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Games and Play of Dream of the Red Chamber

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GAMES AND PLAY OF DREAM OF THE RED CHAMBER

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ABSTRACT

My dissertation examines the games derived from Cao Xueqin's novel *Dream of The Red Chamber* during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (1880s-1920s) through its various literary and textual representations. In brief, the games create a sense of otherworldliness for players to imagine their mode of being in a space that is set apart from the daily grinds of the historical transition. Dramatic and literary sources have been a constant motif or theme for traditional games in China. However, it was after the publication of *Dream of Red Chamber* that the characters, the themes and motifs of the novel became a prominent element for various kinds of games in their visual design and game rules. The games became both an object for play and the medium through which the elite readers' remarks and taste were effected. In this way, the games became an alternative medium for the reproduction of literati culture itself. My analysis concentrates on the rules and play of the games. Some of the game texts stand on the boundary between games (for play) and texts (for reading): on the one hand, it provided an interactive and communicative space for leisurely entertainment in social gatherings; on the other hand, some of the game rules were not practical to serve as instruction for social play and was emblematic display of elite readers' own readerly pleasure in inserting fiction comments in the absurd context of game rules. I argue that the preference of the elite readers brought to the composition of games an increasingly literary emphasis intended more for the reader than for the player.

The main body of this dissertation is divided into four chapters. Chapter two looks at a verbal game and traces the game rules to the banter and daily conversation in novel and the

game texts in the encyclopedia books that were widely circulating in the market of the time. Chapter three looks at the connoisseurship object of seal carving and seal albums not only as a writing medium that carries and reproduces the content of the verbal game, but also as an "small item " for play or amusement (*yawn xiaopin* 雅玩小品) for its own sake. Chapter four analyzes the rules of drinking game and the internal structures of divinatory practices in a larger social and cultural dimension. I explore the interrelationship between games and divination, and use of games as a writing technique of prophecies in the novel and in an imitation work of the novel. The last chapter traces the card games back to the interplay between personhood evaluation and appreciation (*pinzao renwu* 品藻人物) and the printed ephemerals of playing cards since the Ming.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

> To be an established literati-scholar all depends on the opium,
> Why not be an immortal "opium" ghost?
> Reading all the books and poems available would be useless,
> If one could not carry on a conversation about the *Dream of the Red Chamber*
> 做阔全凭鸦片煙，何仿作鬼且神仙。
> 閒談不說红樓夢，讀尽詩書是枉然
> De Yu 得與, *Jingdu zhuzhi ci* 京都竹枝詞 (Bamboo Twig Song of Beijing, 1818)[1]

The doggerel verse cited above offers us playful remarks on the two cultural fads for urban dwellers in the capital Beijing at the beginning of the nineteenth century: opium-smoking[2] and conversation on the novel *Dream of the Red Chamber*. The jesting line reflects people's overwhelming enthusiasm for reading and talking about the novel. It seems that if one does not have a reading knowledge of the popular novel, one would be placed in a dangerous position as an outsider by the urban literary circle in nineteenth-century Beijing.

Anecdotes about the readers' enthusiasm for the novel were fun and hilarious to read. Zou Tao 邹弢 (1850-1931), a devoted literati reader of the novel, mentioned such

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[1] According to the interlineal remark in the doggerel, *zuokuo* 做闊 means "the person who are the distinguished literati-scholars in the capital Beijing." The verse is listed under the "Category of Vogue and Trends" (*shishang men* 时尚门) in the collection of Bamboo Twig Songs of Beijing. Yisu, eds., *Honglou meng ziliao huibian* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1958), 354.

[2] See Keith McMahon, "Opium smoking and modern subjectivity," *Postcolonial Studies* 8, no. 2 (2005): 165-180.

an anecdote in his *biji* ("random notes") *Random Talk In the Hut of Three Borrowings* (*Sanjie lu zhuitan* 三借庐赘谭):

> In the spring of 1879, Xu Boqian and I discussed this book. With one word not in agreement, we quarreled and almost waved our old fists towards each other. Later on, Yuxian dismisses the discord. Thereafter, we two swore to never talk about the *Red Chamber* again.
> 己卯春，余与许伯谦论此书，一言不合，遂相龃龉，几挥老拳，而毓仙排解之。于是，两人誓不共谈红楼.[3]

The anecdote reflects the popularity of the novel among the literary readers of the time. Even though the early manuscript copies do not include an author's name, readers since the eighteenth century generally attribute the book to Cao Xueqin (c. 1714-c. 1763). After the publication of the novel in print in 1791, the novel generated numerous responses from readers, such as commentary remarks, poetry, lyrics, sequels, imitation novels, regional oral storytelling, and drama performances. Visual images of the characters and the Grand View Garden were ever more prevalent, becoming a recurring subject in the visual art of the day: they were found on the lanterns, snuff bottles, playing cards, cigarette packaging, posters, postcards, letter papers designs, on painted lamp shades, in "pictorial storybooks" (*lianhuan hua*), lithographical pictorials, painting albums, fabrics, textiles, and even on the walls of the Forbidden City.[4] It is not exaggerating to say that the novel *Dream of the Red Chamber* had penetrated into the everyday life of people of all social strata, while the majority of them had never read the

[3] Yisu, eds., *Honglou meng ziliao huibian,* 387.
[4] For the discussion on visual art of the novel, see Shang Wei, "The Story of the Stone and Its Visual Representations, 1791-1919" in *Approaches to Teaching the Story of the Stone*, ed. Andrew Schonebaum and Tina Lu, (New York: Modern Language Association), 346-380. To look at the modern reprints of the visual art, see Shucun Wang, *Minjian zhenpin tushuo Honglou meng*. Taibei: Dongda tushu youxian gongsi, 1996.

novel at all.[5] This cultural phenomenon was named as "the *Stone* phenomenon" by the literary scholar Shang Wei, who states: "this phenomenon was constantly evolving, ever growing, more elusive, and much larger than any specific text called *Stone*." [6]

Literature Review and Areas of Contribution

So far, both English and Chinese scholarship on the "*Stone* phenomenon" tend to focus on the major literary genres, such as commentary poetry, sequel novel, imitation novel, and drama adaptation of the novel. For example, Ellen Widmer's book *The Beauty and The Book*: *Women and Fiction in Nineteenth Century China* explores the influence of *Dream* upon the elite women readers in their literary consumption and production. Widmer argues for a close connection between popularity of the novel and the rise of women's literary culture during the early nineteenth century. Specifically, she argues that the novel inspires women to write commentary poems as well as sequels to the novel. Widmer states that: "of the new novels available to readers by 1830, *Honglou meng* changed the relationship of women and fiction most directly."[7] The appeal of the novel to the gentlewomen readers lies in its unprecedentedly complex female characters and the sympathetic portrayal of many talented women. She argues that by the end of the Qing, the genre of fiction, which was deemed as a masculine genre and thus off-limits to

[5] Shang Wei explains the reason for several factors. First of all, the literacy level of the public; Second, those who claim to read the novel might had access to the adaptations or rerenderings of novel, such as stage performance and regional oral storytelling. See Wei Shang, "The *Stone* Phenomenon and Its Transformation from 1791 to 1919." In *Approaches to Teaching the Story of the Stone (Dream of the Red Chamber*), ed. Andrew Schonebaum and Lu, Tina (New York: Modern Language Association, 2012), 391.
[6] Shang, "The Stone Phenomenon," 390.
[7] Ellen Widmer, *The Beauty and The Book: Women and Fiction in Nineteenth-Century China*
(Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2020), 154.

women in the seventeenth century, had become a genre that women felt comfortable with as both readers and writers. [8]

While Widmer is interested in the shifting dialectics of gender and genre as a cultural and social influence of the novel in the nineteenth century, Catherine Yeh looks at the influence of the novel *Dream* upon the urban culture and entertainment culture in the fin-de-siècle Shanghai. In her book *Shanghai Love: Courtesans, Intellectuals, and Entertainment Culture, 1850-1910,* Yeh finds that the courtesans and the male clients also love the novel and use it for the novel characters, the themes and the scenes from the *Dream* provided a rich source for sophisticated and entertaining role playing between the courtesans and the clients. In such a ritualized play, courtesans often choose a persona from the young females in the novel, and the male clients would assume the persona of Baoyu. Yeh gathered a wide source of materials and cultural activities, such as photographs, interior design, costumes, courtesan competitions, courtesans' names, to show how the players borrowed the themes from the novel to create a world of fantasy apart from that of the reality. At several points, Yeh uses the metaphor of "entering the realm of dream" (*rumeng*) to point out how the gameplay blur the boundary between "true" (*zhen*) and "false" (*jia*), "real" (*shi*) and "illusory" (*huan*). Moreover, the role-playing games should be framed under another playground –the city Shanghai, which was imagined as a dreamscape comparable to Grand View Garden of the novel.[9] To quote Yeh, "the Grand Prospect Garden offered a powerful metaphor for the Shanghai foreign settlements with their paradisiac luxuries, their enclave position on the edge of the vast

[8] Widmer, *The Beauty and The Book*, 274-275.
[9] Catherine Yeh, *Shanghai Love*: *Courtesans, Intellectuals, and Entertainment Culture 1860-2920* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006), 17.

land of Qing orthodoxy, and their peacefulness in a China that had just undergone the most devastating and murderous civil war anywhere in the nineteenth century."[10] Yeh's reading looks at how the novel and the role playing game of the novel shapes the cultural identity of the players and the collective identity of the city Shanghai. In this reading, the connection lies in between the city Shanghai and the secluded Garden in the novel, as Yeh argues that the former had become the world's playground and a replica of the luxurious Grand View Garden in reality. In addition to the role-playing games (with only their implicit rules), Yeh also mentions some games with explicit rules, such as drinking games, card games, and linked-verse competition and treats them as regular components of Shanghai' pleasure quarter. Seen as the prompts for the role-playing act between the players, "these games offered the opportunity to engage in ritualized flirtatious banter, exhibit cultural skills and reinforce the cultural ambience of the occasion." [11]Yeh's reading focuses on the cultural phenomenon of role-playing games of *Dream at* the turn of the century. Unfortunately, such a reading might give the reader a misleading impression: games like drinking games and card games were only prompts to the role-playing games, and they were only played by courtesans and male clients in the Shanghai brothels of the late Qing era.

Chinese scholarship on the games of the novel appeared in print in recent years. Wang Dan's master's thesis "Qingdai honglou meng pulu yanjiu" (Studies on the *pulu* [lists and index] of *Dream of the Red Chamber*, 2017) uses the categorical term *pulu* to

[10] Yeh, *Shanghai Love*, 166.
[11] Yeh, *Shanghai Love*, 165.

analyze a group of commentary writings on the novel published during the late Qing.[12] The thesis includes several literary games of the novel and provides a detailed biographical information on the producers. However, the methodology of using the so-called *pulu* (literally, treatises and lists) as a generic category to study all these texts is questionable. The content of *pulu* can cover an unlimited range of literary genres and media forms and to use that as a research focal point does not contribute much to our understanding of the *Stone* phenomenon. Liao Dandan's article *Honglou renjing jiuling kaolun* (Studies on the drinking games of the *Dream of the Red Chamber—Honglou renjing*) looks at three versions of the drinking games titled *Honglou renjing* (*Person-Mirror of Dream of The Red Chamber*) 紅樓人鏡.[13] The text of the game starts with a character name of the novel, followed with a quotation from *Xixiang ji* as a commentary line, and the drinking instruction. Liao traces the composition of the game to the intertextuality of the drama play *Xixiang ji* in the novel *Dream* and dig out the biographical information about the producers of the games. Liao argues that the drinking game should be examined as a particular kind of readerly responses of the novel and therefore be incorporated into the study of the novel of the Qing era. Wu Di's article "Honglou yexi pu zakao jianlun honglou meng jiqi xushuzhongde yezixi" (Studies on the 'games of leaves' of *Dream of Red Chamber* and the description of 'games of leaves' in the sequels to *Dream*) look at a particular card game "Games of Leaves of *Dream of The Red Chamber*" (*Honglou meng yexi pu*) designed by a woman reader Xu Wanlan 徐畹蘭

[12] Dan Wang, "Qingdai honglou meng pulu yanjiu," (master's thesis, Yangzhou University, 2017).
[13] Dandan Liao, "Honglou renjing jiuling kaolun," *Honglou meng xuekan*, (01) 2017: 231-247.

(1860-1910) from the Jiangnan region during the late nineteenth century.[14] Wu Di also lists several sequels of the novel that included characters' play of the "game of leaves" (葉子戲 *yezi xi*).However, the regular card game ("game of leaves") appeared in the sequels are obviously not the card game—*Honglou meng yezixi* derived from the novel. (The sequels only prove the popularity of the card game of the time, which we already know as a historical fact.) Wu comes to the observation that the *Honglou meng yexipu* is very likely a desktop work, and never became materialized among players of the time. In my review, the author should differentiate the cultural sophistication of the *Honglou meng yexizi* and the commonplace "games of leaves" as mentioned in the sequels.

Each study mentioned above looks at one kind of games derived from the novel. All these authors have identified the producers of the games, their cultural background and high cultural sense of taste reflected in these games. Andrew Lo, a scholar on Chinese traditional games, have spent years studying the origins, the development, the game rules and the social history of traditional Chinese popular games, such as card games, domino games, drinking games and board games. In each chapter of my dissertation, I rely on his research and scholarship for a general introduction of the games under discussion. I also point out the differences between the games derived from *Dream* and the regular games of the time. The games of the *Dream* can be deemed as a reinvention of "popular culture" materials with themes, motifs, characters and topos borrowed from a literary masterpiece that could evoke suitable responses only in the

[14] Di Wu, "Honglou yexi pu zakao jianlun honglou meng jiqi xushuzhongde yezixi," *Honglou meng xuekan,* 01 (2017): 248-260.

readers of the text. Some of these games, in my argument, detach the games from the social performance of playing to a literary composition.

Organization of The Dissertation

Chapter Two studies a verbal game of matching drama snippets from the popular drama play *The Story of the Western Wing* (hereafter referred to as *Xixiang ji*) to characters from *The Dream of the Red Chamber*. Players enjoyed total freedom in the mixing and matching between the two textual sources, but the outcome of their gameplay must be meaningful in the context of the novel. The drama line from *Xixiang ji* reads as a witty observation or remark on the character. This kind of verbal play makes use of existing materials to invent new forms of expression. The verbal game plays on our expectations of the textual or literary materials. We think of any fragmented sequence from a drama play should be placed in its original textual landscape. In the word game, the twist comes from the dislocation: the drama line is taken out of its original narrative context and gains new meaning and new function in its juxtaposition to the figures from another literary work. The rules of the game generate uncertainties. No single version of these game texts was identical to any other. For example, for the same figural character, we can find different drama lines in different players' composition; for the same drama line, it can be matched to different characters in different game texts. Each player creates their own game path and the uncertainties of the game makes it enjoyable and fun. Moreover, the verbal compositions were circulated in between a variety of material and media objects: some compositions were first written on the personal holding fan and the manuscripts and then circulated to the print world; some composition were carved into seals and circulated in seal albums and seal imprint. Like joining in a gameplay, each

player present their playful composition in diverse media, formats, and objects, making the afterlives of this verbal game a series of visual, textual and formal production and reproduction extending from the mid nineteenth century to the mid twentieth century.

Chapter three focuses on the materiality of the verbal game—the seal carvings and the production and reproduction of the seal imprints (derived from the seals) from the 1900s to the 1940s. I look at a seal as a printing tablet, a writing medium, a connoisseurship object, and a communication tool that connects people across time and space. Seal carving, as an ancient-old practice in Chinese' daily life, is the combination of calligraphy, literary content, carving skills, the seal script, and tactile experience of brushwork on a hard material. To literati elite, seal is not only an emblem of authentication, but also a stele of calligraphy, a medium for self-expression, and an object of aesthetic pleasure and scholarly interest. As a connoisseurship object, literati scholar uses the term *wan* (玩) or *yinwan* (印玩) to refer to the seal carvings and seal albums as connoisseurship objects for appreciation. The physical scale of a seal determines that people's somatic experience with the seal is different from an object of a large size, such as a large folding screen. Writing on the rise of seal carving as a literati art in the sixteenth century, Bai Qianshen mentioned that one key feature that allowed the seal to become a literati's favorite object is its small size.[15] Unlike other fragile form of art work such as a scroll of calligraphy or painting, seals allow a more intimate physical contact between the object and the body. Seals are meant to be held in the hand for amusement

[15] Qianshen Bai, *Fu Shan's World: The Transformation of Chinese Calligraphy in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Asia Center, 2003), 51

(*bawan*),[16] "permitting a constant and more intimate physical contact between the hand and the object than was possible with large objects like calligraphy."[17] Moreover, a seal is a printing tablet. A seal allows the image or text carved on it to be reproducible. A seal imprint, thus produced, does not change its original size or textual or visual composition. I trace the circulation, production, and reproduction of seal imprints in modern China. From 1907 to 1920s, the hand-printed seal albums derived from this collection were mainly circulated among inner circles of friends and small groups of connoisseurs. From 1927 to 1928, with the introduction of photographical printing, the whole collection of seal imprints was reprinted by the most advanced photographic printing technology in a contemporary newspaper. In 1946, a bookshop in Chongqing used the method of hand-printing and issued the seal albums through commercial selling. This time, the seal albums became commodities in the book market, available for anyone who would like to buy, regardless of their symbolic capital or cultural capital. This chapter looks at the connoisseurship object of seal carving from three perspectives: the materiality of the seal carving and its affinity with the *Stone* of the novel, the cultural biography of the seal imprints, and the mediation and remediation of the seal imprint via modern media and printing techniques.

Chapter four looks at the drinking games derived from the novel *Dream* and players' playing of the game in the fictional narrative. This chapter searches for the

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[16] The aesthetics of *bawan* emphasizes on literati elites' relationship with the world. For example, Li Yu uses the word "*bawan*" to criticize that Jin Shengtan treats *Xixiang ji* as a book (to be held in the hand) of the literati rather than a play on stage (*bannong*). Li-ling Hsiao, *The Eternal Present of the Past: Illustration, Theatre, and Reading in the Wanli period, 1573-1619* (Brill, 2007), 79.
[17] Bai, *Fu Shan's World*, 51.

affinity between play and ritual, games and divination in general and then moves on to the commonalities between drinking games of lot drawing and the divinatory practices in the Chinese social and cultural context. I read paragraphs from the novel *Dream* to look at players' streams of consciousness and psychological responses to the result of their play. As the novel *Dream* gained widespread popularity, the drinking games derived from the novel soon became cultural fads of the time. A clear evidence of its popularity is the number of the games collected in the printed media, such as compendiums, anthologies and booklets. Another indication is the fictional narratives that described characters' gameplay of them and how they respond to the result of the game. Three courtesan novels published in late Qing have chapters of such game play descriptions. In all the three narratives, players are the courtesans and the male clients of the Shanghai brothels of the time. I read one chapter from the novel *Shanghai Dust* 海上塵天影—an imitation work of the *Dream* published in 1896. In both the parent novel and this imitation work, the same kind of drinking games function as a literary device of prophecies, working to reveal the temperaments of the players and forecast their future fates.[18] The close relationship between games of chance and divination have been pointed by many anthropologists of the past decades. Scholars like John Roberts, Malcolm Arth and Robert Bush, in their influential cross-cultural article "Games in Culture" (1959) analyze different categories of games (physical skill, strategy, and chance) as models of specific human cultural activities. Games of chance, in their view, "should be linked to the larger

[18] On the literary devices of prophecies and many different literary forms they assume in the narrative of *Dream of the Red Chamber*, see Ying Wang, "The Disappearance of the Simulated Oral Context and the Use of the Supernatural Realm in" Honglou meng," *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews* (2005): 137-150.

expressive system of religious beliefs and that they are exercises in relationships with the supernatural." [19] My reading answers the following question: how do we understand the association between drinking game of lot drawing and another more widespread social practice of the time—drawing a divination stick from a contemporary temple? What is the shared structure, forms or "rules" that we can detect from both the drinking game of lot drawing and divinatory practices in general and not limited to China? Whether this kind of prophetic message is only comprehensible to Chinese readers or they can ignite similar reading responses to other readers from other cultural and literary backgrounds? Why the drinking games casts a numinous feeling on their players? How such a gameplay, with the genius and manipulation of the author, become a literary device of prophecy in an artificial construct of the fictional narrative?

Chapter five looks at the card game derived from the novel—*Honglou meng pu*. I read the game texts to understand how to play the games, who authored the game and who might be the targeted audience of the manual. Interesting, the rules were written in a way that made them more liable to be read as commentary remarks of the novel. I surmise that the author of the game wrote rules for play, but they also tended to write game rules from the perspective of their own bookishness, which paradoxically, making the rules unplayable in reality. The textual emphasis of the rules brought to the game texts an increasingly literary language intended more for the reader than for the game players. I argue that such a game text informs us elite readers' reading practices of the novel and reflects their self-fashioning of cultural identity during the transitional era.

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[19] John M. Roberts, Malcolm J. Arth, and Robert R. Bush, "Games in Culture," *American Anthropologist* 61, no. 4 (1959): 602.

Often times, when scholars analyze games derived from a literary work, they tend to adopt either a ludological or a narrative approach in understanding the play experience. The gameplay experience was described by the logic of simulation, narration of stories, or both. Most of the games discussed in this dissertation are neither experiences of simulation nor a retelling of a story. Some of these games might never be played in reality at all. And some of these games (for example, verbal games) are not restricted to a physical and temporal space of playground. Nor is my analysis restricted to the theories developed in the field of game studies and gaming culture, which usually emphasized on how games are modeled after the larger cultural or social activities. In reading these games, I answer the following questions: how to play the games? Who were the authors, the producers, the players and the publishers of the games? In what media format were these games published? It is important to know the people who participated in the production and consumption of these games and their shifting cultural identities of the time. As such, this dissertation contributes not only to the scholarship on the reception of novel during the late Qing and early Republican period, but also aims to provide a reading of the intellectual history during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

CHAPTER 2

VERBAL GAMES: IINTERPLAY, MEDIA AND PRINT[20]

Introduction

In this chapter, I look at the most widely circulated edition of the novel *Dream of the Red Chamber* in the mid- to late nineteenth century— *Xinping xiuxiang Honglou meng quanzhuan* 新評繡像紅樓夢全傳 (*The Illustrated, Complete Edition of Dream of Red Chamber with New Commentary*) published by the Shuangqing Xianguan 雙清仙館 printing house in 1832. This edition was edited by Wang Xilian 王希廉 (1800-1876), who was also the owner of the printing house. In this chapter, I draw readers' attention to the 64 illustration leaves bound ahead of the major text of the novel. On the recto side of each leaf, there is a portrait of a character with an inscription of a drama line from *The Story of the Western Wing* 西廂記 (hereafter referred to as *Xixiang ji*); on the verso side of the leaf, there is an image of a flower (Figure 2.1). Later on, the text of character names, followed by the flower names and the drama lines, were taken out of the book of the novel, given the title *Shitou ji pinghua* 石頭記評花 *Flower Evaluation of Story of the*

[20] Excerpts of the novel in this dissertation are taken from David Hawkes' and Jon Minford' translation of the novel. David Hawkes, Tr. *The Story of the Stone* (vols.1-3 by David Hawkes, vols. 4 and 5 by John Minford) (New York: Penguin, 1973-86). In this dissertation, the English translation is referred to by its abbreviation *SS* (for ease of references, the references to the English translation are given by chapter number, and the abbreviation *SS*. I follow the translation of *The Story of the Western Wing from* Stephen H. West and Wilt Lukas Idema's book: *The Moon and The Zither: The Story of The Western Wing*.

Stone) (hereafterreferred to as *Pinghua*),[21] and collected in many commentary anthologies such as *Shitouji pingzan* 石頭記評讚 (*Appraisal and Commentary on Story of The Stone)* and *Xiangyan congshu* 香豔叢書(*Compendia of the Beauties*).

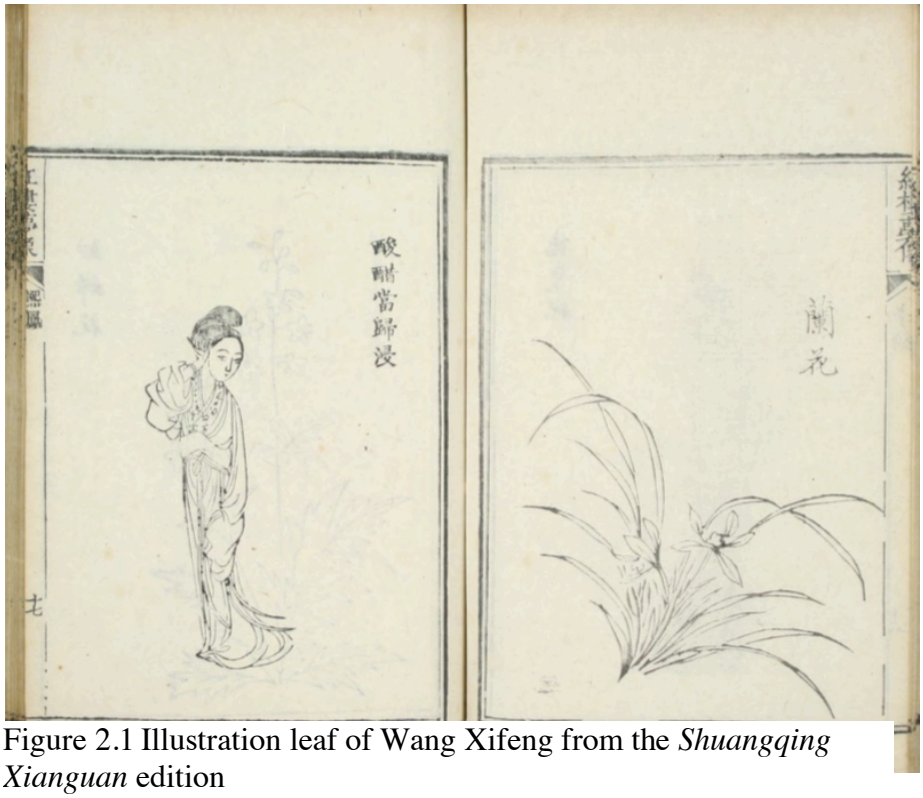

Figure 2.1 Illustration leaf of Wang Xifeng from the *Shuangqing Xianguan* edition

It is readers' play and interplay that truly make the verbal game a fun and enjoyable reading experience: One courtesan transcribed (possibly her own) game text

[21] The term "*Shitou ji pinghua*" 石頭記評花 (*Flower Evaluation of Story of the Stone*), together with other commentary paratexts in the Shuangqing xianguan, were also collected in the commentary anthology *Shitou ji pingzan* 石頭記評讚(Commentary and Appraisal of *The Story of Stone*, 1876). The *shitou ji pinghua* was anonymous in all these compendiums and anthologies. *Pinghua* (flower evaluation), also known as *huabang* (flower registers), is a long-established literati practice originated in the pleasure quarters. The literati ranked each courtesan with titles of the examination candidates. The criteria includes the talent, beauty, personalities, airs and attraction of the courtesan. This kind of literary repertories are alternatively referred to as *pinhua* 品花 (flower connoisseurship*)* and *huabang* 花榜 (flower roster), see Goyama Kiwamu, *Mingqing shidai de nüxing yu wenxue*, trans. Yanwan Xiao (Taipei: Lianjing chuban gongsi, 2016).

on her personal folding fan; one reader found an anonymous game text on a discarded manuscript and submitted it to the monthly journal *Xiangyan zazhi* 香艷雜誌 (Magazine of the Beautiful); one literati scholar commissioned two renowned seal carvers of the day to carve a set of seals, each with a character name or a section of the drama; producers of drinking games remade this game into drinking games, adding instructions for drinking. These readers' own play of the verbal games generated a series of derivative texts, rewritings, imitations, new uses and new functions in the world of print as well as everyday experience. For example, we not only find these verbal games in the media listed above, but also in fictional narratives, such as *Haishang chentianying* 海上塵天影 (*Shanghai Dusk*, 1896), an imitation of *Dream of the Red Chamber*.

Katie Salen and Eric Zimmerman define the concept of play as "a free movement within a more rigid structure."[22] In the verbal game of the *pinghua*, the players have the freedom to choose which drama quotation to match to a certain character; however, the "mixing and matching" must meaningfully reflect the personalities of the characters and the events that take place in the novel. Playfulness in these verbal games is derived from the webs of reference that sometimes link a cluster of drama lines to one single character and sometimes connect one line from the drama to different characters. Readers are invited, as active players, to interact with other readers by transcribing, copying, circulating and printing their verbal composition in various media and materials, with a general tendency to challenge other readers in the reading community.

[22] Katie Salen and Eric Zimmerman, *Rules of play: Game Design Fundamentals* (The MIT press, 2004) 304.

However, the verbal game *Shitou ji pinghua* and its rules of composition were not novel for readers of late imperial period. I trace the rules of the verbal game back to the entertainment texts circulated in the commercially-printed books in early modern China. My analysis shows that the essential feature of the cross-generic writing and textual "mixing" in this verbal game were already a recurring schema and staple in a corpus of party games, verbal games and playful writings found in the encyclopedia books (*leishu*) prevalent in the market since the late sixteenth century. I argue that this verbal game of *Shitou ji pinghua* follows the larger literary fashions and cultural forms in adapting extant materials and reassembling them to serve new purposes, create new forms, and generate new social and cultural meanings.

This chapter is divided into three parts. The first part looks at the most widely circulated edition of the novel *The Dream of the Red Chamber* in the nineteenth century—the Shuangqing Xianguan edition (1832), with a focus on the drama lines printed on the illustration leaves. The second part analyzes literary environment and cultural fashions that shaped the production of *pinghua*. I draw readers' attention to characters' conversation and quotation of the drama play *Xixiang ji* in the narrative of *Dream of the Red Chamber* per se. My analysis shows that the popularity of *Xixiang ji* has made its drama snippets part of the common expressions and knowledge for the general public of the time. In the third part, I shift readers' attention to a body of entertainment texts (mainly drinking verses and verbal games) found in the commercial printed books of drama miscellanies, encyclopedia books *(leishu),* etc. My analysis shows that for readers of the era, this verbal game (of matching lines from *Xixiang ji* to characters from *Dream of the Red Chamber*) was not so much an anomaly as a successor

to the trivial verbal games and playful texts profligate in the printing world. There are fundamental similarities, in terms of the game rules, the writing schemes, the rigid structures, between *Shitou ji pinghua* and the other game texts scattered in print and played in party games. Together they follow the cultural fashions of combing linguist registers of both plebian and elegant, literary and non-literary, poetic and folly in a new textual pastiche that centers on a new topic. Nonetheless, such textual gaming requires players' a high level of literary virtuosity and witty cultural maneuvering. A study of verbal games that involving two of the most popular and canonical texts in the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, this exploration also opens a window on a large corpus of late imperial entertainment texts and frivolous writings that subjected canonical texts for play, games, humor and parody.

Book History of the Novel: The Shuangqing Xianguan Edition

The book history of *The Dream of the Red Chamber* is a series of myths of manuscript hunting, stories of discovery and loss, gossip surrounding its authorship and authenticity, and speculation about what "original facts" were "concealed." It is a history which testifies to the interpenetration of manuscript culture and printing culture, and the dynamic relationship between bibliographical studies and literary criticism.

Before the novel went into print, the incomplete manuscript copies had already been much prized by "aficionados" (*haoshi zhe* 好事者)[23]. The first printed edition of the

[23] *Haoshi zhe* appears ubiquitously in the prefaces of Ming-Qing books, where it has a variety of connotations depending on the context. For example, *haoshi zhe* can mean book aficionado, especially those from the literati collectors of manuscripts. Here, *haoshi zhe* were the men who had the resources and free time to collect copies of the manuscripts of the novel *Dream of the Red Chamber*. Anne McLaren provides a survey of the multifarious meanings of the term in the book history during Ming-Qing. See Anne McLaren, "Constructing new reading publics in late Ming China," in *Printing and Book*

novel (dated to 1791), edited by Cheng Weiyuan 程偉元(1742?-1818?) and Gao E 高鶚 (1738?-1815?), was an instant hit (Figure 2.2). The second revised edition followed immediately in the spring of the following year (1792). The readership of the novel was rapidly expanded by Gao and Cheng's printed editions, which encouraged other publishers to venture into the profitable business.

Figure 2.2 Illustration of Gao E and Cheng Weiyuan's edition of *The Dream of the Red Chamber* (1792)

In pre-modern China, " bare editions" (*baiben* 白本) without any commentary were usually not commercially viable, even in the case of a great novel like *The Dream of the Red Chamber*.[24] Thus, Cheng and Gao's edition, which lacked commentary, was soon

Culture in Late Imperial China, ed. Cynthia Brokaw and Kai-wing Chow (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 152-83.

[24] Most of the books in the market were marketed as "commentarial editions" (*piping* or *pinglin*). For a detailed study of commentary in literati fiction, see David Rolston, *Traditional Chinese Fiction and Fiction Commentary: Reading and Writing Between the Lines* (Stanford University Press, 1997), 2-4.

supplanted by the annotated editions of the 1800s. The first of these annotated editions was published in 1811 by the printing house Dongguange 東觀閣 under the title was *Xinzeng piping xiuxiang hongloumeng* 新增批評繡像紅樓夢 (*Dream of the Red Chamber* with *Newly Added Commentary and Illustrations*). In 1832, Wang Xilian's commentary edition of the novel, *Xinping xiuxiang hongloumeng quanzhuan* 新評繡像紅樓夢全傳 (*An Illustrated, Complete Edition of Dream of Red Chamber with New Commentary*), soon became popular printed edition in the book market. From 1832 to 1884, the Shuangqing Xianguan edition was the most popular edition of the book in the market, reprinted by more than twenty publishing houses from all over the country, including the famous Juzhen Tang 聚珍堂 in Beijing (1876). The Shuangqing Xianguan edition dominated the market until 1884, when another commentary edition of the novel, *Zengping buxiang quantu jinyu yuan* 增評補像金玉緣 (*The Affinity of Gold and Jade, Fully Illustrated, with Additional Commentary and Illustrations*) rose to market dominance. Because this edition integrated the commentaries of Wang Xilian, Zhang Xinzhi 張新之(1828-1850) and Yao Xie 姚燮 (1805-1864), it gained a leg up on the Wang edition. This edition was still in print in the early Republican Era, and the editions from that period are printed with newly introduced lithographic printing technology on poor-quality paper with cheap ink, resulting in hardly legible characters. These were cheap editions sold at low prices which made them accessible to the masses.

The Shuangqing Xianguan edition of the book consists of 12 volumes of woodblock-printed, thread-bound volumes. The first codex consists only of commentary. The order of the pages is familiar. The first page is a cover leaf imprinted with the title and the date of publication, which is printed on the opposite side. There are two prefaces.

The first preface is written by Wang Xilian and carved in calligraphic script; the next is the "original preface," written by Cheng Weiyuan, and carved in block script. Following the prefaces are *Hongloumeng lunzan* 紅樓夢论讚 ("Evaluation of the Characters of *Dream of Red Chamber*") and *Hongloumeng wenda* 紅樓夢問答 ("Questions and Answers for *Dream of Red Chamber*"). Both of these pieces were authored by Xu Ying 徐瀛(?-?), under the pseudonym *Duhua ren* 讀花人(Reader of the Flowers). Following Xu's writings is Huang Cong's *Daguan yuan tushuo* 大觀園圖說 ("Explanation of the Diagram of Grand Prospect Garden"), a prose piece describing the Grand Prospect Garden. What is distinctive about this edition is its inclusion of a group of women's commentary poetry titled 紅樓夢題詞("Endorsement Poems on *The Dream of the Red Chamber*") written by the female writer Zhou Qi 周绮(?-?), the concubine of Wang Xilian.[25] This was the first time that a woman's commentary work was packaged together with the print edition of a novel. Wang Xilian authored the "general comments" (*zongping* 總評) placed at the end of each chapter as well as the "general comments" for the entire novel, placed at the end of the text. Wang's general comments, Zhou's poetry and the *Shitou ji pinghua* were collected together in commentary anthologies, such as *Shitou ji pingzan* (Appraisal and Commentaries on the *Story of the Stone*) and the 1914 compendium *Xiangyan congshu (Fragrant Compendium,* 1915-1917*)*.

The second volume of the Shuangqing Xianguan edition consists of illustrations. This grouping of the illustrations in one volume, rather than inserting them before each

[25] Zhou Qi was also a painter and a seal carver. For more information about Zhou Qi and female readers' commentary practice on the novel, see Song Zhan, "Lun qingdai nüxing de honglou meng pinglun," in *Honglou meng xue kan,* no. 6 (2006):135-160.

chapter, is typical of the "capping illustration" (*guantu* 冠圖) thread-binding (*xianzhuang* 線裝) method.[26] This codex could therefore stand alone, and be used as a painting album for individual viewing and appreciation (*wanwei* 玩味). Notably, each leaf is folded in the middle. The recto side of the leaf is the character portrait while the verso side of the leaf is an image of a flower or a plant (Figure 2.3). Only after turning the leaf can a reader know which flower or plants correspond to the character. Turning the page creates mental suspension, which echoes the uncertainties in the lot drawing of the drinking game "Choose the Flower" played by the characters within the novel (Chapter 63).

Turning the Leaf [27]

Evaluating the history of the book, D.F. McKenzie stresses its materiality: "Readers never encounter abstract, idealized texts detached from any materiality. They hold in their hands and perceive the book whose structures and modalities govern their reading, and consequently their possible comprehension."[28] The experience of the readers of the Shuangqing Xianguan edition of the novel was also shaped considerably by the materiality of the book they hold in their hand.

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[26] The practice of grouping all illustrations at the beginning of a work and make the volumn like an independent painting album was already a common practice by the late Ming. See Anne McLaren, *Chinese Popular Culture and Ming Chantefables* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 59-63. Lucille Chia notes that these grouped illustrations both served the practical function of explaining the text and became an album of visual art independent from the text. See Lucille Chia, *Printing for Profit: The Commercial Publishers of Jianyang, Fujian (11th-17th Centuries)*, 215-17

[27] The pagination of books in pre-modern China was different from that of most modern books. The leaf (*ye*) was printed with text on only one side and folded in middle so that the texts are made visible. The verso side of the leaf is the flower image and the recto side of the leaf is the character portrait.

[28] Donald McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts* (Cambridge University Press, 1999), 20.

The way the leaves are bound determines how the text comes to the hand and eye of its readers, and consequently the reading experience of the book. The order of the pages creates a dialogue between the verso and recto side of the page. Since the character portrait was printed on the recto side of the leaf and the image of the flower was printed on the verso side of the same leaf, in turning the leaf from left to right, a reader would see first the character portrait and then the flower image matched to the character. A flat view of the book will reveal two successive leaves, with the character portrait (on the left side) and flower image (on the right side) unrelated to each other (Figure 2.3). This binding method structured the reading experience. The action of physically turning the leaf

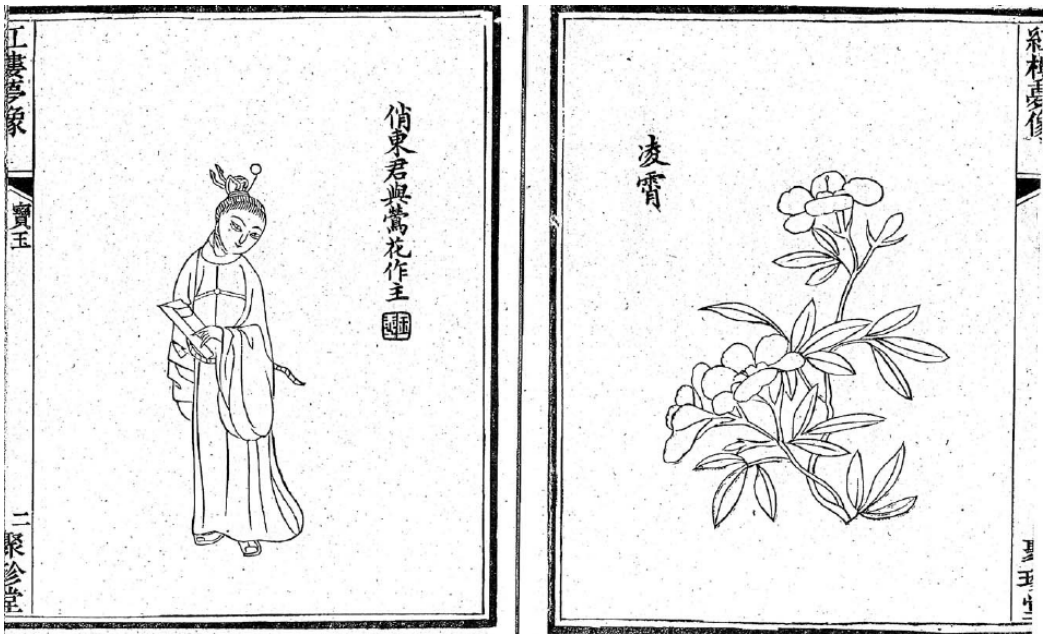

Figure 2.3 A flat view of two leaves from the Shuangqing xianguan edition

created a mental pause, and turned the match between a flower (or plant) and a character into a puzzle.

The thread binding, thus, turn the viewing process into a guessing game, not only prompting the reader to reflect on the correspondence between the flower symbol and the character, but also mirroring the drinking game "Choosing the Flower" played during

Baoyu's birthday party (Chapter 63). In this game, each player draws a lot which is engraved with a flower name and a line from a Tang or Song poem. The flower and the line of poetry are supposed to somehow reflect the player who draws the tile, either by predicting their fate or pinpointing their personalities or traits. For example, Daiyu's tile shows a hibiscus flower and a line of poetry by Ouyang Xiu's 歐陽修 (1007-1072) poem: "Your own self, not the east wind, is your undoing" (*SS* III:228). The game of drawing lots creates uncertainties that allow the player to have a thrilling experience. In turning the page, the reader experiences a similar kind of suspension—they are encountering something unknown for which they are earnest to know. The flower on the lot and the flower on the page both carry a rich symbolic meaning which draws on a literary repertoire of lyric poetry and folklore. The play of matching flowers to beautiful women with a poetic line traces back to the writings of "flower registers" (*huapu* 花譜) or *huabang* 花榜(flower register) during the late Ming dynasty. Both Cao Xueqin and the anonymous designer of the illustrations resort to the tropes and templates of the "*huapu*." In both *Shitou ji pinghua* and the drinking game in the novel, we find each female character is matched to a flower and annotated with a line of commentary; only in the Shuangqing xianguan, the line comes from no other than the drama play—the *Xixiang ji*.

Between 1832 and 1884, the Shuangqing Xianguan edition was republished and reprinted by at least twenty publishing houses across the country.[29] In many reprints, the same illustrations and the drama lines on them were repeatedly carved into woodblocks despite editorial changes in the other "front matter" materials.[30] Why did all of these book

[29] Yisu, *Honglou meng shulu*, 44-47.
[30] At least three publishers copied and carved the 64 illustrations from *Shuangqing xianguan* edition from 1832 to 1877. Yisu, *Honglou meng shulu*, 44-48.

publishers keep the same format and illustrations and why did the they prefer the inscription of *Xixiang ji* rather than the poetry or lyrics which were more commonly used for a colophon endorsement? The answer might be simple: publishers and readers found the drama lines from *Xixiang ji* as remarks on these characters were delightfully fitting and interesting. Most importantly, the *Xixiang ji* was already part of their cultural memory and daily life. In what follows, I will examine the rules of the game, the intertextuality of *Xixiang ji* in *Dream of the Red Chamber* and the larger literary trends and cultural traditions that determined the popularity of verbal games among readers of late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

What Is the Verbal Game?

The game follows an explicit set of rules. The reader must select one line from *Xixiang ji* and match it to one character from the novel *Dream*. Each line from *Xixiang ji* should be fitting and clever chosen, providing a witty comment on the person's personal traits or relevant stories about him or her.

Some lines are a light-hearted pun on the name of the character. For example, the line for Qiuwen 秋紋 is "autumn waters" (*yingying qiushui* 盈盈秋水),[31] a play on the two characters in Qiuwen's name, "autumn" 秋(*qiu*) and "ripple" 紋(*wen*). The lines are sometimes riddles involving the personal details of a character. For Qiaojie 巧姐, the line is "weaving girl" (*zhinü xing* 織女星), because she was born on the Double Seventh

[31] In *Xixiang Ji*, "autumn waters" refers to Yingying's beautiful eyes: "She'll gaze until her overflowing autumn waters are just sockets, and frown until her lightly sketched spring hill have all faded away" (望穿他盈盈秋水，蹙損了淡淡春山). Stephen West and Wilt Idema, trans. *The Moon and the Zither: The Story of the Western Wing* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 207

Festival (the seventh day of the seventh month of the lunar calendar), which celebrates the annual meeting of the "cowherd" (the star Altair) and the "weaving girl" (the star Vega) in Chinese mythology.[32] For some characters, the posture of the character in the portrait reflects the line from the drama.. For example, the line for the character Xichun 惜春 is "paying tribute to Three Jewels" (禮三寶)[33] and the illustration of Xichun shows her palms closed in the gesture associated with paying tribute. The flower matched to Xichun is *lycoris radiate*; the Chinese name for the flower—*mantuoluo* 曼陀羅 is the Chinese transliteration of the Sanskrit *Mañjusaka*, a reference to a story first found in the Saddharmapundarika sutra.[34] Both the caption and flower symbolize Xichun's devotion to Buddhism (Figure 2.4).

[32] The Double Seventh or Qiqiao festival is also known as Chinese Valentine's Day for the romantic myth of the "cowherd" and the "weaving girl" that it commemorates. In the novel, when Grannie Liu meets Qiaojie for the first time, the little girl does not yet have a name. After Xifeng tells Grannie Liu that the baby girl's birthday is "the seventh of the seventh—a very unlucky date." Grannie Liu gives her the name Qiaojie (巧姐), a homophone of the name of the festival (*qiaojie* 巧節): "I prophesy for this child that when she's a big girl and the other are all going off to get married, she may for a time find that things are not going her way; but thanks to this name, all her misfortunes will turn into blessings, and what at first looked like bad luck will turn out to be good luck in the end." (Chapter 42, *SS*. II:325).

[33] The "three jewels" is a Buddhist term for the Buddha, *Dharma* (Buddhist teachings), and Sangha (community of monks and nuns). See Robert E. Buswell Jr. and Donald S. Lopez Jr., *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism* (Princeton University Press, 2013), xx.

[34] Buswell Jr. and Lopez Jr., *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, 2180.

For some characters, the associated line relates to an episode in the narrative. For example, Qin Keqin's 秦可卿 commentary line, "we can meet only in dreams" (夢兒相逢),[35] is a reference to her appearance in Baoyu's dream (Chapter 5) and Xifeng's 王熙鳳 dream (Chapter13).[36] The line can also simply be a short summary of the character's personality, as is the case for Xifeng: "vinegar soaks in the (medicine of) Angelica" (酸醋當歸浸).[37]

Figure 2.4 A unfolded leaf of illustration from Shuangqing xianguan edition of the *Dream*
(The recto side of the leaf shows the figure Xichun and the verso side of the leaf shows the flower image)

[35] The caption is taken from a passage in which Yingying expresses regret that she and Zhang could not consummate their love: "All that's left to do is remember him in my heart, idly call out his name in my mouth, we can meet only in dreams." West and Idema, *The Story of the Western Wing,* 269.

[36] In the novel Qin Keqing appears in dreams for twice. The first time is her appearance in Baoyu's dream tour of The Land of Illusion, which occurs in his sleeping in her bedroom. In the dream, she appears as the figure Jianmei (two-in-one, which is also her maiden name before marriage), the celestial beauty who combines tenderness and sensuality (Chapter 5). After Qin Keqing's death, her spirit appears in Xifeng's dream and offers suggestions for preparing the family for hardship to preserve the family's honor.

[37] The line is taken from the prescription that Yingying has for curing Student Zhang's illness of lechery. The term *danggui* is a pun for both the medicine name of Chinese

However, for some minor characters, the lines are hilarious and sometimes erotically humorous. For example, the line for Fu Qiufang 傅秋芳: "it only allows people to miss in vain"(只許心兒空想) is adapted from the drama line by Yingying: "All that's left to do is remember him in my heart, idly call out his name in my mouth—We can meet only in dream" (从今后只许我心头空想，从今后只许他梦里相逢). [38] The character Fu Qiufang is one of the many minor characters in the novel. She only appears in a few lines of gossip related by the narrator as an aside when several old female servants from the Fu household pay a visit to Baoyu. At the mature age of 22, Qiufang remains unmarried because her brother only wants to ally himself matrimonially with a powerful and aristocratic family like the Jia. Given the ambiguity of the line, it is ambiguous as to whether this describes Baoyu's fancies about Fu's beauty and talent or the narrator's description of her brother's vain hopes for social climbing (Chapter 20).

Some lines are so cleverly chosen that they almost seem like an inside joke for a good reader. For instance, the line for Wan'er 卍兒 is marvelous: "seeking tranquility in the midst of noise" (鬧中取靜).[39] Wan'er, like Qiufang, is another minor character in the novel who would likely escape the notice of even veteran readers of the novel: she is the girl Baoyu catches having a dalliance with Tealeaf 茗煙 in the midst of the bustling

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Angelica (Angelica Sinensis) as well as the time for their rendezvous—time when he "ought to return" for rest. The original translation in accordance to the context is: "vinegar soaks the one who ought to return." West and Idema, *The Story of the West Wing*, 219.

[38] West and Idema, *The Story of the Western Wing*, 168.

[39] The original verse is a comic description of the secret rendezvous between Yingying and student Zhang: "You will meet rain and clouds and in confusion find quietude, I deliver notes and letter, and from trouble filch rest." West and Idema, *The Story of the Western Wing*, 30.

Lantern Festival activities. The quote is a line delivered by Crimson 紅娘 when she delivers her lady's letter arranging a late-night assignation with Zhang Therefore the explicit eroticism of the line from the drama—"you will meet rain and clouds, and in confusion find quietude"[40]—resonates with the eroticism and voyeurism of Wan'er's brief appearance in the novel.[41] A similar line accompanies the image of Siqi 司棋: "meeting you after sunset" (人約黃昏後). This line is a reference to Yuanyang 鴛鴦 accidently witnessing Siqi's evening rendezvous with her cousin Pan You'an 潘又安 in the Garden. The drama line matched to Siqi: "meeting you after sunset" (人約黃昏後) captures the moment when Yuanyang accidently witnessed Siqi's evening rendezvous with her cousin Pan You'an in the Garden. The drama line, further, displays a closer connection with the secret sexual initiation between the *Xixiang ji* and the novel.

In the game, *Xixiang ji* functions as a database of reference materials for players to select and match to characters in *Story of the Stone*. Play within the game is not completely free. The matches must be significant, with the line from the drama either revealing the personality of the character or referencing episodes associated with the character. Most importantly, a verbal game is fun and sparks laughter; it should be a different experience from writing formal prose like *guwen* 古文(prose essay) or *bagu wen* 八股文(eight-legged essays). The composition of *pinghua* requires intelligence and wit.

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[40] West and Idema, *The Story of the Western Wing*, 206.

[41] In Chapter 12, Baoyu is invited to visit the Ning mansion and join the Lantern Festival party. As he cannot stand boisterous drama performance that involved "blooded curdling battler cries, banner flying and weapons flashing and so on," Baoyu decides to visit the painting of the lonely beauty in in Cousin Zhen's smaller study, where he catches Tealeaf seeking pleasure with a girl. When Baoyu inquires about the girl, Mingyan knows not much about the girl except her name—Wan'er. (*SS*. I: 376-377).

Since players can actively decide which lines from the drama they choose and which characters they pick up in the game, each play has a different result. The game has explicit goals. All these decontextualized lines from the drama must be meaningful in the new context of *Story of the Stone*.

Not everyone would be a good player. They need to possess a fairly high level of literary training to understand the nuanced meaning and rhetorical richness of the drama lines and know the novel well to produce a playful pastiche. The skills of navigating through different sources of texts to create such a textual blending and discursive mixing was a must-have for literary readers and semi-literate of the time. The verbal game *pinghua* not only echoes the intertextuality of *Xixiang ji* in the novel itself, but also adhere to the basic rubrics and rigid structures of these entertainment texts in the encyclopedia books (*leishu*) that guide people's performance and game skills in social practice.[42]

The choice of *Xixiang ji* is particularly charming and witty. The intertextuality of the drama play in the novel is well acknowledged by readers and scholars: the subject matter, the theme, the *topos* and the sentimental love of the drama play greatly influenced

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[42] *Riyong leishu* 日用類書 ("household encyclopedia for daily use") is a broad term. *Leishu* in this chapter refers to a repertoire of encyclopedia books that circulated in the book market from the Late Ming into the early Republican Era. They were also generally labeled as *wanbao quanshu* ("complete book on myriad treasures"), as they contained information on all branches of knowledge. To list some scholarly discussion on the content and catalogues of *leishu*, Peter Burke and Joseph McDermott, *The Book Worlds of East Asia and Europe, 1450–1850: Connections and Comparisons* (Hong Kong University Press, 2015), 237-81; Elman, Benjamin. "Collecting and classifying: Ming Dynasty compendia and encyclopedias (Leishu)." *Extrême-Orient Extrême-Occident* (2007): 131-157. Huifang Wu, *Wanbao quansu: mingqing shiqi de mingjian shenghuo shilu* (Xinbei:Huamulan wenhua chushe she, 2012), 11-33; Wei Shang. "The Making of the Everyday World" in *Dynastic Crisis and Cultural Innovation* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2005), 68-70.

the novel. Moreover, the figural characters themselves are good players of quoting lines from *Xixiang ji* to create laughters, to communicate their sentimental feelings, or simply to use them as commonplace expressions and to make up for drinking games.

My studies shows that the inscription drawn from the text of *Xixiang ji* to embellish the book is a success in terms of marketing strategy and cultural fads. Compared to the more regular forms of colophon writing accompanying an illustration leaf, such as prose, lyrics, or poetry that were written under certain precedents, principles, terminologies, formularies and rubrics, the drama lines provide a textual twist and verbal play that elude any serious studies; yet they reveal a fresh and rich perspective what readers of mid to late Qing China wanted to see and consume, and what paratextual materials were promoted as desirable and fashionable. The illustration pages, as the membrane between the reader and the book, fully explore the form of an individual painting album, and the use of the popular drama lines to create a cultivated space of playfulness. Instead of the commonly seen writings printed on fiction illustrations, the short snippet from *Xixiang ji* was short, familiar, fun and, most important, appealing to the taste of the literary class in the nineteenth century.

What and why the publisher decided to print are not the random outcome of production. In what follows, I trace the verbal game to the characters' quotidian conversation in the novel *Dream* as well as the prevalent use of the drama snippets in the social practice of gameplay as we read from literary narratives and the examples of the game composition collected in the commercially printed books. My analysis shows that two factors contributed to the production and popularity of the verbal game:

1) The popularity of *Xixiang ji* and its pervasive appearance in all arenas of daily life, including material objects, everyday conversation, illustration and everyday social practices, like drama performance, popular songs, riddles, drinking games, storytelling, etc.

2) The rigid structure of the game—i.e., the disjunctive writing scheme of mixing texts from different sources into a meaningful whole had become one of the key cultural fashions in the social performance of game play. Light-hearted literary games flourished during the Ming-Qing period as a result of the convergent forces of new philosophical thinking, printing, and theater performance.[43] Given the development of the printing industry at the time, these texts that reworked quotations from one literary or textual sources for comic effects were easily accessible to people of all social classes, allowing a wider audience to participate and test their skills.

Popularity of *Xixiang ji* during Ming Qing period

Authored by Wang Shifu 王實甫(1250-1300), *Xixiang ji* has been "China's most popular love comedy" since its first performance.[44] The play is an adaptation of the Tang *chuanqi The Story of Yingying*, written by Yuan Zhen (779-831). *Xixiang ji* enjoyed wide circulation during the late imperial period. From the late thirteenth century onward, *Xixiang ji* appears to have been a "household name" to people of all social strata. It was adapted into northern musical styles (*zaju* 雜劇), Southern drama (*chuanqi* 傳奇), and practically all the major forms of prosimetric storytelling. [45]By the mid-sixteenth century,

[43] Yinghui Wu, "Constructing a Playful Space: Eight-Legged Essays on Xixiang Ji and Pipa Ji" in *T'oung Pao* 102, no. 4-5 (2016): 508-9.
[44] See West and Idema, *The Story of The Western Wing*, 3.
[45] West and Idema, *The Story of The Western Wing,* 6-7

Xixiang ji was the most frequently-printed play of the period, with editions printed and circulated in commercial, literati and court-sponsored venues. There are well over 100 known Ming editions of the drama, a record only surpassed by the number of printed editions of *Dream of the Red Chamber* in the nineteenth century via new printing technologies like lithography and letterpress printing.[46]

Xixiang ji is about the romance between the maiden Cui Yingying 崔鶯鶯 and the student Zhang Gong 張公. Zhang and Yingying fall in love at first sight. Zhang saves her family from bandits, and her widowed mother promises him Yingying's hand in marriage. Madame Cui then reneges on her promise because her late husband had already arranged a marriage for Yingying. The young couple, with the help of Cui's maid Crimson, consummates their love in secret. When the affair is discovered, they are permitted to marry only if Zhang succeeds in the civil service exams. He does, and the drama ends in happy union.

Episodes from the play enjoyed wide circulation in anthologies, which contained abridged versions of the play or excerpted scenes. In the Qing period, the story was retold in all major kinds of regional storytelling forms such as the *guci* (drama rhymes), *zidi shu* (young player scripts), *tanci* (plucking rhymes) and the *muyu shu* (wooden-fish books). [47] However, many aspects of the play—the lure of sentiment, the pursuit of passionate love without parental permission, the explicit sexual content of certain scenes and lines—were

[46] He, *Home and The World*, 28; West and Idema, *The Story of the Western Win, 7*.
[47] West and Idema, *The Story of the Western Wing*, 10-11.

decried as lecherous, immortal, and thus inappropriate for impressionable adolescents. For this reason, *Xixiang ji* was originally smuggled secretly into the Garden by Baoyu.[48]

Despite ambivalent attitudes towards the play, *Xixiang ji* enjoyed unparalleled popularity in print and on stage during the Ming and Qing period. The critic Jin Shengtan 金聖嘆 (1610?-1661) acclaimed the book as one of the "six books of talents" (*liu caizi shu* 六才子書), yet in his edition, he made a number of textual changes to downplay Yingying's passionate pursuit of love and highlight her virtue.[49] His emendated edition, to quote Ann Waltner, "rescued the reputation of Cui Yingying"[50] The drama also exerted tremendous influence over the genre of fiction and drama known as "scholar-beauty romance" (*caizi jiaren* 才子佳人). Tropes like the talented student, the beautiful maiden, love at first sight, obstacles to their union, and the smart girl servant all became regular components in later "scholar-beauty" works, including *The Dream of the Red Chamber*.

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[48] Many works now deemed classics, such as *Xixiang ji*, *Mudan ting* 牡丹亭 (*Peony Pavilion*), *Shuihu zhuan* 水滸傳 (*The Water Margin*) and *Jinpingmei* 金瓶梅 (*Plum in the Golden Vase*) as well as *Dream of the Red Chamber*, appeared on the list of licentious books (y*inshu* 淫書) during the late imperial period. During the late Qing, both *Xixiang ji* and *Dream of the Red Chamber* was on the list of forbidden books. To evade Qing censorship, many editions of the novel were printed with alternative titles, such as *Jinyu yuan* 金玉緣 (*Gold and Jade Destined Love*) and *Daguan suolu* 大觀瑣记 (*Detailed Record of the Prospect Garden*). Yisu, ed., *Honglou meng shulu* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju,1958), 60-84.

[49] Jin Shengtan specifically praised the work as representative of Li Zhi's 李贄 (1527–1602) idea of authenticity, one of the central values of traditional literati ever since the seventeenth century. By editing the play, Jin aimed to demonstrate its moral respectability. For more about Jin Shengtan's commentary strategy and critical stance on the textual meaning of *Xixiang ji*, see Ge, Liangyan. "Authoring 'Authorial Intention:" Jin Shengtan as Creative Critic." *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews (CLEAR)*, vol. 25, 2003, 1–24. Sally Church, "Beyond the Words: Jin Shengtan's Perception of Hidden Meanings in *Xixiang Ji*" in *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, vol. 59, no. 1, 1999, 5-77.

[50] Waltner, "On not becoming a heroine: Lin Dai-yu and Cui Ying-ying, "76.

Typically, the genre of "scholar-beauty romance" entailed a happy ending (*da tuanyuan* 大團圓). However, the *Dream* deviated from this convention and broke through the cliched ending of the "scholar-beauty romances." As Ann Waltner comments, "the rather facile happy ending of *Western Chamber* serves to stress the complexity and subtlety of *Red Chamber*." [51]

Xixiang ji in *The Dream of the Red Chamber*

The play *Xixiang ji* appears in the novel at least eight times, in Chapters 18, 23, 26, 35, 36, 40, 42, and 51. The intertextuality between these two texts has drawn scholarship from a variety of theoretical perspectives.[52] In this chapter, I want to draw readers' attention to characters' playful banter and oral quotation of the drama play in their daily conversations.

The book *Xixiang ji* is first brought into the garden by Baoyu despite Mingyan's warning beforehand. It does take long before Daiyu found the book and entranced by the text: "the more she read, the more she like it, and before very long she had read several acts. She felt the power of the words and their lingering fragrant. Long after she had

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[51] Waltner, "On not becoming a heroine: Lin Dai-yu and Cui Ying-ying," 78.

[52] See Mengsheng Li, "*Honglou meng* yu *Xixiang ji*," in *Honglou meng xuekan,* no. 1 (1983): 153-62. Fuming Xu, *Hongloumeng yu xiqu bijiao yanjiu* (Shanghai: Guji chubanshe, 1984). I-Hsien Wu's research discusses the narrative function of the drama *The Story of the Western Wing*, arguing that the drama provides Jia Baoyu and Lin Daiyu with a common language to communicate their sentimental feelings. I-Hsien Wu, "Drama as Reading," and "Drama as Performance," in *Eroticism and Other Literary Conventions in Chinese Literature: Intertextuality in The Story of the Stone (*Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2017), 48-83. Ann Waltner looks at how reading of the romance drama influence the heroine of the novel Daiyu, who secretly self identifies with the heroine Yingying in *Xixiang ji*, while at the same time repelled by the scandalous romance. She also points out that tragic ending of *Honglou meng,* which is in contrast to the happy ending of the *Xixiang Ji*, enriches the novel's complex and philosophical value. Waltner, "On not becoming a heroine: Lin Dai-yu and Cui Ying-ying, " 61-78.

finished reading, when she had laid down the book and was sitting there rapt and silent, the lines continued to ring on in her had" (chapter 23; *SS* I: 464). From this point on, the two young people started a game of playful teasing by quoting lines from the drama. Baoyu first identified himself with Student Zhang and Daiyu as Yingying: "How can I, full of sickness and of awe, withstand that face of yours which kingdoms could overthrow" (我就是个多愁多病身，你就是那 倾國倾城貌) Chapter 23. *SS*, 1: 464; *HLM,* 325).[53] Daiyu immediately condemns his words as "nonsense for which he deserves to drop dead"; ironically, she quickly assumes the game by teasing him back with a line from the drama play: "(you are just a) perter spear that looks like silver" (是個銀樣蠟槍頭) (*SS* I:465; *HLM*, 326). [54]

Xixiang Ji was eagerly devoured by Baoyu and Daiyu who easily recognized themselves in the protagonists of the play. Although Daiyu calls it a "horrid play" (*SS* I: 464) , they continue the game of quoting from the play to communicate their feelings and tease each other. In Chapter 26, when Baoyu pays a visit to Daiyu, he overhears Daiyu quoting from the drama: "Each day in a drowsy waking dream of love" (每日家情思睡昏昏). This causes Baoyu to feel "a sudden yearning for the speaker" (不覺心內癢將起來) (*SS* I: 516; *HLM*, 366). Looking at Daiyu's maid Zijuan, he quotes a line from the same act, addressed by Zhang to Yingying's maid Crimson: "If with your amorous mistress I should wed, 'tis you, sweet maid, must make our bridal bed" (若同你多情小姐

[53] This is a modification of a line from Student Zhang's monologue when tries to get close to Yingying: "How can my body that is full of grief and full of sickness, stand a face that topple cities and topple states?" West and Idema, *The Story of the Western Wing*, 145.
[54] West and Idema, *The Story of the Western Wing*, 237.

同鴛帳，怎捨得疊被鋪床) (*SS* I: 517; *HLM*, 367). Such frivolous and explicitly flirting language offends the proper social etiquette, especially for a young lady like Daiyu.[55]

Nevertheless, the quotation of *Xixiang ji* in the novel *Dream* is not always related to the romantic stories or sentimental feelings. For example, in Chapter 40, when Lady Jia 賈母 hosts a feast in the garden to welcome Grannie Liu 劉姥姥 in her second visit to the mansion, a domino game is proposed. To play this game, players need to come up with a literary line that matches with the tiles or insignia on the dominos. Players can directly cite lines from classical poems or excerpts from vernacular literature. (For example, A six dots on a domino is called *tianpai* 天牌, and players can cite poem lines containing the word *tian* 天 or lines with such reference.) [56] When it is Daiyu's turn, she comes up with one line from *Peony Pavilion*: "bright air and brilliant moon feed my despair"(良辰美景奈何天) and one line from *Xixiang ji*: "no Reddie at the window seen" (紗窗也沒有紅娘報) (Chapter 40, *SS* II:301; *HLM*, 560). Poetry lines, classical and quotation from popular drama play like *Xixiang ji* and *Pipa ji* (*The Story of the Lute*) were common sources for drinking games, domino games, and verbal banter of the time, as evidenced by the examples collected in the game manuals, miscellanies and encyclopedia books in circulation.

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[55] Daiyu replies in tears: "This is your latest amusement I suppose. Every time you hear some coarse expression or read some crude disgusting book, you have to come back here and give me the benefit of it. I am to become a source of entertainment for the menfolk now, it seems" (*SS* II:517-8).

[56] Domino games like this were popular during the late imperial period, the domino game manual *Xuanhe paipu* (*Register of Dominoes from Xuanhe* era) was published during the Yuan dynasty and since then circulated in the encyclopedia books for readers for reference. For a development of Chinese dominoes, see Andrew Lo, "The Game of Leaves: An Inquiry into the Origin of Chinese Playing Cards," in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies,* University of London (2000): 401.

However, in the eyes of Baochai, such familiarity with *Xixiang ji* was not appropriate for ladies of their social rank. After recognizing the lines Daiyu recites, Baochai has a long and intimate talk with Daiyu, warning her of the danger of reading such books. Interestingly, she acknowledges that she and other kids in the household are also readers of "these books." [57] Baochai's confession again underlies the popularity of *Xixiang ji* in the Qing society. Even though *Xixiang ji* is a banned "licentious book," certainly not fit for ladies like Daiyu and Baochai to read in private, Daiyu, Baochai, Baoyu and the boys in Baochai's household enjoy reading the play, an indulgence which reveals the appeal the drama holds for the literary class.

In Chapter 49, when Baoyu notices how close Daiyu and Baochai have become, he asks Daiyu: "Since when did Meng Guang accept Liang Hong's tray?" (是幾時孟光接了梁鴻案)(*HLM*, 677) [58] When Daiyu tells him the reason, Baoyu's response is another citation from the drama:

> It seems that the question
> Since when did Mengguang accept Lianghong's tray?
> Could have been answered with another line from the same

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[57] In Chapter 42, Baochai confesses that she also read these kinds of books secretly: "The boys used to read them behind our backs, and we girls used to read them behind theirs" (Chapter 42, *SS* II:333; *HLM* 1:567-68). Elsewhere in the novel, it seems that the *Xixiang ji* was a regular drama repertoire in the household. While it is acceptable to enjoy watching the drama on stage, the books of the drama play was forbidden. Ling Hon Lam makes the argument that the dangerous allure is perceived not in the performativity but the textuality of the drama . Ling Hon Lam, "The Matriarch's Private Ear: Performance, Reading, Censorship, and the Fabrication of Interiority in *The Story of the Stone*," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 65, no. 2 (2005): 357-415.

[58] Meng Guang 孟光 was the legendary wife of Liang Hong 梁鸿, a scholar who supposedly lived during the Eastern Han (25–200). The couple treated each other with such deep respect that she always served him with "the platter lifted level with her eyebrows." In the drama, the line is Crimson's jibe at Yingying for making an assignation with Student Zhang while keeping her in the dark: "it is simply the case that Meng Guang has already received the plate of Liang Hong." Wilt and Idema, *Western Wing*, 206.

Act of the same play it was since you spoke
'like a child whose unbridled tongue known no concealment!'" (*SS* II: 477).

The quotation of drama line is a playful banter between close friends. Baoyu's witty repartee injects a spirit of playfulness into their conversation. The fun of citing lines from *Xixiang ji* in jest is not limited to Daiyu and Baoyu. In Chapter 63, seeing Miaoyu's 妙玉 nom-de-plume "the Dweller Beyond The Threshold: Respectful Anniversary Greetings" (檻外人妙玉恭肅遙叩芳辰) (*HLM*, 897) on the birthday card for Baoyu, Xiuyan' 岫煙 remarks by quoting the drama line: "The monks are no monks, the laymen no laymen, the women no women, the men no men" (僧不僧, 俗不俗,男不男,女不女)."[59] (*SS* III: 233; *HLM*, 897) Clearly, this drama line emphasized her attitude toward the eccentricity, underscoring the fact that linguist registers from *Xixiang ji* are not always poetic and sentimental, romantic and erotic; it can also be folky, commonplace, playful and a lot of them are direct citation or adaption from other textual sources, including classical texts, poems, popular songs, drama lines, common sayings (*suyu* 俗語) and winsome sayings of the time. Moreover, to quote the drama does not necessarily require meticulous reading knowledge. In fact, the play is so well known that it permeates their daily language.

In all these cases, citations from *Xixiang ji* add verbal richness and a sense of playfulness in people's playful banter and daily conversations. One among the many reasons for the permeation of *Xixiang ji* in daily languages is the extreme popularity of the drama play in the book market, on the stage, in its multifarious cultural adaptations and productions, parodies and imitations, all of which can be evidenced by the characters' dialogue in the novel as well.

[59] West and Idema, *The Story of the Western Wing*, 235

In Chapter 51, for example, after reading Baoqin's 寶琴 series of poems on historical figures, Baochai suggests that the last two lines of the poems should be taken out, because the lines allude to *Xixiang ji* and the *Peony Pavilion*—dramatic works which ladies like Baoqin should avoid. Such an avoidance is unnecessary, as Daiyu defends: "Even if, as well-bred young ladies, we may not read the book in which they are to be found, we've all watched plenty plays. Every three-year-old child is familiar with these stories, it's sheer hypocrisy to pretend that you've never heard of them" (*SS* II:514). Li Wan 李紈 adds that the drama is so popular that it is indeed hypocritical to be unknown about it:

> Stories may well be that the people in those last two poems didn't exist. Though the stories about them are unhistorical, they are certainly well-known. You can hear them told by story-tellers; you can see them acted on the stage; you can even find references to them on the divination–sticks that people tell their fortunes with in temples, there can't be a man, woman or child who is not familiar with them, and even if one knows them from the books, it can hardly be said that to have read a few lyrics from the *Western Chamber* or *The Soul's Return* is tantamount to reading pornography (*SS* II: 515).

Obviously, *Xixiang Ji* was no longer just a text for performance or a printed text for silent reading. It forms its own database, performing multiple roles—a reference book for quotation, a storehouse of material for literary games, a book of romance in the book market, a collection of tunes for singing, and a repertoire of language to be enacted in daily life. This versatility explains why the household enjoys the drama onstage, why Xiuyan quotes it in daily conversation, why Baoyu and Daiyu enjoy the text in private, and why Baoqin alludes to the story in her poems. My observation is that in the novel *Dream*, characters' quotations of *Xixiang ji* from memory were not necessarily related to their sentimental feelings or the romance story of the drama play, nor does it mean that

they were avid readers of drama. As He Yuming's study on the Ming book culture bear out: "(*Xixiang ji*) was not just an influential literary and dramatic work—it permeated vernacular speech, folk aphorisms, and the language of visual representation."[60]

Another reason for the popularity of games involving quotations of *Xixiang ji* is that the linguistic registers in *Xixiang ji* encompass the high and low, poetic and folksy, classical and commonplace. This comprehensiveness makes it a perfect database for common expressions and stock phrases to be recombined with other textual sources, as I will show in the next section. Games of assembling quotes from the drama had become a key mode through which witticism and playfulness, literary virtuosity and knowledge of current fashions were demonstrated.

Despite the popularity that *Xixiang ji* enjoyed among all social classes in Chinese society during the Qing, verbal games like *pinghua* would have been impossible without printing. Games reflect the larger cultural context of the time because they are part of the fabric of that society itself. The composition rules for *pinghua* are closely connected to the randomized reading habits conditioned by the format of contemporaneous print materials and reflect the collapse of textual boundaries and hierarchies brought about by Ming-Qing print culture. In what follows, I look at the composition of *pinghua* and trace the writing mechanism of *pinghua* to the book world of late imperial China, especially the daily encyclopedias and drama miscellanies that were easily available to general readers during the late imperial age.

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[60] Yuming He, *Home and the World: Editing the "Glorious Ming" in Woodblock-printed Books of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Harvard University Asia Center, 2013), 28

Verbal Games in the Late Imperial Print World

The so-called *leisu* refers to a body of encyclopedia books that bear many diffeent titles. Among the best known during the Ming Qing period were the *Wanshu cuibao* 萬書萃寶(Myriad books and treasures), *Wuche baji* 五車拔錦 (Five carts piled with brocade) , *Santai wanyong zhengxong* 三台萬用正宗 (Complete title: Santai's orthodox instructions for myriad uses for the convenient perusal of all the people in the world), *Miaojin Wanbao quanshu* 妙錦萬寶全書(Complete books of myriad treasures) ,*Wanjin quanshu* 萬錦全書(Myriad brocades and complete books), *Xuehai buqiuren* 學海不求人 (Seas of leaning with no need for others), *Wanshi buqiuren* 萬事不求人(Myriad uses with no need for other's help), all of which remained in print for centuries. These encyclopedia incorporated all sorts of necessary information, and were marketed as so essential that, as long as one has such a book in hand, everything will be at ease. These encyclopedia books were collectively called *Wanbao quanshu* 萬寶全書 (Comprehensive Compendium of Myriad Treasures) during the Qing dynasty .[61]

Thanks to the scholarship on the *leishu* of the Ming Qing period, we now realize that these encyclopedia books, being as popular as they were in their own era, reflected and influenced the social world and everyday practice of the people. Five features defined the *leishu*: 1) They were inclusive, general and comprehensive, covering almost all texts and topics related to quotidian life, such as divination, dictionaries, letter writing,

[61] The corpus of encyclopedia books (collectedly labeled as *Wanbao quanshu)* continued to circulate in book market in the republican period (1919-1930), see Wu, *Wanbao quanshu*, 36-7. James Hayes, *Specialists and Written Materials in the Village World* (University of California, 1985), 81.

interpretation of dreams, travel guides, fortune-telling, medicine, jokes, brothel guides, as well as verbal games to be played at parties and banquets; [62]2) there was a constant mutual borrowing and interaction among all these books despite the different titles they bear on the cover. One book might copy and recycle the contents and materials from another one, by "cutting, pasting, modifying, renaming, reassembling" with no concerns of justification;[63] 3) The readership included not only the highly educated class, but even merchants, craftsman, and village women;[64] 4) They usually adopt a two-register or three-register typographical layout, with unrelated materials sometimes appearing on the same page, again a feature of a sloppily-made commercial prints;[65] 5) and producers of these texts were not interested in pursuing authenticity or legitimacy, but rather sought to produce affordable books that entertain a large readership.[66]

Among the chapters and categories listed in *leishu*, I want to draw attention to the compositions and texts listed under the "category of drinking" (侑傷門) , "category of jokes and banter" (笑談門), and "category of drinking verse" (酒令門). In one drinking game recorded in the *Wuche baji* (1597), the rule requires the player to start with names of popular songs which share the same last two characters. The next two lines would be quotations from *Xixiang ji*. When assembled together, the drama lines should work coherently with the names of the popular songs ("一令要两个曲牌名, 下两字相同,又要

[62] To see the list of all the categories in a 1758 *Wanbao quanshu*, see Wu, *Wanbao quansu*, 77.
[63] See Wei Shang, "Jin Ping Mei and Late Ming Print Culture" in *Writing and Materiality in China,* ed. Zeitlin, Judith (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2003), 193.
[64] Wei Shang, "The Making of the Everyday World," in *Dynastic Crisis and Cultural Innovation*, ed. David Der-wei Wang and Wei Shang (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 72.
[65] He, *Home and The World*, 10-11.
[66] He, *Home and the World*, 17-18.

西厢二句，贯串合意")[67]. In a drinking game from *Boxiao zhuji ("Pearls to Evoke Laughter"*博笑珠璣*)*, the rules states that the drinking verse should start with one line from *Qianjia Shi* 千家詩 (*The Poems by a Thousand Masters*), followed by one line of *suyu* 俗語 ("common speech"), and then one line from *Xixiang ji*.[68] In a drinking game from *Wanyong zhengzong*, the game asks a player to "begin a verse with the name of a prostitute, followed by the name of an everyday object and ends with a line from *Xixiang Ji"*(一令上要一妓名， 中間要一物事，末用西厢一句，斷之). Again, the drama line from *Xixiang ji* should be read as a comment on the first two elements.[69] In composing these drinking verses, the player needs to synthesize texts of different registers and genres into a semantic whole.[70]To come up with such a challenge, one needs not only to have the knowledge of the diverse sources, but also be able to reorganize that knowledge on command to succeed in the impromptu composition. Their freedom in moving between the boundaries of genres and contexts is delimited by the rules of the game as well as the linguistic rules of semantic coherence. Shang Wei further emphasizes that "in these games, appropriation is conventionalized, and the ironic fusion of incompatible texts becomes the norm of composition."[71]

In this hybrid form of textual construction, different sources were cut and pasted, mixed and reorganized to create a sense of playfulness and cultural virtuosity, reflecting the latest "vogue" and cultural fashions of the time. The key to the improvised verbal

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[67] This drinking verse and its rules are taken from Wu, *Wanbao quanshu*, 293.
[68] He, *Home and The World*, 27..
[69] The rule of the drinking verse and some examples of the game texts can be seen in Wu, *Wanbao quanshu*, 293. 536
[70] Wu, *Wanbao quansu*, 533-46
[71] Shang, "*Jin Ping Mei* and Late Ming Print Culture," 194 .

gaming lies in one's command of diverse knowledge and nimble recontexualization. As He Yuming states:

> A witty speaker is not a pedant but an adroit master of both classical and vernacular language, who can switch at a moment's notice among various linguistic styles and textual genres…the game texts, then, dislodge fragments of canonical texts from their prescribed context of interpretation to redisplay them in a space of play that is governed by its own fashion and coded rules of speech, and possessing its own set of alternative values.[72]

The sense of play derives from players' freedom in crossing the textual genres within the boundary of the rigid rules. As scholars like Wu Huifang and He Yuming's research shows, the game composition usually involve one's knowledge of a wide range of textual sources, such as the *Analects, guwen* 古文 (ancient-style writing), the *Qianjia shi*, the *Four Books (Sishu* 四書), popular dramatic texts such as *Xixiang ji*, *The Story of the Lute (Pipa ji* 琵琶記) and the *Peony Pavilion (Mudan ting* 牡丹亭), popular primer *Qianzi wen* (*Thousand Character essa*y) and *Baijia xing* 百家姓 (hundred surnames), as well as texts in other linguistic registers like *suyu* (common sayings), names of everyday objects (fruits, medicines,) , names of people (from historical figures to prostitute names), names of domino tiles, popular tune names, and even government titles, place names, and festivals etc.[73] The game is one of skill and improvisation. Some players can and sometimes must fail. Ultimately, a thorough reading knowledge of these texts is less important than one's improvised playing by the rules, which were usually made up by other players in a spontaneous manner as well.

[72] He, *Home and the World*, 52.
[73] Wu, *Wanbao quanshu*, 291-294. He, *Home and the World*, 24-25.

This kind of verbal play and cultural display seems to have been a recurrent theme in party scenes of the Ming Qing fictions. For example, at Baoyu's birthday party, Xiangyun proposes a game rule for a drinking game : "before drinking you must give a well-known quotation in prose, a well-known quotation in verse, a domino title name, a song-title, and the days' forecast from an almanac, all five to hang together so that they make continuous sense. After drinking you must give the name of some food you see here on the table which can be used in more than one sense" (Chapter 62, *SS* II:199). The drinking game requires the player to quickly reorganize sources of different genres and registers into a meaningful whole. The rigmarole should stitch together a wide field of knowledge beyond the genre of poetry and prose. Compared with the examples given in the *leishu* as we see above, the game rules Xiangyun proposed are certainly more demanding and sophisticated, reflecting the cultural acumen of her own class. Some players, like Baoyu, must fail the challenge: "no one can compose in such a short period of time." It is the Daiyu who helps him out.

> "one. 'Scudding clouds race the startled mallard across the water,'"
> "two. 'A wild gooses passes, lamenting, across the wind swept sky.'"
> "Three. It must be 'The wild goose with a broken wing.'"
> "Four. So sad a sound makes 'The heart tormented.'"
> "Five. 'The cry of the wild goose is heard in the land.'"
> Then Daiyu picked up a hazel-nut.
> "this cob I take up from the table
> came from a tree, not from a stable" (Chapter 62, *SS* III: 199).[74]

[74] The first line is taken from Tang poet Wang Bo's "*Preface to the Prince of Teng's Pavilion*" (*Teng wang ge xu*). The second line is an adaptation from Lu You's (1125-1209) poem. "The wild goose with a broken wing" (*zhezu yan*) is a domino game name*; jiuhuichang* (the tormented heart) is a musical tune name. The last line is adapted from the first couplet of Li Bai's *ziye wuge* (*ziye Songs of Wu*)*:* The moon in Chang'an, the sound of pounding clothes in thousand household (長安一片月，萬戶擣衣聲). The poem is a good example of the theme of "*daoyi*" (pounding clothes) in literary and visual

Daiyu's verbal play forms a witty pastiche on the topic of "wild goose" and her last two lines play on the pun of *zhenzi* as the homophone for both the food hazelnut (榛子) on the table and the feminine virginity (貞子). Such an ability to switch in between different textual sources became, in a way, a marker of one's cultural sophistication and literary credentials. Nonetheless, the rules of this drinking game resumes those examples taken from the encyclopedia books. Not only do these party games frequently require players to put various sorts of materials into a meaningful and playful pastiche, they also require players to navigate skillfully in between the higher registers and the lower registers.

It is therefore, not hard to see the commonalities and similarities in the verbal game of *pinghua* and the other party games we have seen in *leishu* and in vernacular narratives. First of all, in all these games, one snippet or quotation is dissociated from its original context or its textual significance, and was recombined with other textual source to form a new composition in a new game. Second, the key to play all these games is to reassemble and rearrange these sources into a new piece of pastiche in a contingent and temporary manner.

However, the choice of *Xixiang ji* in *pinghua* is apposite. As we saw above, the subject matter, the theme, the *topos*, and the sentimentality of the drama greatly influence the novel. In addition, the figural characters in the *Dream* themselves are good players,

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culture of traditional China. The motif usually depicts a woman pounding clothes, worrying that her lover, who is far away and might not have enough warm clothing. This allusion is closely related to the name of food that Daiyu picks—the hazelnut. In its Chinese name, hazelnut is pronounced as *zhenzi*, the homophone of "female virtue" or "virginity." Daiyu's composition not only centers on topic of wild goose, but also thematically works well with her pun on the "hazelnut" and quotations of Li Po's poem.

quoting lines from *Xixiang ji* to prompt laughter, communicate forbidden sentiments, and comment on each other's behavior or feelings. This means that in addition to textual incongruity and rhetorical imitation, *pinghua* creatively tailored the established traditions of textual gaming to cater to the readers of *Dream of the Red Chamber*.

Play and Interplay

Once *pinghua* appeared, it quickly stimulated players' participation of the game. Players' compositions were copied and pasted, adapted and reproduced, and gave rise to many rewritings, imitations, recreations and appropriations, being framed and reframed by a number of materials that carried the text: the manuscript copies, personal fans (1958), seal carvings (1904), drinking games (1978), the "random notes" in print, modern journals (1917) and modern pictorials (1927-28). Thus, cultural memory of this verbal game is constituted by a diversity of media formats, operating within different systems of its symbolic meanings and technological basis. Each of these media has its specific way of remembering, framing and representing the verbal game and will leave its trace on the memory it creates. Thus, the verbal game, is the outcome of each players' own game play, but also a result of its reception, circulation, reproduction, and the distribution, including all the rewritings, imitations, adaptations and uses that it has spawned.

I perceive both the writing and the materiality of these game texts as a dynamic process—in the process of production and reproduction, copy and transcription, recycling and recollection, intervention and appropriation, the composition of verbal game remain indefinite and fluid, and had been subject to transformation and adjustments each time it was rendered into a new format, a new materiality, a new genre or put into a new use. That is to say, the verbal game was no longer a stable element inert in any material forms,

but always in a constant state of motion and flux, while being continually transported from one location to another, one genre or medium to another, and one reader group to another. The number of these game texts and its circulation route indicates that *Shitou ji pinghua* went out into the world already embedded in a reading community of devoted readers of the novel *Dream of the Red Chamber*.

These players are, obviously, avid readers of the novel. Like joining in a gameplay, players not only composed their game texts, but also present their finished compositions in diverse media, formats, and objects, believing that their own versions were more nuanced and "tasteful" than the others'. (In fact, readers of *Dream of the Red Chamber* were one of the most fastidious reading communities in the literary history of modern China as the debates and arguments around the novel never stops.) In the majority of these compositions, what was first circulated in other medium outside print are known to us today because they were eventually published and preserved in print. These diverse material formats (personal fans, manuscripts, seal carvings, modern journals, drinking games, etc.) testify to the persistent existence of other means of production and communication outside the mechanism of print.

From the Personal Fan to Print

In Ni Hong 倪鴻 (1828-1892)'s *Tongyin Qinghua* 桐陰清話(*Idled Talk Under the Parasol Tree* 1858), we find such an anecdote[75]:

[75] Ni Hong is a native of Guilin in Guangxi province. On Ni Hong's biographical information and his writing and publication, see Qin Weihong, "Lingnan ciren nihong jiqi huayingci xiemeng 岭南词人倪鸿及其花陰寫夢詞". *Journal of Hechi University*, vol. 34, no. 3. 2014 (June): 46-52.

> I once saw a lady in a painting boat in River Zhu. She held a folding fan. The ribs of the fan are made of *xiaoxiang* bamboo[76] and its panel was of the "gold" panel. On the fan, there was a transcription in "fly-head" script; each line consisted of a name from *Honglou meng*, followed by one line from *Xixiang Ji*. The drama line fit perfectly well with the characters. It is indeed written of refined spirit. I transcribed the text here for those who are interested. Though a game play, it was full of ingenuity. (Figure 2.5)
> 嘗與珠江畫舫中見一女郎，手持湘妃竹金面摺疊扇一柄，蠅頭細書紅樓夢人名，下合西廂記曲一句詞義酷肖, 真雅致也,錄之以供同好。雖屬遊戲，頗見匠心[77]

Ni Hong is a literati scholar and renowned poet, active in Guangxi province during the late Qing period. Ni Hong is a devoted reader of the novel as evidenced by the other commentary works on *Dream* collected in *Tongyin qinghua*. It is clear that Ni Hong appreciated the verbal game and believed its appeal to readers like him.[78]

The verbal composition includes the male characters and even the architectural items from the novel. There is a total of 141 entries, including 73 female characters, 45 male characters, 22 architectural items and even the author Cao Xueqin, for whom the courtesan matches with the drama line: "My thousand kinds of longing—to tell to whom" (有千種相思對誰說) .[79] The comment on the characters' residential place—Green

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[76] The fan rib is made of a bamboo called *xiaoxiang* bamboo. Other options of materials for bamboo ribs are sandalwood, ebony, tortoiseshell, ivory, peals, bones, etc., with bamboo the most common.
[77] See Yisu, ed., *Honglou meng shulu*, 252.
[78] Yisu proposed that the fan precedes the *S*huangqing xianguan edition. Considering that there was a time gap of 26 years between the publication of shuangqing xianguan (1832) and the publication of *Tongyin Qinghua* (1858), I prefer to think that Shuangqing xianguan made *the verbal game* available to a general audience first and the courtesan's composition came later than 1832. Another possibility is that the game of applying drama lines from *Xixiang ji* to characters of the *Dream* had become popular before the publication of *shuangqing xianguan* (1832) among the readers. My general guesses are the courtesan's composition was inspired by the Shuangqing xianguan edition of the book (1832), see Yisu, *Honglou meng shulu*, 252.
[79] West and Idema, *The Story of the Western Wing*, 251.

Delight (怡紅院), for example, summarizes the traits of the host: "in a thicket of rouge and power was hidden brocade and embroidery" (脂粉叢里，包藏著錦繡).[80]

The medium of the writing, the personal holding fan, had become an item of connoisseurship and cultural acumen for the elite class since the Ming dynasty (1368-1644). A folding fan, especially one that made of exquisite craftmanship, carries the

Figure 2.5 The page of verbal games in *Tongyin qinghua published by Saoye Shanfang* (1924)
From: https://taiwanebook.ncl.edu.tw/zh-tw/book/NCL-000470409/reader
Assessed August 20th, 2020.

sense of elegance and elite taste to the fullest. Unlike a book, the portability of the folding fan made it a perfect medium for a piece of calligraphy or painting or a short literary composition. The materiality of this particular fan—the *xiaoxiang* bamboo reminds readers of the character figure Lin Daiyu in the novel, whose residential place is called Xiaoxiang Studio, as the mansion is surrounded with a forest of *xiaoxiang* bamboo. For

[80] West and Idema, *The Story of the Western Wing*, 257.

this, she is given the style name *xiaoxiang feizi* (Consort of Lady Xiao and Lady Xiang) by Tanchun in the poetry club.[81]

However, fans are not durable materials. Ni Hong was well aware of the fact. His transcription and later publication of the writing on the fan in his "random notes" in print sustained the longevity of the game text. And later readers know the composition on the fan from Ni Hong's printed book.

Another contemporary reader Xu Zhaowei 徐兆瑋(1867-1940), a renowned bibliophile and scholar from Changshu in Jiangsu province, once read about the game composition from Ni Hong's *Tongyin qinghua*. He copied the composition in his own manuscript notes, and mentioned another game composition by a female reader he had read from *Chujing shushe lingmo* 鋤經書舍零墨(Scattered notes from the studio of farming and reading). [82]

Based on Xu Zhaowei's notes, I find the game composition collected in *Chujing shushe lingmo*, a collection of "random notes" compiled by the male literati Huang Xiexun 黃協塤(1851-1924). [83] The book was published by the *Shengbaoguan* printing

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[81] *Xiaoxiang* bamboo refers to the spots that appear on the stems that legendarily first appeared on the bamboos growing by the Xiang River. The legend is that the mottled spot was stained by the tears shed by Ehuang and Nuying, the two Xiang River goddesses, in mourning of their husband, the Emperor Shun's death. The style name refers to Daiyu's beauty as well as her constantly shedding of tears. See http://www.gutenberg.us/articles/Xiang_River_goddesses, assessed November 13th, 2020.

[82] Hui Jia, "Hongxue shishang de shoubuziliao huibina gao—Xu Zhaowei de huangche zhanglu" in *Honglou meng xuekan*, 1997(04):273-285

[83] Huang Xiexun (style name Shiquan 式權), is a native of Songnan (today's Shanghai). Huang was an influential journalist of the time. In addition to his professional profile as the editor-in-chief for *Shen bao* 申報(*Shanghai News*) from 1885 to 1905, he also wrote *Songnan meng ying lu* 松南夢影錄(*Record of Dream Images of Shanghai*, preface 1883), a guidebook that provide the most up-to-date information about Shanghai. see

house in letter print in 1878, twenty years after the Ni Hong's first print of *Tongyin qinghua*.[84] Huang Shiquan noted that he has seen the composition on the fan from Ni Hong's *Tongyin qinghua* and encountered another women reader' game composition by the same game rule. Deeply appreciating its inventiveness, he collected and published what he has seen:

> *Tongyin xianghua* has recorded that a courtesan held a fan, on which the names from the *Dream of The Red Chamber*, each matched with a line from *Xixiang ji*. The appraisal and evaluation is fitting and harmonious, appreciated by readers who have viewed it. Recently I see a composition by Zheng Manqing (courtesy name Ruilü) from Hezhong (today's city of Jiaxing in Zhejiang province). It is written with a mind of tapestry and a mouth of embroidery. No single line repeated the precedents and there is a flower matched to each character as well. All is appropriate and matching. I recorded it all here.
> 《桐阴清话》载某校書便面上臚列紅樓夢諸人名，下綴西廂記曲一句。品評諦當。己覽有目共賞矣。近見禾中鄭曼卿（瑞呂）所作。錦心繡口，無一語拾其牙慧。上更冠以花名。亦極工穩切貼。全錄之。[85]

The verbal composition was written by a female reader Zheng Manqing 鄭縵卿 (?-?)from Jiaxing in Zhejiang province. Huang gave the title *Commentary Remarks on The Dream of the Red Chamber* (*Honglou meng pingyu* 紅樓夢評語) in his "random notes".

Zaiping Xu and Ruifang Xu, *Qingmo sishinian shenbao shiliao* (Beijing :Xinhua chubanshe, 1988), 97-103.

[84] *Scattered Notes in the Studio of Chujing* was also collected in volume 9 of the compendium *Gujin shuobu congshu* 古今說部叢書(Compilation of miscellaneous works of ancient and contemporary) published in 1915 as well as the *Biji xiaoshuo daguan* in 1983. The *Gujin shuobu congshu* was compiled by Wang Wenru and first published by the *Guoxue fuluo she* (The Society for the Preservation of National Learning), an organization for the promotion of "national learning" through the publication of materials drawn from Chinese traditional culture. Naibin Dong, "Wang Wenru Jianlun," *Zhanghou shifan xueyuan xuebao* (*Zhexue shehui kexue ban*) 38, no.1 (2001):30-33.

[85] Xiexun Huang, *Chujing shushe lingmo*, Shenbao guan, 1878, Assessed August 25h, 2020, http://www.bookinlife.net/book-147729-viewpic.html#page=85.

In addition to the drama line, Zheng matched a flower to each character, following the writing scheme of "flower register" like the *Shitou ji pinghua*. In Zheng's composition, we could find drama lines (matched to the same characters) that were never seen in other places. For example, for the character Jia Baoyu, Zheng chose the flower sobriquet—"Lord of flowers" (*jiangdong huazhu* 绛洞花主)[86] and the drama line: "Song Yu's Face, Pan An's Looks, Cao Zhi's Talents" (宋玉般情，潘安般貌，子建般才). [87] For Daiyu, Zheng matched her with the plant Crimson Pearl (*jiangzhu xiancao* 絳珠仙草), her supernatural avatar before descending into the mortal world. The drama line applied to Daiyu is also different from other players' compositions: "how you, this Qianü of departed soul" (看你个離魂倩女)[88]; for the character Tanchun, Zheng matched her with the flower rose, which harks back to the dialogue between character Xing'er and You Erjie: "We call (her) 'The rose'…sweet and pretty yet she has a thorn" (Chapter 65; *SS* III:291). The drama line matched to Tanchun is: "she doesn't have half a speck of flippancy" (大人家舉止止端详).[89]

So far, we have seen two verbal games composed by two female readers. These game texts were known to us because of the male literati's appreciation, recollection and preservation of them in print. These first-hand materials inform us that there should be many such game texts circulating among the readers of the time. Most likely, these

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[86] This is when Tanchun establish their first poetry club—Crab Blossom Club, Li Wan propose that everyone have a pen name or style name to sign on their poem, Li Wan suggest that Baoyu just stick to his old name ""Lord of Flowers", 絳洞花主 for which Baoyu replies: "do you have to embarrass me by reminding me of my youthful indiscretions?" (*SS*. II:218).
[87] West and Idema, *The Story of the Western Wing*, 228
[88] West and Idema, *The Story of the Western Wing*, 207.
[89] West and Idema, *The Story of the Western Wing*, 128.

compositions, written as a game and play, were abandoned, forgotten, torn apart, destroyed, trashed and thus totally disappeared in our cultural memory.

From Manuscript to Modern Magazine

Another game text was found in the modern magazine *Fragrant Magazine* 香豔雜誌(*Xiangyan zazhi)* (1915-1916). Bearing the title "Drama lines of *Xixiang ji* on 108 characters from *Dream of the Red Chamber*" (題紅樓夢一百零八人用西廂記), the verbal composition include 108 figures. All these figures are categorized into groups, such as "thirteen members of the poetry club," "eighteenth people relatives of the family clan," "forty-nineteen members of the maids and servants," etc. As the preface states, the anonymous text was found accidently by a reader, who deeply appreciated the critical remarks and submitted it to the magazine for wider circulation:

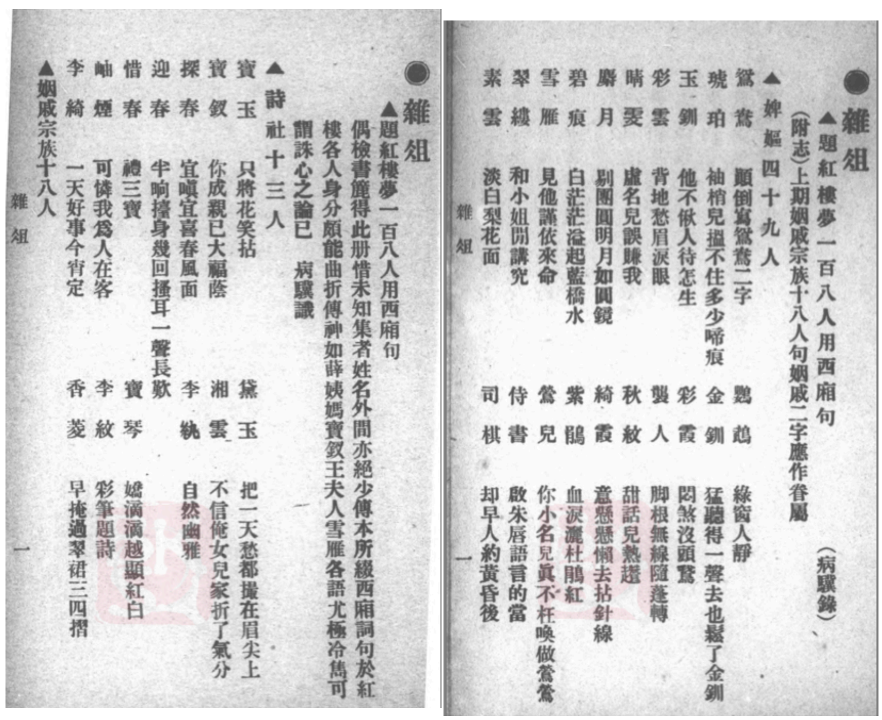
> I come across this booklet from the bamboo book box on accident. It is a pity that this cope was not widely known in the world. The drama lines from *Xixiang ji* that matched to the characters of (*Dream of the)Red Chamber* can capture the spirit of the subject (*chuanshen* 傳神). For example, the lines for Aunt Xue, Baochai, Lady Wang, Xueyan are pregnant with nuanced meaning (*lengjuan* 冷雋). These lines are sharp judgements (to expose their motives). Written by Sick Horse.
> 偶檢書麓得此冊惜未知集者姓名外間亦絕少傳本所綴西廂詞句於紅樓各人身分能曲折傳神如薛姨媽寶釵王夫人雪雁各語尤機冷雋可謂誅心之論已 病驥識 (Figure 2.6).

The reader's recollection of the discarded manuscript and submission to the magazine epitomize his effort to gather interesting but frivolous texts that are in danger of being lost and trashed. The emphasis is on the inventiveness of the composition, its anonymity and its difference from the other published texts. The game text, no doubt, belongs to an elite form of verbal games occupying the fringes of unofficial writings of

elite culture. The aesthetics of the verbal game is strong in the large corpus of game composition, which tended to be composed of snippets and bits of quotations embedded in another text, a narrative or commentary. But in the magazine, this appreciation of the elite form of verbal game is coupled with an awareness of the manuscript's danger of lost in ruins. In this case, it is the modern mass media that communicates to the audience and any players the existence of this game text.

From Verbal Games to Drinking Games

The character names and the drama lines, supplemented with a drinking



雜俎

▲題紅樓夢一百八人用西廂句

偶檢書簏得此册惜未知集者姓名外間亦絕少傳本所綴西廂詞句於紅樓各人身分頗能曲折傳神如薛姨媽寶釵王夫人雪雁各語尤極冷雋可謂誅心之論已　病驥識

▲詩社十三人

寶玉　只將花笑拈　黛玉　把一天愁都撮在眉尖上
寶釵　你成親已大福蔭　湘雲　不信俺女兒家折了氣分
探春　宜嗔宜喜春風面　李紈　自然幽雅
迎春　半晌擡身幾回搔耳一聲長歎
惜春　禮三寶　寶琴　嬌滴滴越顯紅白
岫煙　可憐我爲人在客　李紋　彩筆題詩
李綺　一天好事今宵定　香菱　早掩過翠裙三四褶

▲姻戚宗族十八人

雜俎　一

雜俎

▲題紅樓夢一百八人用西廂句　（病驥錄）

（附志）上期姻戚宗族十八人句姻戚二字應作眷屬

▲婢媼四十九人

鴛鴦　顛倒寫鴛鴦二字　鸚鵡　綠窗人靜
琥珀　袖梢兒搵不住多少啼痕　金釧　猛聽得一聲去也鬆了金釧
玉釧　他不倈人待怎生　彩霞　悶殺沒頭鵞
彩雲　背地愁眉淚眼　襲人　脚根無線隨蓬轉
晴雯　虛名兒誤賺我　秋紋　甜話兒熱趲
麝月　剔團圓明月如圓鏡　綺霞　意懸懸懶去拈針線
碧痕　白茫茫溢起藍橋水　紫鵑　血淚灑杜鵑紅
雪雁　見他諾依來命　鶯兒　你小名兒眞不枉喚做鶯鶯
翠縷　和小姐閒講究　侍書　啟朱唇語言的當
素雲　淡白梨花面　司棋　却早人約黃昏後

雜俎　一

Figure 2.6 The verbal game published in column of "miscellanies," *Magazine of the Beautiful*, no. 11, 1916

instruction, can easily turn into drinking games played at parties and social gatherings. To play this kind of drinking game, players would draw a lot/card from a container, read out the inscription (the figure name and the drama line) and follow the instructions for drinking. In my research, I find four drinking games that included drama lines from

Xixiang ji as commentary remarks on the character figures of the *Dream*. It is not hard to see that the producers of these drinking games are inspired from *Shitou ji pinghua* and adapted the verbal game into their own new uses. None of these drinking games "copied and pasted" the existing game texts (Table 2.1). It is also worth noting that drama lines from *Xixiang ji* were constant snippets in the drinking games of this type, where we see the inscription (on the lot) start with a line from the drama play, followed with drinking instructions that play with the meaning of the drama line.

My analysis of players' participation of the game focuses on two aspects: the uncertainties of game texts and the communication and interactivity of the players realized via print and modern mass media introduced into China during the late nineteenth century.

One way to understand the fun of the verbal game is to look at player and readers' experience of the game. Caillois' discussion of uncertainty shows that uncertainty is one key feature of any gameplay. "play is …uncertain activity. Doubt must remain until the end, and hinges upon the denouement…in fact, the game is no longer pleasing to one who, because he is too well trained or skillful, wins effortlessly and infallibly."[90] Salen and Zimmerman emphasized the importance of uncertainties for game players: "it's critical in a game that players don't know exactly how it will play out. If the outcome of a game is predetermined, the experience can't provide meaningful play."[91] The course of gameplay cannot be determined, nor the result known beforehand, the gameplay is created by players, not the game designers. In the book *Uncertainty in Games*, Greg

[90] The idea that the end of a game is uncertain is first proposed by Roger Caillois in his work. see Caillois, *Man, Play, and Games*, 7.
[91] Salen and Zimmerman, *Rules of Play: Game Design Fundamentals*, 174.

Costikyan's main thesis is that games "require uncertainty to hold our interest, and that the struggle to master uncertainty is central to the appeal of games."[92]

A degree of uncertainty is essential for a game to be playable. And uncertainty can be found in games in many ways. The uncertainties in this game, paradoxically, come from players' free choice in between the two textual sources. In this verbal game, the uncertainties are dependent on how players mix and match between the drama lines and the characters from the novel. The novel provides more than two hundred characters for the game player to choose from (and some players even choose architectural items and mansions); and the drama play *Xixiang ji,* which also absorbs texts of different sorts, is a large repertoire of linguist sources for players to draw from.

As players have the freedom to choose any characters and drama lines from the two texts, the outcomes of their compositions are always uncertain. As the verbal game also reflects their literary skill of playful writing and readerly response of the novel, the outcome of their verbal play never repeats the others. Sometimes new figures from the novel were added and old ones changed or dropped; sometimes a different drama line was matched to the same character; sometimes, the content of one verbal game was incorporated or transported to new games, new uses or new media. As more readers join in the game play, their writings, after being sent back to the print, evoked more responses like a ripple through the community in ever widening circles. It inspires a nucleus of verbal compositions that was in emulation and paradoxically, in competition with each

[92] Greg Costikyan, *Uncertainty in Games* (MIT Press, 2013), 2.

other. It is the uncertainties and inventiveness of each players' composition that makes the game a fun and enjoyable experience.

The uncertainties in the verbal game are created by each reader's own reading responses to the novel and their literary ingenuity of cross-generic composition. For example, for the character Xiren, the primary caregiver of Baoyu, readers have contrasting attitudes toward her, which were clearly reflected in the drama lines they choose. On Ni Hong's transcription, we find the drama line: "the shrike goes west and the flying swallow east" (伯勞東去燕西飛)[93], lamenting Xiren's departing from Baoyu after the downfall of the family. While in the *Fragrant Magazine*, we find the anonymous player matched her with the drama line : "heals without strings, like a tumbling week"(腳跟無綫隨蓬轉).[94] This drama line expresses a more critical attitude towards Xiren's marrying to Jiang Yuhan as an "unloyalty" behavior. In the *shuangqing xianguan* edition of the book, we find the drama line "(only) want to search out the weak points in others"(隻待覓別人破綻).[95] The drama line expresses a strong disapproving attitude towards Xiren, condemning that she telling on other people in secret, though the novel itself provides no clear evidence of it.

This is also the novelty and charm of the game. As readers, we can always find different drama lines matched to the same character in each player's composition, and they all make good sense. For example, for the character Jia Baoyu, the drama line in *Shitou ji pinghua* (i.e. the *Shuangqing xianguan* edition) is : "You, Lord of the East, have

[93] West and idema, *The Story of the Western Wing*,186.
[94] West and idema, *The Story of the Western Wing,* 117.
[95] West and idema, *The Story of the Western Wing*, 203

to be responsible for Oriole (俏东君与莺花做主)[96]; in Ni Hong's *Idled Talk under the Parasol Tree*, we read the line: "eternal passions all sorrow alike" (萬種情緣一樣愁)[97]; in the *Drinking Game of The Dream of The Red Chamber*, the line matched is: "may lovers of the whole world all be thus united in wedlock" (願天下有情的都成了眷屬)[98]; in another drinking games titled *Honglou renjing* (红樓人鏡)[99], the drama line emphasizes on Baoyu's *qing* (sentimental feelings): "those full of feeling are vexed by those without" (我多情早被無情惱)[100]; in *Fragrant Magazine*, the drama line for Baoyu is: "simply twirls the flower, smiling" (只將花笑拈).[101] (The tables at the end of the chapter list the drama lines matched to the character Tanchun, Daiyu and Xiangyun respectively as further examples to show uncertainties in this game play.) There is not such a win or lose status in this game. The game generates a wide range of possibilities.

Sometimes, the same drama line is matched to different characters in different players' compositions. For example, the drama line "(for this person, if) one thing is fine, all things are fine" (這人一事精，百事精) is matched to Tanchun in Tan Tiexiao's edition of the drinking game,[102] whereas we find the same drama line matched to Leng Zixing in Ni Hong's note. The drama line: "(I've forge myself into a) timeless natural

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[96] The drama line is modified slightly from the original drama line—"Dongjun Lord of the East if the god of spring, the oriole is a bird of spring and therefore under his control" (你个俏东君索与莺花做主). West and Idema, *The Story of the Western Wing*, 282.
[97] West and idema, *The Story of the Western Wing*, 259
[98] West and Idema, *The Story of the Western Wing*, 285.
[99] Ma and Ma, *Zhongguo jiuling daguan*, 631.
[100] West and Idema, *The Story of the Western Wing,* 63.
[101] West and Idema, *The Story of the Western Wing*, 120
[102] Ma and Ma, *Zhongguo jiuling daguan*, 635.

courage"[103] (天生是敢)is matched to Wang Xifeng in the 紅樓夢籌令 *Honglou meng chouling* (*Drinking Game of Dream of the Red Chamber)* edited by Tan Tiexiao 谭鐵蕭 (?-?) and to Xue Pan in Ni Hong's copy.[104]

This rule featuring "mixing and matching" challenges our commonsense understanding of authority, fixity, and authenticity that traditional literary analysis normally required. That is to say, while the drama and the novel belong to the author, the verbal game derived from the two textual sources belong to the readers as players. The *Shitou ji pinghua* (originally printed on the illustrations of the novel) only provide the rules of the game, but players create the actual play experience. Novels are linear. Games are non-linear. Readers would not expect uncertainties in a fictional narrative. However, games allow them to explore uncertainties. A game would stop to be play if all it offered was a repetition of what players have already known or read before. In the process of playing, producing, circulating and putting the game texts to various genres, media formats and material objects, the verbal games remains indefinite and fluid, manifesting players' literary wittiness, readerly responses, critical attitudes, and sense of playfulness in connoisseuristic consumption and leisurely production.

Games are social. Play implicates interplay. Games are enjoyed to its fullest when played in earnest between each other and in front of an audience. Although this verbal game was not actually played in an improvised manner in a social setting, players and audience communicate to each other through various kinds of media, most of which were eventually circulated back in print. The feature of interactivity in a game helps us to

[103] West and Idema, *The Story of the Western Wing*, 160
[104] Ma and Ma, *Zhongguo jiuling daguan*, 635.

understand the role of print plays in the meaningful communication between players and the audience. The players not only follow the rules and know that their composition must be meaningful in the context of the novel, they also know that their writings will be circulated within the reading community just as they knew the other players' compositions through media and print. The interplay and circulation of players' game texts provided important evidence of the fluid communication between the textual world and the material world, the private sphere of collection and the public arena of circulation through modern mass media.

It would be misleading to presume that simply because the story of *Dream of the Red Chamber* and *Xixiang ji* were well known to people of all social strata, that everyone would be a good player or reader of the game. It is obvious that *pinghua* appeals to the connoisseurship taste of the elite circle of readers. At the transitional period of time, these means that they were not exclusively literati-scholars or official-scholars, they probably included merchants, modern professionals, courtesans, and college school students. Whatever their profession, they were still the social groups that enjoy a fairly high level of cultural capital.

Conclusion

This chapter focuses on the rhetorical vividness and playfulness of *shitou ji pinghua* and the afterlives of the verbal play—how the drama lines printed on the illustrations of the novel invite readers' participation and emulation, rewriting and appropriation. By extension, it examines the elite readers' skill of using the novel *Dream* and the drama play *Xixiang ji* as bodies of shared knowledge to create a play community and constructed space of playfulness and witticism.

First appearing in the illustration pages of *shuangqing xianguan* edition of the novel, *Pinghua* bear witness to the molding hands of the publisher and the tastes of its readers. Once *pinghua* appeared, it quickly expanded into an autonomous system of its own, allowing more readers to play the games on their own. *Shitou ji pinghua* and its afterlives reflects the larger cultural fashions and literary trends in the print world during late imperial period. It also informs us multiple channels of mechanism outside of print facilitated the interaction between the players, the audience within the reading community of the novel. As my analysis of the materiality and writing of each player's composition shows, the verbal game had become not only a connoisseurship text for reading, but also became a materialized text carried by a variety of objects and media. (In the next chapter, I will explore the verbal game carved on the connoissiuership object of seal carving.)

The afterlives of *pinghua*, like the afterlives of *Honglou meng* witnessed how fashions in one arena influenced the fashions of other arenas. In this regard, players' play and transmission of their verbal play into new uses, art forms, media, genres, practices and artifacts provided important evidence of the fluid communication within printing world that allowed the fashionable item to be transformed into other cultural spheres—leisurely writings on the personal fans and the interesting compositions collected in literati's random notes, writings carved in seals, content displayed in the seal imprints, figural commentaries in the drinking games, etc.

Table 2.1 A list of all drinking games that has inscriptions of drama lines from *Xixiang ji* following characters of the *Dream of the Red Chamber*

Name of drinking game	Bibliographical information	Number of tallies	author
Honglou renjing 红楼人鏡[105]	*Jiuling congchao* 酒令叢鈔 1878 (Compendium of Drinking games)	64	Anonymous
Honglou meng chouling (drinking games of *Dream of the Red Chamber*) 紅樓夢籌令[106]		100	Tan Xiaotie 譚鐵蕭 Zhou Wenquan 周文全(editor) [107]
Honglou renjing 红楼人鏡[108]	*Zhezhi ya gu* 折枝雅故 *(*Twig picking and elegant stories*)*	60	Master of Drinking Quchan Shi 酒家南董曲禪氏
Shier jinchai ling 十二金釵令[109] (Drinking game of Twelve beauties)		13	

[105] Ma and Ma, *Zhongguo jiuling daguan*, 630-634.
[106] Liao Dandan points out that the differences between the *Honglou meng chouling* (alternatively titled as *Honglou renjing* as well) by Tan and *Honglou renjing* (anonymous) are not only in the drama lines attached to some characters, the number of the characters, but also in the drinking instructions. In Tan's edition, the drinking instruction is only related to the literary meaning of the drama lines, but not related to the narrative of the novel. In the *Honglou renjing* (anonymous edition*)*, the drinking instruction is related to characters and narratives of the novel. See Dandan Liao, "Honglou renjing jiuling kaolun," in *Honglou meng xuekan*, (01)2017: 231-247; for the full text of the drinking game, see Ma and Ma, *Zhongguo jiuling daguan*, 634-638.
[107] Information about Tan Tiexiao and Zhou Wenquan, See Liao, "Honglou renjing jiuling kaolun," 241-243.
[108] Ma and Ma, *Zhongguo jiuling daguan,* 638-644.,
[109] Ma and Ma, *Zhongguo jiuling daguan,* 644-645.

Table 2.2 Drama lines matched to the character Tanchun in different sources

Bibliographical information	Drama lines
Shuangqing xianguan	Too smart, too much the rake [110] 忒聰明忒煞思
Idled Talk under the Parasol Tree	I maybe a girl, but I have my pride[111] 我雖是女孩，有志氣
Honglou renjing by Quchan Shi	(for this person, if) one thing is fine, all things are fine 這人一事精，百事精
Fragrant Magazine	(I see her) spring-breeze face, fit for anger, fit for joy[112] 宜嗔宜喜春風面

Table 2.3 Drama lines matched to Lin Daiyu from various sources

Bibliographical information	Drama lines
Shuangqing xianguan	(a body that is) full of grief and full of sickness 多愁多病身
Idled Talk under the Parasol Tree	This passion, will last until sea dries up and rocks rot away[113] 情到海枯石爛時
Hongloumeng chouling	Her teardrops are like dew falling on flower tips[114] 淚珠兒似露滴花梢
Drinking game of the "twelve beauties	Bloody tears sprinkle "azalea bird" red [115] 血淚洒杜鹃红
Revision of Honglou renjing	Tears of love's longing [116] 多半是相似淚
Fragrant Magazine	A whole heaven of sorrows have I pinched between my eyebrow[117] 把一天愁都撮在眉間上

[110] West and Idema, *The Story of the Western Wing*, 196.
[111] West and Idema, *The Story of the Western Wing*, 195.
[112] West and Idema, *The Story of the Western Wing*, 121.
[113] West and Idema, *The Story of the Western Wing*, 267
[114] West and Idema, *The Story of the Western Wing*, 146
[115] West and Idema, *The Story of the Western Wing*, 115.
[116] West and Idema, *The Story of the Western Wing*, 146.
[117] West and Idema, *The Story of the Western Wing*, 133

Table 2.4 Drama lines matched to Shi Xiangyun from various sources

Bibliographical information	Drama lines
Shuangqing xianguan	(her) dreams never leave the shadows of willows or the shade of flowers[118] 夢不離柳影花陰
Honglou renjing	green sedge unrolls a pad of embroidered couch 綠莎便是寬繡榻 [119]
Honglou meng chouling	The mouth knows no restraint 口沒遮攔
Drinking Games of the Twelve Beauties	It kills one with depression[120] 兀的不闷煞人也么哥
Fragrant magazine	I am so worried that my little girl will lose her honor[121] 不信俺女兒家折了氣分

[118] Modified after the lines "his dreams never leave the shadows of willows or the shade of flowers." West and Idema, *The Story of the Western Wing*, 218.
[119] The drama line is modified after "willow skeins and flower clusters unfurl their screens, green sedge unrolls a pad of embroidered couch." West and Idema, *The Story of the Western Wing*, 212.
[120] West and Idema, *The Story of the Western Wing*, 240.
[121] West and Idema, *The Story of the Western Wing*, 152

CHAPTER 3

THE STORY OF THE STONE: SEAL CARVING AND ITS REPLICATIONS IN MODERN CHINA[122]

Introduction

The *Shuangqing xianguan* edition of the novel was gradually replaced by other editions of the book after 1884; however, the verbal game of matching drama lines from *Xixiang ji* to characters of *The Dream* did not totally eclipse the memory of its readers. As my last chapter shows, players' participation in the verbal game brought forth a series of game text, and each of them has been mediated and remediated by the medium that carries it: the woodblock-printed books (1832), the personal fan (1858), the drinking games (1878), the manuscripts, the printed book, and the seal carvings (1904), the modern journal (1915-1917) and the modern illustrated newspapers (1927-1928). Our cultural memory of the game texts is constituted by a diversity of media formats, operating within different systems of its symbolic meanings and technological basis.

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[122] I will refer to the novel as the *Story of the Stone or the Stone* in this chapter to emphasize the resonance between the materiality of seal carving—the story and its stories of circulation and production in modern China and the novel, which was alternatively titled *Story of the Stone*. Wang Dan has written a paper on the seal carving of the novel and published that in Honglou meng xuekan, see Dan Wang, "Wanqing liangzhong Honglou meng yinpu kaolun" in *Honglou meng xuekan* 2017 (06): 155-174. Many readers of the novel are also connoisseurs of the seal carving. It is their generosity that we can view a high-quality facsimile of the seal imprints through internet. See Tian Shu, *Shuiren cengyu pingshuo xianshuo hongloumeng renming xixiangji ciju yinwan* (blog), October 01, 2016, http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_6f6c6b6f0102wvyi.html.

Each of these media has its specific way of remembering, framing, and representing the game texts and will leave its trace on the memory it creates. However, not all of these media formats and material objects were treated the same way.

This chapter focuses on the verbal game *shitou ji pinghua* carried by the object of seal carving, the production and reproduction of seal imprints from the 1900s to the 1940s, the cultural biographies of the seal albums, as well as the commoditization of the seal albums in the modern market economy. I look at seal carving as a writing technology, a writing medium, a connoisseurship object, and a communication tool that connects people across time and space.

Unlike other media of writing, such as the personal fan, the manuscripts, or printed books, seals are printing tablets. A seal is a reproduction tool by itself. Its generative power allows calligraphy writing carved on it to be reproducible and transferable into object thing or object. The thingness of the writing means that when we are talking seal carving, we are facing both the object (progenitor) and the imprint derived from that progenitor. Particularly, I look at the seal imprint—and trace its production, circulation, collection, and reproduction in modern China.

From 1907 to the 1920s, the hand-printed seal imprints were mainly circulated among circles of like-minded friends, small groups of connoisseurs, and intelligentsia of the time. In 1927-28, photocopies of the whole 194 seal imprints were displayed in *Morning Post Sunday Picture Section*, one of the most influential illustrated newspapers of the time. No longer impressed with the human hand, what readers encounter is the photographic copies of the original seal imprints. The whole collection (194 seal imprints) was displayed continuously in the newspaper for two years. Reproduction

technology arises out of certain social-economic contexts, what lay underneath is the familiar desire for the original and the authentic. In 1946, a book publisher in Chongqing issued seal albums of this collection as saleable commodities for the modern consumers. The book shop used the method of hand printing instead of the available technology of photographic printing. Such a seal album, by its way of production, retains the originality and authenticity of the seal carving, while at the same time granted the modern consumers the right of ownership and connoisseurship.

Seal Carving as a Literati Art

Seal carving, as an ancient-old practice in Chinese daily life, is the combination of calligraphy, literary content, artistic skills of carving, the seal script, and the tactile experience of brushwork on hard material. The practice of seal carving in China can be dated back to the Eastern Zhou dynasty (770-256 B.C.).[123] The art of seal carving is closely related to the art of Chinese calligraphy and the study of ancient script known as seal script (*zhuanshu* 篆書). As an art practice, seal carving incorporates visual culture, material culture, and writing culture within its history of development. Starting from the mid-Ming dynasty, seal carving has been regarded as an important aspect of the literati's cultivated pursuits. To literati, a seal is not only an emblem of authentication, but also a stele of calligraphy, an art practice for self-expression, and an object of connoisseurship (印玩 *yinwan*) and scholarly interest. The art of seal carving integrates the art of calligraphy, knowledge in ancient seal scripts, stylistic originality, and scholarly

[123] Qianshen Bai and John Finlay. "The World within a Square Inch: Modern Developments in Chinese Seal Carving" in *Yale University Art Gallery Bulletin* (1993): 27.

investigation of the ancient inscriptions. The study of seals (*yinxue* 印學) or the connoisseurship of seal imprints (*yinjian* 印鑑) and the material possession of seal and seal albums have been essential for displaying one's cultural capital, symbolic capital, and material capital since the Late Ming.[124] In the eighteenth century, seal carving enjoyed unprecedented popularity due to the development in *kaozheng* studies (i.e., the school of textual criticism or philology).[125] During the mid to late Qing, seals accrued even greater prestige because of the literati elite's devotion to the study of metal and stone inscriptions from ancient monuments or objects—the so called *jinshi* studies.[126] At the turn of the century, seal carving, along with other traditional elite art such as painting, calligraphy, continued its appeal to both the cultural elites and the general public.[127]Seals were used for governmental legitimization, authentication, and identification, collected by

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[124] As Wu Yulian's article on Wang Qishu indicates, Wang's collection of seal sand seal albums are indispensable from his extensive traveling, social networking, and wealth. Wang's collection aims to set up the new model of establishing the gender identity of masculinity and manhood. See Yulian Wu, "Collecting Masculinities: Merchants and Gender Performance in Eighteenth-Century China" in *Gender and Chinese History: Transformative Encounters* ed., Beverly Bossler (University of Washington Press, 2015), 59-82.

[125] Jisheng Guo and Jason C. Kuo, *Word as Image: The Art of Chinese Seal Engraving* (University of Washington Press, 1992), 20-21.

[126] The term *jinshi* included several scholarly fields. It originally means the texts carved on the ancient relics ("metal and stone" inscriptions). Alternatively translated as "evidential research," the *jinshi* (stone and metal inscriptions) studies encouraged scholars to hunt for archaic scripts carved in situ (the stone steles, cliffs, and ancient artifacts. See Benjamin Elman, *From Philosophy to Philology: Intellectual and Social Aspects of Change in Late Imperial China* (University of California Los Angeles, 2001), 39-99. 188-91. During the late Qing to the early republican period, the dominating methods for the modern historiography of ancient China were the study of *jinshi*. The leading scholars in this area were Wu Dacheng (1835-1902), Wang Guowei (1877-1927), Luo Zhengyu (1866-1940), etc. see Shana Brown, *Pastimes: From Art and Antiquarianism to Modern Chinese Historiography* (University of Hawai'i Press, 2011), 1-3.

[127] For the status of seal carving during China's transition to the twentieth century, see Elizabeth Lawrence, "The Chinese Seal in the Making, 1904-1937," PhD diss., (Columbia University, 2014), 3-5.

connoisseurs, sold as customized commodities, and displayed in private gatherings, modern museums, and art exhibitions until today. Seal carving, as an epitome of the Chinese cultural legacy from the past, are both traditional and modern. For example, the prestigious Xiling Seal Carving Society has its online shop, offering consumers nowadays a customized personal seal with a payment of $70 or so.[128]

The materials for seal carving are various (bamboo, ivory, jade, clay, bronze, etc.). However, the most favored materials for literati connoisseurs are stones of three premier types because they resembled jade: *Shoushan* stone from Fujiang province and *Qingtian* stone from Zhejiang province.[129]

Chinese literati's fascination with the stones has been an age-old motif.[130] Mi Fu 米市 (1051-1107) is such an eccentric devotee, who would bow to his collected stones as his "elder brother".[131] The materiality of stone, with its folkloric connotation and symbolic attributes, is associated with fertility, sacredness, self-generation, vitality, and divine power.[132] This endowed seal carving quality and a resonance that is unsurpassed by other

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[128] https://item.jd.com/48338616777.html. Assessed Nov. 21st, 2020.
[129] Weizu Sun, *Chinese Seals: Carving Authority and Creating History* (Long River Press, 2004), 40.
[130] John Hay disuses the importance of rocks in Chinese art, see *Kernels of Energy, Bones of Earth: The Rock in Chinese Art* (New York: China Institute of America, 1985). Wang Jing discusses the magical and mythical attributes of the stone in fictional narratives *Story of the Stone*, the *Water Margin* and the *Journey to the West*. Jing Wang, *The Story of Stone: Intertextuality, Ancient Chinese Stone Lore, and the Stone Symbolism in Dream of the Red Chamber, Water Margin, and The Journey to the West* (Duke University Press, 1992), 35-94.
[131] Mi Fu, a prolific painter and collector. His obsession with stones can be found in his connoisseurship treatise on inkstone *An Account of Inkstone* (*Yanshi*). Lothar Ledderose, *Mi Fu and the Classical Tradition of Chinese Calligraphy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979).
[132] Jing Wang, *The Story of Stone: Intertextuality, Ancient Chinese Stone Lore, and The Stone Symbolism in Dream of The Red Chamber, Water Margin, and The Journey To The West* (Duke University Press, 1992), 63.

material. The rise of seal carving as an elite art was inseparable from the literati elite's devotion to the stone as an emblem of the literati self-identity and divine power of writing since the Wanli reign. [133]

Figure 3.1 The drama line on the portrait of Baoyu in Shuangqing xianguan edition
From: Assessed august 30, 2020, https://t.shuge.org/honglou.

As the art historian Bai Qianshen noted: "enhancing the beauty of the stone itself, literati seal carving was really a miniature art that integrated calligraphy, sculpture, painting, and literature in one artistic whole." [134] The literati "leisure seals" (*xianzhang* 閒章) emerged as an independent art form and constituted an important part of the connoisseur collection. The textual content of seal carving includes poetic phrases,

[133] Bai Qianshen notes that the contemporary records of the Wanli era shows that, the rapid development of the seal carving as an art caused the price of some desirable stones over that of the jade. Bai, *Fu Shan's World,* 51.
[134] As Bai noticed, the rise of seal carving as a high form of art practice, took place at a time, when "stones and rocks in and of themselves had become cult objects and cultural icons." Bai, *Fu Shan's World,* 51.

personal names, style names, playful and short phrases, etc.[135] In addition to the engravings, the seal oftentimes has a miniature sculpture on its top, with carvings of images and inscriptions on the side (*biankuan*) (Figure3.6. Figure3.7).[136]

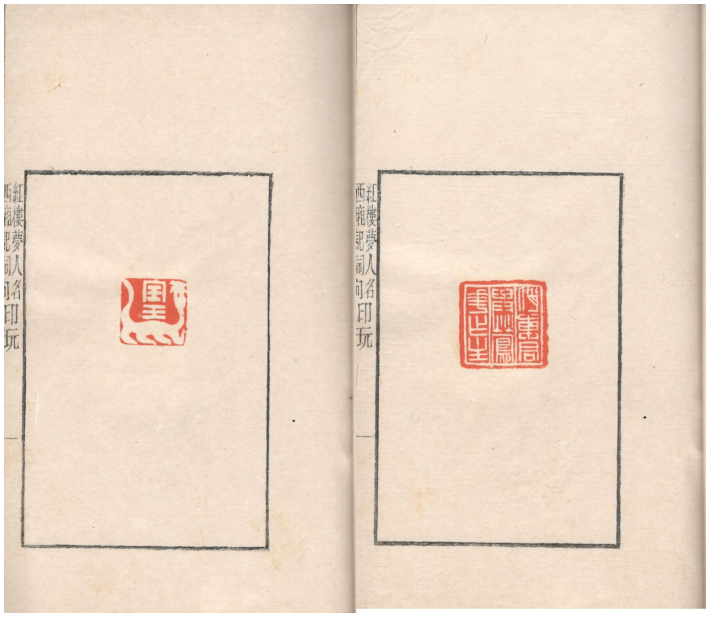

Figure 3.2 The hand-printed seal album pressed during 1920s
From Tian Shu's blog: http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_6f6c6b6f0102wvyi.html. Assessed Nov. 21st, 2020.

Several distinctive features of the seal made it a more appealing object for connoisseurship. Unlike a painting or a scroll of calligraphy, the handy size and the materiality of the seal makes it easy for people to hold with the hand. The literati usually use the term *bawan* (把玩) to describe their pleasure and sense of play in holding and fiddling the seal within the hand. As Bai Qianshan explains, "they could be held, stroked

[135] Bai, *Fu Shan's World,* 51
[136] Side inscription is viewed in the form of rubbings. The criteria to judge a side inscription is the same as those for the calligraphy. Different from the seal script used in seal carvings, side inscription usually uses regular scripts such as clerical script, or cursive script. Jisheng Guo and Jason C. Kuo, *Word as Image: The Art of Chinese Seal Engraving* (University of Washington Press, 1992), 49. Bai and Finlay, "The World Within a Square Inch," 31.

like a worry stone, or played with for amusement (*bawan*), permitting a constant and more intimate physical contact between the hand and the object than was possible with large objects like calligraphy." [137]

Seals as Reproduction Tools

A seal is a writing medium and printing technology. A seal imprint is a replica of the calligraphic writing engraved into the surface of the seal. Like a rubbing, a seal imprint "converts the object from a three-dimensional entity into a two-dimensional representation."[138] As a visual image, a seal imprint is divorced from the seal. Like a woodblock print, a seal imprint is both a copy and an original. For other forms of artworks like painting, sculpture, calligraphy, every piece of work is unique. They can be copied, faked, imitated but not reproduced, in the sense that ultimately each original work of art is unique. If the painter or calligrapher is no longer living, supply is non-augmentable. A seal carving is different. The seal carving is a reproduction tool. For the seal carvings of an artist no longer living, seal imprints (or seal albums) can be continuously produced as long as the seal exists and the current owners grant the production. In cases that the original seals were lost, destroyed, stolen, and no longer existed, our memories of the seal carving rely on the seal imprints it produced.

Brigitte Bedos Rezak emphasizes the regenerative power of the seal carving as the power of "becoming":

> The essence of seals as active agents…lies in their creative capacity, in their power of "becoming" (the impressions) as well as simply of "being" (the intaglio matrices). This regenerative potential lies close to the essence of living things—

[137] Guo and Kuo, *Word as Image,* 51.
[138] Hung Wu, "On Rubbings," in *Writing and Materiality in China: Essays in Honor of Patrick Hanan,* ed. Judith Zeitlin (Leiden : Brill, 2003), 29

not of an inanimate object—and herein may lie the representational capacity of seals.[139]

A seal is not only appreciated for its own "being" (its materiality, craftmanship, physical features, shape, workmanship, brushwork, carving style, calligraphic aesthetics) but also its "becoming"—the writing and the seal imprint that derived from it. By hand pressing the seal on another medium (usually a page, calligraphy, or painting), the imprint thus reproduced allows the engraving to be viewed without the presence of the object (the seal). Once an imprint is made, the visual print acquired its independence and has a social life of its own. A seal imprint is thus characterized both by its material connection to the seal, which may or may not exist anymore, and its independence as a visual form of art.

As Brigitte Bedox-Rezak argued, a seal is an "agency" of writing. Like an animate being, it gains its agency due to its power of regenerating and (re)producing. This replicative potential of the seal means that when we talk about seal carvings, there are two things: one is the seal itself and the other is its replicas on the page—the seal imprints. Usually seal imprints are bound together in a book-like format, called the seal album (*yinpu* 印譜).[140] The most authentic and valuable seal albums are called hand-printed seal albums (*qianyinben* 鈐印本). They are highly valued by collectors and connoisseurs because of their limited quantity and their value of authenticity and

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[139] Bedos-Rezak, Brigitte. *When Ego Was Imago: Signs of Identity in the Middle Ages*. Vol. 3 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 28.

[140] Books of *yinpu* date back to the Tang dynasty and become popular during the late Northern Song period with the circle of literati class. Literati-scholars' interest in seal impression is related to their devotion to epigraphy and archaeology. It was during the Ming dynasty, the seal album, along with other connoisseurship books, began to proliferate in the market. Bai, *Fu Shan's World,* 53-57.

authority due to their material connection with the original seal.[141] Possession of hand-printed seal albums marks one's connoisseurship, social network, cultural capital, traveling experiences, scholarly devotion, and material wealth.[142]

Today, Chinese people's passion for collecting seal albums and seal carving does not die out despite the disappearance of the traditional literati class. Seal carving and seal albums produced by renowned artists are still the hot cakes in the contemporary art market.

Seal Carving and *The Story of the Stone*

This chapter looks at seal carving and seal imprints of the verbal game *Shitou ji pinghua* and its modern afterlives. To know more information about the seal carver of the project, let us first look at the seal albums titled *Playthings of Seal Carvings (playthings) of Honglou meng Character Names and Xixiang Ji Drama Lines* (*Honglou meng renwu xixiang ji ciju yinwan* 紅樓夢人物西廂記詞句印玩). The preface is translated as follows:

> Wang Xuexiang (Wang Xilian) from Dongting Lake authored appraisal of *The Dream of the Red Chamber*, Zhongmu from Wujin (today's Hangzhou) carved the seals for me. Since Zhongmu passed away (in Ji's original euphemism "returned to the Mountain of the Way"), the work had suspended. After more than a decade,

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[141] Woodblock is another way to make seal albums when the original seals no longer exist. However, they are perceived as far below the original seal imprint by connoisseurs as there is a certain loss in quality in the process of recutting the originals seals in the woodblocks. See "Yintan," in Han Tianheng, *Lidai Yinxue Lunwen Xuan*, 72-81.

[142] As Wu Yulian's article on Wang Qishu indicates, Wang's collection of seals was made from his traveling, his purchasing, extensive travel experiences. And this extensive traveling, collection, social networking, and accumulation of wealth was a display of this new model of masculinity and manhood. See Yulian Wu, "Collecting Masculinity: Merchants and Gender Performance in Eighteenth-Century China," in *Gender and Chinese History: Transformative Encounters*, ed. Beverly Bossler (University of Washington Press, 2015), 59-82.

I asked Ye Yezhou to continue the unfinished work. Ji Houtao noted at Xiling in the summer of 1904. [143]
右洞庭王雪香著紅樓夢評赞,昔武进赵仲穆为余作印,自仲穆归道山,此作遂中止。越十数荏,复属仁和叶叶舟足成之.光緒甲辰首夏，江陰季厚燾記與西泠。

The recto side of the unfolded page is the seal imprint of a character name from the novel and the verso page is the seal imprint of the drama line from *Xixiang ji* that matched to the character. Indeed, for readers of the novel, the stone seals prove to be an excellent choice of medium for the commentary writings on *Story of the Stone*, a novel about a *Stone*, narrated by the *Stone* and inscribed on the *Stone*.

The story begins on the mythological plane, with the rock left from the goddess Nü Wa' repair of the sky. When a Daoist called Vanitas encountered the abandoned stone, he read the inscriptions carved on it and learned that this is the stone that was abandoned by Nü Wa repair of the sky. Being abandoned, the relentless stone had henceforth transformed its own shape and been taken down by the Buddhist mahasattva Impervioso and the Taoist illuminate Mysterioso into the mundane world, where it had lived out the life of a man before attaining nirvana and returning to the supernatural realm.[144] When a Daoist called Vanitas encountered the abandoned stone, he read the inscriptions carved on it and learned about this mythical and supernatural origins of the stone. Then we read a man named Zhen Shiyin, who dreams of a monk and a Daoist

[143] Author's translation. Yisu, ed., *Honglou meng shulu*, 285.
[144] "Vanitas read the inscription through from beginning to end and learned that this was once a lifeless stone block which had been found unworthy to repair the sky, but which had magically transformed its shape and had been taken down by the Buddhist Mahasattva Imperivioso and the Taoist Illuminate Mysterioso into the world of mortals, where it had lived out the life of a man before finally attaining Nirvana and returning to the other shore" (*SS* I: 49).

talking about the same *Stone*. “now this block of stone, having undergone the melting and molding of a goddess, possessed magic powers. It could move about at will and could grow or shrink to any size it wanted.” (*SS* I:47) This time, the *Stone* has become a minor deity called Divine Luminescent Stone-In-Waiting (*shenyin shizhe* 神瑛侍者) in the court of Sunset Glow in the Land of Illusion(*SS*, I: 53). His watering of Crimson Pearl Flower (Daiyu’s celestial personal) endows her with reciprocated love and gratitude and

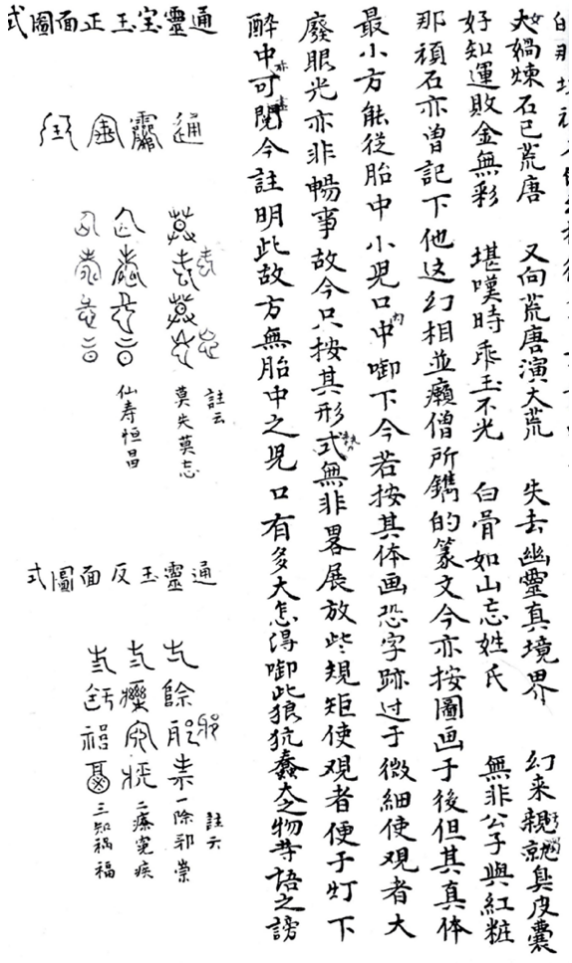

Figure 3.3 Section of Chapter 8 in the yimou manuscript copies of the novel
From: *Zhiyanzhai chongping shitou ji (Re-Commentary on The Story of The Stone by The Red Ink Studio*. Fascism of yimouben. 2018.

the plant decides to repay her debt by giving all her life's tears. That is the preordained love between the protagonist Baoyu and Daiyu.

The other frame of the narrative is *Stone*'s earthly journey and life experiences in the Garden. Now the stone is reincarnated as the boy Baoyu (literarily meaning "the precious jade"), the jade that is in the boy's mouth when he is born and later hangs around the boy's neck. In the novel*, the Stone* is the protagonist, the internal narrator, the recorder as well as the writing medium of the story. In each of these narrative frames, the story of the *Stone* is framed by different spheres of narrative, and they are all connected to each other by the inscribed stone, which is the medium of novelist text we read.

In one instance, readers are given the imprints of what is engraved in the mysterious "precious jade of spiritual understanding" (*tongling baoyu* 通靈寶玉), where the oral-narrator reminds the reader: "reader, you will, of course remember that this jade was a transformation of that same great stone block which once lay at the foot of Greensickness Peak in the Great Fable Mountains." (*SS*, I:188-189) The manuscript copies as well as many printed editions of the book visually presented the rubbings of the engravings on it (in seal scripts) and provided a transcription of the text in the regular script(Figure 3.3):

> (On the front side)
> Magic jade
> Mislay me not, forget me not,
> And hale old age shall be your lot.
>
> (On the reverse side)
> Dispels the harms of witchcraft.
> Cures melancholic distempers.
> Foretells good and evil fortune. (*SS*, I: 189)

The engraved jade functions in a similar way to a Daoist seal used for exorcism, protection, healing, and other ritual performances. [145] The transformation from the monumental size of the rock to the miniature size of the jade also entails concentration, hence furthering empowering the esoteric and enigmatic power of the stone/jade. From another perspective, the supernaturally engraved jade is the incarnation of the abandoned stone left from the Nü Wa's repair of the sky, which is now inscribed with its own life story and becomes the text we read. The reproductive and transformative power of the *Stone* in the novel stands as a metaphor for the reproductive power of the seal.

For readers, the resonance and association between the novel and seal carving are manifest. The act of transcribing the writing in the stone resembles the scabby monk's act of inscribing the words on the abandoned stone so that everyone would know its uniqueness. In the novel, *Stone* is the narrator, the protagonist and the writing medium; in the seal carving, the stone is a progenitor, a medium of writing and a printing tablet that engraved with characters and commentary lines on the *Story of the Stone*. To carve a seal, one must take hold of a stone in one hand and a chisel in the other; the process of carving the stone reinforces the physicality of "making." From this perspective, the process of making a seal also mimics the fiction-making of the novel *The Story of the Stone*, a text

[145] In Chinese Daoism, the seals and talismans are sometimes interchangeable: "The Daoist adept stamps a seal onto a talisman before putting it into operation. Alternatively, the Daoism healer inks the seal with mineral substances, stamps it on paper, and burns it to ashes, thus creating a liquefied medicine the patient would ingest." Shih-shan Susan Huang, "Daoist seals: part 1: activation and fashioning" in *Journal of Daoist Studies* 10 (2017): 73.

seen on an abandoned rock, read and revised by the historical Cao Xueqin, annotated by a group of readers and later on took on a life of its own ever since its circulation. [146]

Such a choice of seal carving appeal to the taste of readers of all ages due to these literary, medial and material resonance and conversions. One might wonder: who was the patron of the project? And who carved the seals.

The Patron and The Seal Carvers

From the preface of the seal album, we know the patron of the project is Ji Houtao 季厚燾 (1865—1948, *zi* Yingshan 瀛山). Ji was the scion of an official-scholar lineage from Changshu in Jiangsu province. Ji earned *xiucai* (civil service examination at the country level) degree in 1873 and took a position in Hangzhou for a while. After the collapse of the Qing dynasty, he remained in Hangzhou and only returned to his hometown in his later years. Ji Houtao not only excelled in seal carving, painting and calligraphy but also was a collector and connoisseur in *jinshi* studies (oracle bones and inscriptions). [147]

Most of his paintings were in the premier genre of landscape painting.[148] This choice demonstrates his strong adherence to the tradition of scholar painting (*wernren hua*) than to the colorful, decorative, and functional style of bird-and-flower or figural themes.[149] Ji's avoidance of these functional themes or decorative subjects set himself

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[146] For a detailed discussion about the textual transmission of the manuscript copies to the printed editions of the novel, see I-Hsien Wu, *Eroticism and Other Literary Conventions in Chinese Literature: Intertextuality in The Story of the Stone*, 149-180.
[147] Binggen Ge, *Changshu guojia lishi wenhua mingcheng cidian* (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2003), 105.
[148] Jianhua Yu, *Zhongguo meishujia renming cidian*, 505.
[149] The subject matter of flower and birds were usually associated with more popular and urban traditions of image making, therefore were not deemed a high prestige by the literati painters in the pre-modern era. However, by the late nineteenth century, they had

apart from the professional artists of the Shanghai School of his time.[150] His biography notes that his landscape painting of later years followed the model of the austere style of the famous literati-painter Ni Zan 倪瓚 (1301-1374) of the Yuan dynasty. reveal his self-identification with the Qing loyalists (*yilao* 遺老) instead of identity of "merchant-official" or "merchant artists."[151]

The first seal carver that Ji commissioned the project to was Zhao Mu 趙穆 (1845-1894, courtesy name Zhongmu 仲穆, style name Muyuan 牧園).[152] Zhao was a native of Changzhou in Jiangsu province. Zhao Mu first learned the seal script by himself and later received training from Wu Xizai 吳熙載 (*zi* Rangzhi, 1799-1870), a renowned seal carver of the time, who is retrospectively classified under the *wanpai* (Anhui school).[153] Zhao moved to Yangzhou and studied there with Wu for ten years. Later on,

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become the main subject matters assumed by painters sojourning in Shanghai. Reflects the concurrent taste and demands from the new rising art consumers (mainly the merchants and compradors), who had a middlebrow taste and almost no training in the intellectual aspects of the art works. See Kuiyi Shen, "Wu Changshi and the Shanghai Art World in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries," PhD diss., (The Ohio State University, 2000), 99.

[150] As noted by Roberts Wu, the larger number of painters who moved to Shanghai formed a distinctive regional style and trends that were identified as *haipai* (shanghai school painting) in retrospective. Roberta Wue, *Art Worlds: Artists, Images, and Audiences in Late Nineteenth-century Shanghai* (Hong Kong University Press, 2014),32.

[151] For a brief summary of the mentality and cultural credentials of *yilao* and rise of new elites and merchants in the art world of late nineteenth and early twentieth century, see Pedith Pui Chan, *The Making of a Modern Art World* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2017), 10-13.

[152] More details about Zhao Mu's biographical information, see Bin Zhou ed, *Zhongguo jinxiandai shufajia cidian* (Hangzhou: Zhejiang renmin chubanshe, 2009), 517.

[153] In late Qing and early republic period, there are mainly three schools in the circle of seal engraving identified by later scholars: the *Zhepai* (Zhejiang school), The *wanpai* (Anhui school) and the *haipai* (Shanghai school). Ginger Cheng-chi Hsü, *A Bushel of pearls: Painting for Sale in Eighteenth-Century Yangchow* (Stanford: Stanford University Press 2001), 6-10.

Zhao moved to Suzhou and remained in Hangzhou for most of his life. Besides being renowned for his seal carving, he also excelled in painting, calligraphy, bamboo carving, and pottery making.[154] Zhao's work includes *Seal Collections from The Double Clarities Pavilion* (*shuangqingge yincun* 雙清閣印存), *Seal Album of Zhongmu* (*Zhongmu yinpu*), and *Seal Albums of One Hundred Generals and One Hundred Beauties* (*Baijiang baimei hebi yinpu* 百將百美合壁印譜), among others.[155] Zhao's painting and seal carving were highly valued by his contemporaries and later art collectors and scholar-officials like Zhao Zhiqian 趙之謙 (1829-1884)[156], Wu Dacheng 吳大澂 (1835-1902),[157] and Fei Nianci 费念慈(1855-1905). [158]

Unfortunately, the project of seal carving was not completed when Zhao Zhongmu passed away. After a suspension of one decade or so, Ji Houtao committed the unfinished project to Ye Ming 葉銘 (1866-1948; *zi Pinsan* 品三, *hao* Yezhou 葉舟, alternative name Weiming 為銘), a well-known seal carver in modern art history. (Out of the 194 seals, Zhao Mu carved 151 seals and Ye Ming finished with the rest 33 seals.) Ye was born in a salt merchant family in Huizhou of Anhui province and lived in Hangzhou

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[154] Jianhua Yu, *Zhongguo meishujia renming cidian* (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin meishu chubanshe), 1296.
[155] Benxin Wang, *Jiangsu renyin Zhuang* (Nanjing: Nanjing daxue chubanshe, 2012), 283.
[156] Zhao was an official literati, who was also renowned for his calligraphy, seal carving and painting. "Art in Late-Nineteenth-Century Shanghai," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 58, no. 3 (2001): 10-13.
[157] Wu Dacheng was a native of Wuxian in Jiangsu. He received *jinshi* degree in 1868 and served at a high official position in the Qing government. Wu was a literati-artist as well. He was good at seal carving and calligraphy, *jinshi* connoisseurship, and was an art collector as well. Bin Zhou, ed., *Zhongguo jinxiandai shufajia cidian,* 217.
[158] Dan Wang, "Wanqing liangzhong yinpu," 162.

for most of his life.[159] In 1904, he founded the famous Xiling Seal Carving Society (*xiling yinshe*) 西泠印社 together with a group of Zhejiang natives, Wu Yin 吳隱 (1867-1922), Wu Changshuo 吳昌碩(1844-1927), Ding Ren 丁仁(1879-1922), Wang Ti 王禔(*hao* Fu'an, 1880-1960) on the island Solidary Hill of the West Lake in Hangzhou. Wu Changshuo, served as the first president of the society in 1913.[160] The society has the institutional mission to "protect metal and stone inscriptions and research seal studies" (保存金石,研究印學).[161] Elizabeth Lawrence's recent dissertation focuses on the institution in modern Chinese history and argues that the institution strove to "promote

Figure 3.4 Portrait of Ye Ming
From: *Guangyin renzhuan*. Shanghai: Xiling yinshe, 1921.

[159] Xia Zhengnong and Chen Zhili ed., *Da cihai meishu juan* (Shanghai :Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2012), 210. Wang, "Wanqing linagzhong houloumeng yinpu kaolun," 163.
[160] For Wu Changshuo's popularity and well-connected patronage among the Japanese, see Wong, *Parting the Mists*, 15. For Wu's influential status and the artistic achievements in the commercial capital of modern China, see Shen, "Wu Changshi and the Shanghai Art World."
[161] Laurence, "The Chinese Seal in the Making,"47.

the seal carving tethered to a nostalgically celebrated past when the making and appreciation of seals were inseparable from elite sociability based on shared education, refined leisure pursuits, scholarly acumen, and aesthetic taste." [162]

Ye Ming is also a seal carving scholar who compiled many important seal albums and *The Bibliographical Dictionary of Seal Carvers* 廣印人傳 (*Guangyin renzhuan,* 1910), one of the most comprehensive reference book that provides biographical information on 1886 seal carvers (including 63 Japanese carvers) from the thirteenth century till his day. [163]

The patron and the seal carvers involved in the project are representatives of the cultural elites living through the dynastic transition of twentieth-century China:

1) They were, broadly speaking, the last generation of traditionally educated men who were living through the turbulent ages in modern China. Like many artists at their time, they had achieved multiple accomplishments in epigraphic studies, painting, calligraphy, seal script, ancient inscriptions, seal carving, etc. Their social capital, cultural proclivities and artistic endeavors tie them more to the "amateur ideal" of the literati-artist than to the professional artists striving to earn a livelihood.[164] Nevertheless, the abolition of civil service examination in 1905

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[162] Laurence, "The Chinese Seal in the Making," 94.

[163] The other important reference book for seal carving is the *Chronicles of Seal Carvers* (*Yinren zhuan* 印人傳) and *The Expanded Biographies of Seal Carvers* (*Xu yinren zhuan* 續印人傳, preface dated 1789) by Zhou Lianggong 周亮公 (1612-1672) of Ming dynastyand *Seal Album from the Flying Goose Hall* (*Feihongtang yinpu* 飛鴻堂印譜 ,1755) by Wang Qishu 汪启淑(1728-1799) of Qing dynasty. Guo and Kuo, *Word as Image*, 84. Wang, "Wanqing liangzhong yinpu kaolun," 163.

[164] This "amateur ideal" during Ming and Qing means an enthusiasm and amateur efforts for literature and art as a means of self-cultivation, instead of a means of making profit. However, as a matter of fact, the professional artists, who depended on the market for a livelihood, however, still pursued an amateur ideal as part of an aesthetic and social

signifies the ending of the existence of the literati class. This means that, despite their scholarly identity, they were forced to make a living by other means, most likely by selling their art works.

2) They were from the lower Yangzi region (mainly Zhejiang and Jiangsu provinces) and had lived through the turbulent years of the Taiping Rebellion (1850-1871) that wreaked havoc on the material and literati culture of their native places. However, unlike many painters, writers, official-scholars or local gentry-elites who left their hometown and sought shelter at other places, often Shanghai, they remained in cities like Hangzhou, Yangzhou and Suzhou and continued the practice of traditional arts and intellectual pursuits for most of their life. [165] The commission of the seal carvings is most likely through direct contact between patron and the artists.[166]

Thus, this project of seal carving represents the connoisseurship taste of the elite reading community of the novel in the Jiangnan region during the late Qing period. This collection of the seal carvings embodied the high cultural capital, prestigious social networks, and elite aesthetic sensibilities as well as a patronage based on mutual trust and

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value. To quote Cahill, "At the root of the problem was the mismatch between admiration for outstanding artists who were committed, more-or-less full -time practitioners and the failure of the traditional Chinese social order to accord honored places to people in that position." James Cahill, *The Painter's Practice: How Artists Lived and Worked in Traditional China* (Columbia University Press, 1994), 7.

[165] Kuiyi Shen, "Wu Changshi and the Shanghai Art World," 34.

[166] Transactions and commissions of art works were conducted mainly through three ways in pre-modern period: "direct contact between patron and the artist; an indirect approach made through a mutual friend or other intermediary; the sponsorship of a live-in painter." Shen also notes that in late nineteenth century Shanghai, the transformation from the old patronage system to a relatively autonomous and anonymous art market was realized through the many fan shops (*Shanjian Zhuang*). Kuiyi Shen, "Wu Changshi and the Shanghai Art World," 100.

fellowship spirit. These forms of cultural and symbolic capital distinguished the project from the production of commodified art market flourished in Shanghai since 1860s.

Gift Exchange of The Seal Albums

In a technological sense, a seal is a printing tablet, and a seal imprint is the "trace" left when the seal is pressed on surface of a leaf or paper. A seal imprint is not only a documentation of the seal, but also a connoisseurship object appreciated for its own aesthetic formation. Once impressed on the silk or paper, the seal imprint acquired its own independence as a work of visual art, a medium of calligraphy text, an object for sale, a gift for exchange and an original for reproductions. A seal imprint is thus characterized both by its reference to the past—the object of the seal, which may or may not exist anymore, and its compatibility with the current—the contemporary visual culture and its viewers.

Thus, to think of seal imprints as the surviving traces of the seal invites us to think beyond the circle of the patron and seal carvers, and to think of the reproduction and circulation of the seal imprints within generations of readers, friends, collectors and public audience. So far, I have found four hand-printed seal albums of this collection in the online catalog of the art market today. All of the four albums were impressed during the late Qing and early Republican period and they have been mainly circulated among private collectors (Table 3.1) The hand-written traces left on the colophons of these seal albums offer us details regarding the social life (buying, selling, gifting, and exchanging) of the seal albums as things in motion.

The seal album found in the Xiling Seal Carving Society has prefaces handwritten by Wu Changshuo, Kuang Zhouyi 况周颐(1859-1926)[167], and Lü Jingduan 吕景端 (1859-1930)[168] On its title page, there is a colophon written by Zhao Rutiao 趙汝調(1898-1955), an entrepreneur and educator of the time: "brother Jianfu Please keep the seal albums as a gift, send by Zhao Rutiao in the spring of 1934" (健夫仁兄惠存，甲戌春赵汝调持赠). Wu Changhuo and the seal carver Ye Ming were founders of the Xiling Seal Carving Society, this seal album was very likely circulated among members of the society ever since its production. The colophon and encomiums indicate their shared taste and connoisseuristic appreciation of this seal album, the social bonding made through the gifting of the seal album, their frequent exchange of tokens and knowledge, which were fostered through their membership of the Society. What we see here is a mode of fellowship in things and intimate engagement with material culture that echoes the literati networks and material connoisseurship of the imperial past.

Another hand-printed seal album found in the Shanghai Library was also a gift exchanged between friends of high culture capital. [169] On its colophon page, there is the following words: “Junyun’s calligraphy is excellent, she recently sent me two volumes of standard-script calligraphy (*kaishu*). I am embarrassed that I have nothing to give back. I hand printed the seal imprints as a return gift (君允夫人書法精絕，近為坐行楷二小

[167] Kuang Zhouyi 况周颐(1859-1926) , a native of Lingui (today’s Guilin) in Guangxi province. Kuang Zhouyi is a literati scholar, poet and seal carver. As an official, he served in the imperial government through the end of Qing dynasty. As a poet, He was revered as “four masters of late Qing” (*qingmo sida jia*). Liangchun Ma and Futian Li, ed., *Zhongguo wenxue da cidian* (Tianjin: Tianjin renmin chubanshe, 1991), 3107-3108.
[168] Lü Jingduan is an literati-official and calligrapher. Xiaojun Qiao, ed., *Zhongguo meishujia renming cidian buyi yibian* (Xi’an:Sanqin chubanshe, 2007), 203.
[169] Wang, “Wangqing liangzhong honglou meng yinpu kaolun,” 155-174.

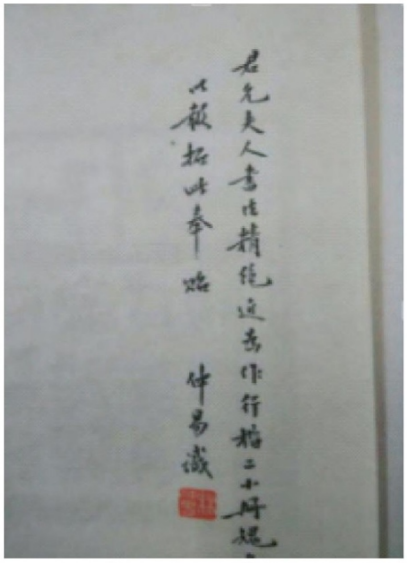

Figure 3.5 The colophon page of seal album impressed by Lin Zhongyi
From: *Honglou meng xuekan* 2017 (06): 155-174

冊，愧無以報，拓此奉貽贈).[170] The signature by Lin Zhongyi 林仲易(1893-1981) reveals to us this is a seal album Lin gave to Zhu as a reciprocal gift. (Figure 3.5)

Lin Zhongyi was a journalist, educator, lawyer, and important political figure born in the late Qing, and living through Republican China and People's Republic of China. Lin was a native of Fuzhou in Fujian province and went to study Economics at Japan's Waseda University in the 1920s. Lin worked as a manager for the *Morning Post* (*Chenbao* 晨报) in Beijing and served as the deputy editor-in-chief for the newspaper in 1923. From 1928 to 1936, he worked as the manager of *Daily of People's Words* (*Minyan ribao* 民言日報), editor-in-chief for *Morning Post*, and lecturer of the prestigious Yen-Ching University. Lin served as the president of Fujian College from 1936 to 1943. After

[170] Wang, "Wanqing liangzhong Honglou meng yinpu kaolun," 158-159.

the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, he served at the high bureaucratic positions in the central government.[171] The gift receiver Zhu Junyun 朱君允 (1896-1966) was born in a preeminent family in Changde of Hunan. After graduating from Jinling Women's College, she went to graduate school at Bryn Mawr College in the United States, where she met and married the famous drama playwright Xiong Foxi 熊佛西 (1900-1965). During the anti-Japanese war (1937-1945), She taught English in Wuhan University.[172]

Figure 3.6 rubbings of side inscription of the title of the seal album
From: *http://auction.artron.net/paimai-art00240230/*
Assessed on August 20th, 2020

[171] His title included Deputy Minister of Publicity Department, member of the national committee of CPPCC (National Committee of the Chinese People Political Consultative Conference), and consultant for the Supreme People's Court. Shengping Li, ed., *Zhongguo Jinxiandaishi Mingren Cidian* (Beijing: Dangan chubanshe, 1989), 433. Hongwu Ma, *Zhongguo jin xiandaishi mingren cidian* (Beijing: Dang'an chuban she, 1993), 413.

[172] Wang, "Wanqing liangzhong yinpu kaolun," 158-159.

Zhu and Lin belong to the emerging new intelligentsia of the time. Both of them were born in the elite family of the local gentry class and studied aboard at the prestigious institutions of the world. The social relationships surrounding the seal album enhanced its cultural capital and social capital. When art historian Clunas writes of the Fuchun Mountain Scroll by Huang Gongwang, he argues that "a painting like this was concentrated capital, not just in monetary terms but in terms of cultural prestige. Its owner was guaranteed the type of connections essential to a successful bureaucratic career"[173] Clunas demonstrates that the social capital of the collectors as the surplus value is no less significant than the intrinsic value of the art work.

The work on the gift by Mauss (1924) lends us some insight to interpreting the social act of gift-giving in this case. Mauss viewed the gift-giving as a prototypical contact and as a form of optimizing behavior. It is a norm of reciprocity when an individual is obliged. As people exchange objects, they reassure and confirm their relationships in a social system.[174] The seal album as a gift was an obligation, an obligation to give on Lin Zhongyi's part and an obligation to receive on Zhu Junyun's part. The gift maintained their social relations or perhaps created and strengthened their social bonding. The chain of gifts and obligations also links people to the seal album and embeds the circulation of the seal album in the flow of social relations. Such an object accumulates further symbolic value through the people who have owned, transacted, exchanged them.

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[173] Craig Clunas, *Superfluous Things: Material Culture and Social Status in Early Modern China* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004) ,139.
[174] Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies* (Routledge, 2002), 8-11.

Figure 3.7 Rubbings of side inscription carved by Ye Ming
From: *Honglou meng xuekan*. 2017 (06): 155-174

Modern Mass Media: Technology, Remediation, and Mechanical Reproduction

Like any physical being, a seal carving or a seal imprint is bound by time. It is fated to disappear and die. Such an anxiety is manifest in the readers' colophon on the seal album, where their anxiety of the death of the thing (seal imprints or seal carving) comes nakedly to the surface. It is this attention to the material dimensions of writing—the ravages of time or human destruction—that makes readers, publishers and editors take action to preserve, to collect and reproduce in whatever means available to them.

Modern mass media provided a fast-paced way to reproduce the seal imprints with the assistance of mechanical reproduction. New technologies of communication, rather than killing off elite culture, are what keep it going in the modern world. Since the 1920s, commercial commodification, preservation, and public dissemination occurred simultaneously and what makes this condition of production possible is technology. New

technologies of pictographic printing, not only remediate the original hand-printed seal imprint but also changes readers' reception and perception of them.

In 1927-1928, the whole collection of seal imprints appeared in installment in the *Morning Post Sunday Picture Section* (晨報星期畫報 1925-1928) (Figure 3.8). The weekly pictorial was inaugurated on September 6th, 1925, and ended in 1928[175]. Based in Beijing, it is one of the "literary supplements to the *Morning Post*" (*Chenbao fukan,* 1918-1928), a cluster of literary and illustrated journals and newspapers that played a key role in influencing the public discussions on the political, social, philosophical, literary, and artistic issues that shaped the intellectual movements—New Culture Movement (1912-1928).[176]

Morning Post Sunday Picture Section one of the most influential illustrated newspapers in Beijing during the 1920s, only rivaled by *Beiyang Huapao* 北洋畫報 (*Beiyang Illustrated Newspapers*) based in Tianjin. To cut the cost, the pictorial utilized the collotype photographic printing instead of the more expensive copper plate printing that *Liangyou* 良友 (*Young Companion*) adopted. Thus, it was also more affordable (4

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[175] The *Morning Post* was initially called the *Chenzhong bao* (*Morning Bell*) and first published on August 15, 1916. *Morning Post Sunday Picture* is one of the *chenbao fukan* (literary supplement of *Morning Post*) of the influential newspaper (1918 to 1928). On the historical significance of *Chenbao Fukan*, see Xiaoqun Xu, *Cosmopolitanism, Nationalism, and Individualism in Modern China: The Chenbao Fukan and the New Culture Era, 1918–1928* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2014), 1-19.

[176] Xu Xiaoqun gives two reasons for the influence of Chenbao fukan:1) its readers and contributors are a group of the well-known intellectuals and writers of the time; 2) the contribution and discussions on the *Chenbao fukan* as well as other journals and newspaper formed a "vibrant public sphere characteristic of that era." (21) For the *Fukan's* influence on the May Fourth Movement and a list of its contributors, see Xiaoqun Xu, *Cosmopolitanism, Nationalism, and Individualism In Modern China: The Chenbao Fukan And The New Culture Era, 1918–1928* (Lexington Books, 2014), 21.

cents) than the monthly magazine *Young Companion* (20 cents per issue) based in Shanghai.[177]

The founder of the pictorial was Liu Haisu 劉海粟(1896-1994), a prominent art educationist and artist in modern China. The motto he gave to the pictorial is The motto he gave to the pictorial is "beauty without limits" (美無疆).[178] Liu Haisu, a self-taught painter himself, played a key role in the art world in modern China. He was one of the main founders of the Shanghai Academy of Pictorial Arts (*Shanghai meishu zhuanke xuexiao*) established in 1912. Following his mentor Cai Yuanpei, Liu believed that art, like religion has a civilizing force that would provide people with comfort and meaning when faced with the stresses and corrupting influences of modern life.

Liu's motto "beauty without limits" fully justifies the hybrid content and its embracement of all forms of art genres in the pictorial. Indeed, what we can see in the *Morning Post Sunday Picture* was a hodgepodge of diverse sources, genres and styles—reproductions of traditional paintings, seal imprints, calligraphy, and western paintings, photographs of historical architecture, celebrities, contemporary figures, recent events, antiquities and artists, as well as pencil panting and cartoons, etc. (Figure 3.8). This hybrid contents and patterns of fragmentation were omnipresent in pictorials and illustrated journals of its time, such as *The Young Companion* (1926-1945), *Beiyang*

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[177] According to the advertisement, the journal was sold for four cents and those who subscribed to the whole month of the *Morning Post* would enjoy a discount. For readers outside of Beijing, each issue sold for five cents and for readers abroad, each issue sold for six cents of Mexican dollar (*dayang*). The journal *Liangyou* sold for twenty cents per copy and rose to 30 cents from April 1928. Certainly, *Liangyou* was a magazine of higher quality in photographic printing and more pages in each issue. See Paul Pickowicz, Kuiyi Shen, and Yingjin Zhang, eds., *Liangyou, Kaleidoscopic Modernity and the Shanghai Global Metropolis, 1926-1945* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 249.

[178] *Morning Post Sunday Picture Section*, no.1. Sept. 6th, 1925.

Illustrated Newspapers (1926-37), *Shidai* 時代(*Tines*, 1929-36), *Meishu Shenghuo* 美術生活 (*Arts and Life*, 1934-37) and *Zhenxiang Huabao* 真相畫報 (*The True Record,* 1912-1913), etc.[179]


晨報
The Morning Post Sunday Picture Section
飛白八法
金陵名家山水冊
補畫

Figure 3.8 One page from *Morning Post Sunday Picture Section*, no. 95. Aug. 7th, 1927

[179] In all these three magazines, diverse genres of Chinese style painting, traditional Chinese decorative arts, western-style painting, modern applied and commercial arts, woodcuts, sculpture, and articles on art and artists, and photographs were all included. See Carol Waara, "*Arts and Life: Public and Private Culture in Chinese Art Periodicals, 1912-1937,*" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 1994), 191-220.

As previous scholarship on the pictorials and art publications of the 1920s has illustrated, thanks to the advances made in printing technologies, high-quality photographic reproductions of traditional art and antiquities had become a cultural trend and integral part of illustrated newspapers, magazines, and illustrated albums of China during 1920s and 1930s.[180]

In addition to the advancement in printing technologies, ideologies and cultural nationalism also played an important role in the mass reproduction of traditional art in the print world and mass media. By the 1920s, the idea that art had the power to transform society gained momentum among intellectuals and artists of the new generation. For editors of the *Morning Post Sunday Picture Section*, reprinting traditional art like seal imprints, calligraphy, and traditional painting not only satisfied the modern urbanites' needs for leisure entertainment, but also resonates with Cai Yuanpei's cultural nationalism through the power of art, especially those of traditional art.[181] The public display of seal imprints in mass media can be perceived as a reaction to the perceived threat of western influences. The founder of the journal—Liu Haisu, like his mentor Cai Yuanpei and a group of like-minded intellectuals regarded traditional art as the most effective way to get younger generations interested in national culture. As many scholars

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[180] The developments of Chinese printing technology from the turn of the century to the 1930s are a process of rapid change. New technologies such as cooper plate, photographic plate manufacturing, and photogravure printing facilitated the reproductions of art works in modern media, see Waara, "*Arts and Life: Public and Private Culture in Chinese Art Periodicals, 1912-1937,*" 55-80.

[181] Cai Yuanpei's proposal in 1912 emphasized the importance of art education as an essential part of modern state institutions. Cai's agenda of promoting art and art education for rejuvenating national spirit quickly gained momentum among the generation of intellectuals and artists of the 1920s, such as Liu Haisu, Xu Beihong, and Lin Fengmian. Xiaobing Tang, *Origins of the Chinese Avant-Garde: The Modern Woodcut Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 9-42.

have observed, one of the intellectual responses to the western influence at the turn of the century, either in literary field or the art world, "was the desire to find native Chinese equivalents for admired aspects of western culture."[182] It is not surprising to find that the reproductions of Chinese traditional arts were given a much higher proportion in the pictorials of this time. Seen from this perspective, the artistic form of seal imprints and the literary content of *Shitou ji pinghua* was an excellent choice. After the May Fourth movement, the novel had already been canonized as a modern Chinese literary classic that could rival the modern European novel. Therefore, both the artistic form and the literary content of the seal imprint went hand in hand with the nationalist agenda at this historic junction.

In the first issue where the collection of seal imprints was displayed, the contributor of the collection articulates the reason for submission and public display:

> A man surnamed Liu Wancang (劉君挽蒼) bought the seal album '*Story of the Stone* characters and *Xixiang ji* drama lines' twenty years ago in Shanghai from Li Beiyun. The seal album consists of two volumes. Each character name and drama line is engraved in a seal respectively. There is a total of 186 seal imprints. Not only are the rhetorical registers refined, but the carving style of each seal is distinctive from each other and never repetitive. This is also something that a practitioner of the "iron pen" can learn from. No information concerning the owner of seal collection is known today. And the seal album has almost become a 'rare edition' (*guben* 孤本) now. I saw this album at Liu's studio and begged him for reproduction and wide dissemination."[183] (Figure 3.9)

The contributor was attracted by both literary content (as being playful and tasteful) as well as the artistic style of the seal carving. The rarer the item becomes, the

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[182]Charlotte Furth, "Intellectual change: From the Reform movement to the May Fourth movement, 1895–1920" in *An Intellectual History of Modern China,* Merle Goldman and Leo Ou-fan Lee, eds. (Cambridge University Press, 2002), 36.

[183] *Morning Post Sunday Picture Section*, no. 84. May. 15th, 1927

more imperative it is to preserve and disseminate in some ways. Like the public exhibition, modern mass media also changed the readers' mode of perception. The display of the seal imprints on the modern mass media means a certain degree of pubic visibility, cultural prestige, and authority, while at the same time brought the private collection to a larger audience and demystified its exclusive circulation. In this manner, the cultural elitism associated with seal carving was made accessible to a modern public audience more varied and diverse than the small circle of connoisseur-fellows and cultural elites of the past.

Figure 3.9 Section from *Morning Post Sunday Picture Section*, no. 84. May. 15th, 1927

A seal album that was sent as a gift will evoke a similar obligation and chain of gifts. The seal albums signify the intimacy and social bonding by members of an inner circle, like that within the members of the Xiling Seal Carving Society or the like-minded friends, like that between Zhu and Lin. Different from this elitist mode of sharing and exchanging of collectibles of items (such as seal carving, seal albums, paintings, curios, porcelains, calligraphy, etc.), mechanical reproduction brings something new. The illustrated newspaper enables readers across time and space to view the same seal imprint simultaneously. However, the audience and viewers of the newspaper were alienated

from the seal imprints and each other. Readers' visual experiences of the seal imprints were first mediated by the printing technology and further oriented by editors' typographical arrangement and editing. No longer did these imprints are connected physically to the original seal or the human hand; rather, the mode of material production freed the hand and remediate the seal imprint through another medium—the newspaper. To apply Walter Benjamin's notion of "aura" and "presence" in his famous essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Is Technical Reproducibility" (1935-1949) , one thing is missing in the newspaper—its authenticity and "aura."

Figure 3.10 Section from *Morning Post Sunday Picture Section*, no. 95. August. 7th, 1927

Figure 3.11 Section from *Morning Post Sunday Picture Section*, no. 119, Feb. 5th, 1928.

The Decay of Aura

Seal imprint, as work of art has always been reproducible and meant for reproduction. However, the technological reproduction is something new. Benjamin's critique of modern reproduction of artwork points out one thing lacking in the most advanced technology of photographic printing. As Benjamin states:

> In even the most perfect reproduction, one thing is lacking: there here and now of the work of art—its unique existence in a particular place. It is this unique existence—and nothing else—that bears the mark of the history to which the work has been subject. This history includes changes to the physical structure of the work over time, together with any changes in ownership.[184]

The uniqueness of the hand-printed seal albums was embedded in its tradition, historical testimony, its cultural biographies, its vulnerability to the physical decay, and the material mode of production. While the photographic printing may leave the former's other properties untouched, it certainly devalues the "here and now" of a hand-printed seal imprint—its unique existence in its own time and space. To quote Benjamin:

> What withers in the age of the technological reproducibility of the work of art is the latter's aura. It might be stated as a general formula that the technology of reproduction detaches the reproduced object from the sphere of tradition. By replicating the work many times over, it substitutes a mass existence for a unique existence. And in permitting the preproduction to reach the recipient in his or her own situation, it actualizes that which is reproduced. [185]

To Benjamin, the aura is quintessential to the authenticity of an artwork. While photographic reprinting freed the hand from the reproduction of the seal imprints, it undermines its authenticity and uniqueness of existence. As David Ferris further explains: "Benjamin locates authenticity in the 'here and now' of an artistic object, that is in its

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[184] Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, 253.
[185] 254

uniqueness, its inability to be in more than one place at the same time."[186] With photographic printing, copies of seal imprints could reach to readers in different places and times. Uniqueness no longer matters in such mass reproduction. As Benjamin observes: "the whole sphere of authenticity eludes technological—and, of course, not only technological-reproducibility." [187]

For a reproducible work of art like seal carving, this poses a problem. Even though there might be multiple seal albums derived from this collection, the very method of hand-printing and the cultural elitism associated with seal carving means that the number of seal imprints is limited. Seal carving, despite its own reproducibility, are not meant for mass reproduction. I argue that the difference between hand-printing and mechanical reproduction lies in the means of production.

First of all, photographic printing is more independent of the original seal carving than hand printing. Second, with photographic reproduction, the seal imprint is fixed at a certain moment in time; what is really jeopardized in the process is the authority of the seal imprint. Unmistakably, a photocopy of seal imprint differs from a hand-printed one. While seal imprint by hand printing is both an original and a copy, a pictographic copy is forever a copy. By photographic reproduction, the newspapers brought the seal imprint closer to the masses spatially and humanly, it also sacrifices the quintessential uniqueness of the hand-printed seal imprint—its aura.

The concept of aura, as described by Benjamin is a spatial existence in a particular moment in time. As David Ferris states, the aura of an object "appears to the

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[186] David Ferris, *The Cambridge Introduction to Walter Benjamin* (Cambridge University Press, 2008), 105.
[187] Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, 253.

beholder in the form of an image whose significance is locked to a particular time and place."[188] In the case of hand-printed seal imprints, the material way of production—its reliance upon the human hand becomes the fundamental core of their uniqueness and authenticity. Photography changes the means of production:

> In the case of photography, the opposite is true because the experience of the image is no longer restricted to a specific place and time but can exist in different places at different times yet remain unchanged.[189]

Photographic replication transformed the relation between the art work and its beholder: its mass reproduction enables the same seal imprint reach to readers in different places at different times.

I argue that what really differentiates a hand-printed seal imprint from a photographic copy is the material mode of production—the involvement of the human hand. As David Ferris states:

> In the case of auratic art, a means of production which relies upon the human hand for its creation becomes the basis for their uniqueness and authenticity (no such work can be produced by another hand and be the same). Thus, authenticity is not something a work possess as some spiritual or aesthetic property; rather, it is an effect of the work's material means of production.[190]

A hand-printed seal imprint must rely upon the human hand for its production; mechanical reproduction replaces the human hand and what is lost in the process is the art work's authenticity, uniqueness and permeance that was quintessential in the connoisseurship appreciation of seal carving.

The public display of whole collection of seal imprints ended in 1928. Its enduring appearance in the ever-changing mass media proved its appealing attraction to

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[188] Ferris, *The Cambridge Introduction to Walter Benjamin,* 94.
[189] Ferris, *The Cambridge Introduction to Walter Benjamin,* 94.
[190] Ferris, *The Cambridge Introduction to Walter Benjamin*, 106.

readers of the 1920s. There are three possible explanations for the appeal of seal carving of *Story of the Stone*: literary content of the verbal game (that mix and match in between the drama lines from *Xixiang ji* and characters of *The Story of the Stone*) is delightful and entertaining to read; the materiality of seal carving resonates with the medium and motif of *The Story of the Stone*; and the continuous appeal of seal carving to modern readers and cultural fads of reproducing and introducing traditional elite art through mass media.

Modern mass media bring the collection to a larger audience and demystifies its exclusive circulation. In this manner, the cultural elitisms associated with seal carving was made assessible to a public audience more varied and anonymous than the idealized literati community of days gone by. Given the readers' enthusiasm towards this collection, it should not come as a surprise that in 1946 the Hanwen Book Shop 翰文书局 in Chongqing issued the seal albums titled *Seal Imprints of Characters from Red Chamber and Drama Lines from Western Wing* (紅樓夢人物西廂記詞句印玩) to the contemporary readers (Figure 3.12). The price for the seal album is one thousand and two hundred *yuan*. The monthly salary for a full-time professor of Qinghua university of the same year is 550 *yuan*.[191] It is evident that the standardize seal album was still a luxury item in the culture market. The publisher and editor of the seal album was a man named Gao Hancheng 高翰承(?-?) from Leshan in Sichuan province. How the collection came into Gao's hand is not clear. But possibly prior to Gao's acquisition of it, very likely

[191] The salary of the faculty at Qinghua university is at the top level of the time compared to other higher education institutions. Qinghua daxue xiaoshi yanjiu shi, *Qinghua daxue shiliao xuanbian*: *vol. 4* (Qinghuadaxue chubanshe, 1994), 539, 544, 551.

hand-printed seal albums of this collection were continuously circulated among private circles as exchanged object or through monetary transactions through the art market.

Unlike the seal albums (which usually consists of four volumes) printed during the 1920s, only 58 seal imprints were collected in this seal album published in 1946. The reason is unknown. It is very likely that some of the seals were lost, destroyed or unavailable to the book shop. The size of the book is 21 cm * 12.5 cm.[192] Each leaf has two seal imprints—the character name on the top, and the seal imprint of the corresponding drama line in the bottom. Below the imprint is the transcription in typescript for the seal script, an indication that the knowledge of seal script was not expected from the contemporary buyers (Figure 3.12 Figure 3.13).

The publisher did not resort to the more up-to-date technologies for mass readership, but utilized the reproducibility of the seal as a printing tablet Making standardized hand-printed seal albums were pioneered by Xiling Seal Society from its founding to 1950s. [193]As Lawrence observes: "the business (of Xiling Seal Carving Society) made literati material cultural available and ultimately more accessible, in the sense that it increasingly catered to consumers who were not classically educated but could appreciate literati art and seal carving on different levels. The business thus contributed to the democratization of connoisseurship in an age of mass culture."[194]

Commodification made the hand-printed album available to anyone who could afford them, regardless of their social or cultural capital. At the same time, the very method of hand-printing preserves the authenticity, authority, uniqueness, permanence,

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[192] http://pmgs.kongfz.com/detail/121_319265. Assessed Nov. 21st, 2020.
[193] Lawrence, "Chinese Seal in the Making", 96-97.
[194] Lawrence, "Chinese Seal in the Making", 97

Figure 3.12 One page from the seal album published by Hanwen Book Shop, 1946.
From: pmgs.kongfz.com/detail/85_239651.
assessed August. 20th, 2020

and "aura" that was contextualized in the act of hand-printing. As Verity Platt convincingly notes, the seal, compared to other forms of print making, "is the only form of reproduction which was not carried out by specialist craftsmen within workshops but was frequently enacted by anybody who owned it."[195]

Seals are printing tablets and reproduction tools. Unlike a photograph, each hand-printed seal imprint is perceived to be a unique and an original as each is linked to the original seal (object), which itself is thoroughly changeable and vulnerable to physical erosion. While a reproduction of painting or a calligraphy is always a reproduction, a

[195] Platt, Verity. "Making an Impression: Replication and the Ontology of The Graeco-Roman Seal Stone." *Art History* 29, no. 2 (2006): 238-39.

hand-printed seal imprint is both an original and a copy, a documentation and a visual image.

Different from the hand-printed seal albums circulated in between private hands, the standardized hand-printed albums represented a modern way of ownership and connoisseurship. In discussing the printing and marketing of the standardized seal albums

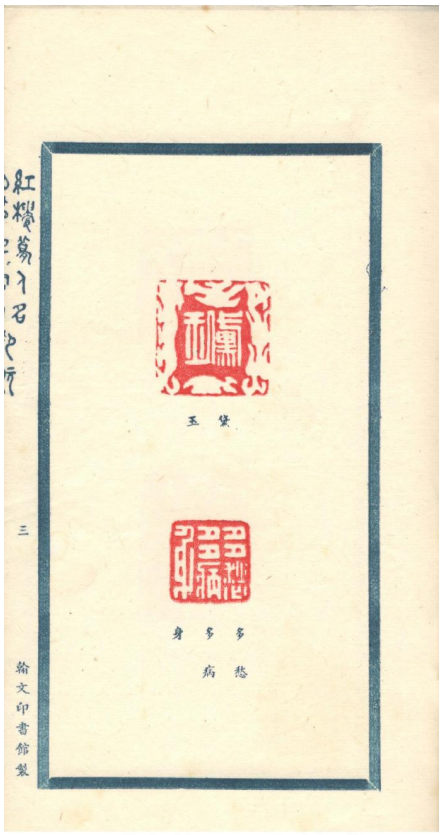

Figure 3.13 One page from the hand-printed seal album printed in 1946. http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_6f6c6b6f0102wvyi.html. Assessed on October 29, 2020

by Xiling Seal Society, Lawrence argues that the standardized seal albums printed by the Xiling Seal Society "contributed to a process of detaching literati seal carving from the literati as a social constituency and reconfiguring it as part of an autonomous field of material production with a fixed history, relevant to a larger public beyond the self-

enclosed world of literati networks."[196]In a way, the method of hand printing and commercial selling "preserved, canonized, and commodified late imperial literati cultural production."[197] Lawrence sees the modern selling and making of hand-printed seal albums as a way to democratize and publicize traditional literati material culture and detach the seal from a more exclusive framework of elite social networks.

Such a standardized seal album was more "common" and easy to acquire, financially and socially, than a seal album made by its owner and exchanged as a gift. A hand-printed seal album exchanged as a gift is reliable upon the social capital and most often the cultural capital of the two parties. The standardized seal albums made things that were previously considered as "singular and unique" into more "common" commodities that can be transacted without sustaining any lasting relationships between giver and receiver.

With the easy accessibility of the modern mechanical printing, the choice of hand printing, in numbers and for prices that strictly limited their dissemination, marks these seal albums as objects of cultural meaning that would appeal to the taste of the connoisseurs. The very method of hand printing marks the authenticity and "aura" of the seal carving, which was withered in illustrated newspaper in the 1920s. But there is one thing lacked in the standardized seal albums: the colophons and hand-written inscriptions left by generations of viewers, collectors and owners. Colophons, written by successive collectors and privileged viewers often contain valuable information about the cultural biography of the albums. To a connoisseur, these texts help reconstruct the history of the

[196] Lawrence, "Chinese Seal in the Making," 119-120.
[197] Lawrence, "Chinese Seal in the Making," 120.

art work, providing historical information and a scholarly tradition that one values and reacts to. Moreover, colophons and personal seals are singularizing devices that express the desire to avoid commoditization. Commercial selling of seal albums in an anonymous market economy testifies the commodity potential of the seal carving, only lacking the high cultural capital and symbolic capital that were previously embedded and signified by the colophons and inscriptions. Therefore, the standardized seal albums by hand printing illuminates a successful combination of the authenticity stemmed in hand-printing and the reproducibility granted by seal carving.

Who are the potential buyers of the standardized seal albums? Even though the components of the elite class from the late Qing through the 1940s underwent radical changes, my presumption is that the target consumers were still those who enjoy a high cultural capital. Some of them might find the literary content of *Story of the Stone* in the materiality of seal imprints catered to their taste. Some of them might be amateur

Figure 3.14 The seal album send to Yu Pingbo as a gift by the Hanwen book shop

practitioners of seal carving and find the album a good manual for practice. At least publishers of this seal album believed so. One seal album was sent as a gift by the book shop to the renowned scholar of the novel—Yu Pingbo 俞平伯 (1900-1990) by the publisher, another practice of gift exchange that singularized something sold as a commodity.[198]

From 1904 to 1946, three modes of production and reproduction technology emerged in the making of seal imprints of this collection. Before the 1920s, the hand-printed seal albums were circulated in small quantities and the current records on the art market and individual notes shows us that they were limited within small circles of intellectual elites, whose ownership of the seal albums also marks their symbolic capital, social capital and cultural capital. From 1927 to 1928, the public audience could view the photocopies of the seal imprints in the widely circulated newspapers of the time. In 1946, modern consumers could own the hand-printed seal album through buying, regardless of their social capital or cultural capital. The three modes of reproduction, circulation and ownership represent three different kinds of relationships between the things and the people. What is mapped out is the changing social-cultural milieu of China from the late Qing to the 1940s.

As Igor Kopytoff analyzed in the article "Cultural Biography of Things," anything has the potential to become a commodity, and any commodity can become momentarily or permanently off the market and unavailable for further exchange. In calling attention to the cultural and cognitive process which things become or stop being commodities, Kopytoff uses the word "singular" and "common" to describe the drive of

[198] Dan Wang, "Wanqing liangzhong yinpu kaolun," 161.

commoditization and counter drive of singularization in any object's cultural biography. As Kopytoff states: "to be saleable or widely exchangeable is to be 'common'—the opposite of being uncommon, incomparable, unique, singular, and therefore not exchangeable for anything else."[199] When seal albums were exchanged among the self-enclosed circles of friends and connoisseurs, they were briefly withdrawn from a commodity economy into a limited sphere of private ownership. When a commodity is removed from circulation and marked personally, the valuation of it is determined less by the art market and more by individual valuation and taste. The standardized seal album, as a commodity salable for money, represents the opposite end on the spectrum, a process toward monetization and commoditization.

This is not to say that seal albums printed before 1920s are insulated from the market of exchange. (Selling traditional art works had long been enmeshed with commerce in imperial China.) Nor does it mean that the standardized seal albums were not held to have particular and singular value to the people who bought them.

The high cultural aura of the seal carving becomes ambiguous and negotiable in this mode of monetization and commodification. The high cultural aura comes from social relationships its material mode of production—the physical contact with the original seals as well as the as cultural relics of the elite connoisseurship. At the same time, standardized seal albums are now consumer' products in the market, available for interested readers who would like to buy. Therefore, the standardized seal albums by

[199] Igor Kopytoff, "The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process" in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge University Press, 1986), 69.

hand printing illuminates a successful combination of the authenticity stemmed in hand-printing and the reproducibility granted by seal carving.

The Story of Seal Carving and the *Story of the Stone*

The audience of the seal carving of *Shitou ji pinghua*, when viewing the seal imprints' stylistic features and literary content, must have had in mind the reincarnated stone in the *Story of Stone* as well as the rich repertoire of the literati's infatuation with stone in history. the seal carving mediates between its own regenerative power and the man-made efforts of reproduction. By virtue of being a natural object that bear man-made carvings, the seal carving blurred the boundaries between the two. Like the *Stone* in the novel, the seal carving conflated two distinct modes of stone appreciation: as a connoisseurship object that bear playful writing about the novel and a self-generated object that creates its own being and replication. I embed my discussion of seal carving in its larger social life as a communication tool between people who made, patronized, collected, owned, appreciated and wrote about the seal carving. Centered on the cultural biography of seal carving and its reproducibility, this chapter considers the driving force behind the reproduction of the seal imprints, the mediation and remediation of the seal imprint through modern printing technologies and mass media, the commodification of seal carving in the market economy, and the sense of authority and authenticity in relation to the material mode of production. Seen from this perspective, the story of this collection of seal carving becomes lens through which we can examine the social, cultural and technological changes that define the early and mid-twentieth century China.

A seal imprint is the two-dimensional visual imprint from which you can imagine the original stone with its carved image. They have the power to provide an aesthetic

experience of elite literati's world of artistic pursuits and scholarly devotion. As printed image made from material objects, they invite readers' playful speculation and playful handling and viewing in search for new perspectives. The world elegant (*ya)* and playthings (*wan)* speaks of a high culture aura connected to the elite leisure culture of the imperial past.

Viewing the seal carving has another effect. It isolates the object (stone) from nature, removing it from its original natural environment, and made it into an object of culture. When that carved stone is impressed on the piece of paper, that inanimate object becomes animate image. The seal carving is the point at which nature and culture meet and where aura and reproducibility, ironically, converse into one. In the making of seal carving and seal imprint, the hand is hidden but it is always there. The act and practice of carving is integral to the seal as a transformative object: inanimate to animate, nature to culture, production to reproduction.

In the novel, when the Vanitas brought the wild rock from the nature into the mundane world of culture, it brought together the entire canon of self-generative stone and its status in Chinese ritual culture. When the historical Cao Xueqin copied the text from the rock onto pages, the story evokes full of stories about the esoteric and mysterious power of the revered objects of stones. The transcribed text underwent numerous permutations, mutations and changes in its circulation from one hand to another, from one medium to another. The seal imprints discussed in this chapter, as things-in-motion, were also mediated and remediated several times by different material media and technologies of printing, which recalls the memory of the textual history of the novel.

This project of seal carving consolidates the elite reading community of the novel in the Jiangnan region of the late Qing period. By far, this project of seal carving is the earliest project related to the novel *Story of the Stone* in my research. It provides schemata for future readers' imagination and cultural memory of the text of the *Stone*. The use of stone to commemorate the novel *Story of the Stone* fascinates readers of all ages. Various sorts of seal carving projects of the novel were continuously practiced from the late Qing to contemporary China. And the literary contents in these seal carvings ranges from character names, architectural items, character epithets, commentary captions, verbal expressions, common sayings to poem lines, puzzles and word games. For example, in 2015, Henan People's Publishing House published *Honglou meng yinpu* (*Seal Album of Dream of the Red Chamber*), a modern photographic reprint of a collection of seal imprints that were all carved by a group of contemporary seal carvers. It is not only the semiotic text carved in stones that deserves remembering, it is more of the media technologies of the seal and visual medium of the seal imprints that proved to appealing and long-lasting in our cultural memory.

Table 3.1 Information about the four hand-printed seal albums found in today's art market

Title of the seal album	Transaction date	Volume information	Auction company	Transaction price
Seal Carving of character names of *Story of the Stone* and drama lines of *Xixiang ji* 紅樓夢人名西廂記詞句印玩 (impressed in 1928)[200]	July 4th, 1999	4 volumes	Beijing Hanhai auction Co., Ltd.	¥2000-3000
Seal carvings of character names of *Story of the Stone* and drama lines of *Xixiang ji* 紅樓夢人名西廂記詞句印玩 (impressed in the Republican period) [201]	June 3rd, 2013	4 volumes 20.3*12.4 cm	See Poly International Auction Co., Ltd.	¥20, 700
Seal carving of character names of *Story of the Stone* and drama lines of *Xixiang ji* 紅樓夢人名西廂記詞句印玩 (impressed between 1871 and 1908)[202]	Nov. 16th, 2015.	4 volumes. 7.5*11.5cm	Beijing Guardian Auction Co. Lmt.	¥20,700
Seal albums of character names of *Story of the Stone* and drama lines from X*ixiang ji* 紅樓人竟集西廂詞句合璧印譜 (impressed in 1925)[203]	2017	8 volumes 26*15.1cm	Xiling Seal Carving Society	¥ 32,200

[200] Assessed August 25th, 2020, https://auction.artron.net/paimai-art00240230/.
[201] Assessed August 25th, 2020, http://www.yidulive.com/wap/jgdetail.php?id=19356 .
[202] Assessed August 25th, 2020, http://www.yidulive.com/wap/jgdetail.php?id=19356.
[203] Assessed August 25th, 2020, http://www.xlysauc.com/auction5_det.php?id=136216&ccid=973&n=4648

CHAPTER 4

DRINKING GAMES: DIVINATION, PROPHECY AND IMITATION

Introduction

This chapter looks at the drinking game of lot drawing as a prophetic device in the novel *Dream of the Red Chamber* (hereafter referred to the *Dream*) and an imitation work of the novel—*Shanghai Dust*. Like the other literary devices of prophecies, such as the poems, songs, opera arias, lantern riddles, and Buddhist allegories, the result of the game (writing on the drinking lot) reveals the future fates of the characters in the fiction *Dream of the Red Chamber*. Through my analysis, I argue that the game evokes a numinous reaction from its players for a reason: the way the game is played is identical to another practice that players do at the time: drawing the divination stick from a temple.

In this chapter, I start with a general theoretical discussion on the affinity between games and divination. Then I move to the drinking game of lot drawing. In considering the material making and its symbolism of a Tang dynasty game set discovered in 1832, I will read the literary description of gameplay in the novel *Dream* to look at players' play experience, especially their mental suspense before the lot drawing, their psychological responses to the result of the game and the significance of the drinking game in the whole narrative development. In this game, each player draws a lot that shows a flower name, a poem written for the flower, and a drinking order. A retrospective reading reveals that the game provides a prediction for what will happen in the novel. If the players can draw a lot that reveals their future fate, that is a more potent irony—

since we like to think that the games of chance are games of randomness, the result of which are beyond the control of anyone.

To understand the numinous significance of the game, we have to look back to the games of chance in early civilization, which were closely intertwined with ritual, divination, fate, and magic. I argue that it is the authors' genius to turn gameplay into a revelation of doomed oracles.

Drinking Games in Pre-Modern China

Drinking games have a long history in China. They were originally associated with archaic rituals dating back to the Warring States period (475-221 B.C.). Its Chinese term *jiuling* (酒令) includes the word of *jiu* 酒 (alcohol) as well as the character *ling* 令 (command). Generally speaking, what can be called *jiuling* 酒令 involves all games played during social gatherings and parties. Some games involve a round of competition or challenge or improvisation composition; and some of them are games of chance. And drinking is required for whoever fails or receives the challenge.

Drinking games were an indispensable component of the salon activities of the literary class in traditional China. These literary games usually involve group improvisation of poetry. One highbrow drinking game in Chinese cultural history is later known as "*Liushang qushui*" 流觴曲水(floating goblets and meandering water). The game was played on the famous literati gathering— "*Lanting yaji*" 蘭亭雅集 (Orchid Pavilion Gathering) that took place in Wang Xizhi's 王羲之(303-361) garden on the day of Spring Purification Festival (which happens on the third day of the third month of Lunar calendar) in the year 353. The party-goers bathed, sang, and sat along a meandering stream and played such a game: they would let the wine cups float down the stream and whenever a cup pass before a guest, the guest would compose a poem. Whose failed such a challenge, the person had to drink up the cup in front of him or her. Such an

elegant event shows that drinking games, literary composition, ritual performance were intertwined in the cultural and social lives of the literati class in pre-modern China.

Poetic activity and drinking games were an important part of the courtly life of the well-to-do class. To quote Clunas: drinking games played at literati's "elegant gatherings" or parties "was not just about a set type of objects, it was about a whole set of cultural practices and attitudes as well." [204] In the novel *Dream of the Red Chamber*, almost every party and festival celebration involves some kind of party games and the types of games indicate the players' literacy level and cultural sophistication: those played among the maids and servants (the illiterate class) usually does not involve literary composition; the games that Tanchun, Baochai and Daiyu played displayed their privilege of a literary education and extensive reading. Think of the uncontrollable laughing that Grannie Liu (Chapter 60) and Xue Pan (Chapter 28) caused to the audience when they make attempts in the party games.

Sources on the drinking games and drinking etiquette can be found in collectanea (*congshu* 叢書), encyclopedia books (*leishu* 類書), anecdotal writings (*biji* 筆記), and chapters in Ming-Qing fictional narratives. Some of these game manuals also include the basics, protocols, the manners of drinking, the various types of wine, suitable occasions for drinking, ideal companions, utensils, and even methods to produce wine and connoisseurship on wine tasting. For example, the *Days and Months in the Realm of Drunkenness* (*zuixiang riyue* 醉鄉日月) by the Tang writer Huangfu Song 皇甫松[205], the *Drinking Games from the Hall of Peace and*

[204] Craig Clunas, *Empire of Great Brightness: Visual and Material Cultures of Ming China, 1368-1644* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007), 145.
[205] Ma and Ma, *Zhongguo jiuling daguan*, 774.

Elegance (*Anyatang gonglü*) by the Song writer Cao Shao [206], *History of Wine* (*jiushi* 酒史) by Feng Shihua 馮時化(?-?), *Rules of Decorum in Drinking* (*shangzheng* 觴政)[207] by Yuan Hongdao 袁弘道(1569-1610) and *Drinking Verse in The Realm of Drunkenness (Zuixiang lüling* 醉鄉律令) by the Ming literati scholar Tian Yiheng 田藝蘅(fl. 1570).[208] These connoisseurship texts provided recollections and anecdotes of the social etiquettes and drinking games that were recollected from the previous decades. Another source to look at the drinking games are the encyclopedia books *(leishu* 類書) that were available to every household during the Ming Qing period. Usually the drinking games were listed under the "category of drinking" (侑傷門) , "category of jokes and banter" (笑談門), and "category of drinking verse" (酒令門).[209] With the flourishing print culture since the late Ming period, playing cards for drinking games became new fashionable printed items. These printed ephemerals combined visual sophistication and cultural connoisseurship, allusions to classical texts and illustrations of scenes and characters

[206] Cao Shao, *Anyatang jiuling*, in Tao Zongyi *et al*., (comp.), *Shuofu sanzhong*, II, 851-8; *Shuofu sanzhong*, VII, 4302-17.
[207] Ma and Ma, *Zhongguo jiuling daguan*, 775.
[208] Ma and Ma, *Zhongguo jiuling daguan,* 776.
[209] These drinking games usually require players to compose a textual pastiche in a impromptu manner. As scholars like Wu Huifang and He Yuming's research shows, the game composition usually involve one's knowledge of a wide range of textual sources, such as the *Analects, guwen* 古文 (ancient-style writing), the *Qianjia shi*, the *Four Books (Sishu* 四書), popular dramatic texts such as *Xixiang ji*, *The Story of the Lute (Pipa ji* 琵琶記) and the *Peony Pavilion (Mudan ting* 牡丹亭), popular primer *Qianzi wen* (*Thousand Character essa*y) and *Baijia xing* 百家姓 (hundred surnames), as well as texts in other linguistic registers like *suyu* (common sayings), names of everyday objects (fruits, medicines) , names of people (from historical figures to prostitute names), names of domino tiles, popular tune names, and even government titles, place names, and festivals etc. Huifang Wu, *Wanbao quanshu*, 291-294; Yuming He, *Home and the World*, 24-25

from the popular fiction and drama play, available for both the elite class and the rising middle class.[210]

The most comprehensive collection of the drinking games published during the late Qing period was *The Compendium of Drinking Games (Jiuling congchao* 酒令叢鈔, 1878), compiled by Yu Peidun 俞敦培 (style name Zhitian 芝田).[211] This compendium collected a total of 926 drinking games, of which Yu categorized into four categories: games of ancient times (*guling* 古令), elegant verses (*yaling* 雅令), games of lot-drawing (*chouling* 籌令) and poplar games (*tongling* 通令).[212]

This chapter focuses on the drinking game of lot-drawing (*chouling*). The term *chou* was widely used in ancient China for divination, mathematical functions, and counting [213] It was also used to refer to counters for the game of pitch-pot 投壺 (*touhu*), an ancient game related to ritual performance, divination, and drinking game. [214] The game of lot drawing is usually played with a container (*tong*) inside which a certain number of drinking lots (sometimes the playing cards) are placed.[215] Sometimes party-goers would assign an official who supervises the game —the so-

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[210] Andrew Lo, "Literati Culture in Ming Dynasty Drinking Games Using Cards," *Zhongyang Daxue renwen xuebao (National Central University Journal of Humanities*), 31 (2007): 243-288.
[211] Yu Dunpei is a native of Jinkui in today's Jiangsu province. *The Compendium of Drinking Game* has 324 drinking games in total. The book was pirated and republished with another title *Complete Compilation of Drinking Games* (*jiuling quanpian,* 1918) in the early Republican period. Liao, "Honglou renjing jiuling kaolun," 243.
[212] Ma and Ma, *Zhongguo jiuling daguan*, 779.
[213] The term *chou* was widely used in ancient China for divination, for mathematical functions and counting. Strickmann, *Chinese Poetry and Prophecy*, 85.
[214] Joseph Needham believes the game was used for divination. Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilization in China*, vol. 4, part I. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1962), 328. Many scholars also believe the game involve drinking, see Strickmann, *Chinese Poetry and Prophecy*, 82-83.
[215] Many Playing cards for card games also have drinking instructions and inscriptions on them, indicating that they can be used alternatively for drinking games. See Andrew Lo, *Dice, Dominoes, and Card Games in Chinese Literature*. Andrew Lo, "Literati Culture in Ming

called register officiant (*jiuzheng* 酒政). Such an official would cast a dice and count according to the pip on the die to decide the turn of the player to play. The player draws a lot from the container, reads out the inscription, and all the party-goers need to follow the instructions to drink accordingly. While finishing the round of drinking, the player casts the dice to determine the next player to draw. Some instructions also ask players to compose a literary verse in an impromptu manner or sing a popular song or drama tune or start another game.

The figures and quotations printed on the drinking lots comes from a wide range of textual and literary sources, including vernacular narratives like *Water Margin, Three Kingdoms*, story collection *Strange Stories from A Chinese Studio* (*liaozhai zhiyi* 聊齋誌異), popular drama plays like *The Story of the Western Wing (Xixiang ji), The Story of the Lute (Pipa ji)*, and *The Peony Pavilion (Mudan ting)*, well-known folklores and mythologies, Tang poetry, Song lyric-poetry, the Confucian classics, sometimes even historical figures, courtesans of the time, seasonable calendars, the hexagrams derived from *I Ching*, etc.[216] The lots and the cards would have existed side by side since the late Ming.[217]

Drinking Games and Divination

Drinking games of lot drawing (*chouling* 籌令) were prevalent in Tang poetry as indicated by poems and literary sources written during the time.[218] An eighth-century game set *Lunyu yuzhu* (論語玉燭 *Analects* Jade Candle) provided the earliest material evidence for this

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Dynasty Drinking Games Using Cards," *Zhongyang Daxue renwen xuebao (National Central University Journal of Humanities*), 31 (2007): 243-288.

[216] Interested readers could consult Ma Guojun and Ma Shuyun's compilation of drinking games of lot drawing, and see the content on the lots. Ma and Ma, *Zhongguo jiuling daguan*, 447-723.

[217] For a look at the playing cards and the literary texts on them, see Lo, "Literati Culture in Ming Dynasty Drinking Games Using Cards," 243-288.

[218] Donald Harper, "The Analects Jade Candle: A Classic of T'ang Drinking Custom," *Tang Studies*, no. 4 (1986): 69-70.

kind of games played among the elite class in the Tang dynasty.[219] The game set was unearthed in Dantu in Jiangsu province in 1982. The game set has 50 silver lots (*chou* 籌) placed inside a container of cylindrical shape; each lot has one quotation from the *Analects* in gold, followed by a drinking instruction. The instruction is closely related to the quotation from the *Analects* and provides a playful interpretation of the inscription to enliven the festive occasion.

Drawing a drinking lot might reminder players of another practice that they do in everyday life— drawing a divination stick, either in a secular setting of the street-stand or a solemn setting of a religious temple. Donald Harper points out the numinous significance of the game within the social and cultural background.[220] His analysis is summarized as follows: first of all, the turtle that mounts the cylinder on its back is associated with longevity and numinous power, and therefore divination practice in Chinese culture.[221] Especially, the turtle-mounted container closely resembles the turtle-pedestaled stele, which had formed a standardized funeral ordinance by Tang times.[222] Second, the lotus-knob on the top of the jade candle resembles the "stone spillers" (*shi zhu* 石柱) or "lookout piller" (*wang zhu* 望柱) erected on the entrance to the tombs and this tradition traces back as early as the Han.[223] Third, the number of lots for the game set—50—is also the number of yarrows stalks used for divination to form hexagrams based on the *Book of Changes*.[224] Meanwhile, the yarrow stalks were also placed in a *tong*-like container.

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[219] Dantu xian wenjiaoju, Zhejiang bowuguan, "Jiangsu dantu dingmaoqiao chutu Tangdai yinqi jiaocang" in *Wenwu*, 11, 1982(04): 14-32. Liu Jiugao and Liu Xing, "lunyu yuzhu kao lue" in *Wenwu* 11, 1982(06): 34-37.
[220] Harper, "The Analects Jade Candle: A Classic of T'ang Drinking Custom," 69-89.
[221] Harper links the turtle as a stele pedestal to the turtle held up Penglai in the Eastern Sea as well as the turtle "who rose from the Lo River to reveal a magical diagram to the antique flood hero, the Great Yü 大禹." Harper, *The Analects Jade Candle*, 75.
[222] Harper, The analects Jade Candle, 74.
[223] Harper, The analects Jade Candle, 74.
[224] Harper, *The Analects Jade Candle*, 76.

This kind of container is also what to store Buddhist sutras when they were buried on a holy site.[225] Considering all the numinous aspects of the game set in its cultural and social context, Harper states that "if the lookout pillar served as a spirit beacon, perhaps the jade candle lot container represented another kind of divine light—that of mantic illumination."[226]

As scholars have widely demonstrated, lot drawing was a popular social custom in secular and religious communities since the medieval period in China. Michel Strickmann noticed that the lot drawing was "a coherent and consistent element forming pre-imperial classic mantic systems, like trigrams, hexagrams, and asterism."[227] The drinking game of lot drawing is, as Harper states, "another manifestation of the use of lots in popular customs."[228] Noticing the similarity between drawing a drinking lot for the party games and drawing a divination lot in mantic performance or religious ritual or ceremony, Harper offers a playful and witty comment at the end of the article: "Did they (and I suspect that they did) see it as a kind of booze oracle in which the sayings of Confucius led them to inebriation?"[229]

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[225] The Chinese association of the shell of a sacred turtle and divination is inherent in the word by 占卜, which was originally meant to divine by the turtle and later became the general term for all forms of divination. The turtle also played an important role in Indian cosmological myths, as well as western and Arabic ones. See Ronit Yoeli-Tlalim, "A Tibetan image of Divination: Some Contextual Remarks," in *Imagining Chinese Medicine*, Vivienne Lo and Barrett Penelope, eds., (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2018), 429-440.

[226] Harper, "The Analects Jade Candle," 76.

[227] Michel Strickmann, *Chinese Poetry, and Prophecy*, ed. Bernard Faure (CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), 2. Donald Harper mentions that the *chou* ("counters" or "countering rods") already occurs in Warring States sources as a name for lots used in computation or games of chance. Harper, "The Analects Jade Candle," 76.

[228] Harper, "The Analects Jade Candle," 77.

[229] Harper, "The Analects Jade Candle," 77.

Yet despite this insightful observation, comparatively few attempts have been made to understand the fundamental affinity between games and divination, drinking game of lot drawing and divinatory practices in Chinese context. The symbolic elements reflected in the design of the game set The *Analects* Jade Candle is illuminating for us to think about the mental response and inner psychological life of the players in playing the game. Moreover, the drinking games of lot drawing provides us an opportunity to shed light on the commonalities between the two distinctive social practices—games and divination. This is not to propose that drawing a drinking lot and selecting a divination stick share the same origins. By the medieval period, the two existed side by side in their own social and cultural contexts. I argue that games of lot drawing create a mental experience of altered state of consciousness, translating what people have experienced (for example, in a mantic performance) into a new form and media. After all, divination shares a common characteristic with games of chance, namely, a preoccupation or fascination with the unforeseen.

The boundary between games and divination, play and ritual are challenged from time to time when scholars in different disciplines and cultural studies have found that divination as a ritual or religious performance is used with the artifacts for games: dice, cards, and lots.[230] From a theoretical point of view, there is a fundamental similarity between divination and games: both experiences are governed by rules.

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[230] As Culin states in the beginning of his monograph *Chess and Playing Cards*: "games, I hold, must be regarded not as conscious inventions, but as survivals from primitive conditions, under which they originated in magical rites, and chiefly as a means of divination. Based upon certain fundamental conceptions of the universe, they are characterized by a certain sameness, if not identity, throughout the world." Culin, *Chess and Playing Cards*, 679.

Divination as Implicit Play

The error people tend to make the most in thinking about games and divination is to assume that they stand in opposition to each other because divination is usually considered "serious" or “solemn” whereas games belong to a much “unserious” and therefore “trivial” sphere. I argue that a more accurate distinction is between being earnest as opposed to being insincere in either divination or gameplay. Perhaps one reason that games remain their eternal appeal to humans is that, like divination has always done for us, it provides an ordered cosmos and a rigid set of rules for navigation.

There are fundamental similarities in gameplay and divinatory acts. First of all, both games and mantic practices are ruled-governed practices, processes, and systems. All games have rules. In pointing out the fundamental connection between ritual and play, religion and games, Rachel Wagner emphasized the key governing factor of rules: "That which is governed by rule and structure is cosmos. That which is without known rules is chaos… The movement from chaos to cosmos, from profane to sacred, is accomplished by laying a system of rule over the world—that is to say, by determining, or perhaps even manufacturing, the rules of the game."[231]

Games model the world that players live in. More accurately, they model a world that players want to live in. The rules of the game reflect humanity’s desire for order, for contrived and controlled situations. With rules, games eliminate unwanted contingencies, undesired surprises, and the besetting chaos of everyday life, ensuring that everything that happens in a

[231] Rachel Wagner, "The importance of playing in earnest," in *Playing with Religion in Digital Games*, eds. Heidi Campbell and Gregory Grieve (Indiana University Press, 2014), 201.

game is within the frame of play. Gary Morson states this as: "rules prescribe what can and cannot happen, so that events in the game in some sense represent events in life."[232]

The same sense of relief and consolation is also the driving force in human beings' eternal pursuits and devotion to mantic practices. The desire to live in an ordered cosmos is also reflected in people's desire to engage in mantic acts, to know what the future holds for oneself or one's community, to gain some foresight from the invisible world, to intervene with the divine will, to consult with the god's or the deity's own words, and to gain esoteric wisdom, often in cryptic forms as oracles. In the game world, rules drive the operation of the gameplay. The question comes to: can we find highly formalized "rules" in divinatory practices through which the practitioners seek to obtain esoteric information?

Michel Strickmann answered this question in his book *Chinese Poetry and Prophecy: The Written Oracle in East Asia*. Based upon a thorough survey of the oracular manuals, mantic performances, and divination rituals in a different parts and regions across the globe, Stickmann's research shows that the oracles are not only ubiquitous in China and Japan, but also a key feature of social practice in all regions of the world. All these divinatory practices, conducted through a wide variety of material means, apparatus, techniques, and processes, are structured in a "simple but sweeping formulation."[233] The repeatable and formulaic pattern, in the words of Stickmann, is a two-step operation at its core:

> They begin with some randomizing procedure for selecting one of the numbered responses, which must then be pondered and interpreted. Access to the encoded treasures of divine wisdom is granted through a variety of means: drawing or casting lot/dice,

[232] Gary Morson, *Prosaics and Other Provocations: Empathy, Open Time, and The Novel* (Academic Studies Press, 2013), 228.
[233] Strickmann, *Chinese Poetry and Prophecy,* 142.

> cards, coins, making marks in the sands, spinning wheels or tops, or even driest drawing from among the written answers themselves: single-step divination.[234]

The initial step is determined by a random generator (e.g. a die, yarrow stalks, coins, pebbles, sticks, cards, etc.), and therefore perceived to be controlled by fate, fortune, or the supernatural entities. The second step is access and interpretation of the oracles. Such a procedure is "patterned theoretically and repeatable behavior, while its social function must be investigated in specific historical contexts."[235] Strcikmann also points out that the "various means of access are essentially interchangeable, hence arbitrary."[236] What Strickmann has found out, after the extensive survey on each oracle text in its own cultural context, is that there is a universal rule, a pattern governing each specific mantic performance in every historical context. The use of the divination sticks to form a hexagram based on the method and text of *I-Ching* is not culturally related to the Ifa divination method practiced among the Yoruba of Nigerian region.[237] However, both the two time-honored divination methods exhibit the same "pattern" in their operations and procedures.

Strickmann's methodology is a "cross cultural mantic orgy."[238] These mantic texts, when studied cross-culturally, manifest a trans-cultural feature.[239] This shows two things: 1) mantic acts in all regions of the world, are found to be "programmed" in a way like games with explicit

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[234] Michel Strickmann, *Chinese Poetry and Prophecy*, ed. Bernard Faure (CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), xxiv.
[235] Strickmann, *Chinese Poetry and Prophecy*, xxii.
[236] Strickmann, *Chinese Poetry and Prophecy*, xxv.
[237] To look at the Ifa divination method and how it conforms to the two-stage method of divination as summarized by Strickmann, see Strickmann, *Chinese Poetry and Prophecy*, 88-89. To look at the method of divination using the Book of Changes, see Michael Loewe and Carmen Blacker ed., *Divination and Oracles*, 46-50.
[238] Strickmann, *Chinese Poetry and Prophecy*, xxvii.
[239] Strickmann, *Chinese Poetry and Prophecy*, xxvi.

rules; 2) the "rules" of each divination method can been essentialized as a universal formula as quoted above.

There are always rules where there are games and, also where there are divinatory practices. Rules offer a reliable sense of order. Rules tell diviners or the practitioners how to select the critical oracular text and how to interpret the signs. This challenges people's presumption of divination as an intuition-based practice under the govern of a deity or god. In the book *Divination and Oracles,* Michael Loewe explained the progress from intuition to regularization of the divination performance in China as follows:

> There are two aspects of divination and oracles in China that appear to be contradictory but which are complementary. The first depends on intuition or instinct and stands outside the sphere of rational activities; the second stems from the exercise of remaining intellect…. there was a general tendency for spontaneous and intuitive divination to be overtaken by the process of regularization or standardization, or by intellectual advances.[240]

Elsewhere Strickmann explained the progress from intuition to regularization as: "Buddhists, Taoists and officials strove to tame uncontrolled inspiration by establishing set forms for ritual when they reduced action to writing, they made rituals repeatable and their outcome predictable, in this way they not only took control of the present, but set their seal upon the future."[241] In other words, divination might begin as an intuitive mental process, "but before long the human intellect began to play a role, as complex concepts arose and an urge towards standardization accompanied the growth of philosophical implications"[242] Strickmann proposed that writing has played a significant role in stabilizing each system of mantic arts.[243]

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[240] Loewe, *Divination and Oracles*, 40
[241] Strickmann, *Chinese Poetry and Prophecy*, 43.
[242] Michael Loewe and Carmen Blacker ed., *Divination and Oracles* (Allen & Unwin, 1981), 48.
[243] Strickmann, 93-95.

This leads to my second observation. There is a sense of play in both games and divination. The French sociologist Roger Caillois emphasized that play is derived from rules:

> Play is simultaneously liberty and invention, fantasy, and discipline. All important manifestations of culture are derived from it. It creates and sustains the spirit of inquiry, respect for rules, and detachment. In certain respects, the rules of the law, prosody, counterpoint, perspective, stagecraft, liturgy, military tactics, and debate are rules of play. they constitute conventions that must be respected.[244]

In the game design manual *Rules of Play*, Salen and Zimmerman define play as the "free movement within more rigid structures of rules." [245] All these game theorists have pointed out that play depend upon rules to happy. As both games and divination are governed by rules, both the two practices are governed by the drive to play. The "more rigid structures," to use the words of Salen and Zimmerman, are the rules of the game and play is how one interacts with those rules. This observation can also apply to the divinatory activity. In *Homo Ludens: A Study of The Play-Element in Culture*, Johan Huizinga admits that "we are accustomed to think of play and seriousness as an absolute antithesis," but he argues that such a dichotomy "does not go to the heart of the matter." [246] Play infuses both divination and games. Since play depends upon rules to happen, play is part of the process that instantiates a play arena and a system of mantic procedures. Since both game and divination are governed by rules, both exhibit the concept of play. To quote Strickmann's concluding remark in the monograph: "divination exemplified the traditional mingling of play and faith, *Scherz und Ernst* ."[247]

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[244] Roger Caillois, *Man, Play, and Games* (University of Illinois Press, 2001), 58.
[245] Eric Zimmerman, "Narrative, Interactivity, Play and Games" in *First person: New media as story, performance, and game*, edited by Noah Wardrip-Fruin and Pat Harrigan, (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2004), 159.
[246] Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, 18.
[247] Strickmann, *Chinese Poetry and Prophecy,* 144.

Third, both games and divination exist in a network. There are two arguments in this statement. First of all, games exist in a network.

> For if you look at them you will not see something that is not common to all, but similarities, relationship … look for example at board games… and we can go through the many, many other groups of games… and see how many similarities crop up and disappear. And the result is: we see a complicated network of similarities, overlapping and crisscrossing: sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities in details.[248]

One obvious example in world history is the racing board game played with dice and tokens moving on a designed route on a game board. A specific example in Europe is the Game of Goose that originated from Italy in the late middle ages. Various ramifications of the games were produced and played since the end of the 16th century and have been spread from Italy to many other countries, with rules hardly altered over the centuries. Dozens of new games based on the Game of the Goose appear every year, reflecting the current ideological, cultural, political, religious and sometimes educational and polemical themes.[249] This kind of racing board game has evidence of existence in archaeological finds in many early civilizations around the world, such as the Royal Game of Ur, The Egyptian game Senet, the Chinese game *liubo*, the board game Mancala.[250] What links these games in a network is the basic rubrics of their rules. The player would control a token on a path. The movement of each token is determined by the throw of

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[248] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 66-67.

[249] Adrian Seville, "The Game of the Sphere or of the Universe—a Spiral Race Game from 17th century France" in *Board Game Studies Journal* 10, no. 1 (2016): 1-16.

[250] The board game mancala is a divinatory device and examples of such uses and practices abound around the world. Scholars like Wim van Binsergen, in dialogue with the historian of games Murray, pointed out that Mancala board games were also formal models for geomantic divination. Van Binsbergen, Wim MJ. "Time, space and history in African divination and board-games." *Time and temporality in intercultural perspective: Studies presented to Heinz Kimmerle, Amsterdam: Rodopi* (1996): 105-125; Van Binsbergen, Wim MJ. "Divination and board-games: Exploring the links between geomantic divination and mancala board-games in Africa and Asia." In *International Colloquium 'Board-games in Academia', Leiden*, pp. 9-13. 1995; Steward Culin, Mancala: The National Game of Africa. *Report of the National Museum* 1894: 597-611.

dice—a result of randomness and chance; upon each throw of dice, the player would move to a certain position on the board and follow the rules on that position. While landing at some spots might lead to an advantageous status, landing at others might result in an unfavored situation. The racing board game is the prototype of games of chance in human history.[251] What we see is a network of similarities in the design of the game rules; nonetheless, these games of chance were found to be models for divinatory purposes and uses.[252]

Likewise, divinatory practices across the globe exist in a network. Systems of divinatory practices and oracle traditions in different regions demonstrate a structural parallel between each other. Strickmann describes the generic connection between the vast family of mantic procedures as a kind of "consanguinity."[253] To quote Strickmann:

> The similarities among mantic systems in different cultures are patent and undeniable, all may ultimately derive from some occult common parent, but such genealogies are always chancy and suspect. The spread of ideas, images, techniques, and materials continues to intrigue historians as well as prehistorians. The text is itself intended for manipulation, under prescribed ritual conditions and in conjunction with other objects and gesture; the separating out of counting sticks, the drawing of lots, and the scratching of lines in and, the casting of dice, coins or draughtsmen, the spinning of a wheel and more.[254]

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[251] For the game of the Goose and its historical development, cultural legacy and transmission in Europe, see Adrian Seville, *The Cultural Legacy of the Royal Game of the Goose: 400 Years of Printed Board Games* (Amsterdam University Press, 2019). Games that belong to this family are numerous. The list a few of these games in East Asian society, the imperial Chinese board game *shengguan tu* "promoting officials" and its ramifications in folk culture. see Ellen Johnston Laing, "Chinese Pictorial Board Game Prints" in *Arts Asiatiques* (2015): 77-86; Carole Morgan, "The Chinese game of Shengguan tu" in *Journal of the American Oriental Society* (2004): 517-532. The Buddhist community also play a similar board game of chance with teachings of the scripture, see Beverley Foulks McGuire, "Playing with karma: a Buddhist board game," in *Material Religion* 10, no. 1 (2014): 4-28.

[252] For a general summary of these games and the spiritual connotations of the earliest board games, see Mary Flanagan, *Critical play: Radical game design* (MIT press, 2009), 65-69.

[253] Strickmann, *Chinese Poetry and Prophecy,* 142.

[254] Strickmann, *Chinese Poetry and Prophecy,* 89.

What Strickmann emphasized is that there is a "simple if sweeping formula" behind every member of the extended corpus of oracles.[255] The exact oracle answers or the questions to be asked might differ from one community to another; the selection of the divination stick is a pure game of chance, and what follows after the selection are proper interpretation of the oracular texts, usually accompanied by a full corpus of commentaries and interpretation. Nevertheless, they all follow predetermined rules and these rules testify to the extraordinary parallels in between each other.

Lastly, both gameplay and divination require participants to be earnest. Games yield their best result when players are earnest. The same attitude of devotion, sincerity, and earnestness is also mandatory for people who inquire about the future. For this, Huizinga articulates as follows:

> The mental attitude in which a community performs and experiences its sacred is one of high and holy earnest. But let it be emphasized again that genuine and spontaneous play can also be profoundly serious… the players abandon himself body and soul to the game, and the consciousness of its being merely a game can be trusted into the background. The joy inextricably bound up with playing can turn not only into tension but into elation. [256]

A player who does not care about winning or losing will be a spoilsport. He or she will kill the fun of the game and the interests of other players for they reveal the very fact that games are fabricated. Huizinga explains that "by withdrawing from the game [the spoilsport] reveals the relativity and fragility of the play-world in which had had temporarily shut himself with others."[257] Such a player "must be cast out, for he threatens the existence of the play community."[258]

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[255] Strickmann, *Chinese Poetry and Prophecy,* 143.
[256] Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, 20-21.
[257] Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, 11.
[258] Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, 11.

Rachel Wagner applies the concept of spoilsport to the religious world and lists the religious spoilsports that includes "religious reformers, splinter groups, controversial contemporary interpreters of sacred writ, or even the proliferation of individual interpreters of all kinds as new readers approach ancient traditions and reassess what the rules of the game are and make new arguments for what the rules *should* be."[259] The spoilsport is dangerous because they destroy an already ordered cosmos. Rachel Wagner differentiates two types of spoilsport: the one who argues about the rules but still want to play and the nihilist spoilsport who reveals that the game is "a sort of deliberate sham."[260]

Such an idea of spoilsport applies to mantic practice as well. [261] In divination, a spoilsport can be a nihilist who denounces that mantic arts are artificial and meaningless. According to the study of "numeromantic texts" from Dunhuang analyzed by Marc Kalinowski, "The procedure should only be used for those who have faith, and it will not be wrong even once in ten thousand times. It should not be given to anyone not for the asking, even if he offers a thousand pieces of sash." [262] The person who is "not for the asking" is a spoilsport who sees it as a waste of time. The attitude of spoilsport of divination.

The fact that divination and games of chance were closely aligned in every early civilization of the world have been generally acknowledged by scholars of different fields. The play scholar Csikszentmihalyi and Bennet, back in the 1970s, stated that games of chance "seem

[259] Rachel Wagner, "The Importance of Playing in Earnest" in *Playing with Religion in Digital Games* (2014): 207.
[260] Wager, *The Importance of Playing in Earnest*, 208.
[261] Jon Doveyand Kennedy Helen, *Game Cultures: Computer Games as New Media: Computer Games as New Media* (McGraw-Hill Education , 2006), 59.
[262] The citation can be found in Strickmann, *Chinese Poetry and Prophecy*, 139.

to have emerged from the divinatory aspect of religious ceremonials."[263] Historians and anthropologists have found that most of the ancient games we know today are played for divinatory purpose or as part of ritualistic liturgies that concerned the prosperity or destiny of individuals or the whole community.[264] For example, The Egyptian board game Senet (3500 BC) were understood to be closely aligned with Egyptian ritual culture, when a player is playing the game "against a spirit opponent", indicating that the game "may have functioned as a spirit medium connecting the living to the netherworld."[265] Strickmann mentions that the transition and evolvement between games and divination is not always one-way direction: Tarot is just a contemporary example showing that playing cards might begin as "a game with no purpose beyond providing mental stimulation" and end as a method for advising on future actions.[266]

The best-known example in early China is the board game *liubo* 六博 (six rods). Scholars have found that the diagram of a *liubo* board can be alternatively used as a divination manual for mantic practices.[267] Joseph Needham has provided a chart to show the genetic relationship of

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[263] Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Stith Bennett. "An Exploratory Model of Play" in *American Anthropologist* 73, no. 1 (1971): 47.
[264] Mary Flanagan, *Critical Play: Radical Game Design* (MIT Press, 2009), 63-73.
[265] Mary Flanagan, *Critical Play: Radical Game Design* (MIT Press, 2009), 68.
[266] Farley, *A Cultural History of Tarot*, 3.
[267] On the same origin between games and divination, see Ling Li, *Zhongguo fangshu xukao* (Beijing: Dongfang chubanshe, 2002), 20-27. On the game of *liubo* and its use for divination, see, for instance, Li Xueqin, 1997, 49-50; Mark Edward Lewis, *Dicing and Divination in Early China*, No. 121. *Sino- Platonic Papers*, (July) 2002: 1-22. Tseng makes the connection between the *liubo* board found in Yinwan tomb material and the TLV mirrors, or bronze mirrors dating to the Han. Tseng claims that both game board of *liubo* follows the pattern of TLV mirrors, which were used to prevent the invasion of evil spirits. See Lillian Lan-ying Tseng, "Divining from the Game Liubo: An Explanation of a Han Wooden Slip Excavated at Yinwan," in *China Archaeology and Art Digest* 4 (2002): 55-62; Anna-Alexandra Fodde-Reguer discusses the *liubo* manual as manual for prognostication, and how one could use the board and the game manual for mantic inquiry. See Anna-Alexandra Fodde-Reguer, "Divining Bureaucracy: Divination Manuals as Technology and the Standardization of Efficacy in Early China," (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2014), 72-74. Li Ling has discussed the earliest board game found in pre-Han Bamboo slips and argues they are precursors for the later board game "shengguan tu," which in

games and divination to the development of the magnetic compass in the Chinese cultural context and proposes:

> Some social anthropologist will produce some day a fully integrated and connected story, quite biological in character, showing how all these games and divination techniques were genetically connected. It would only need markings or numbers on the arrows to have an object which by compression would become a cubical die, and this again by extension or unfolding would give rise to dominoes on the one hand the playing cards on the other. [268]

Games and divination do similar cultural work: both are governed by strict rules; both created ordered cosmos; and both are limited to specific time and space. In what follows, I read the literary description of the drinking game of lot drawing from Chapter 62 of *Dream of The Red Chamber*. Novels and narratives can provide us literary descriptions about the inner psychological lives of the players during the gameplay and how the author manipulate the result of the game for a larger narrative development.

Drinking Game in *Dream of the Red Chamber*

In Chapter 62, the maids in Baoyu's mansion decide to organize a nocturnal party to celebrate Baoyu's birthday. Drinking games for such a party should be friendly to all party-goers, many of whom are literate. For this, Baoyu proposes the drinking game "choosing the flower" (*zhan huaming* 占花名), for which everyone applauds and goes to invite the young ladies for participation. The drinking lots are made of ivory and placed inside a cylindrical bamboo box. One shakes the dice inside box and the number of the two dices are added together to determine the player to draw a lot. Each lot has an image of a different kind of flower and a

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its earliest state, is also played for divination. Ling Li, "Zhongguo zuizaode shengguan tu-shuo kongjia po hanjian rishu he juguantu yi jianguan cailiao," in *Wenwu*, 2011(05): 68-79.

[268] Needham, Joseph. *Science and Civilisation in China. Vol. 4, Part I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), 328-331.

literary line extolling that flower. The player would read out the inscription and everyone in the party would drink according to the instructions on the lot.

Baochai is the first player, and the tally shows a picture of a peony with the caption "Empress of the Garden" followed by a line from a poem written by the Tang poet Luo Yin 羅隱 (833-910): "Yourself lack passion, yet can others move." (任是無情也動人) There is also a caption on the lot: "leader of all flowers" (群芳之冠) and the drinking instruction:

> All present are drink a cup in your honor, also,
> Because you have preeminence over all the other flowers
> You are entitled to ask anyone present to recite a poem,
> Or tell a joke or sing a song for your entertainment. (SS III. 225)

The drinking commands align with the caption, emphasizing her status of "preeminence over all the other flowers" (*SS* III. 225). Everyone agrees that the poem line and the flower Peony is a good match to Baoyu: "the peony suits you perfectly. What a splendid choice!" (*SS* III. 225) To the audience, Baochai's beauty are like the flower of peony. At one point, Baoyu compared Baochai to the Imperial concubine Yang Yuhuan (楊玉環, 719-756) of the Tang dynasty, whose beauty is also iconized as the tree peony in literary writings of Li Bai (李白, 701-762) and other poets (Chapter 30).

The next player is Tanchun. Before she draws the lot, she wonders: "I wonder what I shall be." (*SS* III:225) The flower image on the lot is "almond blossom" with the caption "Spirit of the Afterglow," followed by the line "Apricot trees make the sun's red pedaled floor." However, the drinking instruction immediately embarrasses Tanchun: "You are destined to make a noble marriage, congratulations! Those present must offer you a cup of wine and drink a cup in your honor!" (*SS* III:226). For this, Tanchun responds: "I think we ought not to play this game, it's really a game for men to play, outside. There are all sorts of objectionable things in the

directions" When others have seen the tally, they raised their cups and drank a toast to Tanchun and said: "what's wrong with the prognostication? We've already got one royal consort in the family, why should we have another? Congratulations!" (*SS,* III: 226)

Tanchun's embarrassment reveals the ambiguity of play: On one hand, everyone playfully takes the result as real ("you are going to make a noble marriage! Congratulations!"), which makes her even more embarrassed. On the other hand, the audience, as well as herself, are well aware that it is just a game and therefore the result should not be taken as real. ("These lots were used for play.) The double consciousness is a product of gameplay, knowing that games provide a safe and ordered cosmos; and no matter what the result of the game is, everyone has the right to treat it in a light-hearted way.

Game scholar Gregory Bateson proposes the concept of metacommunication to understand the mentality of players in games. Bateson described the ambiguity from his observation to the zoo: "The playful nip denotes the bite, but it does not denote what would be denoted by the bite."[269] For Bateson, playing is not just to follow the rules of play, but also to communicate the idea that the "play actions are just play and not something else." [270] This double consciousness sustains the magic circle of the game. Throughout the game, players are constantly treating the result of the game in a serious way, while simultaneously knowing that it is just a game.

The next player is Li Wan. The flower on the lot is winter-flowering plum, with the caption "Beauty of the Snow" (霜曉寒姿), and the literary line "Content by cottage fence to bloom unseen" (竹籬茅舍自甘心), which comes from one line from a poem titled Plum

[269] Quoted in Salen and Zimmerman, *Rules of Play: Game Design Fundamentals*, 370-371.
[270] Quoted in Salen and Zimmerman, *Rules of Play: Game Design Fundamentals*, 371.

Blossom by the Song poet Wang Qi 王淇(?-?).Li Wan's response " isn't that nice" (倒有些意思!) deserves our attention (*SS*, III: 227). For the audience as well as Li Wan herself, the flower as a symbol for her personality is obvious. The poetic line associates Li Wan's temperaments with the famous literati poet Lin Bu 林逋 (987-1028)who idolized the flower. Like the recluse Lin Bu, Li Wan exemplifies the virtue of simplicity and a distaste for vulgarity, sensuality, and vanity. [271]

The next player is Xiangyun and her lot shows a picture of crab apple blossom with the caption "Sweet Drunken Dreamer" (香夢沉酣). The quotation was a line from the poem titled Crab Apple Flower written by Song poet Su Shi 苏轼(1037-1101): "Fear that the flowers at dead of night should sleep" (只恐夜深花睡去). For this, Daiyu teased her: "for "dead of night" should read "on a stone bench" (*SS* III. 228). Daiyu's witty comment refers to Xiangyun's falling asleep on a stone bench after intoxication earlier on the same day. Daiyu' comment points out the numinous coincidence between what was inscribed on the lot and what has already happened in reality. Between the two frames of reference—what the characters know from their past experience, and what the reader reads in the present game play—lies the possibility of formulating what the author means in the design of how the game proceeds. The author has already articulated the numinous aspect of the drinking game through the portrayal of the characters' mental dialogue.

When it is Sheyue's turn to draw the lot, her lot shows an image of a *rosa rubus* with the caption "Summer's Crowning Glory" (韶華勝極) followed with a line from Song poet Wang Qi

[271] Lin Pu is hermit poet of the Song dynasty. Denying all official positions, he lived on the Gushan Island in West Lake in the city Hangzhou, and planted hundreds of plum blossoms around his hatch. He is also a profound lover of crane and named himself: "taking plum as wife and cranes as sons," Tuo Tuo, *Song Shi* (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1977), 13432.

王琪(?-?) "After sweet rose there is no more blooming" (開到荼蘼花事了) (*SS* III. 228). The flower of *rosa rubus*, in the Chinese poetic tradition was recognized to be the last flower to bloom in springtime—"the flower to send farewell to spring." The flower represents the ending of spring, thus also the farewell to one's youth. The instruction makes this motif even more transparent: "all present drink three cups to commemorate the passing of the flowers" (在席各飲三杯送春) (*SS,* III:228). The words of farewell and "the passing of the flowers" casts such an inauspicious feeling on Baoyu that he immediately frowned and hid the card. as a player, Baoyu is too serious and earnest to kill the fun of it. However, as a reader, Baoyu already find what is expressed in the result of the game of chance. If the game of chance reflects the capriciousness of fate, this time, the prediction for that fate is too solemn.

When it is Daiyu's turn, she thought to herself: "I wonder if there are any nice ones left" (*SS* III.228). Daiyu's drinking lot shows the hibiscus flower with the caption "mourner of the autumn moor," with which Daiyu is pleased. The line comes from Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007-1072): "Your own self, not the east wind, is your undoing." The instructions said: "You are to drink a cup of wine yourself, and peony is to take a cup with you" (*SS* III:228).

This time, everyone comments that hibiscus is the right flower for her, just like their comments that the peony is the right flower for Baochai. The flowers, in the Chinese cultural and literary tradition, had been shaped into flower-symbols that are associated with beauties, their appearance, temperaments, airs, and physique. Such flower-symbols are imbued with cultural, sensuous, and sensory meanings. Reading in retrospect, the flower hibiscus associates Daiyu with another figure Qingwen. When Qingwen dies, a maid made up the story that she becomes a hibiscus flower spirit in heaven. To memorize his beloved maid, Baoyu wrote the mourning

poem an Elegy and Invocation to The Spirit of The Hibiscus (Chapter 78).[272] The flower hibiscus is the flower symbol for both the two girls, casting a prediction for Daiyu's early death.

The last player is Xiren and her card shows a spray of peach blossom with the caption "fisherman's lost paradise" (武陵別景) and verse from the Song poet Xie Fangde 謝枋得 (1228-1889): "Peach trees in pink and another spring is here" (桃紅又見一年春). The lines extend beyond the perception capacities of the audience at the game. Readers who read in retrospection, can figure out that that the poem line refers to Xiren's marriage to Jiang Yuhan after the downfall of the family.

The word *zhan* 占 ("to divine") in the name of the drinking game *zhan hua ming (*占花名) also points out the mantic aspect of the ludic activities . The idea of matching a flower to a person is deeply rooted in the Chinese literary motif of "beauties as fragrant plants" (*xiangcao meiren*) that can be traced back to the poet Qu Yuan in the Han. The venerable hermeneutics of this motif has been adopted down through the ages by male literati to match beauties to flowers as an allegorized self-expression of their lament. This influenced a corpus of writing collectedly termed "flower register" (*huapu* 花譜) that started to circulate in the printing market since the late sixteenth century. The writing of "flower register" centers on the courtesans of the time, matching their appearances and persona with certain flowers, usually followed with verse composition, poetic expressions, and the appraisals and biographies. They are tilted variously as

[272] One of the common literary devices in traditional Chinese fiction is to create pairs of characters as doubles for each other. Usually, the minor characters are called reflections or shadows (*yingzi*) of the main character. The technique of shadows is developed to a high degree in *Dream*. For one character, there might be several "doubles." In the novel, Qingwen is a "double" of Daiyu. The two are similar in appearance, physique, and temperament and both of them are iconized as the flower of hibiscus. see David L Rolston, *Traditional Chinese Fiction and Fiction Commentary: Reading and Writing Between the Lines*, 195-211.

pinhua 品花(flower connoisseurship*)*, *Huapu* 花譜(flower register*), hua'an* 花案(cases of flower ranking), and *huabang* 花榜(flower roster). In these connoisseurship texts, flowers are symbols for a *meiren* (beauty)—her physical appearance, fashion, sentiments, airs, virtue, personalities, temperaments and talents. The novel has omnipresent uses of flowers as crucial metaphors or symbols for the girls residing in the garden. As Yu Yingshi said: "flowers are the symbols of the girls in the garden."[273] The drinking game is another variant of the "flower registers" that were popular in the literary world and printing world of the Ming-Qing era, understanding that the flower and the poetic line about that flower, are actually symbols and metaphors for the person who draw the lot with that flower.

However, if it is just a game, why does Tanchun feel embarrassed? And why does Baoyu have such an inauspicious feeling toward the result? Game scholar Gregory Bateson proposes the concept of metacommunication to understand the mentality of players in games. For Bateson, playing is not just to follow the rules of play, but also to communicate the idea that the "play actions are just play and not something else." [274] Throughout the game, players are constantly treating the result of the game in a serious way, while simultaneously knowing that it is just a game.

The metacommunication reflects a cognitive frame that mirrors the concept of the "magic circle" proposed by Huizinga: "all play moves and has it being within a play-ground marked off beforehand either materially or ideally, deliberately or as a matter of course…" [275] Huizinga describes gameplay as a "stepping out of real-life into a temporary sphere of activity with a

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[273] Yu Yingshi 余英時, *Honglou mengde liangge shijie* 紅樓夢的兩個世界 (Taibei:lianjing chubanshe, 1978) , 52; Kiwamu Goyama, "*Honglou meng yu hua* 红楼夢與花," Translated by Chen Xizhong, *Honglou meng xuekan,* (02)2001: 104-135.
[274] Salen and Zimmerman, *Rules of Play: Game Design Fundamentals*, 371.
[275] Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, 10.

disposition all of its own."[276] The "magic circle" refers to the boundary between the game and the real life beyond the game, the distinction of the game from ordinary life. In his important essay "A Theory of Play and Fantasy," Anthropologists Gregory Baterson notes that "play occurs within a delimited psychological frame, a spatial and temporal bounding of a set of interactive messages."[277] For Bateson, the frame of a game communicates to the players that what happened in a game is just a play. Players should treat the result in a way different from that in the real world. For players, the result of the game, i.e. the flower and their interpretation of the literary line on the lot should remain within the game. On one hand, players treat the game as a game, knowing that whatever happen in a game would not have any influence upon their ordinary life ; on the other hand, they also hold great expectation upon the result of the game, hoping that the line on the lot would fulfills their self-reflections, hopes and self-knowledge. Their attitudes in the game are no less earnest than their mental states in drawing a divination stick. The metacommunication of play functions in complex ways. For example, Baoyu' reaction to the line "passing of the spring" implicates that he has taken the words as an oracle unconsciously, even though he is well aware at the same time that "it is just a game." In this case, the "magic circle" that separates gameplay and everyday life totally collapses for him.

Readers of the novel learn how to read the game when they read the novel in retrospect. The novel is renowned for its masterful use of prophecies. These predictions appeared in the form of word games, *shichen* 詩讖 (poem oracles), *tuchen* 圖讖 (illustration as prophecies), *chanji* 禪機 (gāthā), 戲讖 (drama play as prophecies), and *chaizi* 拆字 (character divination), turning the reading into a guessing game between the author and the reader and alluring the

[276] Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, 8.
[277] Gregory Bateson, " A Theory of Play And Fantasy," in *Steps to An Ecology of Mind* (Chicago : The University of Chicago Press, 172), 191.

readers into a endless web of riddles and puzzles. As Wang Ying states: "these devices, being part of the narrative plot, are multi-functional, employed also for character development—to reveal the characters' temperaments and states of mind."[278] Another feature of these prophecies is when and how they appeared in the text: most often they are inserted in amidst of the festive celebrations or the most jubilant occasions, in a way to strengthen the author's deeper philosophical thoughts and understanding of the illusory and transient nature of life.

Readers, when read in retrospect, realize that this party celebration is a turning point in the whole narrative of the novel. After the party, things start to become gloomy. As the "Lord of all flower" in the garden, Baoyu is the person for whom this party is prepared. After the party, the carefree, innocent, and lyrical world of the garden gradually disappeared. Though the party is to celebrate his birthday, ironically, it is also the last party to send farewell to happy time in the garden. The lines on the drinking lots reiterate the poem riddles and the opera arias that Baoyu read and listened in his dream tour to the supernatural realm. Unlike the divine messages wrapped in the poetry riddles that elude Baoyu's comprehension, this time, words on the lot evoke strong ominous feelings from Baoyu. And there is a reason for that as I will explain later.

The prophetic signs in the novel take on many different literary forms and deserve further studies on their own.[279] Here, we should note the difference between the prophetic signs of the omens and the oracular message gained through operations like divinations. As Michael Loewe

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[278] Ying Wang, "The Disappearance of the Simulated Oral Context and the Use of the Supernatural Realm in *Honglou meng*" in *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews* (2005): 146.

[279] To list some Articles on the prophecies in the novel *Dream of The Red Chamber* published in English. Mark Ferrara, "Patterns of Fate in 'Dream of the Red Chamber'" in *Interdisciplinary Literary Studies* 11, no. 1 (2009): 12-31. Ying Wang, "The Disappearance of the Simulated Oral Context and the Use of the Supernatural Realm in 'Honglou meng'" in *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews* (2005): 137-150.

has proposed, omens might be a different category than divination. In his words, "divination comprised a deliberate search by man for the answers to questions and included the artificial production of signs for the purposes. [...] Omens are seen in the phenomena or portents of nature that are obvious to all. And that of sufficient size and strength to demand explanation."[280] In the novel, the blooming of the crab-apple flowers out of the season, just as had happened before Baoyu's loss of his jade, Daiyu's death, and the dilapidation of the garden is such an ill-omen perceived by Tanchun.[281] This kind of omen should be differentiated from the oracles that we see through the drawing of the drinking lots.

The most effective irony in this episode is how players react to the result of the game. When Tanchun feels embarrassed to the literary line and the predictions, her own fate of marrying off to a faraway place is also foreshadowed. When Baoyu understand how to read the words on the drinking lots, he also understand the "mandate of heaven" in its most ludic form. More than a gameplay, the author also employs such a mental consciousness to reinforce narrative development, turning the result of the game into words of foreboding, words of prophecies.

Let us leave aside Cao's maneuvering of the drinking game and follow the evidence on the popularity of the drinking game of lot drawing among people of the time. After the wide circulation of the novel itself, it is not surprising to find that names and references to the novel

[280] Michael Loewe, "China," in *Oracles and Divination,* ed. Carmen Blacker and Michael Loewe, (Allen & Unwin, 1981), 38-39.

[281] This blossoming of the tree out of season is perceived as an inauspicious sign by Tanchun: "this must be an ill-omen. Everything that is in harmony with nature prospers, and things out of season, out of time fade and die. Plants and trees obey a natural cycle. If a tree flowers out of season, it must be an ill-omen" (Chapter 94; *SS* IV, 291).

appeared on the lots for play, and texts of these games were collected, printed and circulated in the book market since the late nineteenth century.

Drinking Games of *Dream of the Red Chamber*

The lots usually start with the characters of the novel, followed by lines of commentaries on the characters and drinking instructions. The earliest textual evidence of the gameplay dated to 1801, in a poem carved on a rock stele. The stele is located in today's East Mountain wall of Park of King Yu's Terrace (Yuwangtai 禹王台) in the city Kaifeng of Henan province[282]:

> Drinking Tallies of the *Red Dream* is hidden among the flowers,
> Players sit randomly and not tired of merry-making
> Those playing guess-fingers hold their fingers back simultaneously
> The elegance of singing popular tunes are envied by Zhou Yu.
> 红楼筹小伴花藏
> 杂坐纷拿不厌狂
> 拇战几人齐敛手
> 风流度曲羡周郎

The character *chou* in the poem indicates that the game mentioned was very likely the drinking game of lot drawing. Although the content of the game is unknown to us, we can find these drinking games in compendiums or anthologies, such as *Compendium of Drinking Game* (*jiuling congchao* 酒令叢鈔, 1878) edited by Yu Dunpei 俞敦培 [283] and the collection *Twig Picking and Elegant Anecdote* (*Zhezhi yagu* 折枝雅故).(Figure 4.1) (Table 4.1) The most sophisticated is one collected in the commentary anthology *Idle Talk of Four Kinds* (痴說四種 *chishuo sizhong*) published by Shenbao guan.

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[282] Ai Lin, "*Honglou meng jiuchou ziliao erze,*" *Honglou meng xuekan,* no.3 1989 :109.
[283] Yu is a devoted reader of the *novel Dream of the Red Chamber*. The *Compendium of Drinking Game* collects 324 drinking games in total. See Dandan Liao, "Honglou renjing jiuling kaolun," *Honglou meng xuekan,* no. 1 (2017): 231-247.

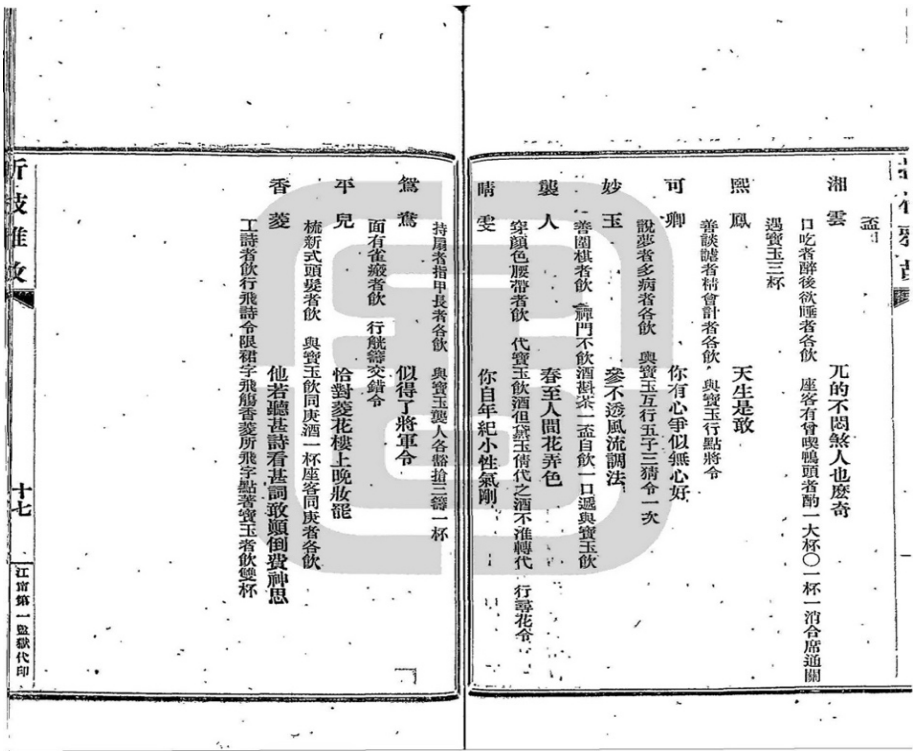

Figure 4.1 The drinking game “vising Daiyu” from the *Zhezhi yagu (Twig Plucking and Elegant Anecdotes*)
From*:* National Library of China

In my research, four of these drinking games have literary lines from *Xixiang ji* as critical remarks on the figural characters. For example, in the drinking game *Honglou renjing (*character-mirror of *Red Chamber)*, the line for the figure Grannie Liu is: "Grannie Liu, no wonder she is a seasoned old madam" (刘老老，真是積世老婆婆) followed with the drinking command: "The player drinks a big cup, the present who are good at storytelling, joke-telling, are waived from drinking, senior and who are from the countryside drinks." (自饮一大杯,能說故事新聞或笑話者免飲. 年長,及從鄉間來者飲.)[284]

[284] The lines for the character Grannie Liu in various versions of drinking games show some discrepancies. See Ma and Ma, *zhongguo jiuling daguan*, 632. 636. 642. These drinking games were originally collected in Yu Dunpei's *Jiuling congchao*, for the fascicle of the pages from *Jiuling congchao*, see *Biji xiaoshuo daguan* 筆記小說大觀, vol. 35. (Jiangsu guangling guji keyin she 1983), 242-248,

The most complex game is the "Goblet Records of *Dream of Red Chamber*" (*Honglou meng gongshi* 紅樓夢觥史) edited by Scholar Lotus Sea (*Lianhai jushi* 莲海居士).[285] There is a total of 121 figures in the game manual. Each character is followed with a line of a basic introduction of the character (social status, familial relationship to the family clan, etc.), a character appraisal (赞曰) written in a poetic couplet. The drinking instructions followed are related to the personalities of the figure and the fictional narrative of the novel. All these 121 characters are categorized into groups : "lord of all flowers" 花主 (1 figure—Jia Baoyu); "Imperial Concubines"宫妃 (3 figures—Jia Yuanchun, Empress Zhou, Empress Wu); "Mandated Women" 誥命 (7 figures); "Ladies In Boudoir" 閨秀 (15 figures); "Wives and Concubines" 姬妾 (10 figures) ; "Maids in the Palace" 宫人 (1 figure, Baoqin, the maids of Yuanchun who became the Imperial Consort); "Maids" 侍史 (53 figures); "Female Actresses"女樂 (9 figures); "Distant Relatives"雜親 (6 figures); "Women of Female Virtue and Morality" 節儀 (7 figures); "Nuns and Monks" 方外(8 figures); and "Immortals and Supernatural Beings" 仙釋 (1 figure, the fairy Disenchantment). The game text, compiled into a commentary anthology, makes one wonder whether such a game was written for actual play or printed for leisurely reading.

Drinking Game in *Shanghai Dust*: Parallel and Mimesis

Drinking games of lot drawing were usually open to anyone who could read the instructions. No sophisticated literary skills are needed in these games and players do not necessarily need to know every detail of the novel. However, compared to the other boisterous

[285] The game manual was originally collected in *Idiot Talk: Four Kinds* (*chishuo sizhong* 痴説四種) published by *Shenbaoguan* and later on included in *The Beautiful Magazine* (*Xianyan zazhi*) issue no.7, 1915. Readers can find the text of the game in Ma and Ma, *Zhongguo jiuling daguan*, 646-675.

games such as thumb-fighting or simple gambling to get staggering drunkenness, drinking games derived from *Dream* do embody a high cultural acumen. In addition to these games collected in the printed materials, we can find the literary description of how players played them in three courtesan novels—*Shanghai Dust* 海上塵天影(Chapter 33), *The Tale of the Orchid Dream* 蘭花夢 (Chapter 16)[286], and *Nine-Tailed Cuckold* 九尾龜 (Chapter 192). In all these novels, the players are the male clients and prostitutes of the high-class brothels.

Another popular game played among courtesans and the male clients are the role-playing games. Some courtesans would name themselves after Jia Baoyu, Lin Daiyu, Qingwen, and the male clients would assume the role of male protagonist of the novel—Jia Baoyu. As Catherine Yeh's research shows, the novel had become a cultural reference point for the courtesans and the urban literati to establish their new identity in the fin-de-siècle Shanghai. The city Shanghai, under this frame of play, was compared to the Grand View Garden in the novel.[287]Shanghai was cast as a dreamscape that offers the players a peaceful and carefree realm cut off from the outside world, much like what a game did for its players. Yeh's reading of the role-play games highlights two dominant themes: "the motif of the dream as counterpart to reality and the notion of play as a light theatrical performance."[288]

In what follows, I read Chapter 33 of the novel *Shanghai Dust* (1896) to look at how players played the drinking games derived from the novel *Dream* and how the author imitates the

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[286] Yisu, *Honglou meng shulu*, 255; Wenbin Hu, *Jiuxiang chanong shuo Honglou* , 117-118.
[287] Catherine Yeh gathered a wide source of materials and cultural activities, such as photographs, interior design, costumes, courtesan competitions, courtesans' names, to show how the players borrowed the themes from the novel to create a world of fantasy apart from that of the reality. Yeh, *Shanghai Love*, 136-166.
[288] Yeh discusses the various other sorts of games (drinking games, card games, verse composition, and poetry contests) as complementary to the role playing game between the male clients and the courtesans. I suspect that players of the drinking games are not limited to the

writing technique from the parent novel to turn the result of the game into a prediction for the future.

The novel was authored by Zou Tao 鄒韜 (1850-1931). Zou Tao was originally from a family of farming from Wuxi.[289] After the Taiping rebellion, Zou moved to Shanghai in 1880 and became a newspaper editor. Zou is a typical modern *wenren* (man of letters) in the fin-de-siècle Shanghai, who earned the salaries through "plowing the pen" in the press industry.[290] He is a frequent visitor to the brothels and authored several courtesan guides—*Guidebooks of the Shanghai city lights* (*Haishang dengshi lu*; 1884), *Flowers from the spring river* (*Chunjiang huashi*; 1886). Building on the theme of his beloved novel *Dream of the Red Chamber*, he wrote a courtesan novel *Shanghai Dust*.

Zou Tao is a devoted reader of the novel. His enthusiasm toward the novel is manifest in his "random notes" about the novel as well as his imitation work *Shanghai Dust* discussed here.[291] He almost modeled his own life and persona after the protagonist of the novel—Jia Baoyu. His pen name, "Attendant of the Xiaoxiang Garden" (*xiaoxiangguan shizhe* 瀟湘侍者), consciously styled himself in the role of Jia Baoyu, since the residence place of the character Lin Daiyu (who have the deepest love and admiration from Baoyu) is called *Xiaoxiang* Garden. As Catherine Yeh observes, he almost "disappeared fully into the role of Jia Baoyu," only lacking the financial privileges which Jia Baoyu enjoyed.[292]

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literati and courtesans of the brothels in Shanghai, a *guixiu* reader might also play these games with friends and relatives in their social parties and gatherings. Yeh, *Shanghai Love*, 166.

[289] Ce Yang, "*Ping haishang chentianying*," in *Mingqing xiaoshuo yanjiu*, no. 3 (1988):191.

[290] Catherine Yeh, "The life-style of four Wenren in late Qing Shanghai," in *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 57, no. 2 (1997): 419-470.

[291] Yeh, *Shanghai Love*, 191.

[292] To Quote Catherine Yeh, "Zou Tao is a fine example of a person who went far beyond taking up the part of Jia Baoyu for a short period and instead nearly merged his real life with the role." Yeh, *Shanghai Love*, 162.

Like the *Dream*, the story begins in the supernatural realm of "Sky of Sentiment" (*Youqing tian* 有情天), with its alternative name "heaven of departing-hatred" (*Lihen tian* 离恨天) where lives the goddess Nüwa, and Du Lanxiang in her Hundred-Flower Palace (*Baihua gong* 百花宫), and the immortal crane (仙鶴). Because the act of the Immortal Crane's filling the "sea of regret" (*Henhai* 恨海) angers the Emperor of Heaven (*Tiandi* 天帝), all the flower fairies as well as the immortal crane are banished and descended to the mortal world. These flower spirits are reincarnated into the talented courtesans. One of the main goals of the group of goddesses is to set up a women's school to promote gender equality between men and women.

Du Lanxiang is reborn as a woman called Wang Yuan. Driven by poverty she, later on, becomes a courtesan by the name of Wanxiang in Shanghai. With the patronage of one rich man, she established the brothel house Garden of Exotic Fragrance and changed her name to Su Yunlan. The brothels–the Garden of Exotic Fragrance (*Qixiang yuan* 綺香園) is, therefore, the counterpart of the supernatural realm, just like the Grand View Garden in the *Dream*.

The parallel and imitation between his novel *Shanghai Dust* and the *Dream* are obvious. We can find similar stories, scenes, and characters taken directly from the parent novel, only the Grand View Garden in the *Dream* is replaced by the Garden of Exotic Fragrance—a courtesan house in the cosmopolitan city of Shanghai. The meta-textual relationship between the *Shanghai Dust* and the *Dream* is made clear from the self-commentary in the beginning chapters of the novel (Chapter 2): "later, there is one person who has read the text, claimed that the stories copied from the *Dream of the Red Chamber*—not a surprise at all" (后来有一个人看见了，說这事抄錄《紅樓夢》的影子，不足为奇).[293]

[293] Tao Zou, *Haishang chentian ying* (Harbin: Heilong jiang meishu chubanshe, 2003), 12.

The Immortal Crane was reborn to be a talented man named Han Qiuhe. Qiuhe is a devoted reader of the novel *Dream of the Red Chamber*. He is portrayed as both a talented poet and modern man who is well educated in western knowledge and technologies. The character is based upon Zou Tao himself, as both Qiuhe's style name "Attendant of the Xiaoxiang Garden" (*xiaoxiang guanshizhe* 瀟湘侍者) and the sobriquet "drinking beggar" *(jiugai* 酒丐) are taken from the Zou Tao's own. The sentimental love story between Han Qiuhe and Su Yunlan is based upon Zou Tao's own story with a Shanghai courtesan.[294] Another young hero is Gu Lansheng. Gu is a double of Han Qiuhe and a figure like Jia Baoyu in the parent novel. The novel has another Daiyu-like figure—Yang Shuangqiong. Yang's family and Gu's family are associated with marital affinity. Qiuhe, was employed by the Gu family as a tutor to Shuangiong and Lanshang.

The courtesans and talented men enjoy a carefree lifestyle in the brothels—a replica of the Grand View Garden amid the modern cosmopolitan city Shanghai. Like the figural characters of the *Dream,* they enjoyed a high-cultural leisurely lifestyle—fishing, playing games, organizing poetry clubs, holding linked-verse competitions, etc. In Chapter 33, they decide to play a drinking game of lot drawing, just like what the characters played in the novel *Dream*. The word "prophecies" (*zhengzhao)* in the title of the chapter—"the immortals recognize the prophecies in Drinking Games of the *Dream of the Red Chamber*" (紅樓令群仙識徵兆) (Chapter 33) nevertheless makes evident that the drinking game gives a foreboding account of the predetermined fates of the players, imitating the drinking game "choosing the flower" in the parent novel.

The game set has 60 ivory sticks (*yaqian* 牙籤). On one side of it, there is a character name from the *Dream* followed by a line from *Xixiang ji*. On the other side of it is inscribed the

[294] Yeh, *Shanghai Love*, 192.

instructions on how to pour the wine and who should drink. The drinking game is one version of the *Honglou renjing* that was collected in various printed sources.(Table 4.1) Two officiants preside over the game and assume the responsibility for maintaining order: Shanbao and Jiehou serve as registers of the rules (*jiuzheng*) for one group of the party and Peixiang reviews the party inside: people who cheat, once discovered or reported by others will receive punishment. [295]

For a Baoyu-like character Gu Lansheng, the character on the lot is Baoyu, followed with the drama line from *Xixiang ji*: "I, the person with sentiment doomed to be hurt by the one of the heartless."(我多情早被無情惱.) The drinking instruction follows: "People who recently earned a degree, married, got a son, or recently leave home, or return home drinks. People who like to talk about *qing* (feelings of sentimentality) drinks." (新科，新娶，新得子，新出門，新回家者飲。好言情者飲).[296] For a Daiyu-like character Yunlan, unsurprisingly, the lot she draws is inscribed with the name Lin Daiyu, followed with the drama snippet: "Leader among noble maidens" (侍女班頭). The other side of the lot has the drinking instruction: "All present celebrate one cup, person who draws the tally of Baoyu toast a drink. People who treasure flowers, easy to fall sick, sentimental, and those who were born in February drinks." (共賀一杯，擎者寶玉者敬酒送飲。惜花，善病，多愁，及二月生者飲.)[297] To the lines on Yunlan's lot, the audience responds: "this lot is really picked marvelously. This is the same word shown on your 'flower register.' Congratulations to you! It looks like you picked up the lot from the container"(你的花榜上也是這句，果然要賀你，恐怕你揀出來的).[298] The word "pick up"

[295] Zou Tao, *Haishang chentianying*, 324.
[296] Zou Tao, *Haishang chentianying*, 327.
[297] Zou Tao, *Haishang chentianying*, 329.
[298] Zou Tao, *Haishang chentianying*, 329.

reveals the meta-dramatic force of the game. Coincidence of this type comes rather cheap. If the players can draw a lot unwittingly, as if the lot is picked up intentionally by the person, against all expectations, that is a more potent irony. Since games of lot drawing are games of chance. They should be unpredictable and no one can choose what she or he randomly draw.

The chapter not only gives us textual evidence of the popularity of drinking games derived from *Dream* and the possible players of them during the late nineteenth century, but also reinforces the numinous aspect of such a game. The relationship between imitation and intertextuality is primarily examined here on two levels. On the one hand, it concerns Zou Tao's imitation of the writing technique learned from the parent work. Emulating the drinking game "choosing the flower" in the parent novel, Zou Tao weaved the drinking game of *Dream* into his imitation novel (of the *Dream)*. Emulating Cao Xueqin's writing technique, he also connects what is written on the drinking lot with the future fate and the personalities of the player who draws the lot. On the other hand, (and this is perhaps far more important,) intertextuality extends itself to us readers, as it directs readers on how we read the drinking game: what is written on the lot are designed intentionally by the author. It is from the novel *Dream* that Zou Tao and readers learn such a writing technique. As a good reader, Zou Tao borrows the technique and used that in his artwork. As readers, we expect that the lots the players draw and the characters inscribed on these lots are "shadows" or prototypes for the players. Thus, for a Qingwen-like character, she must also draw a lot showing the name Qingwen on it.

Such a game of chance can hardly happen in real life because it reverses the fundamental characteristics of a game. Games should create uncertainties. We can immediately appreciate the difference between games played in fictional narratives and games played in real life.

Contingency, Games, and Fiction

The game of chance is a good metaphor for the unfathomable fate. In validating the rhetoric of play, Sutton Smith articulates that, "the historical origins of the rhetoric of fate lie in our primitive desire to control the circumstances of life through magic and payers. There is a broad and ancient history of cultural attempts to exercise such control through divination and magic and luck.[299] The French game theorist Caillois divides all games into four types. Games of chance are referred to as games of *alea* (which is *a Latin* word meaning "dice"). In these games "winning is the result of fate rather than triumphing over an adversary" and "destiny is the sole artisan of victory.[300] A game of chance reflects the "capriciousness of chance." Such a game functions "as a negation of will, a surrender to destiny." [301] In its religious setting, a game of chance is perceived as a wrestle between the mortal being and a supernatural power—a god, deity, or supreme being. One has to respect fate as an "impersonal neutral power with no heart or memory, a purely mechanical effect." [302]

In a way, life itself has more undesired randomness and unpredictability than games. One way to do away with unwanted contingency is games. To quote Gary Morson, "Nothing forbidden by rules can ever happen in a game."[303] Thus, even the game of chance is a reflection of a desire for order: "for nothing in life is clear, since everything is confused from the very beginning, luck, and merit too. Play, whether agôn [competitive] or alea [chance], is thus an attempt to substitute perfect situation for the normal confusion of contemporary life… in one

[299] Sutton-Smith, *The Ambiguity of Play*, 68.
[300] Caillois *Man, Play, Games*, 133.
[301] Caillois, *Man, Play and Games*, 134.
[302] Caillois, *Man, Play and Games*, 46
[303] Gary Morson, *Prosaics and Other Provocations: Empathy, Open Time, and The Novel* (Academic Studies Press, 2013), 226

way or another, one escapes the real world and create another." [304] At least, if one loses in a game of chance, one's losses are limited in the game that does not have real-life consequences.

Another way to do away with unwanted contingency is art. Fiction is a self-regulated world. Like the designer of a game, the author can eliminate whatever does not fit in the artifice. Gary Morson puts this as: "contingency then disappears, at least in principle." [305] Both fiction and games created an ordered cosmos where everything is artificially controlled. [306]

What about a game in a fictional narrative? In such a game, not only the rules of the game are determined, the result of the game (even for a game of chance) is also under the author's control, reflecting his or her authorial design or intention. In ancient history and culture, the attempts to exercise such control must be exercised through divination and magic. In fiction, and the author is now the sole artisan who controlled the fate of the characters. Thus, Cao Xueqin can turn a game of chance not a result of the mechanical result of randomness and contingency, but controlled that games of chance into a revelation of predetermined fate. For players in the novel, the fun of the game depends upon the existence of the unfathomable chance. For readers reading the novel, such a game becomes a reading game between the author and the readers, seeing as a battle on how the reader can best understand the tricks.

The drinking game of lot drawing in the *Dream* and the *Shanghai Dust*, therefore, is a controlled artifact inside another artifact. In both the two narratives, the result of the game, against all expectations and as if by design, serves as a means to the novel's plot. Fiction, thus, turn a game of chance from a manifestation of the "capriciousness of destiny" to the revelation of a predetermined destiny. Unlike other prophecies that eludes the perception of the mortal

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[304] Caillois, *Man, Play and Games*, 135.
[305] Gary Morson, "Contingency, Games, and Wit" in *New Literary History* 40, no. 1 (2009): 134.
[306] Gary Morson, *Prosaics and Other Provocations* (Academic Studies Press, 2013), 225.

characters themselves, the oracular messages wrapped in the framework of gameplay, ironically, evokes an immediate uncanny feeling in the characters.

Social Forms and Divination

Reading the rules of the game, I will explain why this kind of drinking game can elicit numinous and uncanny feelings from the players. There are many kinds of prophetic signs and ominous messages in the novel itself, such as the riddle poems in the supernatural registers that Baoyu read in his dream tour and the opera arias performed by the fairies (Chapter 5), the lantern riddles composed by the young ladies on the Lantern Festival, the Buddhist allegories voiced by Vanitas, and so on. One thing marvelous about prophecies is their esoteric feature. They are elusive and inaccessible to the mortal characters themselves, especially when these oracle poems are produced by the characters themselves. This drinking game, in contrast, simulates players' constant interpretation of the lines about what happened in the past, the present, and the future. A prominent feature of these numinous signs is how they are revealed.

The practice of lot drawing in the drinking game resembles another social practice—drawing a divination stick for knowing what is held in the future. I argue that it is the rules of the game that matters to us. Deep down, the rules of this game are identical to the rules of divinatory acts summarized by Strickmann: the first step of randomization is followed by an interpretation of the signs. It is the pattern or the core procedure of the two distinctive social practices, whether it is a game or a ritual practice that plays a key role. When the two-step operation is manifest in other social activities, the numinous aspect of the social practice can hardly be missed by a mindful reader at present. In chapter 29, members of both the Rong and the Ning families visited Daoist temple of the Lunar Goddess for purification ceremonies. Such a visit is not only a ritual event but also a social outing with a festive atmosphere. For such a ritual ceremony, drama play

is performed not merely to cater to the taste of mortal beings, but more for the audience of the deity. Therefore, the play must be chosen either by drawing lots from a container or shaking tallies from a pot in front of the altar (神前拈了戲) (*HLM*, 411). The three tallies that fall out of the altar in a sequence are the *White Serpent* 白蛇記, *A Heap of Honors* 滿床笏, and *The South Branch* 南柯夢. The first play is the legend of Gaozu (r. 2066-195B.C.) of Han dynasty who rose from a commoner to the emperor after he slays a numinous serpent. The second play is about the glory, wealth, and longevity of Tang general Guo Ziyi: on his 70th-year-old birthday party, all his sons and sons-in-law come to congratulate him and their official ritual tablets are piled on the bed. The last play *The South Branch* tells the philosophical lesson of how the glory and wealth of this mortal world are illusory and transient. Upon hearing the last title, Lady Jia falls into complete silence: "she knows that *The South Branch* likens the world to an ant-heap and tells a tale of power and glory which turns out, in the end, to have been a dream." (*SS*, II: 81) the content of the drama plays and the way they are selected reminded readers as well as the characters (Lady Jia, obviously) the details of drawing oracle sticks: usually the procedures also takes place in a temple; the sticks are placed on an altar, before an image or sculpture of the diety, who serves as the oracle's guardian or patron. The procedures are ubiquitous, as we see in divinatory acts and in the drinking games. There are two essential steps that are repeatable in these social practices. In both the gameplay and the ritual ceremony, we find two essential steps that are repeatable: first, a stick is chosen by shaping the container; second, a line or a title printed on that stick elicits further interpretation. Both the two social performance are not intended to be mantic or divinatory in purpose and function, however, they also provokes strong emotional reactions from the audience.

Another way to understand the "rules" or "pattern" is the concept of "social forms" proposed by Greg Simmel. To quote Simmel, "Geometry considers the form through which matter becomes empirical bodies at all—form, which of course exists as such only in the abstract, just as do the forms of social interaction." [307] Simmel hoped to separate the form of experience from the content of that experience. For Simmel, the content of the daily activities—playing a game, riding a bus, running an errand, preparing for a meal, are not the subjects of attention. Instead, he was interested in the structure or the form of experience— the steps to ride the bus, to run the errand, to prepare a meal, and to play a game. [308] This focus allowed Simmel to stress the form and patterns of daily practices outside the content that more often received attention. Marshall McLuhan makes a similar argument in his fundamental work *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. He treats games as one kind of media, and argues that as media, "the form of any game is of first importance." To McLuhan, the "form" of social practice, directly reflects the world players live in. It is rather the "pattern of a game that gives it relevance to our inner lives, and not who is playing nor the outcome of the game."[309]

The concept of the “social form” allows us to cut through the details or the elaborate procedures of each social practice and thus cross the boundary between mundane and ritual, play and religion. Divinatory proceedings, the drinking game and the selection of the drama performance, are distinctive social practices; however, all three are governed by the same "social form": the first step involves a randomization of choice through manipulation of material objects; the second step is an interpretation of the message inscribed on that material.[310] The conspicuous

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[307] Georg Simmel, *Sociology: Inquiries into the Construction of Social Forms* (Brill, 2009), 27.
[308] McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* ,156.
[309] McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, 156
[310] Strickmann, *Chinese Poetry and Prophecy*, 89.

feature manifest in all three social acts lies not in the physical materials that were used, but in the "social form" that governs the practice itself—the rules of the game, the proceedings of divination, and the way to choose the drama performance.

The error people tend to think of the ritual and play, is to assume that the religious ritual is sacred and serious whereas games are ludic and therefore, are relegated to the mundane. Sutton-Smith draws readers' attention to the shared similarities between religion and the games of chance: "They both provide experiences of 'otherness,' 'alterity,' or 'altered states of consciousness.' And these or similar states of mind are as essential to religious ritual and prayer as they are to game involvement."[311] One might say that games of chance appeal to its players because it allows them to experience similar experiences of "altered states of consciousness", a feeling of alterity and "transcendence" like what they would experience in religious ritual or mantic arts. Games, gives what people have already felt in one situation or experience a new form. [312] Only that games, are a "stepping outside of 'real' life into a temporary sphere of activity with a disposition all of its own."[313] Therefore, the separateness of games from real life –the so-called "magic circle" by Huizinga, allows its players to treat the result of the game in a light-hearted way.

It would be easy to argue that games are fun, while fate-calculation elicits a more serious response from practitioners. Seen as ludic models of mantic performance, drinking games of lot drawing d may lack moral earnestness or didactic teachings. It is just for this reason, that games

[311] Brian Sutton-Smith, *The Ambiguity of Play* (Harvard University Press, 2009), 66-67.
[312] McLuhan compares the relationship between games to real life as: "games, likewise, shift familiar experience into new forms, giving the bleak and the blear side of things sudden luminosity." McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, 156.
[313] Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, 8.

are earnestly played, because what happened in the game remain within the game. If the result of the game is not desirable, at least it happens in a game.

Games model an ideal reality since rules can eliminate whatever undesired in a game. as Gary Morson states: "games model reality. More accurately, they model reality as if it were ordered."[314] A similar argument that McLuhan makes is how players' engagement with games embodied their social lives outside of the game: "games are dramatic models of our psychological lives providing relevance of particular tensions."[315] How should we look at the popularity of the drinking game of lot drawing in traditional Chinese society? Does this game reflect players' inner desire for order and predictability, for their quest for the unforeseeable future, for their desire to configure the invisible world? Do the uncertainties in such a game reflects their perspective about fate, health, marriage, wealth, and other mundane matters? Does it translate people's experience in mantic acts into a new form or a new kind of media?

I propose that there is a more fundamental bond linking between divination practice and the drinking game of lot drawing. When one draws a divination stick from a contemporary temple, the prophetic messages revealed on that stick might have a serious influence on their configurations of the invisible forces. Games appeal to us because their rules can prevent whatever unpleasant out of existence. Another appeal is that the result of the game, however undesired or unwanted, remain within the game. If the oracle texts or the divinatory booklets are not always desirable, at least humans can have a sense of mastery and relief in the realm of game.

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[314] Gary Morson, *Prosaics and Other Provocations* (Academic Studies Press, 2013), 228.
[315] McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, 153.

Games create an ordered cosmos. More than that, in such a controlled world of uncertainties, players can experience similar states of mind as they experience in other situations. Only in games, they know that the result of the game will remain within the game and have no real-life consequence after the game ends. It is the genius of the author to depict the players' altered state of consciousness and unconsciousness during the gameplay. It is also the author's great ingenuity to turn the drinking lot into a divination lot, hinting at the players' fates in a camouflaged manner.

Table 4.1 A list of drinking games of *Dream of The Red Chamber*

Compendium of Drinking Game (*jiuling congchao* 酒令叢鈔 1878)	*Drinking Game of Visiting Daiyu* 訪黛玉令 [316]	Anonymous	24
	"*Drinking games* of *Honglou meng*" *Honglou meng chouling* 紅樓夢籌令[317]	Tan Tiexiao 譚鐵簫 Zhou Wenquan 周文泉	100
	Honglou renjing 紅樓人鏡[318]	Anonymous	64
Twig Picking and Elegant Anecdotes (Zhezhi yagu 折枝雅故)[319]	*Revision of Honglou renjing* 紅樓人鏡[320]	Master of Drinking Mr. Qu 酒家南董曲禅氏	60
	Drinking Verse of Twelve Beauties 十二金釵令[321]		13
Etiquettes	*Spring fills the Red Chamber* 春满红楼令[322]	Anonymous	30

[316] Unlike other drinking games, there is no commentary line to each character, but only instructions to let the players play other games. Ma and Ma, *Zhongguo jiuling daguan*, 472.
[317] Ma and Ma, *Zhongguo jiuling daguan*, 634-638. In Liao's article, Liao Dandan compares three versions of drinking games, the *Honglou renjing* edited by Quchan shi (in *Zhezhi yagu*), the *Honglou renjing* (referred to as Tanben) produced by Tan Tiexiao and Zhou Wenquan and collected in *Jiuling congchao* (Compendium of the drinking game) and the *Honglou renjing* (anonymous) which was also collected in *Jiuling congchao* by Yu Dunpei. All the three versions of drinking games have lines from Xixiang ji as remarks on the figures. She shows that Quchanshi's version is close to the anonymous version, but changes the drinking instructions. 1) Tan's version has an inclusive range of figure in the game, including the older maids, the other male figures, and the supernatural or religious figures. 2) The drama quotations matched to these figures are different from one to another; 3) Tan's version has a drinking order unrelated to the narrative, but focused on the meaning of the drama play. the drinking order in the anonymous version is closely related to the text of the novel. Liao, Honglou renjing jiuling kaolun, 235-237.
[318] Ma and Ma, *Zhongguo jiuling daguan*, 633-634
[319] *Zhezhi yagu* is a compendium of drinking games, among which 17 are drinking games of lot-drawing. Ma and Ma, *Zhongguo jiuling daguan* 780.
[320] Ma and Ma, *Zhongguo jiuling daguan*, 638-644
[321]The characters included in the drinking game "twelve beauties" are not the same ones from the "Supernatural Register of Twelves Beauties" originally seen in the novel. Ma and Ma, *Zhongguo jiuling daguan*, 644-646.
[322] This drinking game is alternatively titled "Flower Gatherings in the Red Chamber" (紅樓芳會)The literary inscription matched each character taken from chapter titles of the novel itself. For example, for the lot of Yuanyang, the line takes from the title of chapter 40: "Yuanyang makes four calls on three domino games in the Painted Chamber." (*SS*. II.9). For the Lot of Lady Jia, the line is "Lady Jia holds two feasts in one day in the Grand View Garden." (*SS* II. 9). This drinking game is played by characters in the novel the *Tale of the Orchid Dream* (chapter 16).

Lingyi 令儀			
Idiot Talk: Four Kinds (*chishuo sizhong* 痴説四種)	"Goblet Records of *Dream of Red Chamber*" (*Honglou meng gongshi* 紅樓夢觥史)	Scholar Lotus Sea 莲海居士	121

For a modern republication of the game rules and inscriptions, see Ma and Ma, *Zhongguo jiuling daguan*, 678.

CHAPTER 5

CARD GAMES: COMMUNITIES OF TASTE

Introduction

How to play a card game based on the narrative of the novel *Dream of the Red Chamber*? What are the game rules? Who designed the game? These are among the questions readily answered by the game manual— *Honglou meng pu* 红楼夢譜[323] (Manual of *Honglou meng* Card Game), authored by Sanran Zhuren 三然主人, from Qiantang (today's Hangzhou) of Zhejiang province. The manual was published in a booklet *Pengzan Yaju* 朋簪雅聚 (*Friends and Beauties in an Elegant Gathering*, 1895) and published in lithography by a printing house in Shenyang.

This manual shows us how sophisticated readers of the novel reinvented the popular *ma que* (precedent of today's mahjong) game by replacing the conventional game rules with reading knowledge of the novel. In this chapter, I treat the text of *Honglou*

[323] The character *pu* 譜 in the title of the card game usually means lists and registers in a certain order. It is not a transparent term to translate. I translate *pu* into "manual" for the title to indicate that the lists of entries and registers in *Honglou meng pu* are rules for play. Another work titled *Honglou meng pu* is collected in *Xianqing xiaolu* 閒情小錄(Idled Record of Leisurely Pursuits, 1877) by Shouzhi 壽芝 (?–?) . This is a list of figures, material objects and architectural items organized into 26 categories, such as the poetry clubs, the gardens and the mansions, the doctors, the eunuchs, and Daoist nuns, etc. See Wang Dan, "Qingdai *Honglou meng* pulu yanjiu," (master's thesis, Yangzhou University, 2016), 20-21. An online fascism of *Xianqing xiaolu* can be found at: https://s.shuge.org/xqxlu, assessed August 30, 2020. The text of *Honglou meng pu* (1895) under discussion in this chapter is from the photocopy of book *Pengzan yaju* collected in the National Library of China. The full version of the text in Chinese can be found in the appendix of this dissertation.

meng pu as a piece of commentary writing on the novel. Reading the textual fabrics and page layout of the manual, I contend that *Honglou meng pu* is an unconventional and novel "kind" of fiction commentary in the unusual format of game rules. Such a game text was designed by and for the elite readers of the novel in the lower Yangzi delta in the last decade of the nineteenth century.

Honglou meng pu is a long list of game rules divided into four parts. This manual shows us how sophisticated readers of the novel reinvented the popular card game of *ma que* by rewriting the rules of combining similar dominos or cards into groups with character cards of the novel. These game rules, displayed in its typographical layout and textual format, can alternatively be read as an unconventional and novel kind of commentary writing and character evaluation for its own sake. My analysis demonstrates that *Honglou meng pu* added a new and fanciful dimension to the popular card game of *ma que* (麻雀 hemp sparrow) by borrowing motifs, themes, and main narrative plots from the novel *Dream of the Red Chamber*.

In each entry of game rules, a verbal phrase or caption is followed with a line of character names, indicating the character cards needed to form such a suit in the game. On the other hand, the verbal phrase either provides a remark on the characters or highlights a particular episode related to these characters. Thus, *Honglou meng pu* compresses a large amount of information about the designer's reading of the novel into the design of the game rules and the social practice of gameplay. It must be acknowledged that the decoding and mastering of the game rules require a reader's intimate knowledge of the novel. To a non-reader of the novel, the manual leads him or her to nowhere. *Honglou meng pu* is, for readers "in the know."

The content of *Honglou meng pu* is much more complex than its popular counterpart of card games. Reading the game rules, we can get a glimpse of the summary of the narrative plot,

the personalities of the 43 characters, the supernatural framework of the novel, and the preordained destinies of characters, as well as the various social gatherings and leisurely activities that take place in the Garden. Its literariness and exquisite taste in writing invite readers to read it alternatively as a commentary text more than practical guidance for actual play. To a certain extent, the appeal of *Honglou meng pu* is predicated on this intertwinement between game texts as commentary writing and the playing community as an otherwise reading community.

Honglou meng pu shows us how late Qing readers of the novel articulate their literati sensibility by turning popular gambling game rules into refined literary writing and turn a card game into a competition of reading between readers . The game manual embodied the individual creativity and literati sensibility of these cultural elites at the turn of the century. I argue that *Honglou meng pu* crosses the boundary between gaming and reading.

Card Games in Imperial China

Both the playing cards and dominos in Chinese are called *pai* (literarily meaning a plaque). Both the card games (*zhipai*) and domino games (*gu pai* "bone plaques" or *ya pai* "ivory plaques)" bear money-suits symbols on them. [324] The earliest mentioning of a card game named

[324] The historical information on the origins and history of Chinese games of dice, domino and card in this paper refer to the research by Andrew Lo, whose research on the ancient art of Chinese games are the well-informed, erudite and informing. For the game of *ma que* and *ma diao,* see Andrew Lo, "The late Ming game of *ma diao*" in *The Playing Card: Journal of the International Playing Card Society* 29 (2000): 115-136. For an introduction to Chinese card games, see Andrew Lo, "Dice Dominoes and Card Games in Chinese Literature: A Preliminary Survey," in Frances Wood (edi.), *Chinese Studies* (British Library Occasional Papers, London: the British library, 1988), 127-34. Andrew Lo, "Amusement Literature in Some Early Ch"ing Collectanea," In Willard J. Peterson, Andrew Plaks, and Ying-shih Yu (ed.), *The Power of Culture: Studies in Chinese Cultural History* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1994), 275-303. For the name of *yezi xi* (games of leaves) and what it referred to from Tang dynasty to late imperial period, see Andrew Lo, "The Game of Leaves: An inquiry into the origin of Chinese playing cards," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of*

Yezi xi (games of leaves) appeared in the year 1294.[325] During the late Ming (1368-1644) and Qing periods, the most popular card game was *ma diao* 馬掉 (horse losing a leg), which used forty money-suited playing cards. The popularity of the card game among the general populace and literary elite class is evidenced in the many writings on it by famous men of letters of its time. For example, Pan Zhiheng 潘之恆 (1556-1622) has written *Yezi pu 葉子譜* (Manual of Games of Leaves) and *Xu yezi pu* 續葉子譜 (Sequel to Manual on Games of Leaves).[326] Feng Menglong's 冯夢龍 (1574-1646) manual of card game *Paijing* 牌經(Classics of Cards) and *Ma diao jiao li* 馬吊腳例(Rules of the *madiaojiao* Game) are rules of the card games of the time.[327] Wang Daokun 汪道昆(style name Wang Nankun) (1525-1593), a literati-scholar interested in vernacular literature, theater and publishing, once designed and published a set of "*shuqian ye pu*" 數錢葉譜(Counting Money Playing Cards), a card set illustrated with figures from the *Water Margin*, and a set of playing cards of "*chusao pin*" (楚骚品) illustrated with characters from the *"Nine Songs"* and *"Encountering Sorrow."*[328]There is a clear connection between the drama performance at Kunshan and the emergence of playing cards as pointed out by modern scholar

London (2000): 389-406. For a general introduction on card games and domino games, see Andrew Lo, "China's passion for *pai*: playing cards, dominoes, and mahjong," in *Asian Games: The Art of Contest* (Asia Society, 2004), 216-231.

[325] Andrew Lo, "The Game of Leaves: An Inquiry into the Origin of Chinese Playing Cards." *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 63.3 (2000): 389.

[326] Andrew Lo locates the two manuals as the earliest extant manuals on card games, see Andrew Lo, "Dice dominos and card games in Chinese literature: a preliminary survey," 130.

[327] Andrew Lo, "Dice dominos and card games in Chinese literature: a preliminary survey," 130.

[328] Lo, "Games of Leaves," 397. For a comparison of Chen Hongshou's Venerating Antiquity Cards (*bogu yezi*) with that of Wang Daokun's *shuqian ye pu*. See Tamara Heimarck Bentley, "Authenticity In A New Key: Chen Hongshou's Figurative Oeuvre, Authentic Emotion, and The Late Ming Market," (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2000), 176-79.

Bentley Tamara and Wan-go Weng.[329]

As active members of the charmed circle in the lower Delta region, these writers were acquainted with each other and passionate devotees to theaters, poetry parties, literary clubs, pleasure quarters, and book compilation; very often their design of playing cards combines connoisseurship taste of theater, fiction, courtesans, and luxury woodblock prints.[330] For example, the playing cards *Yuan Ming xiqu yezi* 元明戲曲葉子(games of leaves of dramas of Yuan and Ming periods), printed in Huizhou during Wanli era, has a set of 26 cards. Each card bears an illustration of a scene derived from dramas of the Yuan and Ming periods, including some drama plays that are not extant anymore.[331]

Some of the playing cards combine personhood evaluation and connoisseurship taste of beauties. For example, playing cards of *Yandu jipin* 燕都妓品 (A Classification of Courtesans of the Capital) compiled by Binghua mei shi 冰華梅史 (the historian of plum blossom in snowflakes) have one famous courtesan on each card, annotated with a title from the civil service examination, a line of poetry, allusion to texts such as *Shishuo xinyu* (A new Account of Tales of the World) as well as drinking instructions. [332] (This set of playing cards were categorized under the corpus of "flower register" in later times.) Most often these playing cards have drinking

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[329] Tamara Bentley, "Authenticity and the Expanding Market in Chen Hongshou's Seventeenth-Century Printed Playing Cards." *Artibus Asiae* 69, no. 1 (2009): 159.

[330] Bentley observes that another feature of illustrated playing card in late Ming period is the "combination of luxury pints and theater connoisseurship." see Tamara Bentley, "Authenticity and the Expanding Market in Chen Hongshou's Seventeenth-Century Printed Playing Cards." *Artibus Asiae* 69, no. 1 (2009): 160.

[331]The set of playing cards *Yuan ming xiqu yezi* was printed in late Wanli period in Anhui. Fu Xihua, a scholar in woodblock illustrative art, judges that this set of cards precedes Chen Hongshou's one about two decades. See Ma and Ma, *Zhongguo jiuling daguan,* 323.

[332] Andrew Lo also locates three sets of playing cards that embrace connoisseurship on courtesans on them. These connoisseurship texts later on, are collected in compilations such as *Shuofu sanzhong*. Lo, "Literati Culture in Ming Dynasty Drinking Games, 255.

instructions as well, indicating its alternative use as cards for drinking games (as discussed in chapter 4). [333] Allusions and figures on these cards might include historical figures, the scholars in the civil service examinations, figures from drama plays such as *Western Wing*, famous courtesans of the time, historical figures, and characters from fiction like *Water Margin*[334] and *Journey to the West*. [335] This shows that the medium of playing cards incorporated literati scholars' judgment and evaluation on a vast range of subjects, including fictions and drama plays of the time, beauties, historical figures as well as scholars who gained the highest degree in civil service examination.

Despite the illustrative matters, all these cards bear money-suit symbols for easy identification. Thus, they were open to anyone who could recognize the insignia. Andrew Lo argues for the inclusiveness of different social classes as possible players of these games: "our cards become a case of *yasu gongshang*, where the refined and the common join in the appreciation of the refined, and it is the celebration of an open literary culture that is particularly refined."[336]

The passion for card games only rose to a new height during the Qing dynasty. To quote the doggerel written by the literati Liang Zhangju 梁章鉅(1774-1849):

> The capital has the greatest number of private secretaries, but if they are to establish themselves, they must have some talent and reach a certain moral standard. Someone

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[333] Andrew Lo provides a translation of the drama play name on these playing cards and the respective money-suit value. See Lo, "Literati Culture in Ming Dynasty Drinking Games," 274-275.

[334] The majority of the playing cards during the Ming-Qing period is printed with figures from *Water Margin*. A regular set of playing cards for the game *ma diao* during the Ming period consists of forty cards, and divided into four monetary suits: the tens of myriads suits (*shiwan*); the myriads suits (*wan*); the strings of cash suit (*suozi*); and the single coin suit (*wenqian*). Lo, "Games of Leaves," 405.

[335] Andrew Lo listed some cards for drinking and card games published during the late Ming period, see Lo, "Literati Culture in Ming Dynasty Drinking Games," 257-259.

[336] Lo, "Literati Culture in Ming Dynasty Drinking Games," 280.

made up the following "Ten Numbers Tune": "a good hand in calligraphy. Second rate talent. Able to hold three catties of wine. Clothes of the four seasons. Encirclement chess (*weiqi*) with a handicap of five pieces. Six acts of *kunqu* opera. Seven-character doggerel verse. Eight cards of the *ma diao* game. Grade nine official ranks. Amiable nature ten out of ten.[337]

As Andrew Lo noticed, some of the manuals on card games were more than rules for play; they provide paraphernalia information such as gradings of the players, suitable locations, food, and equipment. This shows that card games had become "a refined cultural activity with a sophisticated protocol, to be played in elegant surroundings and with expensive accouterments."[338]

Indeed, the card game was popular among all social classes, including Manchu princes, members of the imperial family, and scholars involved in the *Siku quanshu* (*Collectanea of The Four Treasuries*) project.[339] The description of card games is abundant in Ming-Qing fiction. Andrew Lo identifies 22 fictional works that contain scenes of a card game, including *Jin ping mei cihua* (c. 1592) and some sequels to the *Dream of The Red Chamber—Xu hong lou meng* (1799), *Honglou meng bu* (1819) and works influent by *Dream—Jing hua yuan* (1832), *Pin hua bao jian* (1940), *Qing lou meng* (1978), *Hai shang fan hua meng* (1903), etc.[340]

In the novel *Dream of the Red Chamber*, the game was an enjoyable pastime for both the aristocratic class and the lower class. Grandmother Jia, Xifeng, and Yuanyang once played the game. The smart Yuanyang has to give a signal to Xifeng to let grandmother Jia win the game.

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[337] The doggerel is written by Liang Zhangju and collected in his *Guitian suoji* 歸田瑣記 (Random Jottings after Retirement). The paragraph is translated by Andrew Lo. See Lo, "China's Passion for *Pai*," 227-228.
[338] Andrew Lo, "China's Passion for *Pai*," 228.
[339] For example, members of the imperial family Yongzhong (1735-1793), a great grandson of Kangxi had three poems on cards. Yongrong (1744-90), son of Emperor Qianlong has also left four poems entitled Card Games. Lo, "China's Passion for *Pai*," 228.
[340] Lo, "Dice, Dominos and Card games in Chinese Literature: A Preliminary Survey," 131-132.

While the card game was a leisurely entertainment for them, it can easily turn into a gambling game among the lower social class. In Chapter 73, when Lady Jia heard about a fight that broke out over the card games during the night shift among the servants, she broke out in anger. "She orders the dice and playing cards to be collected together and burnet, the money from the banks be confiscated and divided up among the other servants. And she sentenced the principal offenders to receive forty strokes of the heavy bamboo, to be dismissed, and never to be employed by the family again. The other was to receive twenty stokes, lose three months' pay, and in the future to be employed in cleaning out the latrines." (Chapter 73, *SS* III: 440) Grandma Jia's punishments echo many Ming loyalist and puritanical scholars' point of view. On the one hand, members of the elite played the game and produced game manuals or playing cards; on the other hand, some members of the same elite class decried the reckless gambling that commoners engaged in..[341]

Moreover, playing cards as printed ephemerals that are small, portable, and illustrated were also suitable objects for print production. During the late Ming, the most famous set of playing cards in woodblock printing was Chen Hongshou's 陳洪綬(1598-1652) *Shuihu yezi* (Playing Cards of *Water Margin* Characters on the Games of Leaves), a set of forty character cards, each painted with portraits of bandits from the novel the *Water Margin*.

A regular set of playing cards for *ma que* and *ma diao* consists of forty cards and divided into four monetary suits: the tens of myriads suits (*shiwan*); the myriads suits (*wan*); the strings of cash suit (*suozi*); and the single coin suit (*wenqian*). [342] On the playing cards of Chen Hongloushou's *Shuihu yezi*, we see the money suit printed on the top and the character's name

[341] The Qing law code issued in 1740 officially banned gambling and list the game of *ma diao* in two of them. Lo, "China's Passion for *Pai*," 227-229.
[342] Lo, "China's Passion for *Pai*," 219.

printed vertically on the right (Figure 5.1). To play a card game with this set of cards, one only needs to recognize the money suit symbols without any knowledge about the stories or figures printed on the cards. Chen's artistic portraiture of the heroes and heroines from the popular fiction *Water Margin* rendered this set of playing cards a connoisseurship print object for visual appreciation. However, *Honglou meng pu* are not the ephemeral printed objects of playing cards. It is a game manual consisting of rules in linear lines without any illustration or indication of what the playing cards look like. While Chen's playing cards are woodblock prints of visual art,[343] the manual of *Honglou meng pu* is a text of literary commentaries on the novel *Dream of the Red Chamber*.

Reading the textual fabrics and page layout of *Honglou meng pu*, we find that we can read the list of verbal phrases alternatively as either fiction commentaries and game rules. The

Figure 5.1 Playing Card of Water Margin (水滸葉子) by Chen Hongshou
From: http://www.wdl.org/en/item/17873.
Assessed on August 25th, 2020

[343] Chen's woodcut playing cards depicting personages from the novel the water margin occupies a blank leaf, and their poses are strongly reminiscent of stage performance. See Yu Hang Li and Judith T. Zeitlin, *Performing Images: Opera in Chinese Visual Culture* (Smart Museum of Art, 2014), 68.

game rules turn readers' reading knowledge into rules for play and converted rules into fiction commentaries. Writing such a game manual will certainly delight elite readers of the novel. One may wonder: how to play the game? Who designed the game and for whom? How to read the game manual?

Who Designed the Game?

In the preface to the book *Pengzan Yaju*, Wuqiang Shanmin 吴羌山民 gives a brief introduction of the author of the game manual—Sanran zhuren:

> Sanran Zhuren is a descendant of nobles in Qiantang. He held *juren* degree and later on entered officialdom. He earns a high reputation in his governance and talented and virtuoso in many fields. Whenever he is relieved from official documents, he likes gathering friends for playing and indulging in artistic pursuits, passing the time in "matters of refinement."[344]
> 三然主人者，钱塘華胄也，名孝廉，出宰東。都歷治有聲，博學多才，恆於判牘餘暇集眾而遊藝，假韻事以消閒.[345]

The first page of *Honglou meng pu* lists four collaborators for the game manual and indicates to us the fellow aficionado cohort of this design (Figure 5.2). Despite our lack of biographical information of Sanran zhuren, we are told that he was a literati-scholar of a decent pedigree ("*huazhou"*華胄*)*, who received a good education and obtained an official post. As a collaborative project, the manual is re-edited by Yuyuan Zhuren 豫園主人 (Master of the Garden Yu), co-edited by Ziyi Jushi 自怡居士 (Self Pleasant lay Buddhist) and proofread by

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[344] The direct translation of *yunshi* is "matters of refinement" and it usually refers to poetry gatherings. In the Qing dynasty, it also has a connotation of "romantic encounters," especially with male actors. Wu Cuncun suggests that it may be variously translated as "refined pursuits," "romantic anecdotes," "romantic adventures," "diversions," and "beautiful moments." In the context of this preface, I do not see any connotation or direct indication that *yunshi* here hints at homosexual romantic encounters. See Cuncun Wu and Stevenson Mark, "Speaking of Flowers: Theatre, Public Culture, and Homoerotic Writing in Nineteenth-Century Beijing," in *Asian Theatre Journal* 27, no.1 (2010): 114

[345] Yisu, *Honglou meng shulu*, 257; *Pengzan yaju*, juan1, 1a-2b.

Zhongju Jushi 種菊居士(Chrysanthemum Planting lay Buddhist). Ziyi Jushi is the style name of Fei Yin 費寅 from Haining, about 46 miles away from Sanran Zhuren's native place of Qiantang. Despite the anonymous status of the other three contributors, their native places map a geographical area that includes the most flourishing cities in the lower Yangzi delta; cities like Hangzhou (Qiantang) and its nearby cities of Suzhou, Yangzhou, and Nanjing, were celebrated both as centers of stylish contemporary fashions and past literati culture.

The four collaborators and initiators of the project indicate their collaborative nature of the design of the game rules. Always played to that audience of like-minded peers, *Honglou meng pu* reenacted on the page the camaraderie and refined literary taste of the literary clique.

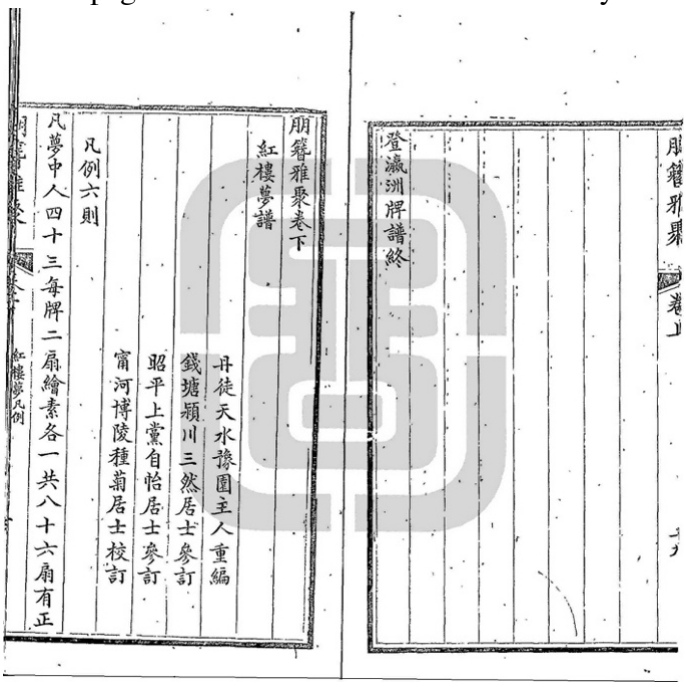
朋簪雅聚卷下
紅樓夢譜
丹徒天水證園主人重編
錢塘顆川三然居士參訂
昭平上棠自怡居士參訂
甯河博陵種菊居士校訂
凡例六則
凡夢中人四十三每牌二扇繪素各一共八十六扇有正
登瀛洲牌譜終

Figure 5.2 Front matter of *Honglou meng pu* 紅樓夢譜 in *Pengzan yaju* 朋簪雅聚 (1895)
From: National Library of China, Beijing

Writing and circulating the game rules in print reflected and sustained a belletristic social community. Wuqiang Shanmin goes on to elaborate the *raison d'etre* of the game manual:

> The reason why Sanran Zhuren wrote the game manual was that the gambling games nowadays are shallow, vulgar, and lack "taste" and therefore not worth encouraging. Therefore, he changed and deleted some rules, maintaining the basics, and modifying its forms, in order to refresh the ears and eyes. The book is divided into two volumes. The game of *Dream of the Red Chamber* is based on an existing one. Sanran zhuren added and deleted part of the rules for perfection…Reading the manuals can refresh one's mind and eyes, and practicing the games can benefit one's spirits and intelligence. The games are fascinating, pleasurable, and interesting for play. The game cannot be compared with the boisterous and bustling game of "bronze flag" (*tongqi*),[346] "plaque nine" (*paijiu*)[347], and alike. It shares similar rules with the popular *ma que* game, however, it multiplies the contrivances and thoughts…
> 三然之意，以為近日博戲之具，俚淺匙味，不足鼓之，乃化而裁之，通而變之，以新耳目焉，書分上下兩卷，紅樓悉仍舊貫，稍增損之… 觀之可以曠我心目，習之可以益人神智引人入勝趣味莫窮。較之呼盧喝雉，銅旗牌九之喧嘩紛雜不得同年而語矣。大意與今同行之麻雀相同而思緻倍之…[348]

Wuqiang shanmin points out: 1) the superiority of Sanran Zhuren's design over the contemporary popular card game like "bronze flag" 铜旗 and "plaque nine," 牌九;2) the manual can be enjoyed both as a text for reading (*guanzhi* 观之) and instruction for playing (*xizhi* 习之); 3) The emphasis on the refined taste marks the edge of the cultural capital of readers and players of this game over the gambling populace. The preface suggests that Sanran Zhuren was not merely publishing a list of game rules for the sake of popularizing a new game; rather, it was to display his playfulness, cleverness, ingenuity, literary sophistication, and literati taste in writing and playing.

Therefore, the manual translates the refinement, literati taste, and connoisseurship gesture of cultural elites into the game rules and it provided sophisticated protocols for like-minded

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[346] *Tongqi* ("bronze flag"铜旗) was played in the nineteenth and at least the early twentieth centuries. The game could be played with either cards or dominoes with a deck of 105 cards/dominos. See Lo, "China's passion for *pai*," 224.
[347] *Paijiu* (domino nine 牌九) is another popular domino game of thirty-two pieces. See Lo, "China's passion for *pai*, 223.
[348] Yisu ed., *Honglou meng shulu*, 257; Sanran zhuren, *Pengzan yaju*, juan 1, 1b-2a.

readers in a communicative play. While the manual itself provides rules for playing a card game, the motivations of the contributors are oriented more towards a mutual acknowledgment achieved through the "resonance" of sharing the same literary taste, wit, and creative energy towards literary reading and cultural playing. In this sense, the booklet underscores the literati identity and social standing of its designers and players in this social chaotic era and marks their high-cultured way of life that is over or about to be over. Especially, the character *zan* 簪 (hairpins) in the title of the booklet *Pengzan Yaju* indicates that the game players might include women readers as well.[349]

How to play the game

The way the game is played is similar to the "*ma que"* 麻雀(hemp sparrow) game popular of the time, which is precedent for the tile game known as *ma jiang* 馬將(hemp generals or horse generals) or mahjong in its English approximation. However, instead of simply recognizing the insignia of tiles (*tiao* 條), circles (*bing* 餅), or myriad (*wan* 萬) on a mahjong domino, one needs to understand the epithets and captions listed in the manual. The epithets and the verbal phrases allude to classical texts such as *Shipin* 詩品 (An Evaluation of Poetry) by Zhong Hong 鍾嶸 (c. 465-518), *Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語 (A New Account of Tales of the World) by Liu Yiqing 劉義慶 (403-444), *Qingshi leilue* 情史類略 (*Anatomy of Love: Categories and Sketches*) by Feng Menglong's 冯夢龍 (1574-1646) and classical lyric and

[349] Another game manual-*Games of Leaves of Dream of the Red Chamber* (紅樓夢葉戲譜 *Honglou meng yexipu*) was published in 1915. It was authored by Xu Wanlan 徐畹蘭, a female *guixiu* writer from Deqing in Zhejiang province. Many of the game rules in *Honglou meng pu* can also be found in Honglou meng yexipu. This indicates that card games of *Dream of the Red Chamber* had already become popular among the elite class of both genders in the lower Yangzi river before 1895. For a modern transcription of *Honglou meng yexipu*, see Wenbin Hu, *Jiuxiang chanongshuo Honglou*, (Shanxi jiaoyu chubanshe, 1998), 382-390.

poetry.

The game manual starts with the "general principles six entries" (*fanli liuze* 凡例六則). According to the "general principles," each set of playing cards has forty-three character-cards and two sets are used for the game. A total of eighty-six cards were distributed to four players. Like the game of mahjong, one player serves as "the East" (in the language of the game rules—"stays awake"醒), and the other three "fall into a dream" (*rumeng* 入夢). In the first round of play, "the East" has twelve cards to start with, and the other three players each have eleven cards. In each round, the players normally pick one card from the pile and then discard a card from the hand. The game aims to create sets by discarding and picking an equal number of cards. Four sets are needed to claim a winning hand. However, if one has twelve cards of the suit "twelve beauties" (十二釵) or "twelve maids" (瑤池侍女), one claims a winning hand straight with no need for more suits.

The game rules make sense very easily to a mahjong player[350]; however, instead of simply recognizing the insignia of circles, tiles, or simple characters on a *mahjong* domino, one needs to decode the lines of captions, epithets, and verbal phrases into rules of the game. The first list of (*zhengse* 正色) categorizes all the characters into groups, each annotated with an epithet, a sobriquet,, and a verbal phrase; the second list *qise* 奇色 summarizes the supernatural narrative and the pre-ordained fates of the character. What is more challenging is the third list "Elegant Gatherings in Prospect Garden" (*daguan jiaxing* 大觀嘉興), and the fourth list "Sentiments in

[350] A general rule to play today's mahjong game: one has 14 tiles in the hand. A mahjong is made up four sets and one pair. A pair is two identical tiles. A set can either be three identical tiles, or a run of three consecutive numbers in the same suit.

the Dreams" (*mengjing xianqing* 夢境閒情). This is a total of 48 entries of combination rules based on the many social gatherings and entertaining activities participated by the many characters in the Prospect Garden. The rules are written in a high literate register and tense with literary allusions. Comprehension of the rules of the game requires an erudite reading knowledge of the novel and learning in classical texts. Memorizing the game rules without any prompt on the cards is impossible for any game player, as I would argue later in this chapter, the manual is oriented more for literary appreciation than for pragmatic playing.

Game Rules as Commentary Writing

The first list of game rules is titled "*zhengse shisan zhong"* 正色十三种 (principle color, thirteen types of combination rules). In each entry, a line of an epithet of *qing* is followed with another line of a four-character caption and the third line of character names, indicating the combination of character cards for a suit. [351] (Figure 5.3) My analysis shows that: 1) the *qing* epithets followed with character names are a simulacrum or an attempted rewriting of the *qingbang* (roster of names ranked according to *qing* 情榜) or the *huanbang* (mysterious roster 幻榜), hinted in the commentary remarks in the Zhiyan zhai 脂硯齋(Red Inkstone Studio) manuscript copies of the book[352]; 2) The epithets of *qing* is a cliched literary term used in fiction composition and taxonomy during Ming-Qing period; 3) The three-tier grading system applied in

[351] There is a total of ten *qing*-epithets, annotated with upper color, middle color and lower color in smaller font. In the online digital project (http://scalar.usc.edu/works/honglou-meng-pu-1/-34?path=-34&), one can see all the epithets are tagged by different characters and the visualization show the connections of these character cards.

[352] The commentary for the early manuscripts of the novel contains remarks signed with as many as ten different names. Most of them are by Zhiyan Zhai (Red Inkstone Studio) or Jihu Sou (Old Tablet). The identity of these commentators and their exact relationship to Cao Xueqin is not clear. Zhiyan zhai is also the name appearing in the book title of these manuscripts (*Re-commentary on the Story of Stone by Red Inkstone Studio)*. The studio name becomes the general name referring to the group of commentators of the manuscript copies.

the hierarchy ranking of characters (upper color 上色, middle color 中色 and lower color 下色) harks back to the celestial registers of "Twelve Beauties in Jinling" (Register Main, Register Supplementary I and Register Supplementary II) stored in the supernatural realm of the novel. Again, the three-tier grading system was a constant *topos* in the literary repertoire that dated back at least to the Six Dynasties.[353]

In *Honglou meng pu*, an excerpt for the three immortals was named as "wandering immortals" (leading roles) (散仙 引):[354] Buddhist mahasattava impervioso (*mangmang dashi* 茫茫大士), Taoist illuminate mysterioso (*miaomiao zhenren* 渺渺真人), and fairy Disenchantment (*jinghuan* 警幻), all the rest of forty mortal characters are categorized into groups. Each group starts with an epithet containing the character *qing*, a caption or verbal phrase, and a list of

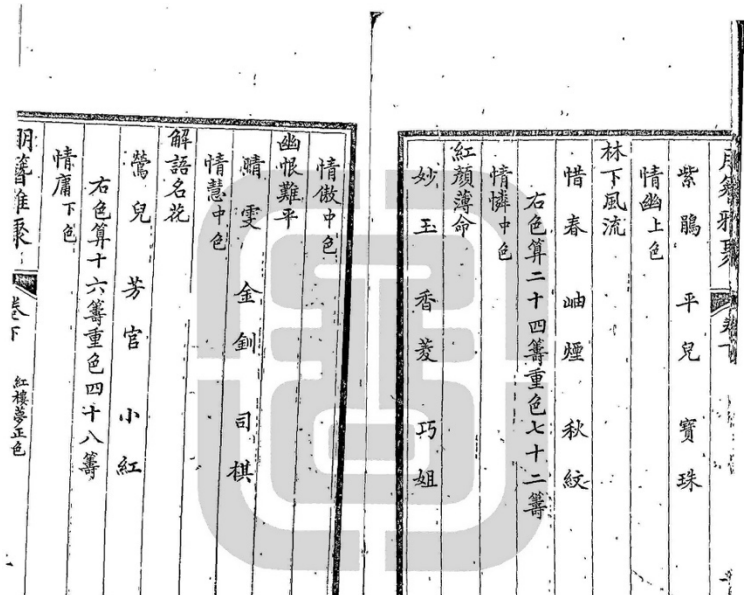

Figure 5.3 One page from Honglou meng pu 紅樓夢譜
From: Photocopy from National Library of China

[353] Stephen Owen, "Zhong Rong's preface to 'Grades of Poets," in *Early Medieval China: A Sourcebook*, Wendy Swartz, Lu Yang and Choo Jessey, eds. (Columbia University Press, 2013), 287-292.
[354] *Sanxian* usually means the immortals not bearing an official title in the supernatural realm.

character names, suggesting the rules for play: any three character-cards in the list can form a suit.

This classification of characters with a character decree of *qing* reminds us of the remarks by Zhiyan Zhai 脂硯齋(Red Inkstone Studio). At one point, Zhiyan zhai mentions:

> "Later I came across the following in the 'final roster of *qing*': Baoyu is "feeling not feeling," Daiyu is "feeling feeling." These epithets are naturally an assessment of their perversity and obsessiveness, and these summary judgments too are illogical and paradoxical, superb indeed!"[355]

In the interstices of various points through the text, Zhiyan zhai suggests that in the final paper of the original manuscript, there exists a roster to rank the major characters. From the above paragraph, we know that Baoyu stands on top of the list with the comment—*qing buqing* 情不情 and Daiyu follows him with her epithet of *qingqing* "feeling feeling" 情情. The list is supposed to be written by the immortal Disenchantment.[356] Notably, this roster of *qing* (情榜) follows the template of *jinbang* (金榜 golden roster) for listing the successful candidates in the civil service examination. Not particular to *Dream of the Red Chamber*, many Ming-Qing

[355] Chen Qinghao, ed., *Xinping shitou ji zhiyanzhai pingyu jijiao* (*New edition of the Collated Red Inkstone Commentary on Honglou meng* (Taipei: Lianjing chuban shiye gongsi, 1979), 367.
[356] From the scattered comments in the Zhiyan zhai manuscripts, modern scholars suggested that there are sixty beauties ranked into five grades, and the roster is written by Disenchantment. Yu Yingshi gives a convincing account that the list is based on talent, beauty, social status, and most important of all, the character's emotional connection with Baoyu. Yingshi Yu, *Honglou meng de liangge shijie*, (Taibei: Lianjin chubanshe, 1978), 110-36. Wang Jing suggests that "roster of *qing*" were more influenced by the system of classification in *Qingshi* by Feng Menglong and she sees the correspondence between the alternative titles of *Qingshi—Qingtian Baojian* (A Mirror for The Passion Sky) 情天寶鑑 and that of *Dream of the Red Chamber—Fengyue Baojian* (A Mirror for the Romantic) 風月寶鑑." See Jing Wang. *The Story of Stone: Intertextuality, Ancient Chinese Stone Lore, and the Stone Symbolism,* 96. 206-207. Rolston, *How to Read Chinese Novel*, 206.

fictions adopt a *bang* structure to list its characters, which might appear in the middle, in the front matter, and toward the end of writing.[357]

Meanwhile, it deserves mentioning that the *qing* epithets appeared either in the Zhiyan zhai's remarks or *Honglou meng pu* are not novel at all for readers and writers. They had become clichéd formulas or templates in literary work or other printed ephemerals. For example, the *Anatomy of Love: Categories and Sketches* (*qingshi leilue* 情史類略) by Feng Menglong divided all of its stories by subtitles of twenty-seven epithets of *qing,* to name just a few, *qingyuan* 情缘 ("conjugal destiny and affinity"), *qing'ai* 情愛 ("passion"), *qingchi* 情痴 ("infatuation"), *qinghan* 情憾 ("pathos"), *qinghuan* 情幻 ("illusion"), and *qingling* 情靈 ("efficacy").[358] However, some of these stories titled under the epithets of *qing* are purely erotic, a far cry from the discourse of *qing* in the novel *Dream of the Red Chamber*.[359]

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[357] For instance, *The Scholars* (*Rulin Waishi* 儒林外史) contains a list of posthumous titles commonly referred to as the *youbang*.The front matter of many editions of the *Shuihu Zhuan* 水滸傳 contains a list of 108 heroes ("stone tablet"). As mentioned in footnote 24, Hu Shi thinks that "roster of *qing"* in *Dream of the Red Chamber* resembles both of the two novels. Many imitation novels (*fangzuo*) 仿作 of *Dream of the Red Chamber* also applied the writing strategy of the roster to list its main characters. The late Qing novel *Pinhua Baojian* 品花寶鑑 (Jeweled Mirror of Appreciation of Flower) and *Qinglou Meng* 青樓夢 (Dream of the Courtesans' Chambers) also use the rosters to list its important characters. David Rolston, *Traditional Chinese Fiction and Fiction Commentary: Reading And Writing Between The Lines*, (Stanford University Press, 1997), 204-207. The format of *jinbang* was also used to rank courtesans and male actors in fictions and the texts known as "flower registers." See Patrick Hanan*Chinese Vernacular Story*, (Harvard University Press, 1981), 89-90

[358] The prevalent appearance of the epithet of *qing* was indispensable with the so-called cult of *qing* during the late imperial period. Martin Huang traces the use of the epithets of *qing* back to Feng Menglong's *Qingshi*. Martin Huang, "Sentiments of Desire: Thoughts on the Cult of Qing in Ming-Qing Literature," *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews (CLEAR)* 20 (1998): 179.

[359] Martin Huang also gave another example: the seventeenth century *Xiuping yuan* 繡屏緣 (The Romance of the Embroidered Screen) authored by the Master of the Su Temple (Su'an zhuren 蘇庵主人). These female characters are given epithets of *qing* as well. The titles are 情而正 (loving and righteous),情而俠 (loving and gallant),情而節 (loving and chaste). As Martin Huang

The prevalent appearance of *qing* in literary writing was directly influenced by the cult of *qing* during the Ming-Qing period. One could even claim that *Dream of the Red Chamber* is the sublime apogee of the cult of *qing*.[360] The novel is about disillusion and illusions, dream and awakening, indulgence and transcendence. *Qing* is the skillful means to reach enlightenment and Baoyu, the one endowed with the upmost *qing* is also the one who reach enlightenment through his indulgence.[361] It is in this sense that Zhiyan Zhai designates Baoyu "the God of Flowers" (*zong huashen* 总花神) and "Crowning Beauty" (*zhuyan zhiguan*, 诸艳之冠) or sometimes "Head of All Beauties" (*qunfang zhiguan* 群芳之冠) in the marginal comments of the manuscript copies. In the game manual, Baoyu is the only male character, and he stands on top of the other mortal female characters with the epithet *qingzhong* 情鐘 (devotee of *qing* or connoisseur of *qing*) and the sobriquet "Escort of Flowers" 護花使者; the annotation after the epithet is *zhuse* (principle color 主色), indicating the function of the playing card of Baoyu—it is a "joker" that can substitute any other cards to form a suit.

In addition to the supernatural figures and the male character Baoyu, all the other female

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remarks, this work is also influenced by Feng Menglong's Qingshi and it is a "high erotic novel." Huang, "Sentiments of Desire," 179.

[360] Maram Epstein examines the complex relationship between the feminine, emotions, and authenticity in late Ming culture and the literary portrayal in the narrative *Dream of the Red Chamber*. See Maram Epstein, *Competing Discourses: Orthodoxy, Authenticity, and Engendered Meanings in Late Imperial Chinese Fiction* (Harvard University Asia Center, 2001), 61-119; Maram Epstein, "Making Sense of Baoyu: Staging Ideology and Aesthetics" in *Approaches to Teaching the Story of the Stone,* ed. Andrew Schonebaum and Tina Lu (New York: Modern Language Association), 318-26.

[361] This is what Wai-yee Lee have summarized as *yiqing wudao* 以情悟道 "using *qing* to reach enlightenment" or "disenchantment through enchantment." It is Baoyu's endowment with a "blind defenseless love", and "stupidity in *qing*" that lead to his ultimate religious wakening. Li Wai-Yee defines the concept of enchantment as follows: "enchantment is the process of being drawn to another world that promises sensual and spiritual fulfillment, it is the illusion of power, of the capacity to transcended the human condition." see Wai-yee Li, *Enchantment and Disenchantment: Love and Illusion In Chinese Literature* (Princeton University Press, 2014), 3.

characters are grouped into categories and graded into three levels: "upper color" (*shangse* 上色), "middle color" (*zhongse* 中色), and "lower color" (*xiase* 下色). A suit of playing cards of "upper color" is worthy of more tokens than a suit of "lower color." For example, Qiuwen, the servant-maid of Baoyu, Xiuyan, the nephew of Lady Xing and Xichun, a genteel lady of the prestigious Jia Household, are listed after the epithet "tranquility in *qing"* (*qingyou* 情幽) and the sobriquet "Limpidity and Refinement like the Seven Worthies under the Bamboo Grove" (林下風流).[362] Such a suit of "upper color" equals a token of 72 lot (*chou* 籌*)*. In contrast, Wang Xifeng, was listed in the same entry with Jia Zheng's concubine Aunt Zhao and Xue Pan's wife Xia Jingui, after the epithet of *qingdu* 情妒 (jealousy in *qing*) and the caption "sea of unbound bitterness" (苦海無邊). Such a suit of lower grade (*xiase* 下色) equals a token of 32 *chou*. As we can see, the epithets are not only evaluation remarks but also translates that commentary into rules for play. What determines the ranking of the characters is the designer's judgment of their moral qualities in accordance with the Confucian moral value system. For instance, *yi* 義 (righteousness), *zhen* 貞 (loyalty), and *shu* 淑 (gentility) in the epithets belong to the upper grade; whereas *yong* 庸 (mediocre), *yi* 移 (unfaithfulness), and *du* 妒 (jealousy) are ranked in the lower grade. Therefore, the epithets of *qing* are not concerned with the discourse of *qing* (emotions, desires, feelings, sentiment, sentimentality, sentimentalism, love) per se, but more so with the female virtue (*fudefu* 婦德) of the Confucian ideologies.

Manual of Connoisseurship Taste

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[362] *Linxia Fengliu* 林下风流 (The Air of Seven Worthies Beneath the Bamboo Grove) alludes to one anecdote collected in the fourteenth entry "worthy beauties"(*xianyuan* 贤媛) in *Shishuo xinxyu*. See Richard Mather, *Shishuo xinyu*: *A New Account of Tales of The World* by Liu I-ch'ing with Commentary by Liu Chün, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1976), 355.

After each *qing*-epithets, there is a smaller font print of *shangse* 上色 (upper-grade color), *zhongse* 中色 (middle-grade color), or *xiase* 下色 (lower-grade color). The character evaluation and ranking of the personhood (*renlun jianshi* 人倫鑑識) is a practice that recurs frequently in literary criticism and this practice dates back to Han dynasty, a literary example being the Treatise on Personality (*Renwu zhi* 人物誌) by Liu Shao 劉邵(168-172).[363]

The rhetoric, tone, and style of *Honglou meng pu* were influenced by the fiction commentaries of the time as well. What they all share is an interest in evaluating and judging personhood.[364] For example, Jin Shengtan 金聖嘆 (1608-1661) in his *Shuihu zhuan dufa* essay 水浒传读法 (How to Read *Water Margin*), ranked the major characters of the novel into the nine grades system that directly borrowed from the ranking scheme for governmental service.[365] The commentator Yao Xie 姚燮 (1805-1864) complied many lists of the objects, characters, places, mansions in *Dream of the Red Chamber* in his *Du Honglou meng Gangling* 讀紅樓夢綱領 (An Outline for Reading the *Dream of the Red Chamber,* 1860).[366] In a list called "*Renwu xingqing pin*" 人物性情品 (Evaluation of the Personalities of the Characters), Yao used the format of

[363] See Jack W. Chen, "Classification of People and Conduct: Liu Shao's *Treatise on Personality* and Liu Yiqing's *Recent Anecdotes from the Talk of the Ages*" in *Early Medieval China: A Sourcebook,* ed. Wendy Swartz, Yang Lu, and Jessey Choo (Columbia University Press, 2013), 334-50.
[364] Rolston, *Traditional Chinese Fiction and Fiction Commentary,* 203.
[365] Evaluating character is an important part in Chinese historiography as it is in fiction. Jin Shengtan's "How to Read the Fifth Book of Genius" contains a list of character evaluation based on the nine-grade system, using terminologies such as *shangshang* (upper high), *shangzhong* (middle-high), *zhongshang* (upper middle). David Rolston also points out that some historical writing also laid an emphasis on the evaluation of character and people. See Rolston, *How to Read the Chinese Novel*. 202.
[366] Rolston, *How to Read the Chinese Novel,* 319-320

pinmu (list) to assign a one-character adjective to each of the characters listed.[367] For instance, Jia Zheng is captioned with *fu* 腐 (rotten) and Jia Huan with *du* 毒 (wicked).

Whether Sanran Zhuren has read Yao Xie's works is not verifiable or relevant here; however, a very similar list of one-character commentary remarks (different from the Yao's) appeared in the card game: there are sixteen character-cards, each bearing a one-character

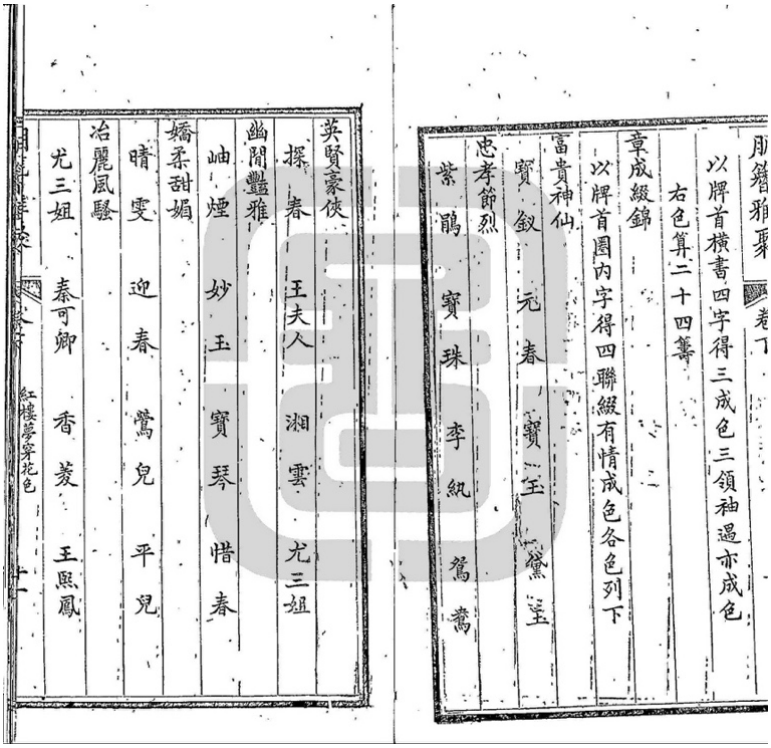

Figure 5.4 The game rule "Woven phrases like ornamented Brocade" 章成綴錦 in *Honglou meng pu* 紅樓夢譜
From: Photocopy from National Library of China

adjective. The ingenuity and creativity lie in their function for the playing practice: four characters in a certain order constitute a verbal phrase and if a player collects all the corresponding four cards, he or she gets a suit in hand. For example, Baochai's card, is noted with the adjective "prosperous" (富) for her family's riches; for Yuanchun's card, it is "distinguished" (貴) for her status as the Imperial Consort; Baoyu's inscription is "luminous"

[367] Roston, *Traditional Chinese Fiction and Fiction Commentary*, 204.

(神) for his celestial and immortal identities (he is the abandoned stone bearing the script of the story, the lustrous jade shrunk from the stone, and the Divine Luminescent Stone-In-Waiting 神瑛侍者 in the supernatural realm); Daiyu's commentary remark is "unworldliness" (仙) for her lofty personality, ethereal appearance, and her identity as the supernatural plant Crimson Pearl (絳珠仙草) in her previous life. The four characters on each card make up a word of high register: "rich and carefree like an immortal" (*fuguishenxian* 富貴神仙), thus the four character-cards form a suit. There is a total of six combinations like this and the game rules are given the name "Woven phrases like ornamented Brocade" *(zhangcheng zhuijin* 章成綴錦) as listed in Table 5.1.

Manual of Literati Taste

Reading the manual and playing the game demand two kinds of knowledge—literary dexterity acquired through years of classical training and reading knowledge of the novel. The former requires years of classical training, the latter access to the novel. Readers of the game manual are no doubt, of the literary class. Like the many sophisticated games played by the young talented characters in the novel, playing this game is a social practice of literati taste. Setting aside how to play the game, reading the game texts demanded a level of refinement in literary acumen and marked one's cultural capital

Like the talented residents in the Garden, Sanran Zhuren and his fellow friends developed an aesthetic relationship to the game play in writing and playing the card game of *Honglou meng pu*. The manual is more than a practical-oriented instruction on how to play a card game. It was are written for a small coterie of refined readers of the novel, cognizant of literary games and dilettante players in the "roaming in the arts" (*youyi* 游藝); and this dilettante posture is not in

conflict with the cultural credential of literati value on authenticity and the Confucian orthodoxy. The game manual, like the many other game texts and playful writings that flourished during the Ming-Qing period, carries over the conception of writing for play and play in writing, which is also rooted in the Chinese philosophical and literary tradition. Indeed, the game draws upon a tradition that legitimized an interest in things both "idle" and private, unconcerned with the public duty or the public dimensions of one's occupation.[368]

In this sense, the game manual shares some similarities with writings about leisured lifestyle and connoisseurship texts that flourished during the late imperial period. Actually, writing about the "idled" pursuits, "useless" objects, and personal experience of the material collections started to appear in the Northern Song and proliferated during the Ming; what is deep-rooted in these writings is the literati sensibility, aesthetic value, and discourse of detachment which paradoxically defends that one's investment and indulgence in playthings will not become a pure pleasure-seeking pastime. [369]

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[368] Wu Yinghui explored the playful writing in Ming drama commentary and traced the genealogy of playfulness in literature to *Zhuangzi:* "the free and easy rambling in the *Zhuangzi* established an ideal state of being as well as a philosophical attitude of the Chinese literati." Wu argues that the playfulness is not in conflict with Confucian orthodoxy as well: "The Confucian classics also contain remarks on the harmless and humorous effect of jesting." See Yinghui Wu, "Constructing a Playful Space: Eight-Legged Essays on *Xixiang ji* and *Pipa ji*." *T'oung Pao* 102, 4-5 (2016): 508-9.

[369] Clunas bases his study of the social meaning of consumption and production on "books on things" (the literature of Ming connoisseurship), and argues that the discourse on material objects and collections functions to mark social distinctions, especially at a time when the new rising class of the merchants threatened the social priviledges of the traditional elite class. Clunas, *Superfluous Things: Material Culture and Social Status in Early Modern China*, 116-141. The literary genres of these connoisseurship texts include "*biji*" 筆記(random notes), *"xiaopin"*小品 (informal essays), *pu* 譜(catalogues), *lu* 錄 (records) *ji* 記(notes). Wai-yee Li argues that the object possession and the account of one's experiences with them might "have important political, moral and metaphysical implications." See Wai-yee Li, "The Collector, the Connoisseur, and Late-Ming Sensibility," 276.

Various genres of connoisseurship literary texts emerged since the late Ming, such as catalogs or registers (*pu* 譜) of inkstones, calligraphy, painting, books, perfumes, wines, rocks, flowers and plants, etc. Inherent in the evaluation and hierarchical ranking of these "superfluous things" and pastimes and unsubstantial matters were an expression of connoisseurship taste and individual experiences.[370] Central to these texts of connoisseurship is the concept, tropes, and registers of evaluative classification, artistic criticism, and connoisseur refinement (*pin* 品), which were used to rank everything from artwork, material objects, to people being looked at.

The large body of connoisseurship tests in various genres also became a mark of social identity, something that differentiated elite (and true) connoisseurs from the ones who were nouveau riche or the "newly educated."[371] As Wai-yee Li observed: "self-definition is attained through the process of assembling and ordering things" and writing about the things "is a way for the cultural elite to set itself apart."[372] In other words, connoisseurship texts about material collections, the courtesans and male actors, one's hobbies, amateur activities, and leisurely pastimes—all the pursuits of non-profitable things were a social marker for symbolic power and cultural capital, which became extremely necessary when the literati class was no longer supported by the imperial regime at the turn of the century.

During the late nineteenth century, the traditional literati class had already lost previous social prestige. Connoisseurship texts do not disappear along with the collapse of the imperial

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370 Li, "The Collector, the Connoisseur, and Late-Ming Sensibility," *T'oung Pao* 81, no. 4 (1995): 275-278.

371 As Sophie Vopp has observed, late Ming and early Qing texts "satirize the social imposture inherent in the newly educated' adoption of refined diction and deride the inauthenticity and theatrical hollowness of their rhetorical manipulation." See Sophie Volpp, *Worldly Stage: Theatricality in Seventeenth-Century China* (Harvard University Asia Center, 2011), 96.

372 Li, "The Collector, the Connoisseur, and Late-Ming Sensibility," *T'oung Pao* 81, no. 4 (1995): 280.

regime, and writings about taste emerged in new cultural and literary modes and genres, gaining a wider range of audience backed up by new printing technologies, urbanizations, modern press industry, modern education systems, etc.

As a legacy of this body of text, *Honglou meng pu* are governed by dual focus: the anti-utilitarian quality of the game manual embodies the freedom of spirit of its designers in enjoying the leisure time without any political agenda. Nonetheless, the practice of inserting such cultural acumen literary expertise in the "frivolous activities" acknowledges their engagement in the elite culture. That is to say, the manual becomes the agent for the assertion of one's cultural identity despite their success or failure in gaining a degree in the civil service examination or later on serving an official position.

Text for Reading or Game for Play?

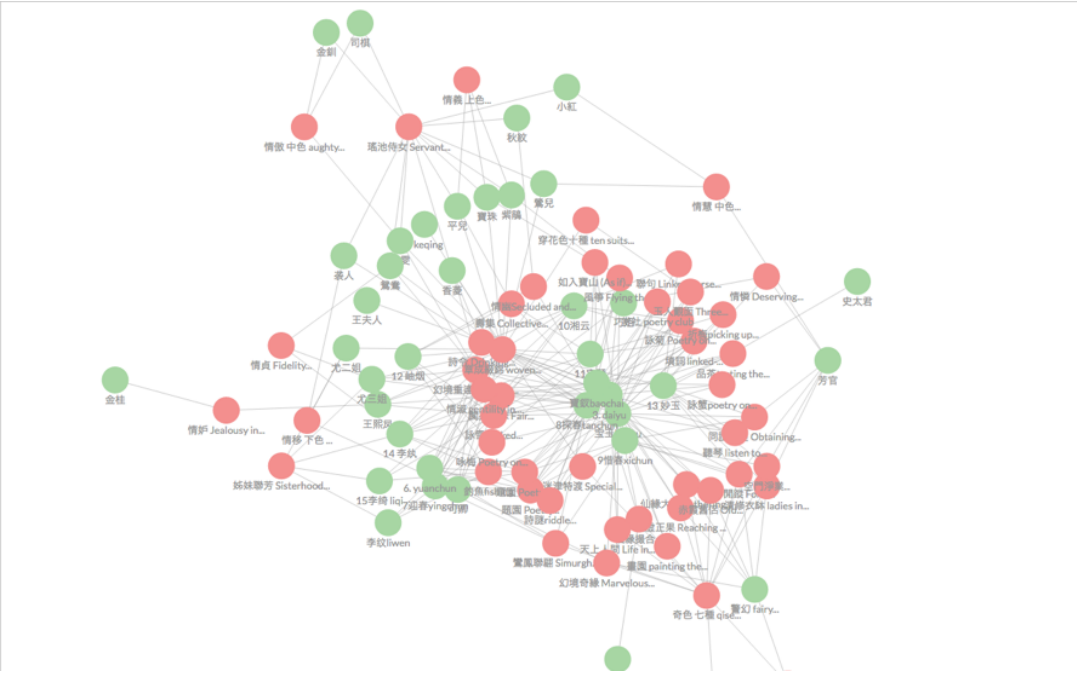

Figure 5.5 A visualization of the game rules of *Honglou meng pu* via scalar
From: http://scalar.usc.edu/works/honglou-meng-pu-1/index

With the visualization tool of scalar (http://scalar.usc.edu/works/honglou-meng-pu-

1/index), I designed a website to visualize the connections between the character cards and the game rules. In the picture above, each green dot represents a character card (a media image in the project) and each red dot represents a game rule (a webpage in the project). The lines linking the green dots to red dots denote how each character card can be combined with other cards to form a suit (Figure 5.6). Thus, the illustration gives a clear idea of the complexity of the game rules and how that creates a series of puzzles and codes for a player to decode, memorize, and play with.

Memorization of these rules become impossible for anyone in actual play. The literary emphasis of the games brought to the game an increasingly literary language intended more for the reader than for the game player. Game text publication does reduce the game to textual composition and risks the danger of removing it from social gameplay. I argue that the manual is more of a connoisseurship text for literary appreciation than an instruction for playing. Its bookishness and literariness made it divorced from the context of playing, and became a text for the elite reading community. Analogously, the manual is like the desktop version of drama plays, which was designed not as performance-oriented instruction, but for silent reading and appreciation by literary readers.[373] Taken as reading material, the game texts are comprehensive as well: the first part of *zhengse* (principle color, 正色) is concerned with character appraisal and its format imitates the supernatural register in the novel; the second part of *qise* (singular color, 奇

[373] As Shen Jing noticed, *chuanqi* drama was distinct from popular theater in that the commentators primarily viewed plays as texts. See Jing Shen, *Playwrights and Literary Games in Seventeenth-century China: Plays by Tang Xianzu, Mei Dingzuo, Wu Bing, Li Yu, and Kong Shangren* (Lexington Books, 2010), 14. Li-ling Xiao argues that before the Wanli period, plays were most published as prompt for stage performance. During the Wanli period, however, drama became popular among the literati class. As a result, more printed editions of popular dramas appeared in the book market that were printed not as a prompt for the actors on stage as texts for reading for literati readers. Li-ling Xiao, *The Eternal Present of the Past: Illustration, Theatre, and Reading in the Wanli period, 1573-1619* (Brill, 2007), 38-86.

色) centers on the supernatural realm and the pre-ordained fates of the characters; and the third part of "*chuanhuase*" (mixed color 穿花色) is an indexical list of all the "elegant social gatherings" took place in the garden.

I surmise that the game rules were first written and designed for play; however, when the rules are written on such a high level of complexity and sophistication, its pragmatic functions are undermined. In other words, the rules failed to be pragmatic for social play. The failure of the game design renders the rules alternatively pleasurable as a text for reading. So far, there are no artifacts of the playing cards in any archive. Nor is any literary evidence showing the game had been actually played. As a matter of fact, the game manual remained obscure until now. Considering the preface of the game manual, the game texts raises the question of whether we should identify it as intended for literary consumption or social practice.

***Xiaopin*: A Cultivated Space of Playfulness**

Thus, I propose that the manual is a kind of *xiaopin*, sharing the characteristics with other items compiled together under this term in the repertoire of literary works; meanwhile, as a text both for reading and writing, it displays a spirit of playful writing or "writing in jest" (*xibi* 戲筆) as literary fashions and cultural trends in the Ming-Qing period.

The early use of the term *xiaopin* is related to the Buddhist sutra during the Six Dynasties (220-581). [374] *Xiaopin* is not a genre. It is more of a mode of writing that is typically concerned with the subject matter of leisure lifestyle, personal hobbies, individual notes, personal

[374] *Xiaopin* originally referred to the simplified or abridged versions of Buddhist scriptures and first appeared in the Jin dynasty. *Xiaopin* was more often associated to the informal literary prose writing in the late Ming dynasty, but no definable features were attached to it. Writings categorized under *xiaopin* might include a variety of existing forms—prefaces, colophons, personal letters, biographical notes or memories, inscriptions on paintings, travel essays, and many more. See Laughlin, *The Literature of Leisure and Chinese Modernity*, 14

observations and thoughts, interesting but useless facts, and observations of the fleeting and trivial moments in life and they are usually short in length. Charles Laughlin gives the umbrella term "literature of leisure" to embrace and describe the commonalities and features of *xiaopin* (informal prose) from the pre-modern period and the *xiaopin wen* (informal essay) created during the 1920s and 1930s."For writing to be identified as leisurely is largely a matter of attitude, tone, and subject matter—it is writing unconcerned with public affairs, moral cultivation, or the meaning and application of the orthodox Confucian classics."[375]

Essentially, the flexible and moving category of *xiaopin* is not limited to a particular era or genre. What is generally termed as *xiaopin* (roughly "small item" or "small piece") by book compilers and literary historian can include all genres of texts which capture the causal, the informal, the intimate, the trivial, the flexible, and the little things that are in contrast to the ideological discourse of *dayan* 大言 (grand words). Avoiding the rhetoric of moral didacticism or public duties, the aesthetics of *xiaopin* provide a lens for the literati elite to articulate the private and personal being apart from the public duties. *Xiaopin* carved out a world that one can write in a different way than those genres of *guwen* 古文(formal prose) or *bagu wen* 八股文 (eight-legged essay), which most literati scholars are trained in or are presumed to be writing in.

Philip Kafalas used the term *wenlei* 文類 (a category of writing that could include many genres) to describe the features of *xiaopin*.[376] "Indeed, their most prominent characteristic is a refusal to acknowledge any didactic links between the world of the individual and the larger social and moral world—an attitude that results in an often lyrical emphasis on the minor and

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[375] Laughlin, *The Literature of Leisure and Chinese Modernity*, 26.
[376] In Kafalas' examination on the four late Ming compilations of *xiaopin,* he found that the so called *xiaopin* of these compilations usually include informal letters, records of excursions, biographies, prefaces, tomb inscriptions, as well as *yuefu* ballads, verse, and poetic couplets. See Kafalas, *Nostalgia and The Reading of The Late Ming Essay, Zhang Dai's Tao'an Mengyi*, 136.

private experiences of life."[377] What all these works of *Xiaopin* share are a kind of casual, individualistic, idle, useless, random, and enjoyable characteristic; usually there is a sense of humor within even the most mundane and trivial living experience. Like the connoisseurship literary texts, works of *xiaopin* provide a guide to a leisurely lifestyle with cultural sophistication, in tandem with the literati sensibility and aesthetic discernment that is subtle, minute, and yet pleasingly beautiful.

In Philip Kafalas's studies on the *xiaopin* compilation in the late Ming period, he finds that materials included in the compilation of *xiaopin* during the late Ming include a wide range of variety: "indeed, the media could reach beyond text altogether. Zhang Dai wrote a 'colophon to Xu Qingteng (Xu Wei's) *xiaopin* painting'. One suspects that Chen Hongshou's playing cards of *Shihu zhuan* characters were another facet of the *xiaopin* phenomenon's visual manifestation."[378] This insight is illuminating for us to look again at the game manual. I suggest the term of *xiaopin* to describe *Honglou meng pu*'s double status as a manual of game rules and a piece of a literary text. Together with the many writings that compiled under collections of *xiaopin* from the seventeenth century to the 1930s, they reflected the literati sensibilities in leisured lifestyle and manifested the "amateur ideal" of the cultural elites.

Honglou meng pu, like the other game texts examined in this dissertation, is hard to be categorized under the traditional generic divisions of Chinese literature. Together, they share many features with those texts termed as *xiaopin*: 1) it is a "minor literature" that shares the low-key quality of *xiaopin*: short in length, but full of structural ingenuity and pleasure in reading. 2) Its novelty of presenting evaluation remarks in the structural format of game rules speaks of

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[377] Patrick Hanan, *The Invention of Li Yu* (Harvard University Press, 1988), 186.
[378] See Philip Alexander Kafalas, *Nostalgia and The Reading of The Late Ming Essay, Zhang Dai's Tao'an Mengyi* (Stanford University, 1995), 134-5.

aesthetic pleasure (*quwei* 趣味) that reflect the aesthetic pursuits and literati taste of its authors.[379] 3) Its subject matter—game rules for play are far away from any moral and political discourse and rhetorical elegance.

Indeed, many game texts published during the late Qing and early Republican periods were labeled under the category of *xiaopin*. For example, the editor Lei Ji 雷瑨(1871-1941) of the publishing house Saoye Shanfang 掃葉山房 in Shanghai, edited and published a series of works titled "Sixty Works of *xiaopin* From the Studio of Yuxuan" (*Yuxuanshi xiaoshi liushi zhong* 娛媗室小品六十種). What was included in this compilation includes *Drinking Game of Tang Poetry* (唐詩酒令), *Drinking Game of Western Wing* (西廂酒令)and *Drinking Verses of Western Wing and Dream of the Red Chamber*(紅樓西廂合錦).

I contend that the *Honglou meng pu* reflects the aesthetic ideal of *xiaopin* that was passionately embraced and celebrated by the literati elites at least since the Ming dynasty. Publishing such a small booklet that was only circulated within small circles can hardly bring fame or profit. The game design was a pastime requiring a playful spirit, unconventional sensibilities, and exquisite literary dexterity; for Sanran Zhuren and his literary coterie, turning a regular card game rules into a game text like *Honglou meng pu* was not merely showcasing their sense of leisurely aesthetic towards reading and playing; it also organizes communities of taste that invested much cultural capital and literati taste in playthings like card games. This seemingly dilettantish writing of *Honglou mengpu* accentuates the leisurely writing and cultivation of an amateurish lifestyle that echoed the charmed circle in the past.

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[379] Patrick Hanan translates Yuan Hongdao's 袁弘道(1568-1610) standards of good literature as : "*qu* spontaneous vitality or zest, and *yun* ("tone"), the refinement of *qu*, a quality that induces aesthetic pleasure." Hanan, *The Invention of Li Yu*, 186.

It is difficult to generalize about texts like *Honglou meng pu* that is so sprawling and accommodating, yet one reason for its value and ingenuity among Sanran zhuren and readers like us today is that it allowed for interested readers to have a social play with rules that are sophisticated, exclusive and fun. Sanran zhuren and his like-minded friends found that within the structural devices of game rules, they could more easily articulate their playful comments and appropriation of the novel, as well as their creativeness and inventiveness in playing a game. The manual serves as a medium to reinitiate the refined leisure activities participated by the figural characters in the novel, with whom Sanran zhuren could identify and relate, in terms of cultural acumen and taste discernment. However, this does not mean that they intentionally write the commentary remarks in a form of game instruction, simply because any intention of a "how to read" attitude into a game would defy the very nature of a game.

Honglou meng pu differs from other card games or fiction criticism because of its medium and formal novelty: unlike the other treatises on the novel (including essays, interlineal commentary, and commentary in poetry and lyrics), it does not need to conform to any "literary forms" (*wen* or *wenzhang*), its generic regulations, formal completeness or ideological stances.[380] Unlike a regular set of playing cards of manual of game rules, the writing format misleads one to identify it as a list of reading remarks. To translate fiction commentary as rules for play takes effort, time, literary knowledge, and a creative mind. Viktor Shklovsky describes the process of the perception of art as an end in itself: "the purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known. The technique of art is to make objects 'unfamiliar', to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception, because

[380] Traditional Chinese fiction commentary tend to emphasize on the didactic function of fiction and tend to provide criticism of the fictional works in tandem with three systems of value (Buddhism, Daoism and Confucianism) to see Rolston, *How to Read Chinese Novel,* 316-40.

the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged. Art is a way of experiencing the artfulness of an object; the object is not important" [381]

We might consider the game manual a different manifestation of the idea of taking the "small" and commonplace things unfamiliar and unique, an aesthetic ideal that was applied to poetry since the Song. It is the readers' enjoyment and effort in understanding how it aesthetically fulfilling. The experience of enjoying the artfulness of the rules is more important than the rules of the game themselves. It is distinguished from our common sense of literary responses to literary work: it showcased an unusual medium of writing to insert random and playful remarks that can turn out to rules for games in communicative interaction. It is free of the stifling effect of the impulse to articulate a position on the issue of "how to read *Dream of the Red Chamber,"* a debate so fierce that a sarcastic word *hongxue* 紅學 (Redology) was coined to poke fun of the fever among the readers during the late nineteenth century.

The standing point of *Honglou meng pu* is different; they are rules for games, as we are told at the very first. This aim and purpose of writing rules for play already bespeak a sense of light-hearted playfulness and ideological indifference. One may say that the enjoyment of writing, reading, and practicing the game manual extends to the enjoyment of being oneself perceived as a person of such leisurely elegance and artistic individuality (*qi* 奇). This concept of "writing as playing" suggest a heightened "literariness" by literati scholar writers, who identified themselves as "not writing to please a large public" and thus were free to "indulge their every

[381] Viktor Shklovsky, "Art as technique" in *Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays*, Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis, eds. (University of Nebraska Press, 1965), 12

creative whim as they composed."[382] Clearly, in *Honglou meng pu*, the authors' intention for amusement and resonance among members of their literary community is highlighted as the motivation for creative energy.

Many reasons explain the manual's obscurity or the state of being "leftover" in our cultural memory. Considering its literary emphasis over its pragmatic concerns, I suspect that the rules had never be put into actual practice as other games of the time. I argue that its complexity, literariness, and borrowing of motifs, themes, and narratives from a popular literati novel render the game rules a literary text for reading and suggests a connoisseuristic appreciation among fellow readers of the elite class. The game text might be unpractical and unplayable for players "in the market," however, it is full of lyrical pleasure in any compilation of connoisseurship texts or *xiaopin*. The game manual is a text of *xiaoping* composed, appreciated, and consumed by China's nineteenth-century cultural elites in the Jiangnan area.

Readers' literary response to the novel *Dream of the Red Chamber* has been an area of rigorous scholarship and remained the center of debate and discussion till today. However, the large body of research has drawn mainly upon the major genres and widely circulated texts, such as the marginal and interlineal comments in the commentary editions of the books, sequel novels, poetry composition, endorsement poems, and adaptations for drama performances. Nonetheless, modern readers can hardly imagine that characters of the novel once appeared in the playing cards and rules of a *ma que* (precedent of mahjong), and to play the game by its rules is far more fascinating and challenging than today's mahjongg game. Moreover, its long list of game rules was printed in a booklet. If we presume that publication of any writing serves a purpose, then the

[382] C. T Hsia, "The Scholar-Novel and Chinese Culture: A Reappraisal of *Jinghua Yuan,*" in *Chinese Narrative: Critical and Theoretical Essays,* ed. Andrew Plaks (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1977), 271.

game rules in print have its targeted readers as well: it is written for readers who would appreciate the creative spirit, clever recontextualization, and textual hybridity.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I treat the text of the game manual as a playful writing and commentary work on the novel. Reading the textual fabrics and page layout of the manual, I contend that *Honglou meng pu* is an unconventional and novel "kind" of critical work on the novel as well as a text in print targeted at certain communities of readers, mainly the cultural elites with high literacy, cultural knowledge of the novel, and command of cultural sophistication in the lower Yangzi delta in the last decade of the nineteenth century.

Refined literary games, like the traditional cultural skills (chess, poetry and calligraphy, and painting), were considered a literati pastime and thus conformed to the central tenets of the literati mode of aesthetic discernment. Incorporating literary or classical sources into gameplay (for example, board games, drinking games, and card games) was an established model of literati taste and cultural fashion during the Ming-Qing period. For the cultural elites of both sexes, literary games played in a social gathering is an important part of their cultural life. Thus, the design of *Honglou meng pu* embodied a proper expression of literati aesthetic and echoes the "amateur ideals" treasured in the circle of cultural elites since the late Ming, when the high-culture taste became an alternative means for social standing, in a time when literati class as the highest in the social strata was on the verge of extinction.

The game manual, as a text in print, has social and cultural implications as well. It is designed for a community of readers and players who possessed sophisticated classical training and reading knowledge of the novel. By making the captions and epithets of the rules consistent with a high aesthetic standard and literacy level, *Honglou meng pu* became a medium through

which the readers and players could express their social position, cultural capital, or aspirations. It not only publicized the literary dexterity and literary taste of Sanran zhuren's cohort, but also defined a play community and a reading community of the novel in the lower Yangzi region.

Notions of literati taste, particularly regarding theater connoisseurship, material collectibles, arts and antiquities, and so forth have been codified in manuals for collectors and connoisseurs since the northern Song and became proliferated in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries; many of these books and ideas continued to circulate during the eighteenth century and were reissued or republished in early republic period. *Honglou meng pu*, share many commonalities with this body of writing: what is deep-rooted in them is the literary expertise and literati sensibilities on how to live a self-fulfilling, fun, and emotionally rich life with all these leisured activities and idled pursuit.

Moreover, the game manual of *Honglou meng pu*, in the format of "lists and registers" (*pulu* 譜錄), traditionally belongs to the miscellaneous or *za* 雜 category, which also ranks last in order of importance in the traditional taxonomy of written forms in pre-modern China. Instead of assigning using any generic division to describe *Honglou meng pu*, I think this manual is a text of *xiaopin* and shares more commonalities with writings about the cultivated literati lifestyle, trivial amusements, and idling leisure pursuits, such as day trip accounts (*youji* 遊記), records (*lu* 錄) and registers (*pu* 譜) of connoisseurship writings, personal correspondent letters (*xinzha* 信札), random notes (*biji* 筆記). Even though *xiaopin* does not have an exact definition and formal features associated with it and texts compiled under *xiaopin* include diverse literary formats and genres, they all share a lyrical emphasis on the minor and private experience of life.

Game texts like *Honglou meng pu* complements our knowledge of the ignored game culture, reading history, and readerly appropriation of the novel *Dream of the Red Chamber* in

the late nineteenth century. Writing and practicing such a game (manual) showcases a kind of "playfulness in literature," that the major literary discourse of this period neglects; it helps us rethink the playful part about Chinese literary history and cultural landscape of the political, cultural, and social transformations and disorder in this period: issues like how playing cards or card games are not just printed ephemerals popular for a short period; how they connect reading pleasures with the fun of playing; they card games can embody connoisseurship taste as a cultural and literary legacy from the past; how gameplay be a plebian activity and an elite plaything; culture and literati culture; how such a manual of card game turn was well suited to expressing the elite literati taste and leisure culture.

Table 5.1 Game rules of “Woven phrases like ornamented Brocade” (*zhangcheng zhuijin* 章成綴錦)

富 prosperous 寶釵 Baochai	貴 Majestic 元春 Yuanchun	神 Luminous 寶玉 Baoyu	仙 unworldly 黛玉 Daiyu
忠 Loyalty 紫娟 Zijuan	孝 Filial Piety 寶珠 Baozhu	節 Chastity 李紈 Li Wan	烈 Integrity 鴛鴦 Yuanyang
英 Gallant 探春 Tanchun,	賢 Worthy 王夫人 Lady Wang	豪 Unreserved 湘雲 Xiangyun	俠 Chivalrous 尤三姐 You Sanjie
幽 Secluded 岫煙 Xiuyan,	閒 Composed 妙玉 Miaoyu	艷 Beautiful 寶琴 Baoqin	雅 Elegant 惜春 Xichun
嬌 Dedicate 晴雯 Qingwen	柔 Tender 迎春 Yingchun	甜 Sweet 鶯兒 Ying’er	媚 Charming 平兒 Ping’er
冶 Ravishing 尤三姐 You Sanjie	麗 Alluring 秦可卿 Qin Keqing	風 Refined Style 香菱 Xiangling	騷 appealing 王熙鳳 Wang Xifeng

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

In this dissertation, I focused on three games derived from the *Dream of the Red Chamber* and their relevant cultural significance at the turn of the twentieth century. Refined literary games, like traditional cultural skills (chess, poetry and calligraphy and painting), were considered a literati pastime and thus conformed to the central tenets of the literati mode of aesthetic discernment. Incorporating literary or classical sources into game play was an established model of literati taste and cultural fashion during the Ming-Qing period. These games construct a play community for readers who have a sophisticated knowledge of the novel and a fairly high level of literary taste. *Games of Dream of The Red Chamber* reveals to us how the novel was deeply integrated into the fabric of everyday life, especially the leisured life of the cultural elites. It also enlarges our modern readers' understanding of the interconnection between literary games as a reading competition and reading practice as social practice of gaming. They fulfilled literati-readers' need for cultured amusement and for new connections between the literary world and the social game play.

For the cultural elites of both sexes, literary games played in social gathering, much like poetry competition, are more of an intellectual endeavor and component of the social gatherings. For these players, production and play of these games were not merely showcasing their literary refinement; it also organizes communities of taste that invested

much cultural capital and literati taste in the leisure ventures of gameplay. This seemingly dilettantish attitude accentuates amateurish lifestyle enjoyed by the aristocratic family members as portrayed in the novel. Thus, playing these games embodied a proper expression of literati aesthetic and echoes the "amateur ideals" treasured in the circle of cultural elites since the late Ming, when high-culture taste became an alternative means for social standing due to the discounted value entailed by the imperially conferred diploma.

Game Texts and Communities of Taste

Some of these game texts are not simply for pragmatic social practices of play—although the producers probably wanted them to function in this way originally—but rather to entertain other readers in a completely unexpected format and medium. Here I use the word "game texts" to refer to these game rules as literary compositions in manuscript or printed format. "The medium is the message," to quote ~~the words by~~ McLuhan.[383] Rather than rules of folk games transmitted orally, game texts transformed playing into reading and reading into playing. Some of the game rules give new dimensions to what was considered a game—by listing the rules in the format of commentary text, they require serious reading and decoding. In this refined, ludic, communicative, social performance, games of *Dream of The Red Chamber* cross the boundary between reading and playing.

When turning these rules into interactive, communal, and collective social play, the games opened up an interactive arena and playground for these readers to relate to each other and play together. The games become a context for stylized communication, where reading

[383] Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man,* 13.

knowledge, literary taste, cultural refinement and energetic creativity play a performative and functionary role through social interaction.

Like the talented residents in the Garden, these readers and players developed an aesthetic relationship to the game play by reinventing and renovating the popular folk games that everyone else also played. Expressing their literary knowledge and sense of taste in the performative and social act of gameplay, they are not only good readers of the novel, but also good players in the literary fashions and cultural display. In these game texts, taste emerged as the defining characteristic. The possession of the reading knowledge required to understand the rules is what identifies a genuine reader of the novel and a good player and by extension, a person of high cultural capital and great sense of witticism.

It has been an age-old tradition to integrate stories and characters from popular drama play or fictional narratives into game play and to rewrite game rules of popular folk games in accordance to the content of literary texts. However, the novel *Dream* endows these games with a new dimension for players' imagination within the frame of play.

Treating the games not only as social performance, but also as game texts, this dissertation analyzed the writing medium, the interconnection between the game rules and the narrative text of the novel, the social identity of the players, the engagement of games with its cultural context, and the "magic circle" that games mapped out for its players from the more serious tasks of daily living. Through this dissertation, I raised numerous examples drawing on what seem to be parallels between the themes of the novel—illusion and disillusion, dream and awakening and the rules of the game that players need to constantly interact with. Like ritual, games offer players a sense of structure and order in a chaotic world. The games and playthings, as leisurely entertainments, pastimes and ludic activities, appealed to these players precisely

because they enabled them to bypass everyday limitations. There is an indissoluble connection between the fictional world and the "make-believe" or "fun" part of the games.

Magic Circle and Gameplay

The motif of dream and awakening and the sense of illusion and disillusion that fascinate readers of all ages melt smoothly in the ludic experience of the game from the standpoint of the player. An easy place to see the affiliation between the play experience and the reading experience is the theme of the novel: the dialects between illusion and disillusion, enchantment and disenchantment, dream and awakening. As Wai-yee Li's reading of the novel argues: "one of the central concerns in this book is the power of subjective illumination, the celebration of the human imaginative capacity as a token of implied freedom and autonomy for the remembering, dreaming, or imagining self." [384]

Like Baoyu's dream tour to the Land of Illusion, the game proposes a means of crossing beyond the mundane life into a world of fantasy and fulfillment of dreams. The world of games promises, at times, to work as a kind of supernatural realm itself. It is a sort of imagined ideal space beyond the mundane life. Such a notion of imagination, fantasy and dream that is set apart from the world of pollution and chaos also applies powerfully to the world of the novel, especially the Grand View Garden that is separated from the rest of the world. In a way, games of the *Dream of the Red Chamber* create the play experiences of simulation and imagination that share some important features with the idealized world in the Garden, both of which take place in circumscribed spaces isolated from ordinary life outside out it.

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[384] Li Wai-Yee defines the concept of enchantment as follows: "enchantment is the process of being drawn to another world that promises sensual and spiritual fulfillment, it is the illusion of power, of the capacity to transcended the human condition." see Wai-yee Li, *Enchantment and Disenchantment: Love and Illusion in Chinese literature* (Princeton University Press, 2014), 211-214. 259.

The themes of the novel—dreaming and awakening, illusion and disillusion, enchantment and disenchantment— and what takes place in the novel—narratives, plots, events, stories, happenings— apply powerfully in the gameplay. For readers of the novel, the Grand View Garden is a sacred place and a utopian world. The garden, to use the words of Dore J. Levy, "provides an opportunity for an enlarged view of the world from within its precincts."[385] The leisurely lifestyles of the young residents in the Garden represent a lyrical ideal of the literati tradition, an aesthetic illusion that appeals to readers of all time. It represents an idealized world where their wishes for how to live an aesthetically beautiful life is worked out. Like the garden in the novel, games are self-enclosed worlds. Players of the game, like the residents of the garden, are playing in this symbolic space of order making. For example, in the board game of the novel "Full Illustration of Grand View Garden" (*Daguanyuan quantu* 大观园全图) (Figure 6.1), play takes place in the playground of the game board illustrated with the overall illustration of the Grand View Garden. By taking a character token and following the travel route from one place to another through Garden as illustrated on the game board, players can temporarily imagine their "wandering through" the garden, while also following the rules that related to the stories of the novel that occurred in these spaces. Playing these games means stepping into a "magic circle" and being transported into a world of imagination temporarily.

[385] Dore Levy, "The Garden and Garden Culture in the *Story of the Stone*" in *Approaches to Teaching The Story of the Stone (Dream of the Red Chamber),* ed. Andrew Schonebaum and Tina Lu (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 2012), 116.

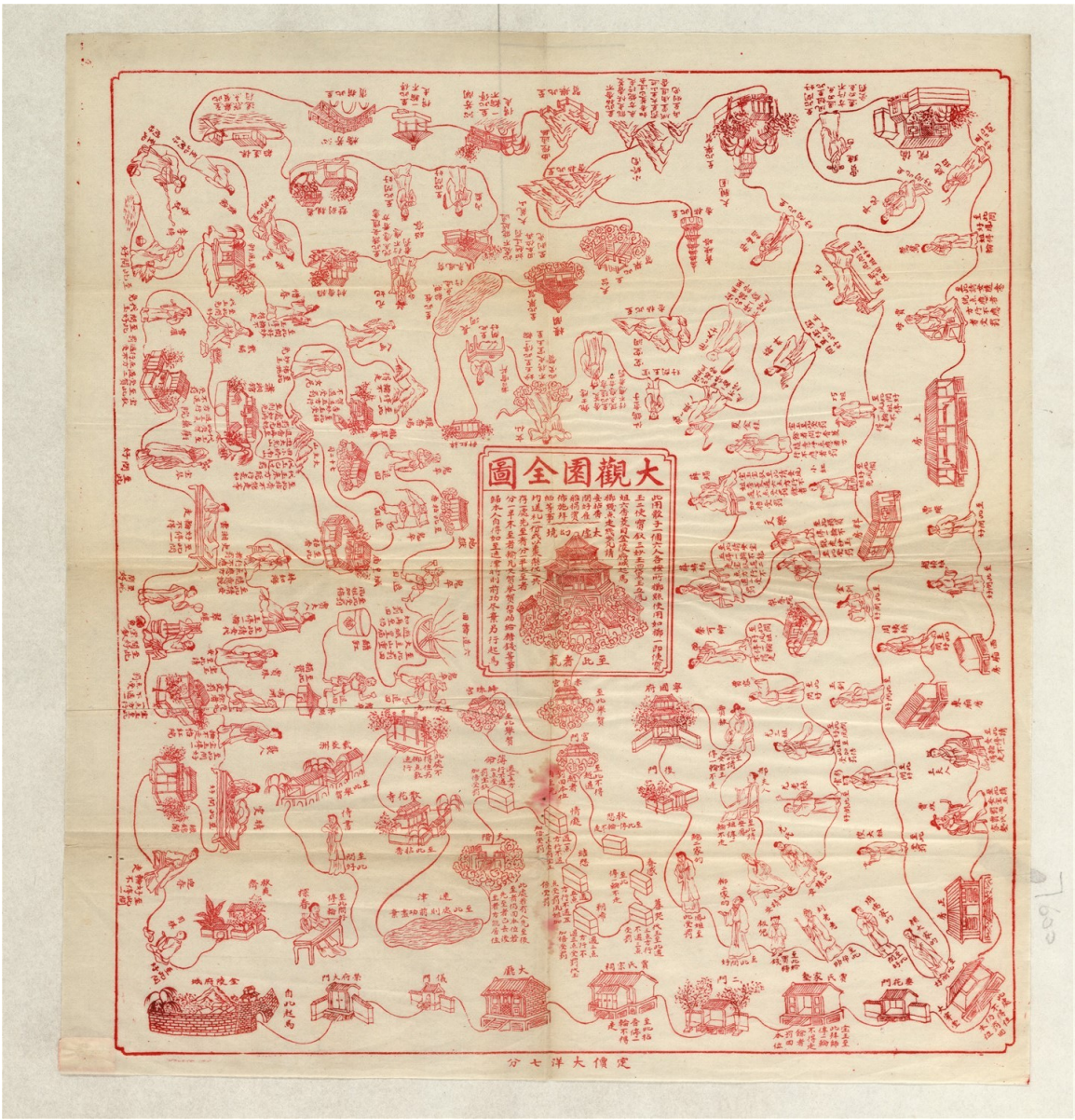

Figure 6.1 Game Board "full illustration of the Grand View Garden"
From: https://news.artron.net/20191212/n1066944.html. Assessed Nov.22nd, 2020.

The world of the novel and the "magic circle" of the game have a lot in common: they are all symbolized places that blurs the boundaries between the real and the unreal. The game is rule-ordered cosmos separated from the mundane life for special activities. This sense of order-making and "separateness" takes on several level.

First of all, play is not ordinary or real life. As Huizinga explains, "we find play present everywhere as a well-defined quality of action which is different from 'ordinary' life"[386] For Huizinga, play is "a stepping out of real life into a temporary sphere of activity with a disposition all of its own." [387] Play, says Huizinga, "creates order, is order. Into an imperfect world and into the confusion of life it brings a temporary, a limited perfection" through the fixed rule.[388] The game world of order-making shares many similarities with the lyrical world of the Grand View Garden. The Garden is an epitome of traditional literati taste and idealized lifestyle. The many elegant activities and refined things that take place in the garden actualizes and effects a beautification, bringing about an order of things higher than the world they live in. The garden is not a garden in reality, but a space of imagination in the mind of the author and the reader. As a matter of fact, Chinese literati garden, either in real life or in fiction hovers at the dialectics between aesthetic obsession and melancholy, illusion and the fate of devastation. Wai-yee Lee conjures up the aesthetic of illusion in gardens with the dynastic catastrophe during the Ming-Qing transition with the statement: "if the aesthetic of illusion in gardens potentially invited the charge of self-indulgence, it also overlapped with dreams, memories, or fantasies wherein a lost world could be reclaimed or an escape from an alienating reality invented in the post-conquest world."[389] In Li's reading, the garden that the late Ming literati scholars built and imagined are "responses to the fall of the Ming."[390] There are numerous references to aesthetic of illusion in the fictional garden (Daguan yuan 大觀園), as Li states: "conjured up through dreams, memories,

[386] Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, 4.
[387] Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, 8.
[388] Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, 10.
[389] Wai-Yee Li, "Gardens and Illusions from Late Ming to Early Qing" in *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 72, no. 2 (2012): 334.
[390] Wai-Yee Li, "Gardens and Illusions from Late Ming to Early Qing," 335.

and private myths, the Grand View Garden is maze-like, full of mirrors, reflections, visual tricks and sudden changes in perspective—it seems to reflect the pleasures of actual garden even as it embodies the dialects of reality and illusion."[391] Such a world blurs the boundary of illusion and reality and reminds readers of Jia Baoyu's dream tour to the supernatural land (*Taixu huanjing* 太虛幻境). Some game rules that allude to the luxurious lifestyles and wasteful extravagance in the Garden make the comparison and parallel even more evocative. The game proposes a means of crossing beyond the vicissitudes of mundane daily life into a supra-narrative space of imagination and the fulfillment of dreams.

Games is another potent site for creating meaning beyond the mundane reality. For Huizinga, play "proceeds within its own boundaries of time and space according to fixed rules and in an orderly manner. It promotes the formation of social groupings which tend to surround themselves with secrecy and to stress their difference from the common world by disguise or other means."[392] Games play involves entry into a "temporarily real world" in a space "expressly hedged off for it."[393] The world of games is capable of providing its players what the garden provides to the characters—a temporary world of its own. The "magic circle" that separates gameplay from ordinary life is analogous to the garden where the young figural characters could enjoy luxurious lifestyles and wasteful extravagance. Jesper Juul recognizes the similarities between the game and fiction: "rules separate the game from the rest of the world by carving out an area where the rules apply; fiction projects a world different from the real world.

[391] Wai-Yee Li, "Gardens and Illusions from Late Ming to Early Qing," 335.
[392] Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, 13.
[393] Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, 14.

The space of a game is part of the world in which it is played, but the space of a fiction is outside the world from which it is created."[394]

The "magic circle" of these games offered many levels of pleasure. Much as Huizinga described the games as the playground of "magic circle," playing games of *Dream* was touted as the exclusive pastimes of the cultural elites. By merging the motifs of the novel and the order-making features of games, these games offered the players the portal to a temporary escape from the daily grind. In this ordered cosmos, players could leave behind worldly concerns and play the part they desired without consequences in real life, like Baoyu's wandering and sensing of supernatural pleasures in his dream tour. This "magic circle" promised the absorbing experience of pursuing one's innermost desire, of throwing oneself into the realm of illusion and supernatural pleasures and fantasies, of displaying one's cultural proclivities and symbolic capital, and finally, of indulging in fantasy undertaking that is not aimed for some extrinsic benefit.

Rules of the game can evoke in the players the desire to enter into a disenchanted world where the play actions are to be interpreted and understood in a meaningful way. As Egenfeldt-Nielsen, Smith and Tosca put it, to play a game means "setting oneself apart from the outside world, and surrendering to a system that has no effect on anything which lies beyond the circle."[395] In these games derived from *Dream*, we see the characters, motifs, narratives and allusions borrowed from the novel are used to map order onto reality itself, offering these players an ongoing sense of communal belonging.

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[394] Jesper Juul, *Half-real: Video Games between Real Rules and Fictional Worlds* (MIT press, 2011), 164.

[395] Egenfeldt-Nielsen, Simon Jonas Heide Smith, and Susana Pajares Tosca, *Understanding Video Games: The Essential Introduction*, (New York: Routledge, 2008), 24.

Rachel Wager compares the communal bonding in games to other forms of art: "literature and painting have the ability to draw us into other words, to engage us in thinking of the 'what if', imagining ourselves other than who we are, and the world other than it is."[396] Games of the novel, by its representation and constant allusions to the novel, are portals into the imaginative spaces and fantasized modes of being "as if" they are characters in the novel. Games replicate players' desire of imagining their own being in the Grand View Garden, an imaginary space that is cut off from the ordinary mundane life. Both involve the sense of entering into a world of alterity, where one's engagement and activities are shaped by possibilities determined by rules. And both are governed by rules of its own.

That is to say, the kinds of fascination players have with the "magic circle" of the games looks a lot like their fascination with illusory and supernatural aspect of the novel. Playing these games became an alternative means for these players to create a realm of lyrical ideal and spiritual resonance in a disenchanted world. If the lyrical ideal, the profligate splendor and sensual pleasure as portrayed in the garden life of the novel are representative of the glorious days of the vanishing past, at least the games are stepping in to fill the gap. With the decline and the transformation of traditional elite culture during the late nineteenth century, perhaps gameplay can express these elite readers' innermost desire of creating a temporarily real world of its own that gives themselves the inner strength to deal with adversity in real life.

Second, the games of the novel *Dream of the Red Chamber* set apart a time and space in which special social bounding, intricate play and interplay occur in a self-contained enclosure in accordance with codified rules that alludes to the narrative texts. One could argue that the dialects of reality and illusion, dream and awakening are rendered richly in the play world of the

[396] Wagner, *Godwired: Religion, Ritual and Virtual Reality*, 7.

games wherein the special rules hold absolutely. By alluding to the novel, these rules create an interactive play of illusion, fantasy, dreaming, and supernatural wandering. The idealized, structured mode of being in both playing and reading cast a nostalgic retrospect that crystalized the high-cultural way of life of the past into something that is over or about to be over. In this sense, writing, playing and reading these games resonated, not simply to a communal appreciation of connoisseurship taste, but to a higher cause and sublime ideal.

In the game rules of the card game, playing is described as "entering into a dream" (*rumeng* 入夢); in the board game "Full Illustration of the Grand View Garden", the game world is referred to as "illusory realm" (*huanjiang* 幻境). This evidence suggests the alternative worlds imaged during these games are compared to a dream, both a dream in its literary meaning and the dream that conjured up in the novel. Wager compares play as "entering into a sacred space" in that both "involve the sense of entering into a controlled space, where play is shaped by possibilities determined by rules, comforting in its ordered nature."[397] It is not far-fetched to say that playing the games of the *Dream* creates a temporary space of its own, translating readers' memory of the novel into a collaborative and interactive social play. For these players, the games of the novel, like the novel itself, evoke in them the desire for a lyrical ideal and the aesthetic pleasure of an elegant literati lifestyle that is on the verge of disappearance.

Thirdly, the design of these games, which is built upon the popular folk game but elevates to a rarified level of sophistication, raises profound questions and encourages reflections on the sense of literati taste in leisured pastimes. The discussions on exquisite taste and literati connoisseurship permeate throughout the novel, particularly in material culture like antiques,

[397] Rachel Wagner, "This is Not a Game: Violent Video Games, Sacred Space, and Ritual" in *Iowa Journal of Cultural Studies* 15, no. 1 (2014): 16.

food, tea, fabrics, garden design, and cultural practices like art, music poetry composition, drama performance, as well as through the various literary games and leisurely pastimes they engage in. One might claim that the novel is encyclopedic of aristocratic life of the imperial age and a manual of connoisseurship taste on how to live a good life. For readers of the late nineteenth century, it is a reference book informing them everything having to do with a powerful and privileged aristocratic family that come with the possession of considerable cultural, symbolic, and social capital. Such a nexus of traditional and high culture had become of particular interest to readers in a mass-oriented and commercialized world. To many readers, the games are reminiscent of the elegant parties and the party games that the characters play, which would evoke nostalgic sentiments of the prestigious cultural events between famous literati and courtesans in the lower Yangzi delta during the glorious Ming period. This deep feeling of nostalgia is transparent in the title of the novel. Tina Lu traces the sense of nostalgia in the novel to people's attitude toward the end of the past Ming dynasty: "many people, among them some of the most influential writers of the day, felt deep nostalgia about the passing of the old world, which was strongly associated with a splendor that was sensual, unsustainable, and even slightly louche."[398]

Thus, production of these sophisticated games promoted a certain type of elite social interaction laden with elegiac celebrations of a disappearing culture. The gameplay, with its feature of the imaginary and the inaccessible, implicates a gap between self and the real life, and a sense of ironic distance from the spender of the garden and the glamor of the idealized lifestyle of the figures in the novel. By playing these games, the players cast an admiring look in

[398] Tina Lu, "Dreams, Subjectivity, and Identity in the *Stone*" in *Teaching Approaches to The Story of The Stone*, 275.

retrospect upon the talented figures in the novel, as well as the real figures in history and eventually the phantom of the empire.

Games can be viewed as a manifestation of the desire for a nostalgic imagination that lies just beyond the reach of people's ordinary lives. Some of these games, for instance, the drinking game and board game, were part and parcel of the role-playing games in which players assumed personas of characters of the novel to engage with each other in a ritualized play of flirtation and sentiment. For some players, the artificial space of the game had become an essential and indispensable part of their lifestyles. For some of these game players, the city Shanghai is compared to the grand view garden of the novel. Within the frame of play, the city compared to "a big playground and land of fantasy outside the harsh confines of the real and the necessary."[399] The boundary between game and ordinary life is further blurred when the players (the urban literati and courtesans) extended roleplaying games into the daily life, using the novel to model their lifestyle and persona, set the fashion trends of the city and shape the cultural phenomenon of the day. (As we see in chapter 4, Zou Tao is an extant example of such role-playing players.) these role playing games not only allow players to escape the

Games are not only play of imagination and simulation, but also a play within their specific cultural context. Game theorists Salen and Zimmerman urge that we should not assume that gaming spaces have no bearing on ordinary life. Far from being isolated from real world, games are part of the culture: "the magic circle is not an impermeable curtain but is instead a border that can be crossed."[400] That is to say, "games are not isolated from their environment, but are intrinsically part of it, participating in the ebb and flow of ideas and values that make up a

[399] Catherine Yeh, *Shanghai Love*, 170.
[400] Salen and Zimmerman, *Rules of Play: Game Design Fundamentals*, 94.

larger cultural setting."[401] These games existed in their own time and were played by real people who were shaped by their historical time they experienced. Therefore, these games say something meaningful about the players and the world they live in. Sometimes games can tell us the readers' opinions about the characters and readerly response of the novel; sometimes the gameplay also shaped the cultural identity of the players. The game give a realm of imagination so that the players would transform the city they lived in into a dreamland like the garden in the novel.[402] Most essentially, I argue that these games are also a medium of communication that cast a nostalgic look upon the imperial past. On one hand, the players were apparently motivated to play the games because they offer them meaningful ways of imagination and fantasy. On the other hand, the games provide a comforting world for those who feel a deep sense of frustration and dissatisfaction in the wake of dynastic fall.

These players are, no doubt, devoted readers of the novel. An extreme example is Zou Tao, for whom the boundaries between real life and gameplay were almost completely erased so that we cannot separate his real life, the characters of the novel, his own novel and his biographies.[403] Gameplay of the novel provided many players a compensation mechanism to voice their ambiguous feelings toward the end of the Qing court and the new social order. These games permitted an interactive model and creative linkage between past, present, and future. In this way, games and play came to fulfill important functions socially and individually.

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[401] Salen and Zimmerman, *Rules of Play: Game Design Fundamentals*, 572.
[402] For example, the link between the city Shanghai and the Grand View Garden is staged in many courtesans' role-playing games as well as in the courtesan novels of the time. Catherine Yeh takes Zou Tao's *Shanghai Dust* as an example, and argues that "the courtesans became part of the city's self-staging as a marvelous playground." Catherine Yeh, *Shanghai Love*, 171.
[403] Ce Yang, "Ping haishang chen tian ying," 191-192. Catherine Yeh mentions that Zou Tao's own novel, an imitation work of the *Dream*, is based on his own life and his relationship with a courtesan in Shanghai. Yeh, *Shanghai Love*, 191-192.

Gameplay as Cultural Play

The authors of the game manual not only witnessed these changes, but also were affected by the cultural and political transformations. These games were not concerned with any social relevance or collective engagement. These players that exerted themselves in the pursuit of the recreational activities with other cherished companions may in fact be full of worries about the troubled times, eventful days, and social chaos. In the widely accepted narrative of the 1890s and especially the years after the 1898 reform, the principal driving force of modern Chinese literature is a call for a new writing practice that is concerned with immediate social ills and aimed for political reform and overall prosperity. Such a discourse was manifested and embedded within writing of polemical essays, debates, articles and speeches in the newspapers and journals, at least this is what we read from the literary history. What we see in these games is what we tend to neglect: the actual recreations and entertainment designed and played for amusement, fun and pleasure, and the creative energy that was cherished and shared among a small clique— trivial things and texts that were appreciated for its novelty. All of these facets were marginalized and neglected in cultural and literary history. They were buried and forgotten since the vast scholarship on this period tends to surround their debates on Liang Qichao's 梁啓超(1873-1929) advocacy of new literature and "poetic revolution."[404] What is interesting about the games is precisely the fact that they were uncalled for and yet they were written, published, played, and sometimes hard to be played. This was true in many compilations of *shuobu* 說部

[404] The historical significance of Liang Qichao's proposal for a poetic revolution raises many questions that may be examined in connection with the 1898 reform. Tang Xiaobing argues that the "concept of a 'poetic revolution' would continue in different forms and guises through the large part of the twentieth century." See Xiaobing Tang, "'Poetic Revolution,' Colonization, and Form at the Beginning of Modern Chinese Literature," in *Rethinking the 1898 Reform Period: Political and Cultural Change in Late Qing China*, ed. Karl, Rebecca E. and Peter Gue Zarrow (Harvard University Asia Center, 2002), 245-65.

(miscellaneous notes and stories), or *xiaoshuo* 小說 (small talks), compilations of *xiaopin* 小品 (small item or small piece) and *biji* 筆記 (random notes) during the late Qing and early republic period.

Producers and publishers of these game texts were well aware of the peripheral status these texts represented. Beyond the category of older literary norms of the four branches, these game texts were also at odds with the mainstream modern literary discourse or the agenda of late Qing reforms and New Culture Movement. These game texts, neither deemed as mainstream by traditional category of literature nor serving a utilitarian function for social or political agendas, represented the dilemmas of the players who produced and played them at this historical junction. Some of their men of letters were urban professionals who earned their salary through "plowing the pen" for newspapers and journals in urban centers; some of them were the prestigious and influential loyalists to the imperial dynasties of the bygone ages. Some of them were cultivated in traditional arts like calligraphy, painting and seal carving and still remained as the tastemakers of their time. They distained Confucian orthodoxy and learned foreign language and culture; however, they also felt anxious that the-social changes rapidly brought about by modernity might mean a total westernization/modernization at the cost of the traditional culture from the past.

As texts of frivolity and triviality, production and play of these games represented a tradition of Chinese elite leisure culture that is not in conflict with the Confucian orthodoxy of the imperial age nor with the radical cultural reforms that emphasize the sociopolitical functions of literature in the Republican period. These games promise, at times, to function as sacred place of traditional literati culture.

Since the late nineteenth century, modern leisure activities and new forms of entertainments started to attract the young generations. They might go to a theater house instead of enjoying traditional Chinese drama play, go to a foreign restaurant or western coffee shop, stroll in horse-drawn carriages, or watch shows in foreign magic shows or circus.[405] Traditional types of games and literary games were gradually replaced by these modern entertainments in the public sphere since the 1880s. The traditional literati games such as linked-verse composition, riddles, drinking games, card games and domino games that take place in an inner private setting—a garden or a household, were gradually replaced by billiards or bowling in modern teahouses or the public leisure arenas in the city. [406]

Modernity in leisure culture is represented in many different forms. On a superficial level, the leisurely entertainment was moved away from a private social setting into the public sphere, making up a modern lifestyle for the urban dwellers in the major cosmopolitan cities. From the mid-19th century, wealthy merchants became a new uprising class, a driving force participating in almost every area of cultural and social changes, including the modern leisure industry and entertainment business.[407] Modern leisure facilities— teahouses, western-style cafes, restaurants, game rooms, public gardens, wine shops, opera houses, opium dens, courtesan houses and theaters—catered to the taste of the rising class and they sprang up in the urban centers like Shanghai.[408] Traditional literary games gradually gave way to these fads. As Catherine Yeh states: "to make money was the founding principle of this city. And the city made

[405] Jiarong Lu, "Leisure and modernity in late 19th Century Shanghai," (M.A. thesis, University of Essex, 2018), 32; Yeh, *Shanghai Love*, 307.
[406] Lu, "Leisure and Modernity in Late 19th Century Shanghai," 49.
[407] The new elites might include merchants and compradors and their influence on every arena of social practices are discussed by scholars in different fields. For example,
[408] Yeh, *Shanghai Love*, 307.

entertainment into a money-making enterprise." [409] In modern China, new forms of recreation and entertainments emerged and they are less about writing and reading than about spending and consuming.

In this modern city, the new elites of merchants and compradors played an ever more important role in determining the new order of the world. As Lu Jiarong argues: "modern entertainment culture not only changed the ordinary Chinese people's perception of leisure and wealth, but also opened up a new horizon of desire for material goods, and taught them how to enjoy modern things."[410]Now, leisurely pursuits were less connected to literary refinement and literary consumption, but more to the orientation of modern material culture, commercial consumption and transaction of commerce. If we view the novel Dream of the Red Chamber as an elaboration of Chinese elite leisure activities, then that leisure culture is forever gone. The new forms of leisure culture and entertainment industry gradully pushes traditional games into a marginalized position. For readers of the day, they represented an essential part of the traditional cultural legacy at the verge of loss and amnesia.

I think one reason for the games' appeal and enduring interest to today's readers is the interaction and social bonding they create: they are games to play and play happened in an interactive model. Unlike reading a commentary writing or a visual representation of the novel, play implies a social play. What will happen in a game is always uncertain and they are to be created by players themselves. Some of these games prove to be still of great interest to today's readers. For example, the illustration of game board "Dream Tour of the Land of Illusion" was recycled and redesigned by today's readers and sold as games for today's interested readers

[409] Catherine Yeh, "The life-style of four Wenren in late Qing Shanghai," 427.
[410] Lu, "Leisure and Modernity in Late 19th Century Shanghai," 53.

through crowdfunding and it was a great success[411]

Afterthoughts

This dissertation has brought to light a body of game texts that have been neglected, marginalized and even forgotten in modern literary and culture history. In writing this dissertation, I am not just looking at games from the point of view as a literary scholar; I also am driven by the feeling that these games are fun and interesting to play. They are recreations and entertainments. I believe that despite the breathtaking pace of recent technical advancement in computer programing and video gaming, these games will appeal to today's readers of *Dream of the Red Chamber*. There is a sense of readerly pleasure in looking at and playing these games. There is a vast kind of experiences these games can produce in readers and players—the desire and pleasure of playing, the engagement of the reading in the social act of play, the social bonding and connection with other readers via the communicative and collaborative experience of game play. Moreover, these games are capable addressing the more profound themes of the novel in a manner unlike any other form of media through the interaction and choices of the players. The game rules and game design are infinitely detailed, richly rendered, and yet able to create play experience of wonder, uncertainties and imagination in an open-ended, procedural and collaborate manner.

In writing this dissertation, I try to bring to my readers what is fun and interesting about these games; he pleasure that readers could experience and the dynamic system that games provide for its players to inhabit. Like any other media, games have a unique aesthetic, which is

[411] This project is collaborated between two avid readers of the novel. They based the design on the board game of the late Qing period and remade the game through computer modeling. The set of game board comes with paraphernalia such as character tokens, paper moneys, etc. The project raised money through crowdfunding and was very successful as the website shows. See https://z.jd.com/project/details/88807.html assessed November 10th, 2020.

different from visual media, storytelling, drama performance and fictional narrative. More than trivial activities and light-hearted amusement, these games have surprising ways of moving in between the trivial and the profound. Some might see it as mere entertainment or pastime, while others might read the designer' profound understanding of the novel in its unique aesthetics. Upon finishing this dissertation, I hope that interested readers can play these games and have a memorable time together with other devoted fellow readers in earnest play.

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APPENDIX A

A MANUAL OF CARD GAME: *HONGLOU MENG PU* 红楼梦谱

Preface by Wuqiang shanmin 吴羌山民

Digital rendition: http://scalar.usc.edu/works/honglou-meng-pu-1/index

Sanran Zhuren is a descendant of nobles in *Qiantang*. He held *juren* degree and later on entered officialdom. He earns a high reputation in his governance, and is talented and virtuoso in many fields. Whenever he is relieved from official documents, he likes gathering friends for playing and indulging in artistic pursuits, passing the time in "matters of refinement." The reason why Sanran Zhuren writes the game manual is because of the nowadays' gambling games are shallow, vulgar and lack of "taste" and therefore not worth encouraging. Therefore, he changes and deletes some rules, and maintains its basics and modifies its forms, in order to refresh the ears and eyes. The book is divided into two volumes. The card game of *Honglou meng* is an existing one. Sanran zhuren adds and deletes part of the rules for perfection. Reading the manuals can refresh my heart and eyes, and practicing the games can benefit one's spirits and intelligence. The games are fascinating, delightful, and endless of fun. They are totally different from the noisy, boisterous games of "bronze flag" or "plaque nine." It shares similar rules with the popular *ma que* game, however, it multiplies the contrivances and thoughts.

三然主人者,钱塘华胃也,名孝廉,出宰東。都歷治有聲，博學多才。恆於判牘餘暇集眾而遊藝,假韻事以消閒。著有登瀛洲，紅樓夢二譜，命曰朋簪雅聚。三然之意，以為近日博戲之具，俚淺尠味，不足鼓之，乃化而裁之，通而變之，以新耳

目焉。書分上下兩卷，紅樓悉仍舊貫，稍增損之，以臻美…觀之可以曠我心目，習之可以益人神智引人入勝趣味莫窮。較之呼盧喝雉，銅旗牌九之喧嘩紛雜不得同年而語矣。大意與今同行之麻雀相同而思緻倍之。

"General Principle" Six Rules

There are forty-three character-cards of "persons in the dream." Each character-card has it doublet called fan (*shan* 扇)[412], and there are a total of 86 fans. the combination rules are listed as *zhengse* 正色 (principle color suits), *qise* 奇色 (odd color suits) and *chuanhuase* 穿花色 (mixed color suits) here.

To play the game, four people gather together. One person serves as the East and "stays awake" (*xing* 醒) and the other three "fall in a dream" (*rumeng* 入夢). They take their turns as "East" respectively. In the first round, "The East" takes twelve cards and the other players each has eleven cards in hands. Every three cards form into a suit (*se* 色 color) and every four suits claim a winning hand, for example, there are "Four Blessings", "Five Flowers" as well as "Nine Offspring." If the suit is "odd color"(*qise* 奇色) combination, the number of cards in a suit is not rigid (in other words, not necessarily three). When a suit is formed, the cards are put faced down.[413] If the number of cards used in a formed suit is more than three, the player takes the extra cards to complement the number. (For example, if the suit is of four cards, the player takes two cards from the pile).[414]As for the suit of "Twelve Hairpins," there is no need to take any extra cards since it is already a winning hand.

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[412] One possible reason why each doublet is named "fan" is that the each playing card is a long square slip and when holding the cards together, it looks like one is holding an unfolded fan in hands. In this game, the doublet is different from each other in that one is printed with illustration of the character (*hui* 繪) and the other is plain with the text (*su* 素).

[413] This is in contradictory to the way today's mahjong game is played in China. In playing mahjong, if a suit is formed, the player needs to display the suit and show all formed suit to the other players.

[414] This is to make sure that number of the cards in one's hand is always enough to form four suits in total.

Whenever someone has the "*sanxian*" 散仙 (Wandering Immortal) cards (Disenchantment, Buddhist *Mangmang* and Daoist *Miaomiao*) or the card of Baoyu, he or she can not replace the cards with other cards, nor does the card need to be formed into a suit. Whenever someone get the card, put it down and take another card to make up the number. If the four cards themselves form into a suit, it counts as an extra suit. However, when it is formed into a suit, it can be not taken out again. (the fans of "Wandering Immortals" and Baoyu can work as a master card, when the suit needs one regular character-card, any of the four cards can replace the needed card and thus forms into a suit. however, as long as cards of wondering immortals and Baoyu has been counted into a suit, they cannot be taken out and formed into other suits.)

If the suit is formed with "*zhengse*", "*qise*" combination, even if one could not claim a winning hand, the formed suits still win 64 tokens. If the suit is only formed with the last fan taken, the hands win 32 tokens

If the hand is all made of "*chuanhua se"* (穿花色) suits, the number of tokens is the multiple of each cards. The formed suits are complex and interchangeable. For example, the suit of Baoyu, Admantina and Daiyu can be counted either as "Three Jade" or "Elegant Mood of Listening to the Zither" (聽琴佳興). The other cases follow the suit. If one "*chuanhua*" suit forms, and there is other scattered "*qise"* cards that can be combined to the already formed "*chuanhua*" suit, then the newly-formed "*chuanhua"* suit wins half of the original tokens as stipulated.

The value of tokens stipulated in the manual is presumed that the cards are formed of the same type. If the cards are mixed with both the plain type and the illustrated type, then the tokens are halved.

凡例六则

凡梦中人四十三，每牌二扇，共八十六扇，有正色，奇色，花色列后

凡聚四人，一人醒，三人入梦，以次轮转。首家得牌十二扇，二三家各得十一扇，每三成色，四色为成，如四喜五花以至九子，凡在奇色，均不拘扇数成色。另压不现于面，每多一扇，准其照补. 其十二钗等色本合成牌之数无庸补牌。

凡得散仙宝玉不准更代，亦不必成色, 起手得即另压待起, 举次第照数补牌， 如自成色， 不在成牌四色之内，如合凡牌，其另压牌准暗自遞加抽换惟不准重拆入手

凡正色奇色无论成家不成家准其抵算成家各贺六十四筹其以末扇得成者各贺三十二筹

凡穿花色成牌成方算, 准其参互错综曲尽变化如待遇宝玉妙玉本为”三玉仍算听琴佳兴. 余仿此. 又成牌后遇有奇色散见可以成色者, 亦准作穿花, 照原色减半算.

凡算筹均照纯色算如绘素相间均减半算.

正色十三种

***zhengse* (principle color) combination rules, thirteen suits**
http://scalar.usc.edu/works/honglou-meng-pu-1/-34

散仙引
Immortals in the Supernatural Realm
管領情天
(Wandering immortals) governing the heavenly realm of *qing*
茫茫大仕 渺渺真人 警幻仙姑
Buddhist mahasattava impervioso, Taoist illuminate mysterioso, fairy Disenchantment

右色算百二十八籌 重色算百八十四籌
a single suit counts for 128 tokens; a doublet of the suits counts for 184 tokens.

情胎引
Leading all Fetus of *qing*
藍田種玉
Sowing the jade in the Lantian
史太君 王夫人 薛姨媽
Lady Jia, Lady Wang, Aunt Xue
右色算十六籌 重色四十八籌
A single suit counts for 16 tokens; doublets of the suits count for 48 tokens.

情鐘 主色
Devotee of *qing* (master card)
護花使者
Escort of Flowers
寶玉
Baoyu
遇奇色成采
When the fan of Baoyu meets the "*qise*" (odd color) cards, they form a suit.

情淑 上色
Gentility in *qing* (upper grade color)
金閨名媛
Genteel Ladies in Golden Boudoir
黛玉 宝钗 湘云 元春
Daiyu Baochai, Xiangyun, Yuanchun
迎春 探春 宝琴 李玟 李绮
Yingchun, Tanchun, Baoqin, Li Wen, Li Qi.
右得三成色，算二十四筹，重色七十二筹，全色七百六十八筹

Three cards form a suit. One suit counts for 24 tokens; doublets of the same suits count for 72 tokens; if all the nine cards are gathered, the suits count for 768 tokens.

情貞 上色
Fidelity in *qing* (upper grade color)
歲寒松柏
Pine and Cypress Surviving the Cold
李纨 尤三姐 鸳鸯
Li Wan, You Sanjie, and Faithful

情義 上色
Righteousness in *qing* (upper grade color)
知己酬恩
Reciprocation of beneficence for being recognized and appreciated
紫鹃 平儿 宝珠
Nightingale, Patience, Jewel

情幽 上色
Secluded and Exceptional in *qing* (upper grade color)
林下風流
Limpidity and Refinement like the Seven Worthies under the Bamboo Grove
惜春 岫烟 秋纹
Xichun, Xiuyan and Ripple
右色算二十四筹，重色七十二筹
a single suit counts for 24 tokens; doublets of the suits count for 72 tokens.

情憐 中色
Deserving sympathy in *qing* (middle grade color)
紅顏薄命
Rosy-faced beauty slighted by fate
妙玉 香菱 巧姐
Adamantina, Caltrop, Qiaojie

情傲 中色
Haughty minded in *qing* (middle grade color)
幽恨難平
Deep-held hatred hard to be pacified
晴雯 金钏 司棋
Skybright, Golden, Chess

情慧 中色
Discerning in *qing* (middle grade color)
解語名花
Renowned flower good at discerning and untying the knots in others' mind

鶯兒 芳官 小紅
Oriole, Farfumee, Crimson
右色算十六籌,重色四十八籌
A single suit counts for 16 tokens; doublets of the suits count for 48 tokens.

情庸 下色
Mediocre in *qing* (lower grade color)
婦德柔嘉
Female Virtue of Tractability and Docility
邢夫人 尤氏 周姨娘
Lady Xing, Lady You and Aunt Zhou

情移 下色
Shifting and unfaithful in *qing* (lower grade color)
春光別院
Sexual desire towards some others' yard
秦可卿 尤二姐 襲人
Keqing, You Erjie, Aroma

情妒 下色
Jealousy in *qing* (lower grade color)
苦海無邊
Sea of unbound bitterness
王熙鳳 夏金桂 趙姨娘
Wang Xifeng, Jingui, Aunt Zhao
右色算八筹 重色二十四筹
a single suit counts for 8 tokens; doublets of the suits count for 24 tokens.

奇色七種 "*qise*" combination of seven types
http://scalar.usc.edu/works/honglou-meng-pu-1/--qise-gaming-rules

三才 Three Talent
青埂仙緣
Destined meeting with Immortals in the Greensickness Peak
茫茫大士 渺渺真人 寶玉
Buddhist Mangmang, Daoist miaomiao, Baoyu

赤霞舊侶
Old Companion in Court of Sunset Glow
驚幻仙姑 寶玉 黛玉
Fairy Disenchantment, Baoyu and Daiyu

幻境奇緣
Marvelous destiny in the Land of Illusion
驚幻仙姑 寶玉 秦可卿
Fairy Disenchantment, Baoyu and Qin Keqing
右色算百二十八筹，重色五百二十筹
a single suit counts for 128 tokens; doublets of the suits count for 520 tokens.
迷津特渡
Special Escort through the Ford of Error
茫茫大士 渺渺真人 香菱
Buddhist Mangmang, Daoist Miaomiao, and Caltrop

空門淨業
Purification of one's karma in the Gate of Emptiness
妙玉 惜春 芳官
Adamantina, Xichun and Farfumee
右色算六十四筹，重色算二百五十六筹
a single suit counts for 64 tokens; doublets of the suits count for 256 tokens.

姊妹聯芳
Sisterhood in jointed fragrance
李紈 李紋 李綺
Li Wan, Li Wen and Li Qi
尤氏 尤二姐 尤三姐
Lady You, You Er-jie, You San-jie
右色算三十二籌 重色百二十八籌
A single suit counts for 32 tokens; doublets of the suits count for 128 tokens.

四喜 Four Joys[415]

天上人間
Life in the celestial realm
茫茫大士 渺渺真人 寶玉 黛玉
Buddhist Mangmang, Daoist Miaomiao, Baoyu and Daiyu
Buddhist mahasattava impervioso (*mangmang*), Taoist illuminate mysterioso (*miaomiao*)

仙緣接引
Reception and guidance by immortals
茫茫大士 渺渺真人 驚幻仙姑 寶玉

仙緣撮合
Preordained union by the immortals
茫茫大士 渺渺真人 寶玉 寶釵
右色算二百五十六籌，重色千零二十四籌

清修衣缽
Ladies in meditation of Buddhism
驚幻仙姑 妙玉 惜春 芳官
Fairy Disenchantment, Adamantina, Xichun, Farfumee

同証菩提
Obtaining Bodhi (Skt., perfect knowledge of the true *dharma*) in companionship
寶玉 妙玉 惜春 芳官
Baoyu, Admantina, Xichun, Farfumee
右色算百二十八筹，重色五百十二筹

鸞鳳聯翩

[415] "Four joys" refers to "four joys of life" (*rensheng sixi*), is an excerpt taken from Wang Zhu's "poem of four joys". The four joys refers to "The evening of lowery candies in the wedding chamber, the time when the name is written on the golden roster, receiving sweet rain after a long drought, encountering an old friend in a distant land." These lines were commonly used as a primer in late imperial china and have become part of the modern day Chinese vocabulary.

Simurgh and Phoenix in Accompanied and Freely Fluttering,
元春 迎春 探春 惜春
Yuanchun, Yingchun, Tanchun, Xichun
右色算九十六筹，重色三百八十四筹
A single suit counts for 96 tokens; doublets of the suits count for 384 tokens

五花 Five Flowers

大虛正果
Reaching enlightenment in the Illusory Realm of Great Void
茫茫大士 渺渺真人 驚幻 寶玉 黛玉
Buddhist Mangmang, Daoist Miaomiao, fairy Disenchantment, Baoyu, Daiyu
右色算五百十二筹，重色二千零四十八筹
A single suit counts for 512 tokens; doublets of the suits count for 2048 tokens.

六合 Six harmony [416]
仙緣大會
Grant Gathering with the immortals by destiny
茫茫大士 渺渺真人 警幻仙姑 寶玉 黛玉 寶釵
右色算千零二十四籌 重色四千零九十六籌
A single suit counts for 1024 tokens; doublets of the suits count for 4096 tokens.

七星 Seven Stars
方外閒蹤
Folks living beyond the confines of the world
茫茫大士 渺渺真人 驚幻仙姑 寶玉 妙玉 惜春 芳官
Buddhist Mangmang, Daoist Miaomiao, Fairy Disenchantment, Baoyu, Adamantina, Xichun and Farfumee.
右色算千零二十四籌 重色四千零九十六籌
A single suit counts for 1024 tokens; doublets of the suits count for 4096 tokens.

[416] the word *liuhe* 六合 refers the heaven and earth, as well as the four direction—east, south, west and north. In the ancient Chinese epistemological knowledge of the universe, the six connected together represent the all spatial dimensions of the space, therefore representing the whole.

九子 Nine Offspring[417]
幻境重逢
Reunion in Land of Illusion
寶玉 黛玉 元春 迎春 尤三姐 鴛鴦 晴雯 王熙鳳 秦可卿
Baoyu, Daiyu, Yuanchun, Yingchun, You Sanjie, Faithful, Skybright, Wang Xifeng, Qin Keqing
右色算七百六十八籌

十二釵 Twelve Hairpins

閬苑名姝
Fair Ladies in the Resplendent Palace of Land of Illusion
黛玉 寶釵 元春 迎春 探春 惜春 湘雲 李紈 尤三姐 秦客卿 王熙鳳 巧姐

右金釵以牌首如意為誌 成色算二千零四十八籌 遇寶玉加一百二十八籌 遇警幻仙姑同 並遇加三百八十四籌
all of fans of Twelve Hairpins are imprinted with a mark of "*ruyi*" on top of the fans. [418]
The suit counts for 2048 tokens; if the suit meets the fan of Baoyu, a bonus of 128 tokens is added; if the suit meets the fan of fairy Disenchantment, a bonus of 128 tokens is added. If the suit meets both the fans of Baoyu and Disenchantment, a bonus of 384 tokens is added.

瑤池侍女
Servant Maids by the Chalcedony Pool
鴛鴦 紫娟 平兒 寶珠 香菱 晴雯 金釧 秋紋 鶯兒 司棋 小紅 襲人
Faithful, Nightingale, Patience, Jewel, Caltrop, Skybright, Golden, Ripple, Oriole, Chess, Crimson, Aroma
右仕女以著半臂為別成色算千五百三十六籌遇寶玉警幻仙姑同前
A single suit counts for 1536 tokens; if the suit meets Baoyu or/and Disenchantment, it follows suit of the above

[417] *Jiuzi* 九子 refers to the nine offspring of a dragon. It is a common saying in Chinese that the dragon has nine sons and each of them is different. Each is assigned with a numinous animal. The numerology of nine signifies large quantity, it is also an auspicious number. Therefore, the nine sons of dragon is a euphemism, meaning the prosperous offspring of the emperor.
[418] *Ruyi,* is the name of baton or scepter, often hold in hand at court among elegant literati and used by Buddhist monks in varying symbolic fashion. See Kroll, Paul W., et al. *A student's dictionary of classical and medieval Chinese*. 2015.

穿花色十種 "*chuanhua se*" combination of ten types
http://scalar.usc.edu/works/honglou-meng-pu-1/chuanhuase-gaming-rules

如入寶山
(As if) Entering Into the Jeweled Mountain
寶玉 寶釵 宝琴 宝珠
Baoyu Baochai Baoqin and Jewel
右色为四宝，算六十四筹
One suit is called "four treasures" and counts for 64 tokens

玉人覿面
Person with a "jade" (in their name) meeting each other
寶玉 黛玉 妙玉
右色为三玉 算四十八筹
the suit is called "Three Jade" and counts for 48 tokens

蘭契同心
Kindred spirit in Purity and Integrity
以牌首横书四字得三成色三领袖遇亦成色 右色算二十四筹

章成綴錦
woven phrases with colorfully ornamented pattern
以牌首圈内字得四联缀 有情成色 各色列下[419]
each suit is linked by the character in circle in the head of the cards in its order. Every card is also written with a *qing-epithet*, the combinations are listed as follow

refer to Table 5.1

以上各算百九十二筹
All the above combination of fans counts for 192 tokens.
以上共六色皆以牌圈内字連綴成文
the above six combination suits are all formed with the specific character linked in its order.

大观佳興
Elegant Gathering in Prospect Garden
http://scalar.usc.edu/works/honglou-meng-pu-1/daguan-jiaxing

419 According to the gaming rules, my speculation is, for every card, besides the name of character, there is also one character in circle assigned to each character. for example, the character for Baoyu is "*shen*" (luminosity) , the character for Yuanchun is "gui" 貴(nobility, majesty); for Baochai, it is "*fu*" 富(Prosperity) and for Daiyu is 仙(loftiness) . When the four character-cards are gathered, and put in a specific order, it should read as *fugui shenxian* 富貴神仙. The same principle applies to other combination suits in this group

以園中雅集人數恰符成色，各色列下
The following suits are based on the elegant gathering in prospect garden, if all the people involved in these exaltations are gathered, it forms into a suit. All the combinations list as follows.

聽琴 Listening to zither playing
寶玉 黛玉 妙玉
Baoyu, Daiyu, Admantina

詠蟹
Poetry on crab
寶玉 黛玉 寶釵
Baoyu, Daiyu, Baochai

折梅
Picking up the plum blossom
寶玉 寶琴 妙玉
Baoyu, Baoqin, Admantina

聯句
Linked Verse at Concave Pavilion
湘雲 黛玉 妙玉
Xiangyun, Daiyu, Admantina

畫園
Painting the garden
史太君 惜春 寶玉
Lady Shi, Xichun, Baoyu
以上各算六十四
each of the above suit counts for 64 tokens.

赏社
Crab Flower Poetry Club
宝玉 黛玉 宝钗 探春
Baoyu, Daiyu, Baochai, Tanchun

咏梅
Poetry on Plum Blossom
寶玉 寶琴 岫煙 李紋

壽集
Collective Birthday Anniversary Celebration
寶玉 寶琴 岫煙 平兒
Baoyu, Baoqin, Xiuyan, Patience

以上各算九十六籌
All the above suit counts for 96 tokens.

品茶
Tasting the Tea
寶玉 黛玉 寶釵 妙玉 史太君
Baoyu, Daiyu, Baochai, Admantina, Lady Shi

詠菊
Poetry on Chrysanthemum
寶玉 黛玉 寶釵 湘雲 探春
Baoyu, Daiyu, Baochai, Xiangyun, Tanchun

釣魚
Go Fishing
寶玉 探春 岫煙 李紋 李綺
Baoyu, Tanchun, Xiuyan, Li Wen Li Qi
以上各算百四十四筹
each of he above suits counts for 144 tokens.

填词
linked- verse composition games
寶玉 黛玉 寶釵 湘雲 探春 寶琴
Baoyu, Daiyu, Baochai, Xiangyun, Tanchun, Baoqin

風箏
Flying the Kite
寶玉 黛玉 寶釵 探春 寶琴 紫娟
Baoyu, Daiyu, Baochai, Tanchun, Baoqin, Nightingale
以上各算二百五十六筹
Each of the above suits counts for 256 tokens.

詩謎
(composition of) Lantern Riddles on the Lantern Festival
寶玉 黛玉 寶釵 元春 迎春 探春 史太君
Baoyu, Daiyu, Baochai, Yuanchun, Yingchun, Tanchun, Lady Shi

詩令
Drinking games "Choosing the Flower"
黛玉 寶釵 探春 湘雲 李紈 香菱 襲人
以上各算三百八十四筹
Each of the above combination suits counts for 384 tokens
題園
Poetry Endorsement on the Prospect Garden

寶玉 黛玉 寶釵 元春 迎春 探春 惜春 李紈
Baoyu, Daiyu, Baochai, Yuanchun, Yingchun, Tanchun, Xichun, Liwan
以上算五百十二筹
each of the above suits counts for 512 tokens

詠雪
Linked Verses on the Snow
寶玉 黛玉 寶釵 湘雲 探春 李紈 岫煙 寶琴 李紋 李綺 香菱 王熙鳳
Baoyu,Daiyu, Baochai, Xiangyun, Tanchun, Li Wan, Xiu Yan, Bao Qin, Li Wen, Li Qi, Caltrop, Wang Xifeng
以上算千零二十四筹
The above suit counts for 1024 tokens.

以上共十七色以大觀園雅集聯合成彩
The above seventeen combination suits are made up based on the elegant gatherings in Prospect Garden

夢境閒情
Dream Realm and Leisurely Sentiments
以梦中琐事遇合有情成色 各色列下
The following episodes, and trivialities are either what happened in the dream or when there is *qing* is involved. The combination suit list as follows:

露鎖
(Baochai) allows the golden locket to be disclosed
宝钗薛姨妈鶯兒遇宝玉天幸 贺六十四籌黛玉遇合含酸 免賀 照罰

Bao-chai, Aunt Xue, and Oriole meets Baoyu counts as a “heavenly blissful meeting,” and wins a facilitation of 64 tokens. If meet with Daiyu, who bears bitter feelings , the felicitation is removed and punished with same value of tokens.

代繡
Sewing Embroidery in Substitute
寶钗遇寶玉于襲人處奇遇 贺四十八籌 黛玉遇合含酸 免贺 照罚 遇湘云解 免罰賀九十六籌
Baochai meets Baoyu at Yiren counts as “marvelous meeting,” wins a felicitation of 48 tokens; if meets Daiyu, who bears bitterness, the felicitation is removed and a punishment of same value of tokens are taken; if meets Xiangyun, the punishment is released and congratulated with 96 tokens.

送扇
Sending the fans
寶玉黛玉遇襲人露情 罚四十八筹
Baoyu , Daiyu meeting Aroma, Baoyu reveals his innermost feelings (towards Daiyu) to the wrong person—Aroma. This suit is punished 48 tokens.

賜串
(Yuanchun) bestow the bracelet (to Bao-chai)
寶钗寶玉元春遇有喜 賀四十八筹 黛玉遇合含酸 免贺照罚
Baochai, Balyu and Yuanchun meet, counts as a blissful event and wins a felicitation of 48 tokens. If they meets Daiyu, who holds bitter feeling, no felicitation and a punishment of the same amount of tokens is taken.

窺睡
(Daiyu and Xiangyun) peeking (through the gauze window) at Baoyu's sleep
宝玉遇湘云黛玉奇遇 贺四十八筹
Bayou ran into Xiangyu and Daiyu, counts as "marvelous encounter", and wins a felicitation of 48 tokens.
袭人遇合含酸 免贺照罚
If the three characters meets Aroma, who bear bitterness , no congratulation and penalty of same value of tokens is taken.

拾麒
(Xiangyun) pick up the lost kylin
湘云宝玉遇于袭人处奇遇 贺四十八筹 黛玉遇合含酸 免贺照罚
Xiangyun, Baoyu meets together with Aroma, counts as "marvelous encounter," and wins a felicitation of 48 tokens; if they meet Daiyu, who bears bitter feelings, no felicitations and punished same value of tokens

聽议
Discussion of the household management in the Reception Room
探春 李纨宝钗遇新政 贺四十八籌 遇趙姨娘口角 免贺罚六十四筹
If Tanchun, Li wan and Baochi meet, they discuss about the new policy on household management, if meet with Aunt Zhao, fall into a quarrel. There will be no felicitation but a punishment of sixty four tokens.

絕甯
Break off any communication
惜春尤氏遇冰炭 罚三十二筹
If Xichuan and You-shi meet, it is like ice meets with burned coal; this suit is punished 32 tokens.

觀棋
Watching over chess-playing
妙玉遇宝玉于惜春处思凡 罚四十八筹
Adamantina meets Baoyu at Xichun's place and thinks of secular matters; the suit is punished 48 tokens.
酬簡
(Baoyu) replying the letter (of Anniversary Greetings from Adamantina)
宝玉妙玉遇岫烟通情 贺四十八筹

Baoyu, Adamantina meets Xiu-yan, who understands and explains the meanings of nom-de-plume in the birthday greeting, wins a felicitation of forty either tokens.

剪髮
(Faithful) cutting her hair off
鴛鴦遇刑夫人不幸罚四十八筹
Faithful ran into Lady Xing, counts as a misfortune and punished with 48 tokens
遇史太君解 免罚倍賀
If the two also meets Lady Shi, the penalty is released and is given felicitation of double the value of tokens (96 tokens).
遇王夫人錯怪 罚十六筹
If the three meet lady Wang, who is wronged (by Lady Shi), a penalty of 16 tokens is taken
遇探春解 免罚照贺
If the four meet Tanchun, the penalty is removed and wins a felicitation of 48.

乞脂
Begging for face powder and rouge
宝玉遇鴛鴦奇遇 贺三十二筹 袭人遇含酸 免贺照罚
Baoyu meets Faithful counts as "marvelous encounter," and wins a felicitation of 32 tokens; if the two meet Aroma, who bears bitterness, no felicitation and punished with same value of tokens.

驚幽
(Faithful) inadvertently interrupts a pair of love-birds's rendezvous
鴛鴦遇司棋逢春 罚三十二筹
If Faithful meets Chess (meeting secretly with her lover), the suit is punished 32 tokens.

贈裙
(Aroma) giving (Caltrop) a new skirt as gift
香菱宝玉袭人 遇 奇遇 贺四十八筹
Caltrop, Baoyu and Aroma encountering each other counts as "marvelous meeting" and wins a felicitation of forty eight tokens.

觀妝
(Baoyu) behold (Patience) putting on make-up with appreciation
平儿宝玉袭人遇 奇遇贺四十八筹
Paitent, Baoyu and Aroma gathering together, counts as a "marvelous encountering" and the suit wins a felicitation of forty-eight tokens.

趺扇
(Skybright) tearing the fans
晴雯袭人宝玉遇口角 罚四十八筹
If Skybright, Aroma and Baoyu meet, they fall into a quarrel; this suit is punished 48 tokens.

病遣
(Lady Wang) sending (Skybright) off by the excuse of illness
晴雯遇襲人王夫人遇讒 罚四十八筹 遇宝玉多情 免罚照賀
If Skybright meet Aroma and Lady Wang, she suffers from being slandered and the suit is punished forty eight tokens. if she meets Baoyu, a creature with care and feelings, the punishment is released and a felicitation of 48 tokens is given in order.

醉眠
(after the nocturnal birthday revel, people in the Green Delight) fall fast asleep in extreme drunkenness
方官 宝玉 晴雯 襲人 遇 奇遇 贺六十四籌
The four cards--Parfumee, Baoyu, Aroma, Skybright are gathered, is a "remarkable encounter", and wins a felicitation of sixty four tokens

喚茶
Asking for serving the tea
小紅遇寶玉天幸 賀三十二籌 秋紋遇含酸 面賀倍罰
Crimson meets bayou, is a "heavenly blessing," whoever get the suit wins a felicitation of 32 tokens; if the two meet Ripple, who bears bitter feelings, no felicitations but double the punishment of tokens

墜井
(Golden) end her humiliation in death by downing herself in the well
金釧遇寶玉 王夫人 冤遇 罰四十八籌
Golden meets Baoyu and Lady Wang, is a resentful encounters because Lady Wang wrongs Golden. The suit is punished 48 tokens.

試夢
Experiment in the act of love in the dream
襲人寶玉遇秦可卿 試情 賀四十八籌 遇警幻仙姑同並遇 賀百二十八籌
Aroma, Baoyu meets Keqin, experiment in the act of love, wins a felicitation of 48 tokens; if also meets fairy Disenchantment, wins a felicitation of 128 tokens.

同車
Taking the same carriage
王熙鳳寶玉遇 有喜 賀三十二籌
If Wang Xifeng meets Baoyu, counts as a "bliss"and wins a felicitation of 32 tokens.

術魘
Witchcraft to the assaults of daemons
寶玉王熙鳳遇趙姨娘 遇 罰四十八籌 遇茫茫大士渺渺真人解 免罰倍賀
If Baoyu, Wang Xifeng meet Aunt Zhao, the suit is punished 48 tokens; if the three meet Buddhist Mangmang and Daosit Miaomiao, the punishment is released and this suit of four wins a felicitation of 96 tokens.

借刀
Borrowing a wife to kill a person
尤二姐 遇 王熙鳳 冤遇 罰三十二籌 遇平兒解 免罰
You er-jie meets Xifeng is a “vindictive meeting”; the suit is punished 32 tokens. If they meet Patient, the punishment is released.

還劍
Return the sword
尤三姐 遇寶玉 冤遇 罰四十二籌
You San-jie meets Baoyu is a “vindictive meeting”; the suit is punished 32 tokens.

反脣
Talking back in disrespectful manner
薛姨媽遇金桂 口角 罰三十二籌 遇寶釵解 免罰
Aunt Xue meet Jin-gui, falls into a quarrel and the suit is punished 32 tokens; if the two meet Baochai, the punishment is released.

依劉
Living with and depending on Grannie Liu
巧姐遇刑夫人 讎遇 罰三十二籌
if Qiaojie meets Lady Xing, the suit counts as a hatred encountering and is punished 32 tokens.

閒氣鐘靈
以全色純奇成色
Air of Composure and Concentration of Numinous Spirits (Beneath the Heaven)
if all the suits are of “qise” (odd color) suits, this hand of all suits count as a combination and wins another token of 384 tokens.

天成妙合
wondrous enjoining prescribed by heaven
以起手即成為色
If someone’s cards form into a stipulated combination in the original order without any interference or adjustment, this hand of cards counts as a suit.
右色算七百六十八籌 二三家五百十二籌
“right color” counts for 768 tokens, and for the second or third player, it counts for 512 tokens.
臨風舒錦
spreading out the patterned twill in the wind
以全色純繪成色
This combination forms if all the suits are of illustrated cards.
右色照原色倍