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THE COMPOSITION OF *QING SHI* (THE HISTORY OF LOVE) IN LATE MING BOOK CULTURE

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L'enciclopedia non intende registrare ciò che realmente c'è ma ciò che la gente tradizionalmente ritiene che ci sia – e pertanto tutto ciò che una persona istruita dovrebbe sapere, non solo per conoscere il mondo ma anche per comprendere i discorsi sul mondo.¹

Umberto Eco

*Abstract*²

This paper examines the appropriation and re-elaboration of the traditional encyclopaedic discourse in the discursive practice that gave form to the late Ming anthology of narratives *Qing shi* (History of Love, ca. 1628–1630). It focuses on the analysis of elements of the paratextual apparatus, such as titles and intertitles, internal textual markers and the prefaces, in order to outline the main aspects of the literary tradition running through the composition of the *Qing shi* in the context of late Ming print culture.

This paper examines a few key features of the literary tradition and publishing culture that gave form to the late Ming (1573–1644) anthology of narratives *Qing shi* 情史 (The History of Love, ca. 1628–1630),³ attributed to Feng Menglong 馮夢龍 (1574–1646), which is celebrated as one of the most repre-

1 Eco, 2007: 35.

2 I would like to thank Lee Cheuk-yin, Angelika Messner and Paolo Santangelo for their comments on earlier versions of this paper. I am deeply grateful to the editor, Roland Altenburger, and the two anonymous reviewers of the present journal for their extremely helpful comments and suggestions. I dedicate this paper to the memory of Professor Tang Jiuchong 唐久龍 (1944–2012).

3 The title has also been translated as “Anatomy of Love” (HANAN, 1981: 95–97) and “Archive of Love” (VITIELLO, 2011: 3). Unless otherwise stated, all translations are mine.

sentative documents of the so called “cult of *qing*” in late Ming culture.⁴ By using the term “history” in the translation of the main title of the work I aim to highlight the encyclopaedic discourse inscribed in the collection. As I will demonstrate further on in this paper, this notion of history is strictly linked to those of the encyclopaedia and the archive. Two more titles, other than *Qing shi*, are connected with this work. The first one is *Qing shi lei lue* 情史類略 (Outline of the History of Love, arranged by categories), which is used in many components of the paratext, and which actually is an expansion of the main title by the term *lei* 類 as a marker of the textual genre. The second one is *Qingtian baojian* 情天寶鑒 (Precious Mirror of the Heaven of Love) which, however, certainly is a later editorial variation since it is used only in a late Qing edition dated 1894.⁵

Previous studies of *Qing shi* have mainly focused on the interpretation of the concept of *qing* 情 arising from the narrative texts included in the collection, and from its rich commentarial apparatus. These studies have already reconstructed the main interpretation of *qing* as advocated in the work. Thus, *qing* has been defined as “an ardent, selfless sympathy for others”,⁶ with “relationship” as its main concern and its basic semantic connotation.⁷ The work of Feng Menglong has been described “as a reflection on the phenomenon of love and as the widest-ranging attempt in traditional China to trace back the origins of the reproductive drive, and then to sweep over the whole range of its cultural forms, including the purely hedonistic ones, and its various supernatural re-elaborations”.⁸

However, the importance of the subject matter, particularly within the context of late Ming literary culture, led to a partial overlooking of the ways these contents were arranged, and of the sets of literary and textual norms they conformed to. The present paper primarily addresses the issue of the appropriation and re-elaboration of the traditional encyclopaedic discourse and its influence on

4 The expression “cult of *qing*” is commonly used in contemporary historical and literary scholarship on late imperial China to define the special fascination with the concept of *qing* 情 (feelings, emotions, love) exhibited in literature from the late Ming and the Qing (1644–1911). In these studies, *Qing shi* is always quoted as one of the most representative sources. See CHANG, 1991: 9–18; KO, 1994: 69–112; HSU, 1994: 166–232; HUANG, 1998; EPSTEIN, 2001: 61–119; LEE, 2007: 39–43.

5 At the present stage of my research, I have not examined this particular edition of *Qing shi* yet. For a description, see KIM, 2005: 19–20.

6 HANAN, 1981: 96.

7 MOWRY, 1983: 16.

8 SANTANGELO, 2007: 123.

the production of narrative anthologies, and it focuses on the analysis of the textual form of the collection, and especially of the various paratextual elements, such as titles and intertitles, internal textual markers and prefaces.⁹ The primary aim is to outline the main aspects of the literary tradition that influenced the composition of *Qing shi*, and to re-contextualize it within the cultural milieu of the late Ming, particularly its rich and heterogeneous print culture.

The Background: Encyclopaedic Discourse and Narrative Collections in the Chinese Literary Tradition

Qing shi is an anthology of more than eight hundred narratives in literary language, for the most part selected from literary and historical sources from the Zhou (1046–256 B.C.) dynasty up to the Ming and only for a minor portion written especially for this collection. The entries are organized into twenty-four categories that, except for two cases, are further divided into sub-sections. Alongside the narrative texts the collection also includes an important introductory and commentarial apparatus composed of two prefaces signed by Wuren Long Ziyou 吳人龍子猶 (Long Ziyou of Wu) and by the designated compiler of the anthology, Jiangnan Zhanzhan Waishi 江南詹詹外史 (The Garrulous Unofficial Historian of Jiangnan), respectively. Both of these pseudonyms are considered as referring to Feng Menglong himself. Moreover, there are the general comments placed at the end of each chapter and more specific comments added to individual narrative items.

The general structure of the anthology rests on the correlation of three elements: multitextuality,¹⁰ categorization and commentary. All of these elements constitute important features of Ming publishing culture. Since the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the Ming printing industry witnessed a remarkable increase in the publication of miscellanies and collected books intended either for the high-brow reading elites of literati and collectors or for a larger middle-brow reading public composed of government students, craftsmen and merchants. This highly heterogeneous composite book production included writings on collecting

9 My definition of the various components of the paratext follows the taxonomy proposed by Genette in his study on the liminal devices of the book. See GENETTE, 1987.

10 My use of the term “multitextuality” is meant to emphasize the quantitative dimension governing the process of accumulation and recycling of earlier texts at the heart of miscellanies and collections in late Ming publishing culture.

and connoisseurship and on the art of living as well as the rules of style and taste, in the forms of *biji* 筆記 (random books) and *xiaopin* 小品 (informal essays),¹¹ daily-use encyclopaedias (*riyong leishu* 日用類書) and popular encyclopaedias (*tongsu leishu* 通俗類書), narrative anthologies and collections in both literary and vernacular language.¹² Despite their obvious dissimilarity in terms of structure, function and audience, these types of texts nevertheless converge in the core features of multitextuality and categorization serving to organize and communicate knowledge. They also testify to the long-standing fascination of Chinese literary culture with issues of classification, embodying what, paraphrasing Northrop Frye, may be defined as an “encyclopaedic impulse”¹³ toward a continuous and unified knowledge, aiming at summarizing all that has been written in one culture up to a particular point in history.

The *leishu* 類書 (category book) was the privileged genre of this kind of totalizing project in Chinese literary culture. The term, probably in use since the Tang dynasty (618–907), was codified in the eleventh century to define works gathering an ensemble of knowledge arranged by categories and composed of extracts from earlier sources.¹⁴ The composition of this kind of texts was related to certain projects of political legitimization, the diffusion of teaching material, and the transmission of practical knowledge, as well as to changes in the means of, and access to, book production. The genre reached its highest level of diversification in terms of number of projects, printing editions and scope of intended audience during the Ming dynasty, when there were not only scholarly projects promoted by the imperial house or by individual scholars, but also popular works of practical knowledge intended for a larger readership.¹⁵

From a bibliographical perspective, *leishu* designated a genre with fuzzy borders, comprising excerpts from textual materials as different as historical documents, philosophical writings, narratives, random writings and belletristic

11 LI, 1995: 276.

12 For a general overview of the publication of multitextual collections and their impact on knowledge accumulation and dissemination, see ELMAN, 2007; LIU, 2006. On the compilation of commented anthologies and their impact on late Ming publishing and literary culture, see CHEN, 2007: 489–530; CHENG, 2008: 79–85; DAL, 2006: 31–34; DONG, 2010: 127–141; REN, 2006a: 29–42.

13 CLARK, 1992: 95.

14 BRETTELLE-ESTABLET / CHEMLA, 2007: 9; DRÈGE, 2007: 19–38. For other aspects of the history of Chinese encyclopaedias, see also the following: LOEWE, 1987; DE WEERDT, 2007: 77; ELMAN, 2007.

15 For a discussion of the interaction of Confucianism and popular educational works in the late Ming, see TADAO, 1970.

works, that taken together could not fit any, or conversely could fit all, of the four main bibliographical categories of books (*jing* 經, *shi* 史, *zi* 子, *ji* 集) and thus required a new designation.¹⁶ The expansion of the genre during the Yuan (1279–1368) and Ming (1368–1644) dynasties, when popular titles of practical or entertaining nature intended for a low-brow readership flourished besides government and literati works, further increased this element of indeterminacy.

The *leishu* tradition played a very important and wide-ranging function in the history of Chinese literature.¹⁷ Besides the primary role in training ornate diction and rhymes, *leishu* provided formal models for the textual organization of extended and accumulated knowledge, which was particularly the case with narrative collections.¹⁸ The most extensive example of this combination of categorization and narrative (*xiaoshuo* 小說) was *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記 (Extensive Records of the Reign of Tranquillity), compiled in five hundred *juan* 卷 at the order of the Song emperor Taizong 太宗 (r. 976–997) in 977 and completed in the following year. *Taiping guangji*, however, was not the first narrative collection arranged by categories. The use of categorization to order narrative entries was a distinct element of the collection *Shuo yuan* 說苑 (Garden of Anecdotes) by Liu Xiang 劉向 (79–8 B.C.) in the Han dynasty (206 B.C.–220 A.D.), and it became a common practice in narrative (and fictional) works from the fifth century onwards, in major works such as Liu Yiqing's 劉義慶 (403–444) *Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語 (New Accounts of the Tales of the World) and Duan Chengshi's 段成式 (ca. 800–863) *Youyang zazu* 酉陽雜俎 (Miscellaneous Morsels from Youyang). As noted by Tian Xiaofei with regard to Liu Yiqing's work, in these texts the categories represent a set of interpretative frameworks for the anecdotes and they imply the compiler's value judgement.¹⁹ Differently from earlier narrative collections, however, in *Taiping guangji* the contents were organized according to a double-layered categorization composed of ninety-two categories and more than 150 sub-categories. Moreover, it assigned a distinct title to each narrative text and indicated the source from which it was drawn. These simple paratextual elements in fact were useful devices to facilitate and speed up consultation, but at the same time they changed the nature of the written documents which now became part of a collective and officially sanctioned work, while the categories singled out by the compilers became the shared lexi-

16 ZHANG, 1985: 1–2.

17 See FANG, 1986; TANG, 2008: 137–190.

18 See QIN, 2002; LIU, 2003.

19 TIAN, 2010: 242.

con of a completed and ordered system of knowledge. The editors of *Taiping guangji* fully exploited the combination of categorization and narrative in order to provide extensive knowledge of an encyclopaedic nature. In this sense, it is both a narrative anthology and a *leishu*, or in Niu Jingli's words, "it was the first official full-length encyclopaedic (*leishuhua* 類書化) narrative anthology".²⁰ Ever since its appearance, *Taiping guangji* exerted great influence on later narrative anthologies. Of all the works dating from the Song (960–1279) to the Qing dynasty listed in Ning Jiayu's survey of narrative collections in literary language, about one third employed a categorical framework, and a few more works have what has been defined as a "para-categorical" (*zhun fenlei* 准分類) structure.²¹

The *Qing shi* between Encyclopaedia and Archive

The *Qing shi* derived from this tradition of categorized compilation of narrative. The work is surely not a *leishu*. In both prefaces it is termed as a "compilation" (*bian* 編).²² Nevertheless, it belongs to the same publishing milieu as the Ming *leishu* and it was meant to serve a similar function: the collection and classification of accounts about phenomena as a form of knowledge.²³

20 NIU, 2008: 1. Qin Chuan also stresses the double nature of the Song compilation, considered both as a *leishu* of narrative quality (*xiaoshuo xingzhi de leishu* 小說性質的類書) and a comprehensive narrative anthology of encyclopedic nature (*leishu xingzhi de xiaoshuo zongji* 類書性質的小說總集). See QIN, 2002: 82. In her monograph on *wenyan* narrative anthologies she defines it as a "narrative encyclopedia in literary language" (*wenyan xiaoshuo leishu* 文言小說類書). See QIN, 2006: 18.

21 See QIN, 2002: 82–84.

22 See FENG, 1993: "Qing shi xu", 1a; "Xu", 2a.

23 In modern reference works on traditional Chinese narrative, *Qing shi* is generally classified either as "a collection of narratives in literary language" (*wenyan xiaoshuo ji* 文言小說集), "a collection of notebook narratives in literary language" (*wenyan biji xiaoshuo ji* 文言筆記小說集), or "collected excerpts of narratives in literary language" (*wenyan xiaoshuo congchao* 文言小說叢抄). See ZHU et al., 2005: 298–299; LIU et al., 2006: 414; NING, 1996: 284. In her study on old narrative collections in literary language, Qin Chuan included it in her overview of narrative anthologies specializing in romantic subjects, following the model of *Yan yi bian* 艷異編 (Tales of Love and Wonder, ca. 1560) by Wang Shizhen 王世貞 (1526–1590), and assigned it to the macro-category of "thematic literary-language narrative collections" (*zhuantixing wenyan xiaoshuo zongji* 專題性文言小說總集), sub-category of "works on romantic topics" (*yanqing zhuanti* 艷情專題). See QIN, 2006: 62–67.

The significance of the classificatory mode for the overall cultural project inscribed in the collection is signalled by the repeated use of the term “category” (*lei* 類) in various components of the paratext, namely in the work’s complete title, which is used in the anthology’s table of contents, in the list of contents for each *juan* and in the title column on the first page of each *juan*. Furthermore, the term *lei* is also used in the intertitle of each *juan*,²⁴ as, for example, “Qing zhen lei” 情貞類 (“Category of Faithfulness in Love”) in the first *juan*. Moreover, in his opening preface the compiler himself provides an explanation for the use of the term *lei lüe* 類略 (“outline by categories”) in the title:

耳目不廣，識見未超，姑就睹記憑臆成書，甚愧雅裁，僅當諧史。後有作者，吾為裨謀，因題曰《類略》，以俟博雅者擇焉。

However, what I myself have heard and seen is not far-reaching; nor are my knowledge and experience particularly impressive. Therefore I could only base this book on what I have seen in records and on my conjectures. It cannot stand comparison with excellent works and it should rather be regarded as an amusing narrative. To indicate my shortcomings to those who will complete it with their compositions in the future, I have named it an “outline by categories” and wait for persons of erudition and elegance to choose their stories from this framework.²⁵

The distinct use of *lei* is what sets the *Qing shi* apart from other literary collections by the same compiler or dating nearly from the same period. If we consider other narrative anthologies in literary language by Feng Menglong, such as *Zhi nang* 智囊 (Sack of Wisdom, 1626) and *Gujin tan'gai* 古今譚概 (Talks on Old and Recent Affairs, 1620), or the collection of popular songs *Gua zhi er* 掛枝兒 (Hanging Branches), also by the same author, as well as works compiled by other authors, such as *Yan yi bian* 艷異編 by Wang Shizhen 王世貞 and *Gen shi* 互史 (Extended History,²⁶ 1626) by Pan Zhiheng 潘之恆 (ca. 1556–1622), we notice that they use *bu* 部 (“part”, “section”) as a unit for the thematic arrangement of contents. The terms of either *bu* or *lei* as the preferable designation of

24 My use of the term “intertitle” follows the taxonomy of paratextual components proposed by Genette. According to Genette, the intertitle (*intertitre*) “est le titre d’une section de livre: parties, chapitres, paragraphes d’un texte unitaire, ou poèmes, nouvelles, essais constitutifs d’un recueil.” GENETTE, 1987: 298.

25 FENG, 1993: “Xu”, 3a–b. The reference to Bi Chen 裨謀, connoting “draft work”, is taken from *Lunyu* (The Analects), XIV.8: “The Master said, ‘In preparing diplomatic orders, Zichan of East Village would have Bi Chen go into the country and draft it, Shi Shu critique and discuss it, the foreign minister Ziyu edit and ornament it, and then finally Zichan himself would mark it with his own unique style.’” See SLINGERLAND, 2003: 156.

26 This is Roland Altenburger’s rendering of the title. See ALTENBURGER, 2009: 132–133.

sections in collected works certainly implied a difference of dimension,²⁷ but in the case of *Qing shi*, the term *lei* is also the main indicator of a particular textual format, the traditional *leishu*, on which it relies to articulate and legitimize its cultural project, that is, the ambition to collect and unite in one work all, or at least the best, representations of the phenomenology of *qing* in order to extend the knowledge on this subject.

The referential function of the collection is further confirmed by the use of the formula *yixia* 以下 (“hereafter”) to introduce the internal sub-divisions within each category and to divide up group narratives into smaller thematic units. This double-layered categorization makes evident the compiler’s efforts to define a finer-grained representation of the attributes and cultural meanings of the subject in question.

Finally, as another textual marker completing this general survey of the paratextual elements adopted in the collection, the use of *buyi* 補遺 (supplement) serves to indicate the inclusion of additional material. The “Supplementary Section” is always placed after the general comment and collects other stories on the same subject grouped according to the chapter’s thematic subsections. It should be noted, though, that of the twenty-four chapters included in the anthology, only three have a supplementary section, and there is evidence that these sections were the result of later revisions of the work, not necessarily by the hand of the designated compiler of the anthology.²⁸ However, taken together, these paratextual markers make evident the assiduous and arguably collective efforts to produce an exhaustive and ever expanding work of knowledge.

Each heading of the 24 chapters of *Qing shi* is composed of three words. The first one is always *qing*, which is used attributively to qualify the next term as “emotional” or “concerning love”. The second term, which is the real component of the categorical framework proposed by the compiler, designates the distinct frame of experience represented in the narratives grouped within that specific category. The last term is always *lei*, serving as genre indicator. For example, the first *juan* is entitled “Qing zhen lei” 情貞類 (“Category of Faithfulness in Love”); the heading of the second *juan* is “Qing yuan lei” 情緣類

27 *Bu* generally extends over more than one *juan*.

28 The Rare Books Collection of Shanghai Library preserves the first volume of a late Ming edition of *Qing shi* printed from woodblocks held by Zengyantang 贈言堂. This edition regularly contains the two prefaces, the general table of contents, the list of contents of the first *juan* and the first *juan*, but it does not provide any evidence for any “Supplementary Section”, neither in the list of contents nor at the end of the first chapter. The publisher Zengyantang was active in the late Ming. See WANG et al., 2002: 13.

(“Category of Predestination in Love”); the third *juan* is “Qing si lei” 情私類 (“Category of Clandestine Love Affairs”); and so on. The middle terms in the chapters’ headings are in many cases common words drawn from the general lexicon of contemporary literary culture. In addition to those just mentioned, the complete list contains *xia* 俠 (chivalry), *hao* 豪 (magnanimity, extravagance), *ai* 愛 (passion), *chi* 癡 (folly), *gan* 感 (touching pathos), *huan* 幻 (illusion), *ling* 靈 (efficacy), *hua* 化 (metamorphosis), *mei* 媒 (matchmaker), *han* 憾 (regret), *chou* 仇 (adversary), *ya* 芽 (sprout), *bao* 報 (reward), *hui* 穢 (debauchery), *lei* 累 (hindrance, misuse), *yi* 疑 (implausibility), *gui* 鬼 (ghost), *yao* 妖 (demon), *wai* 外 (outer, male), *tong* 通 (anthropopathism) and *ji* 跡 (vestige, memory).²⁹

The fixed format of the chapters’ intertitles is not mirrored by the headings assigned to sub-sections, which nevertheless present regular compositional patterns if considered within the context of each individual chapter. Headings used to divide sub-sections are nominal or nominalised labels that index entities populating the world of narrative entries or that, in some cases, offer a one-sentence summary of the main plot. They may refer to narrative entities, such as in the first chapter where the focus of sub-section headings is primarily on women’s social status in male-female relationships: “Fufu jieyi” 夫婦節義 (Chaste and righteous husbands and wives); “Zhen fu” 貞婦 (Faithful wives); “Zhen qie” 貞妾 (Faithful concubines); and “Zhen ji” 貞妓 (Faithful courtesans). Otherwise they may refer to narrative action and events. For example, the second and the third chapters list among their sub-categories phrases that contain logico-temporal operators like the particle *er* 而 (“and”; “but”) and temporal markers such as *xian...hou* 先...後 (“first ... then...”). In the second *juan*, entitled “Qing yuan lei”, the sub-section headings convey narrative events, as in the case of “Yiwai fufu” 意外夫妻 (Unexpected husbands and wives), or they qualify as molecular narratives as in “Lao er qu zhe” 老而娶者 (Such ones who take a wife at old age), “Qi zi ze fu” 妻自擇夫 (Wives choose their own husbands), and “Fufu chong feng” 夫婦重逢 (Husbands and wives reunite). Similarly, in the third *juan*, entitled “Qing si lei” almost all the sub-categories define representations of actions, as in “Xian si hou pei” 先私後配 (First having a clandestine love affair and then mating in marriage), “Si er wei ji pei zhe” 私而未及配者 (Such ones whose clandestine love affairs do not lead to marriage), “Si hui” 私會 (Having clandestine trysts), and “Si bi” 私婢 (Having clandestine affairs with maid-servants). The labels of these headings were the product of the compiler’s prior negotiations with narrative discourse. By pointing out the essential events or

29 See also MOWRY, 1983: 38–148; HSU, 1994: 215–227.

situations of the collected stories, or by attributing qualities to the participants in the narrative world, they define and trigger a distinct set of expectations and allow readers to form and activate complex semantic representations of the narrated experiences on the basis of few textual and linguistic cues. The stories, on their part, offer a large set of experiential repertoires allowing readers to recognize specific elements while still in the making.³⁰ It is precisely in the dynamic relation between what is expected from the reader and the set of experiential models conveyed by narratives that the collection expresses and pursues its encyclopaedic ambition to broaden the reader's world knowledge.

The titles of individual items need to be considered as a final element in order to assess the overall significance of the format of the collection. Following the tradition that began with *Taiping guangji* and was continued by most narrative collections from the Song to the Ming, all entries have their own distinct headings. In some cases, one entry is composed of two narrative items that nevertheless are listed by their individual titles. Nearly all the titles designate the stories' protagonist (either human or non-human) and most often, though not always, refer to the name of the female protagonist. For this reason the anthology can also be defined as a collection of biographies (whether fictional or not) and related to the model provided by the biographical format in historical writing.

The interrelationship between encyclopaedism and history is stated clearly in the anthology's title, where the term *shi* 史 spells out the discursive modality governing the accumulation of texts in the collection. *Shi* is not meant to indicate a chronology of texts arranged according to a temporal sequence. Rather, it defines the actuality of stories as unique events and the law governing their co-existence. Foucault's notion of "archive" offers a useful tool for interpreting the notion of *shi* in this collection. The archive, according to Foucault, is both the law of what can be said and that which determines that the things that are said do not accumulate in an amorphous mass, but are grouped in distinct figures.³¹ However, as Hilary Clark notes, Foucault's "archive" is actually another term

30 On the naming operations of narrative sequences, see HERMAN, 2002: 85–100.

31 FOUCAULT, 1989: 145–146. Vitiello, in his book on homosexuality and masculinity in late imperial China, recently suggested the relationship of *Qing shi* to the archivist modality, referring to Feng Menglong's work as "The Archive of Love". See VITIELLO, 2011: 3. Similarly, in her discussion of encyclopaedias in the 12th and 13th centuries, Hilde De Weerdts associates the increase in the production of encyclopaedias and the use of rubrics as "category" or "category books" to what she defines as the "archival mentality" of Song scholars. See DE WEERT, 2007: 79–84.

for “encyclopaedia”, “that practice institutionalizing both the multiplicity of things to be known and said, and the control of this potentially disordered mass as an organized, intelligible body of knowledge”.³² In this perspective, the title term *shi* captures the process of accumulation and arrangement that lies at the basis of the collection’s general architecture, thereby signalling the interpretative activity that allows the recomposition of individual elements in a broader vision.

Considering the value of the term *shi* in the book’s title, it should be noted that it does not figure as a popular rubric in Ming miscellanies of narratives in literary language. Ning Jiayu’s survey of narrative collections lists about twenty works containing this term in the title, and only in a few cases is *shi* the second term in disyllabic titles. In the case of miscellanies, compilers and editors preferred generic terms such as *bian* 編 (compilation), *ji* 記 (record) and *lu* 錄 (record, history), that were at least nominally closer related to the bureaucratic procedures of registration and accumulation.³³ On the other hand, the word *shi* is found more frequently in the titles of literati books on the art of living and the rules of style and taste, providing manuals and treatises on virtually every object in the milieu of elite culture. According to Li Wai-yee, the general mood of this kind of writings was normative, and therefore the recurrence of words as *shi*, *jing* 經 (canon, classic), *zhi* 志 (record, treatise) and *lu* 錄 (record, history) in the titles

indicate authority: they buttress the claim of these works to define the essential attributes and cultural meanings of the thing in question. In addition, such words suggest that the object described and the account thereof have important political, moral, and metaphysical implications.³⁴

In this perspective, the use of *shi* in the title is a sign of the interstitial position of *Qing shi* in the contest of late Ming publishing culture and literary sensibility. Along with *lei*, it signalled the normative project beyond that of a miscellany that aimed at being more than the *n*th collection of fascinating stories, but rather a tool to broaden the knowledge of the world, quite similarly to a manual or a treaty. However, *Qing shi* differs from a manual or treaty in that its normative endeavour is not achieved through a theoretical exposition of *qing* – at least not

32 CLARK, 1992: 97.

33 The use of these rubrics in the title of narrative collections probably also had an important advertising function; see REN, 2008. The advertising value of a term is, of course, evidence of its cultural significance.

34 LI, 1995: 276.

in the first instance – but rather by clustering sets of narrative – thus first and foremost experiential – examples. Therefore the use of the term *shi* in the title fulfils two fundamental functions: it encapsulates the main cultural project beyond the composition of *Qing shi* and it highlights the compiler's full endorsement of the potential of narrative as a cognitive tool.

Qing and the Dynamics of Fragmented Experience

In anthologies, miscellanies and compilations gathering works by various authors, as in the case of *Qing shi*, there are two orders of text: one is represented by the “original” texts collected in the anthology; the other one is formed by the texts written by the editor that contextualize and arrange the original texts into a new composition designed for a new purpose. This second order of text coincides with, and sometimes exceeds, that which is commonly defined as the paratextual apparatus. It may be simply left implied in the sequence of entries, or it may be elaborated through components such as prefaces, introductions, commentaries and notes.

Much of what makes *Qing shi* a distinct and unique work, and not a static storehouse of earlier narrative texts, is contained in this second order of texts. The two prefaces at the head of the entire collection, the commentaries appended to each chapter, the labels assigned to categories and sub-sections, the principles implied in the ordering of chapters and stories, the dynamics of their interrelations, and to some extent even the titles of the individual entries, constitute what *Qing shi* is as a text and the place where the discourse on *qing* is articulated.

The two general prefaces give a comprehensive account of the cultural project inherent in the collection and provide interpretative clues. Taken together they articulate the dynamic of desire and power characteristic of both the encyclopaedic and the anthological modes of discourse that Hilary Clark defines as the desire to speak and the power to move and to influence an audience.³⁵

The first preface (“*Qing shi xu*”) begins with the categorical statement that “the *History of Love* has been my [lifelong] ambition”³⁶ (*Qing shi yu zhi ye* 情史余志也), in which the term *zhi* 志 (“that to which my mind goes”; “ambition”) synthesizes the volitional and moral urge advocating the cultural project inscribed in the collection. What follows is an exploration of the significance of

35 CLARK, 1992: 98.

36 FENG, 1993: “*Qingshi xu*”, 1a.

this kind of ethical and political “preoccupation” (*zhi*)³⁷ in practical – and strongly emotional – terms, and the acknowledgment of a similar intent in the work by Zhanzhan Waishi:

余少負情癡，遇朋儕必傾赤相與，吉凶同患。聞人有奇窮奇枉，雖不相識，求為之地，或力所不及，則嗟歎累日，中夜展轉不寐。見一有情人，輒欲下拜。或無情者，志言相忤，必委曲以情導之，萬萬不從乃已。[...] 又嘗欲擇取古今情事之美者，各著小傳，使人知情之可久，於是乎無情化有，私情化公，庶鄉國天下，藹然以情相與，於澆俗冀有更焉。而落魄奔走，硯田盡蕪，乃為詹詹外史氏所先，亦快事也。

Ever since I was a young man, I have been endowed with an obsessive sensitivity of feeling. When I meet with friends, I devote to them my utmost sincerity, being at their side in good times as in bad ones. When I know of someone who is in great distress or suffers extreme injustice, I try my best to help him, even if we are unacquainted. And if my efforts are not enough to relieve him of his predicament, I sigh for days, tossing and turning in my bed in sleepless nights. Whenever I find a person rich with emotion, I immediately want to bow before him. Whereas with someone who lacks emotion, and whose intent and language are the opposite of mine, I always feel the need to try to teach him indirectly with my feelings, desisting only when it gets clear that he has no desire to accept them. [...] What is more, I have always wanted to select the finest stories on love, from past and present, and write a short account for each one, in order to let people know the abiding power of feelings, thereby turning insensitivity into sensitivity, and private feelings into public concern, so that everywhere in the empire and in the world people will treat each other with gentleness and affection. I hope that this will lead to a change in the lowly practices of society. However, living in straitened circumstances, I always rush here and there, my studio left abandoned to weeds. Therefore, I was content to know that I had been preceded by the Garrulous Unofficial Historian.³⁸

The desire to speak is the driving force of a cultural and political endeavour aimed at transforming private sentiments and behaviour into matters of public concern, and meeting the compelling demand to include social gentility into the process of self-improvement. According to the preface writer, the world of sentiments needs to be removed from the realm of literary culture for entertainment and made part of a new moral and emotional culture for the sake of education. This program of education on private sentiments and behaviour, which later in the preface is defined as *qing jiao* 情教 (teaching through feelings), turns out to be the justification above the literary project. This particular tone of the miscellany is further elaborated by the compiler himself in the second preface:

37 For this translation of the term *zhi*, see OWEN, 1992: 28.

38 FENG, 1993: “Qingshi xu”, 1a–b, 2b–3a; cf. MOWRY, 1983: 12.

六經皆以情教也。《易》尊夫婦，《詩》有《關雎》，《書》序嬪虞之文，《禮》謹聘，奔之別，《春秋》於姬，姜之際詳然言之。豈以情始於男女，凡民之所必開者，聖人亦因而導之，俾勿作於涼，於是流注於君臣，父子，兄弟，朋友之間而汪然有餘乎。異端之學，欲人鯁曠以求清淨，其究不至無君父不止。情之功效亦可知己。

The teachings in the *Six Classics* are all founded on feelings: the *Changes* hold in high regard the relationship between husband and wife; the *Odes* open with the poem “Ospreys”; the *Documents* include at the beginning a passage on the marriage of Yu; the *Rites* pay close attention to the distinction between marriage completed through either engagement or elopement; and the *Annals*, finally, elaborate on the cases of the Ji and Jiang families. The basic emotional disposition develops from the relation between man and woman. Is this not the place from where all people must begin? Is this not also the reason why the Sages have taught it, so it would not become defective, and therefore it flows abundantly between lord and subject, father and son, elder brother and younger brother, and among friends? Heterodox teachings advocate celibacy in order to attain composure, and in extreme cases they stop only at the point at which one knows no more the meaning of “lord” and “father”. From this fact one may understand the effects of either having or lacking the basic emotional disposition.³⁹

The sentimental education at the heart of the compiler’s literary enterprise is presented here as the fundament of the entire Confucian tradition, as the basic teaching contained in the classics and the fundamental quality permeating all human relationships.

The issue of the power to move and to influence the audience is articulated in the concern about the anthology’s audience. Both prefaces address the issue of readership, though at different levels of depth. In the first preface, Long Ziyou makes only a quick reference to the main topic of the texts collected in the anthology and briefly comments on the general effect the work could have on its readers:

是編分類著斷，恢詭非常，雖事專男女，未盡雅馴，而曲終之奏，要歸於正。善讀者可以廣情，不善讀者亦不至於導欲。

This collection is divided into categories and it deals with matters of strange and unusual nature. Even if the events represented focus mainly on the relations of men and women and they cannot be considered all refined and elegant, in the end they all return to propriety. For those who know how to read it this compilation can help them to enrich their feelings, while those who do not know how to read it will not be led to licentiousness.⁴⁰

Long Ziyou’s concise remark hints at the fundamental moral dimension of the general architecture of the compilation. His argument focuses mainly on the rea-

39 FENG, 1993: “Xu”, 1a–b; cf. MOWRY, 1983: 14.

40 FENG, 1993: “Qing shi xu”, 3a–3b; cf. MOWRY, 1983: 13.

der's moral competence (*shan* 善), or the lack thereof, to grasp the proper meaning of the stories, but it ties it to the interpretative constraints set by the collection itself. Control of and constraint on the reading process become elements of central concern in the second preface, where the author details the different responses and emotional resonances that the chapters are intended to stir in the reader:

是編也，始乎貞，令人慕義，續乎緣，令人知命。私愛以暢其悅，仇憾以伸其氣，豪俠以大其胸，靈感以神其事，痴幻以開其悟，穗累以窒其淫，通化以達其類，芽非以誣聖賢，而疑亦不敢以誣鬼神。辟諸《詩》云興，觀，群，怨，多識種種俱足，或亦有情者之朗鑒，而無情者之磁石乎。

This compilation begins with the chapter on “Fidelity” in order to lead people toward admiring virtue. It continues with the chapter on “Predestination” to help people understand their destiny. The chapters on “Clandestine affairs” and “Passion” will satisfy their cravings, while those entitled “Adversaries” and “Regrettable love” will allow them a venting of their indignation. The chapters on “Magnanimity” and “Chivalry” will expand their hearts, and those on “Efficacy” and “Pathos” will add a supernatural dimension to mundane affairs. The chapters on “Folly” and “Illusion” will help them to attain enlightenment, while those on “Debauchery” and “Hindrance” will strangle their immorality. The chapters on “Anthropopathism” and “Metamorphosis” will enable them to reach out beyond their own species, “Sprouting” is not meant to slander the sages and the worthies, and “Implausibility” does not venture to accuse ghosts and gods, either. Taking as a model what has been said about the *Odes*, that it can be “a source of inspiration”, “a basis for evaluation”, “a means for togetherness”, “a way of resentment”, and that it can “acquaint you with the names of various birds, beasts, plants and trees” – all kinds of phenomena have been covered exhaustively in the present collection. It may serve as a bright mirror for people rich with emotion, and as a magnetite for those without emotion.⁴¹

This excerpt from the second preface is the only discursive elaboration on the concept of composition of this collection. The compiler provides a list of eighteen out of the twenty-four categories included in the anthology, mostly combining them in pairs. He also points out the particular effects these categories he expects to evoke in the audience, and thus he reveals his specific ideas about the significance of the narratives collected in the anthology. The two

41 FENG, 1993: “Xu”, 2a–3b; cf. MOWRY, 1983: 14–15. The judgment on the *Odes* is quoted from *Lunyu* XVII.9: “The Master said, ‘Little Ones, why do none of you learn the *Odes*? The *Odes* can be a source of inspiration and a basis for evaluation; they can help you to come together with others, as well as to properly express complaints. In the home, they teach you about how to serve your father, and in public life they teach you about how to serve your lord. They also broadly acquaint you with the names of various birds, beasts, plants, and trees.’” See SINGERLAND, 2003: 204.

tropes evoked at the end of the passage cited above, the “bright mirror” (*lang jian* 朗鑒)⁴² and the “magnetite” (*cishi* 磁石), may serve to reveal the cultural logic of the collection and materially symbolize the nature and efficacy of the discursive mode captured by the work. By reading the anthology, people who are rich with *qing* will retrieve their own experiences and memories as if watching themselves in a mirror, while for those who lack *qing*, the anthology will serve as a magnetic stone that attracts them with its stories, thereby disclosing to them the efficacy of emotions.

The compiler conceals the criteria he applied to the stories’ order of sequence. With the exception of the first two chapters, the list given in the preface does not reflect the actual arrangement of the topical categories in the collection. Therefore there is an evident disparity between the conception as proposed in the preface and the one as realized in the anthology itself. The opening sentences of the excerpt hint at the arrangement of the categories and assign a normative program to the linear sequence of chapters. This aspect is indirectly confirmed by the twenty-second chapter of the anthology, entitled “Qing wai” 情外 (“Love in the Outer Sphere”, referring to love among males),⁴³ whose internal subdivision similarly follows the overall arrangement of the collection; and also by the final chapter, “Qing ji” 情跡 (“Traces of emotion”), in which the celebration of literature as the timeless human vehicle for expressing *qing* generates an inward turn in the collection and introduces the theme of ending. The next part of the passage in question, however, departs from this linearity of reading as it highlights the effects of correlation and opposition that bundle categories together not according to a linear (or sequential order), but rather based on semantic affinity.

The preface therefore admits the possibility of two distinctly different reading processes: one reflects the static model of the *leishu* tradition, in which categories define discrete areas of experience that are closed in themselves, as single elements of a cumulative system of knowledge; the other one highlights the dynamic and creative interplay of the categories in which comparison, resonance and memory serve the configuration of a multidimensional space opened up by the dialectics of continuity and discontinuity and the centripetal and centrifugal forces that regulate the relations between the parts and the whole.

42 The mirror (*jian* 鑒) was a figure traditionally associated with History.

43 The term *wai* 外, “outer”, was used in many compounds associated with male homoeroticism. For a discussion of this term in connection with homosexuality see VITIELLO, 2011: 39–43 and 220, n. 122. For a discussion of the meaning of *qing* based on the chapter “Qing wai” of the *Qing shi*, see SONG, 2002.

Qing shi and its Predecessors

The anthology *Qing shi* emerged from a world of letters and from a publishing culture that was fascinated by the multiple and complex implications of the concept of *qing*. The philosophical revalorization of this notion had begun around the mid Ming in the works of literati thinkers such as Yang Shen 楊慎 (1488–1559), Li Zhi 李贄 (1527–1602) and the members of the Taizhou 泰州 school of thought. In the sixteenth century it quickly gained enthusiastic support in the field of literary creation.⁴⁴ Several decades before *Qing shi* was published, the famous playwright Tang Xianzu 湯顯祖 (1550–1616) already had celebrated the primacy of *qing* in all matters of human affairs, and its boundless power. His masterwork *Mudan ting* 牡丹亭 (The Peony Pavilion), relating the romantic union of the cloistered maiden Du Liniang 杜麗娘 and her lover, the scholar Liu Mengmei 柳夢梅, assigned to *qing* a transcending power that could cross the boundaries of life and death, highlighting the relation between *qing* and the perpetual renewal of life. In the same period this philosophical revalorization and literary reinterpretation of *qing* was supported by the popular fascination with the theme of love in literature, which prompted the publication of a significant array of narrative miscellanies and popular encyclopaedias on romantic subjects.

Qin Chuan traces the origin of this romantic trend in classical narrative collections to Wang Shizhen's *Yan yi bian* 艷異編 (Tales of Love and Wonder). She notes that Wang's work was the first to employ such an explicit term as *yan* 艷 (amorous) in the title. Moreover, it gained so much popularity on the contemporary book market to prompt a number of sequels, such as *Gu yan yi bian* 古艷異編 (Ancient Tales of Love and Wonder), *Guang yan yi bian* 廣艷異編 (Enlarged Tales of Love and Wonder, ca. 1604–1607) by Wu Dazhen 吳大震 (ca. 1543–1612), *Xu yan yi bian* 續艷異編 (Sequel to Tales of Love and Wonder, ca. 1618), down to the Qing-dynasty *Yan yi xin bian* 艷異新編 (New Tales of Love and Wonder) by Yu Da 俞達 (d. 1884).⁴⁵ It should be noted that Wu Dazhen's *Guang yan yi bian* evidently was one of the main sources used by the compiler of *Qing shi*. The two collections share more than one hundred narra-

44 See CAI, 1996; HUANG, 1998.

45 QIN, 2006: 62–65. Most critics now agree that *Xu yan yi bian* actually was a selection based on *Guang yan yi bian*. On the dating and literary influence of both miscellanies in the late Ming period, see HAN, 2005; REN, 2006b.

tives, and what is even more important, most of the shared pieces belong to a limited number of categories.⁴⁶

The term *yan* also appears in another, slightly earlier anthology of narratives, namely Lu Shusheng's 陸樹聲 (1509–1605) *Gong yan* 宮艷 (Palace romances), which collects, and comments on, narratives on romantic episodes concerning the lives of famous palace women, in particular of Zhao Feiyan 趙飛燕 (ca. 32–1 B.C.) and Yang Guifei 楊貴妃 (719–756).⁴⁷

Wang Shizhen's work was also arranged by category, along the lines of *Taiping guangji*, but it did not include the term *qing* among its rubrics. In fact, in the sequels to this text, *qing* appears as a categorical label only in *Guang yan yi bian* and *Xu yan yi bian*, both of which included “Qinggan” 情感 (“Feelings”) among their sections. The term *qinggan* had previously been employed as a thematic rubric in the Tang-dynasty collection *Ben shi shi* 本事詩 (Anecdotes behind Poems), by Meng Qi 孟榮 (fl. 841–886), as well as in *Taiping guangji*, where it designated a generic category of stories about strong sentiments and emotions. Its adoption in the sequels to *Yan yi bian* continued this thematic tradition, but also testified to the growing appeal of this particular subject in late Ming book culture.

Despite its popularity as a theme, *qing* was rarely used in the titles of anthologies of narratives. Among the major popular miscellanies on romantic subject matter published during the Wanli 萬曆 period (1573–1620), only Yu Xiangdou's 余象斗 (ca. 1561–1637) *Wanjin qinglin* 萬錦情林 (Myriad Brocades of the Forest of Sentiments, 1598) includes the word *qing* in the title. Another anthology, *Xianqing yeshi* 閒情野史 (The Unauthorised History of Being Unruffled)⁴⁸ was published around 1630 by a man named Jin Jing 金鏡 (fl. 1630s), by the name of the famous scholar Chen Jiru 陳繼儒 (1558–1639), who actually only wrote a foreword and some comments to this work.⁴⁹

One important exception, exerting significant influence on the composition of *Qing shi*, was Song Cunbiao's 宋存標 (ca. 1601–1666) *Qing zhong* 情種

46 See HAN, 2005: 91–92.

47 Gao Ru's 高儒 (fl. 1530–1560) catalogue *Baichuan shuzhi* 百川書志 (Baichuan's Register of Books, 1540) includes a reference to a probably slightly earlier narrative anthology titled *Yanqing ji* 艷情集 (Collection of Romances) by a scholar named Lei Shiqing 雷世清. The work is now lost and its circulation in the Ming dynasty was probably very limited. See GAO, 1957: 90; cf. NING, 1996: 232.

48 I follow Greenbaum's translation of the title. In this case, the word *qing* is not specifically related to the semantic sphere of love. See GREENBAUM, 2007: 198.

49 On this anthology, see XUE, 1995: 199; cf. GREENBAUM, 2007: 198.

(Seeds of Emotion, or, Types of Emotion, preface 1626).⁵⁰ This work collected writings of various types, from dictionary-style entries to short stories and quotations by contemporary scholars. The first *juan* is a sort of literary dictionary indexing quotations, extracts and stories on emotion-related subjects derived from the entire Chinese literary tradition up to the Ming. The quotations are divided into several categories, such as “Mai you chu” 埋憂處 (Where sorrows are buried), “You qing chi” 有情痴 (Follies of love), “Qing yu” 情語 (Discourses of love), or “Wang xiang” 妄想 (Vain hopes). They are generally very short, similar to titles or short abstracts of narratives. For example, listed among the entries in the first category of “Mai you chu”, we find items such as “Mingfei cun” 明妃村 (The village of Mingfei), “Lüzhu lou” 綠珠樓 (The tower of Lüzhu), “Yanzi lou” 燕子樓 (The swallow pavilion), “Xi Shi zhong” 西施冢 (The tomb of Xi Shi), and “Mawei” 馬嵬 (Mawei). All of them refer to places associated with famous and beautiful women of the past: “Mingfei cun” referred to the native place of Wang Zhaojun 王昭君, the celebrated concubine of Emperor Yuan 元 (r. 48–33 B.C.) of the Western Han dynasty, who was sent to the Xiongnu as part of the Han politics of alliances through marriage; “Lüzhu lou” alluded to the place where Lüzhu, the favourite concubine of Shi Chong 石崇 (249–300), committed suicide in order to avoid being taken by Sun Xiu 孫秀 (d. 301); “Yanzi lou” was the name of the pavilion built by the Tang dynasty military governor Zhang Yin 張愔 for the beloved courtesan and poet Guan Panpan 關盼盼 (d. 820); “Xi Shi zhong” referred to the place where the legendary beauty Xi Shi lived with Fan Li 范蠡 after the fall of the state of Wu 吳 in the Spring-and-Autumn period; and finally Mawei was the place name of the courier station where Yang Guifei 楊貴妃, the beloved consort of Tang emperor Xuanzong 玄宗 (r. 712–756), was executed to appease the imperial guards’ anger against her family during the An Lushan Rebellion. The second category, “You qing chi”, lists entries such as “Rou yi xi jun” 肉遺細君 (Keeping the meat for the wife), from the biography of Dongfang Shuo 東方朔 (ca. 160–93 B.C.E.) in the *Hanshu* 漢書, and “Dai yue Xixiang xia” 待月西廂下 (Awaiting the moon on the western porch), alluding to the opening line of the poem “Mingyue sanwu ye” 明月三五夜 (The Bright Moon of the Fifteenth) in Yuan Zhen’s 元稹 (779–831) *Yingying zhuan* 鶯鶯傳 (The Story of Yingying). The second *juan* contains short discussions, reminiscent of *biji* 筆記 style, on a variety of topics and anecdotes, including quotations from contemporary literati such as Chen Jiru and

50 See Song Cunbiao’s preface, dated 1626. On *Qing zhong* and its compiler Song Cunbiao, see KIM, 2005: 122–126; LUO / ZHU, 2005; ZHANG, 2008.

Tan Yuanchun 譚元春 (1586–1637). Classical tales by Chen Jiru and Song Maocheng 宋懋澄 (ca. 1569–1622) form the bulk of *juan* three to six, while the last two chapters contain miscellaneous poems and prose writings, most of which are commented on by Chen Jiru.

However, despite its important referential function, *Qing zhong* lacks the overall structural unity of *Qing shi*, appearing more like a collection of random notes and literary texts, unsystematically arranged, and probably intended for circulation among a small circle of readers. The prominent use of the term *qing* in the title evidently was significant to the literary milieu that produced this kind of text. The work almost certainly served as an important material source for Feng Menglong in compiling his collection, but did not gain any comparable degree of popularity and circulation. The only extant edition of Song Cunbiao's work is, to my knowledge, the woodblock edition printed in the Tianqi 天啓 reign (1621–1627) by Weng Shaolu 翁少麓,⁵¹ now held in the Rare Book Collection of the National Library of China in Beijing.⁵² The publishing history of *Qing shi*, on the contrary, is considerably longer and richer. As already mentioned, the work was published during the late Ming, as demonstrated by the Zengyantang edition held in the Shanghai Library. During the Qing dynasty, it was printed – probably at the beginning of the eighteenth century – by the famous printing shop Jieziyuan 芥子園 in an edition in 24 *ce* 冊 (fascicles), and later it was repeatedly reprinted on the basis of this edition. Several Qing editions of *Qing shi* state on the front cover page that the text is based on “woodblocks held by the Mustard Seed Garden” (*Jieziyuan cang ban* 芥子園藏版). At my present stage of research, I have been able to find at least two editions based on the Jieziyuan woodblocks, one in 10 *ce* and the other one in 14 *ce*. Another Qing edition in 12 *ce* was printed using woodblocks held by the publishing house Dongxitang 東溪堂. A sort of pocket edition in 12 *ce*, measuring 16,5x11 cm, a format that was clearly smaller than other editions, was published in 1848 by Jingluntang 經論堂, while lithographic editions enriched with illustrations were printed in 1909 and 1912 by Ziqiang shuju 自強書局 and Shanghai shuju 上海書局, respectively, with the title *Huitu Qing shi* 繪圖情史 (The Illustrated History of Love). Both editions comprise 6 *ce*. Another small-size woodblock edition, similar to the one by Jingluntang, was published by a private printer signing as Qingyin shantang 情隱山堂. In this edition, the

51 Weng Shaolu, a native of Nancheng, was a commercial publisher and the owner of the printing shop (*shufang* 書坊) Feiyulou 霏玉樓 in Jinchang, Suzhou. See QU, 1999: 491.

52 See BEIJING TUSHUGUAN, 2000: 23.

chapters 3 and 17 were censored. Finally, one Japanese edition in three volumes, based on a selection of stories from the *Qing shi*, was published in 1878 in Tōkyō by Shōzandō shoho 松山堂書鋪 with the title *Jōshi shō* 情史抄. A second reprint of this work followed in 1905. The number of editions and the number of copies of *Qing shi* that have been transmitted attest to the popularity of the work during the Qing dynasty and the early Republican period. Changes in the textual format, moreover, help shed light on the distinct cultural significance of this work and its theme in different periods. The elegant Jieziyuan edition, in 24 fascicles, was the expression of a refined literati milieu still fascinated with the culture of sentiments that had flourished during the late Ming, and with its philosophical implications. At the other end of the temporal frame, editions from the late Qing and the early Republican period show a major trend toward the popularization and the commercial exploitation of a new and different sentimental sensibility.

Conclusions

The textual format of *Qing shi* integrated a significant combination of editorial elements developed over decades, from the Wanli period onward.⁵³ The work appealed to an audience already familiar with this kind of miscellaneous texts and romantic subject matter. Most of the stories reproduced in *Qing shi* had already been collected in earlier and contemporary narrative anthologies and popular encyclopaedias. These stories, passed on from one collection to another, combined to form a treasury of shared knowledge and became the common and marketable capital of the contemporary culture of sentiments.

53 The name of one of the commentators who sign the general comments at the end of each chapter is another textual element the *Qing shi* derived from other late Ming anthologies. From chapter one to eight, these commentaries are alternately signed by “Qing zhuren” 情主人 (The Master of Emotions) or by “Qing shi shi” 情史氏 (The Compiler of the *History of Love*), while from chapter nine onwards, all chapters are signed by “Qing shi shi”, except for chapters 15 and 17. The use of the term *shi shi* 史氏 for the name of commentators was rather common in narrative miscellanies, and it was meant to emphasize the pseudo-historiographical character of the work. E.g., Mei Dingzuo 梅鼎祚 (1549–1615) used the name “Nüshi shi” 女史氏 (The Historian of Women) to sign comments in his *Qingni lianhua ji* 青泥蓮花記 (Record of Lotusess Transcending the Mud, 1600), while in *Gen shi*, Pan Zhiheng uses “Gen shi shi” 互史氏 (The Compiler of the *Extended History*).

Qing shi emerged from the need to systematically organize and re-semanticize this vast number of texts into distinct new frames of interpretation. The anthological format and the encyclopaedic mode of discourse were essential components of the cultural project championed by the anthology. The compiler urged his readers to re-read stories and characters from past and present through the lens of *qing*. The main purpose behind the compilation of the anthology was his intention to provide a tool for learning, a guide to the readers in the confusing contemporary world of emotional culture, bridging the gaps and blurring the boundaries between socially sanctioned moral engagement and the valorisation of the world of individual affection and genuine intention.

There occurred a gradual shift in the meaning and function of the romantic subject in works such as *Yan yi bian*, with its various sequels, on the one hand, and *Qing shi*, on the other. This marks the cultural transition from a sentimental culture for literary amusement to one that was meant to serve human self-cultivation, i.e., a movement from *yan* 艷, as a category of literary taste, to *qing* 情, as a category of philosophical engagement, defined Feng Menglong, in his preface to *Qing shi*, by the need to transform “private feelings into public concern”.

Part of this project was inscribed in the distinct textual format assigned to the collection. Feng Menglong, who himself was an outstanding reader and writer of narrative, drew on the tradition of narrative anthologies that was fostering the late Ming book culture in order to articulate his investigation of *qing*. Thus he highlighted the potential of narrative as a cognitive tool and asserted the need to accommodate it within the discursive practice of human self-cultivation.

The normative agenda, as pointed out in the opening prefaces and brilliantly encapsulated in the use of the term *shi* in the title, guided and controlled the textual operations that made *Qing shi* a distinct and unique work, namely the collection, classification and ordering, and finally the publication of experiential examples under the rubric of *qing*.⁵⁴

54 One should also mention the commentarial apparatus and the editorial changes added to the narratives as compared to the hypothetical sources. Both aspects are very important and require a separate analysis. For an example of the editorial changes produced in one narrative text collected in the *Qing shi* compared to its source see BISETTO, 2011.

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