildren's anthology *Comprehensive Overview of Ancient-Style Prose*" 塾童古文觀止選本.³⁵³

Comprehensive Overview of Ancient-Style Prose retained this status as a classroom staple, both ubiquitous and despised, into modern times. I myself used it as a textbook while a student in Taiwan, and my dissertation in part grew from a desire to know why people read anthologies like this rather than the *xiaopin* anthologies I had by then already come to love. When someone who has studied classical Chinese asks me the topic of my dissertation, and I answer "I study books like the *Guwen guanzhi*," their response is usually a mixture of confusion and commiseration: "Oh, you're studying *that*?" This general low regard among former students has almost completely insulated the book from academic study. Has this dissertation brought us any closer to understanding why so many people have been and continue to be subjected to *Comprehensive Overview of Ancient-Style Prose*?

When we examine the selection strategy of *Comprehensive Overview of Ancient-Style Prose*, we find that almost none of its choices depart from the sixteenth-century government school mainstream—it has all the chestnuts. In the Ming dynasty section we

³⁵³ Liang Zhangju 梁章鉅, ed., *Zhiyi conghua* 制義叢話, 1859 edition, *juan* 1; Wang Xianqian 王先謙, ed., *Xu Guwenci leizuan* 續古文辭類纂, Guangxu Xushou tang edition, *juan* 7.

do find a few surprising choices, for example, Yuan Hongdao's "Biography of Xu Wenchang" (*Xu Wenchang zhuan* 徐文長傳), but in comparison to the *xiaopin* anthologies discussed in chapter 4 even this portion appears quite conservative. Most notably, at the close of a century which witnessed unprecedented efforts to anthologize women's writing, there were no female authors included in *Comprehensive Overview of Ancient-Style Prose*.³⁵⁴

When the late Ming *xiaopin* collector Chen Jiru complained that anthologies were restricting not only the range of past writings available to readers, but also the capacity of readers to be moved by past writings, he might as well have been talking about *Comprehensive Overview of Ancient-Style Prose*. In many ways, *Comprehensive Overview of Ancient-Style Prose* represented the culmination of the processes observed by Chen. Because *Comprehensive Overview of Ancient-Style Prose* packed the most must-reads into the shortest possible length—a perfect combination for beginning students—it became the preferred choice of pedants in and beyond China. At the same time, it narrowed the range of texts that one might expect to encounter in a classical Chinese classroom. Read alongside *Comprehensive Overview of Ancient-Style Prose*, late Ming ancient-style *xiaopin* anthologies really do feel like a pedagogical Peach Blossom Spring—a forgotten, alternative canon of “must-reads.”

In contemporary East Asia, debates continue to rage concerning classical Chinese education. In Taiwan, for example, the Alliance for Saving National Literature Education

³⁵⁴ For an overview of women's poetry anthologies in the late Ming, see Kang-I Sun Chang, "Ming and Qing Anthologies of Women's Poetry and Their Selection Strategies," in *Writing Women in Late Imperial China*, ed. Ellen Widmer and Kang-I Sun Chang (Stanford University Press, 1997), 147-70.

(*Cangjiu guowen jiaoyu lianmeng* 搶救國文教育聯盟) recently expressed concern that the “internationalization” 國際化 of the Ministry of Education has made the youth of Taiwan into an “empty-hearted generation” 空心世代. To combat this perceived degeneration, they recommended adding extra classical Chinese instruction to the elementary, junior high, and high school curricula, as well as various sorts of memorization and recitation contests.³⁵⁵

On the opposing side, critics note (citing Ming dynasty officials who were good writers but poor administrators, no less) that studying classical Chinese does not provide students with any kind of marketable skills.³⁵⁶ Nor does it necessarily make you a good writer, another critic wryly observes, attacking the poor literary style of the report authored by the Alliance for Saving National Literature Education.³⁵⁷ The most perceptive critique, however, comes from a high school teacher who agrees that national literature education should be strengthened, but questions whether, in Taiwan, “national literature” should mean what the Alliance assumes it means. Rather than adding more classical Chinese to the curriculum, this teacher recommends strengthening instruction in the full range of Taiwanese literature—whether written in Taiwanese Hokkien, Hakka,

³⁵⁵ Anonymous joint report, “Nianqing ren cheng kongxin shidai Cangjiu guowen lianmeng huyu zengjia guwen chengke 年輕人成「空心世代」 搶救國文聯盟呼籲增加古文課程,” *ETtoday* 東森新聞雲 (May 4, 2015), <http://www.ettoday.net/news/20150504/501692.htm> (accessed March 4, 2016). I am grateful to Wu Ting-chih for sending me several articles on this debate.

³⁵⁶ cgi0911 (anonymous user name), “Siban de guowen jiaoyu youzhu jingzhengli? Cuole, Ming chao jiushi tai bagu cai hui zouxiang shuaibai 死板的國文教育有助競爭力? 錯了, 明朝就是太八股才會走向衰敗,” *BuzzOrange* 報橘 (May 6, 2015), <https://buzzorange.com/2015/05/06/studying-chinese-too-much-will-not-make-you-more-competitive/> (accessed March 4, 2016).

³⁵⁷ Dongdong Xia 凍凍蝦, “Cangjiu guowen jiaoyu lianmeng de guowen jixu cangjiu 搶救國文教育聯盟的國文急需搶救,” *Xin gongmin yihui* 新公民議會 (May 14, 2015), <http://newcongress.tw/?p=3685> (accessed March 4, 2016).

aboriginal languages, or the languages of recent immigrants.³⁵⁸ Nowadays, as is especially evident in the case of Taiwan, classical Chinese education cannot but become implicated in the politics of multiculturalism, globalism, and the nation.

This dissertation was begun in an age of globalism and completed amidst a global resurgence of nationalism. Classical Chinese was not a national language, nor were any of the archaists discussed in this dissertation nationalists. Rather, they were educators in what Benedict Anderson calls “Examination Chinese,” one of the “sacred silent languages...through which the great global communities of the past were imagined.” In contrast to national languages, Anderson argues, these languages were “imbued with an impulse largely foreign to nationalism, the impulse towards conversion. By conversion I mean not so much the acceptance of particular religious tenets, but alchemical absorption. The barbarian becomes ‘Middle Kingdom’... The whole nature of man’s being is sacrally malleable.”³⁵⁹ The classical Chinese word for education, of course, is *jiaohua* 教化, “transformation through instruction.” This was the goal of the archaist educators discussed in this dissertation.

“Nations,” Anderson writes, “always loom out of an immemorial past, and, still more important, glide into a limitless future.”³⁶⁰ Archaist pedagogy, in contrast, seeks a past so profoundly alien that we as a community of readers are shocked, moved, and transformed into something new. On the most idealistic level, this was the goal of books

³⁵⁸ Anonymous joint report, “Nianqing ren cheng kongxin shidai Cangjiu guowen lianmeng huyu zengjia guwen chengke,” *ETtoday* (May 4, 2015), <http://www.ettoday.net/news/20150504/501692.htm> (accessed March 4, 2016).

³⁵⁹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 14.

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 11-12.

like Chen Jiru's *Ancient Writings from Beyond the Ranks*. But because of its close relationship to the late Ming book market, Chen's archaist pedagogy assumed that people "enjoy newness" 好新.³⁶¹ Do they?

³⁶¹ Wang Heng 王衡, preface to *Guwen pinwai lu* 古文品外錄, late Ming edition, Harvard-Yenching Library, 3a.

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