

Lihua Song (宋莉华) is a Professor in the College of Humanities and Communications and Director of the Institute of Comparative and World Literature at Shanghai Normal University. During the 2014-15 academic year, she is in residence as a visiting scholar at Yale University. Professor Song has won numerous academic awards for her research on late imperial fiction; the article translated here, "A Brief Review of the Price of Novels in the Ming and Qing Dynasty," is representative of a line of research that she began during her graduate studies, and an expanded version of the essay was published in her 2004 book, *The Dissemination of Ming-Qing Fiction*. Since then, Song's research has focused more specifically on missionary publications (an important recent interest of many scholars of Chinese book history); currently she is working on a book about Chinese-language fiction written by 19th-century Western missionaries.

Song's "Brief Review" has been of measurable influence on Chinese scholars of book history; it is one of the most cited journal articles in the field catalogued in the standard database of Chinese-language scholarship, CNKI, and is virtually the only twenty-first century article with such influence. The reasons are not difficult to see: Song's methods are very visibly grounded in the traditional methodologies of Chinese book historians. Extensive bibliographical data, drawn from asides or scholia in texts recondite even to specialists, are arrayed in lengthy tables which might seem at first glance almost the textualization of a library database, but which marshal the data in the service of a convincing narrative about the evolution of the Chinese fiction market. Moreover, though Song never directly cites recent developments in Western book history, she is driven by parallel motivating concerns, and reaches often similar conclusions about the interaction between texts' literary and price valuations, the materiality of the book and its ambivalence between mere textual transmitters and fetish objects, and the ways in which not only dissemination but standards of editing and composition are altered by technological change. Although nearly all the works referenced here, and much of the historical background assumed, will be obscure to the non-specialist, it is hoped that scholars of European and

American book history will be able to appreciate in this essay how concerns similar to their own are broached in China within very different styles of analysis and presentation.