In her study of eighteenth-century English fiction, Terry Castle asserts that “sequels are always disappointing” and that a sequel’s own destiny is a “tragedy” in that “it cannot literally reconstitute its charismatic original.” This somber observation on English-language sequels by a modern scholar is reminiscent of an equally somber comment on xushu (the closest Chinese equivalent for “sequel”) by the seventeenth-century Chinese writer Li Yu (1611–1680), who believed that xushu were invariably an unrewarding project for any writer.

It is not that one could not revise Xixiang ji [The romance of the western chamber] or that one could not produce a sequel to Shuihu zhuan [Water margin, or The outlaws of the marsh]. The problem is that these two works are already well established in the minds of people and their position is as secure as Mount Tai and as solid as rock. It is highly improbable that you could force these works to yield their places of honor to you; not to mention whether a revised Xixiang ji or a sequel to Shuihu zhuan could ever live up to the standards set up in the original works. Even if they are indeed several times better than the original works, the best praise they could hope for is “a dog’s tail used to substitute a sable’s tail” or “the legs added to a snake (xudiao shezu).”

However, Li Yu’s dire warning apparently has failed to have its intended effect on many of his contemporaries. In fact, Li Yu’s times witnessed the first boom of xushu for Chinese fiction. They became so popular that several decades later
Liu Tingji (b. 1653) devoted a much lengthier discussion in his *Zaiyuan zazhi* (*Zaiyuan’s random notes*) to a dozen *xushu* works.

Recently, authors and writers of fiction, whenever they see that the works of previous writers are prominently circulated, immediately appropriate the names [of those earlier works] and write sequels (*houshu*) to supplement (*fu*) them, in order to make their own works circulate more easily. Unfortunately, this has become a set pattern. . . . To sum up, as for their composition and the meaning invested in them, the original authors (*chuangshi zhe*) are always full of spirits, while even if the later works might be quite good, they are inevitably constrained [to start with]; very few sequels could aspire to the same level of excellence achieved by their parent works, not to mention surpassing them. It should be even more depressing in the case of those works, which are actually dog’s tails [trying to pass themselves off as sable’s tails]. They will naturally fail to rise above the lowest level of quality.4

A case often cited by modern scholars of Chinese fiction to illustrate the inevitable inferiority of *xushu* in comparison with its parent work is that of the eighteenth-century *Honglou meng* (Dream of the red mansion, better known in English as *The Story of the Stone*) and its numerous *xushu*. (Of course, some readers believe the last forty chapters of the novel’s first printed edition are already a *xushu*; more discussion on this issue in chap. 1). *Honglou meng*’s unprecedented sophistication as a literary masterpiece seems to have only underscored the improbability of any satisfactory *xushu*.5 Despite its “intimating” achievement, this novel has managed to inspire the largest number of *xushu* in the history of Chinese fiction. According to one recent study, the number of *xushu* to *Honglou meng* has come close to one hundred and is still growing.6 The most direct explanation for such a large number of *xushu*, as is the case for *xushu* to most other novels, is obviously the enormous popularity of the original work and the readers’ yearning to know “what happens next,” although there are many other, probably more subtle, factors at play, as some of the contributors to this volume explore.

Based on the titles listed in the recently published comprehensive catalogue of traditional Chinese vernacular fiction (*xiaoshuo*), *Zhongguo tongsu xiaoshuo zongmu tiyao* (A comprehensive catalogue of Chinese fiction with plot summaries),7 Li Zhongchang estimates that approximately 13 percent of the works listed there are *xushu*. This certainly testifies to the prevalence of the *xushu* phenomenon in Chinese fiction.8 The importance of this literary phenomenon is only now beginning to attract scholarly attention. To the best of my knowledge, Li Zhongchang’s *Gudai xiaoshuo xushu manhua* (Random remarks on *xushu* and traditional fiction) is the only study focusing on this phenomenon, although there have been several monographs devoted to individual *xushu* works.9 However, none of these studies, except for Li Zhongchang’s short monograph, deals with *xushu* as a general issue.

This neglect is in large part due to the perception that *xushu* are too imitative and therefore not worthy of serious critical attention. However, without
Taking xushu into serious consideration, our understanding of Chinese fiction will remain vastly incomplete, not least because of the large number of xushu produced. Moreover, xushu should not be singled out for their presumed “derivativeness,” because direct “textual borrowing” is a quality shared by almost all major works of the traditional Chinese vernacular xiaoshuo. After all, many of them were the products of repeated rewritings by multiple authors based on preexisting sources. The famous Ming novel Jin Ping Mei (The plum in the golden vase; also known in English as The golden lotus) is a classic example. Despite the great “originality” exhibited in this novel, its main plot is developed from an episode in the earlier novel, Shuihu zhuan. In addition, Jin Ping Mei “borrows” extensively from numerous other sources. Xushu only highlight the second-degree nature shared by almost all literary works in the sense that each has its own literary precedents. Xushu as “discursive” practices reinforce the paradox that innovation is impossible without imitation. In fact, xushu are fertile ground for studying the intricate relationship between writer and reader in the xiaoshuo production process: the writer of a xushu is always self-consciously assuming the dual role of author and reader; the xushu writing process has to be a reception process of the precursor work(s) as well in the sense that the xushu are a continuation of and commentary on the earlier work(s).

This volume is a first collective scholarly step toward studying this important but long neglected phenomenon in Chinese literature. The xushu closely examined in this book range from the works produced during the late Ming (1368–1644) to those published in the late Qing (1644–1911). Two important questions explored by many contributors here are what prompted writers to produce xushu despite their bad reputation as a literary genre and what motivated readers to read them against the common presumption that they were bound to be disappointing in comparison with the original works.

While almost all contributors focus on the relationships between xushu and their parent texts, their approaches and emphases are quite different. Likewise, their understandings of the generic nature of xushu, given its complexities, are not necessarily always the same. Lin Chen, a historian of Chinese fiction, proposes two “definitions” of xushu, one broad (guangyi) and the other narrow (xiayi). When broadly defined, the term “xushu,” according to Lin, should refer to works that can be characterized as an expansion, abridgment, and rewriting of a previous work for the purpose of improvement. Cai Yuanfang’s (fl. seventeenth century) Dong Zhou lieguo zhi (Chronicle of the eastern Zhou states), for example, should be considered a xushu since it was the result of a rewriting of Feng Menglong’s (1574–1646) Xin Lieguo zhi (New chronicle of the states), which in turn was a rewriting of Chunqiu lieguo zhi (Chronicle of the states of the spring and autumn period), attributed to Feng’s older contemporary, Yu Shaoyu (fl. 1580–1620). By the same token, Chu Renhuo’s (b. 1635) Sui Tang yanyi (The romance of the Sui and Tang) should also be regarded as a xushu since it was based on earlier works such as Suishi yiwen (The forgotten tales of the Sui), attributed to other writers; however, xushu, when narrowly defined, refer to only what is usually understood as an “extension” (yinshen)
or “further elaboration” (yanyi) of a previous work in terms of characters and plot development.\(^1\)

Li Zhongchang proposes the concept of continuation and development (xuyan) to describe all those works subsumed in Lin Chen’s two categories of xushu, which includes “continuations” (xu), “supplements” (bu), “rewritings” (gai), and “imitations” (fang). However, Li appears to have reserved the term “xushu” for use in its narrower sense as sequel: “Xushu are those extensions developed from their parent works by following the latter’s veins and arteries (narrative logic).”\(^1\) Elsewhere, Li offers an even narrower definition of xushu by emphasizing that a xushu must be structurally linked to its parent text (a xushu starts where its parent work ends) and that there must be causal connections between the plots of the two texts (shouwei xiangxian, yin’guo xiangying).\(^1\)

Some Western scholars of fictional narrative have proposed more precise and much narrower definitions of “sequel” (of course, “sequel” is not the exact equivalent for the Chinese term “xushu,” as many of the contributors here will demonstrate). Paul Budra and Betty A. Schellenberg have defined the sequel as a “chronological extension of a narrative” that “was originally presented as closed and complete in itself.”\(^1\) The French narratologist Gérard Genette also emphasizes the importance of the “closure” of the precursor work of a sequel by distinguishing a sequel from a “continuation”: “The sequel . . . differs from a continuation in that it continues a work not in order to bring it to a close but, on the contrary, in order to take it beyond what was initially considered to be its ending.”\(^1\) Elsewhere Genette further defines “continuation” as a “completion” (to continue an unfinished work in order to bring it to an end) and “sequel” as a “prolongation.”\(^1\)

Apparently, if we are to follow the narrow definitions of “sequel” offered by these Western scholars, several of the novels explored by the contributors in this volume would have to be excluded from consideration as sequels. However, whether these same works can be considered xushu is open to debate. This certainly testifies to the complexities of the generic nature of xushu in Chinese literary tradition. Of course, one of the main goals of this volume is to explore such complexities. For the purposes of discussion here I offer only a minimum “working”—and therefore necessarily broad—definition of xushu: they are all “ensuing narratives”\(^1\) regardless of the specific nature of their relationships to their precursor texts. I shall leave it to the contributors to explore the specific forms this “transtextual” relationship assumes in individual works of xushu.\(^1\) Suffice it now to say that these complicated relationships defy easy categorization.

Except for chapter 1, which deals with some general issues in the history of xushu, the chapters in the volume are grouped into three parts: the first part (chaps. 2 through 6) examines many “classic” examples of xushu (many of them can be characterized as “sequels” with little qualification). The second part (chaps. 7 and 8) is concerned with those works that are usually not considered “sequels” but can still be regarded as xushu if we follow Lin Chen’s broad definition; they should challenge us to rethink the generic nature of xushu. The
third part (chs. 9 and 10) focuses on several works of *xushu* produced during the last decade of the Qing dynasty, when this genre was undergoing important changes with the influx of Western influence. A close look at these late Qing *xushu* should tell us much about the direction *xushu* were going during the twentieth century.

In chapter 1, which is intended to be an overview of *xushu*, I examine this literary phenomenon in a larger as well as more historical context. I first attempt to demonstrate why "*xushu,*" thanks to the "textual fluidity" often associated with works of Chinese fiction, has to be a much broader concept than "sequel" in English. Then I explore the close relationship between the rise of *xushu* during the seventeenth century and the simultaneous rise of "interpretation" in contemporary *xiaoshuo* discourse. This close relationship, I contend, was largely due to the increasing need for "serious" interpretations, a logical result of the canonization of several "masterworks" during the seventeenth century. *Xushu*, like the fiction commentary that began to flourish in the same period, were first of all an act of "interpretation" produced from a need to control the reading of the precursor texts. On the other hand, the prevalence of the *xushu* phenomenon may also have something to do with some historical factors that were not necessarily "literary." *Xushu* first began to flourish during the mid-seventeenth century, when China was undergoing a painful dynastic changeover. More than two hundred years later, at the turn of the twentieth century, when the last imperial dynasty was collapsing, *xushu* enjoyed another, even bigger, boom. There appears to be a "transitional" quality inherent in *xushu* as a narrative genre: it is a continuation of as well as a new departure from a previous work. It was this unique "liminal" quality that had rendered *xushu* so attractive to those who found themselves in the interstices between two historical "eras" and who were nostalgic about what had transpired before and, at the same time, anxious about what was happening or what was yet to come (see also chaps. 3 and 9, by Siao-chen Hu and Ying Wang, which touch on this issue from different perspectives). In addition to the mid-seventeenth century and the late Qing, another important moment in the history of Chinese *xushu* was the several decades immediately following the initial publication of *Honglou meng* in 1791. I suggest that many *Honglou meng* sequels can be considered "competing readings" of their common parent novel (cf. the essays on *Honglou meng* sequels in chaps. 4 and 5 in this volume, by Keith McMahon and Ellen Widmer). In fact, what abounds in these sequels are the symptoms of what I characterize as "*xushu* anxiety"—a high degree of readerly self-consciousness of the possibilities of other competing "readings" in the form of sequels. The appearance of a large number of *Honglou meng* sequels in a very short period of time only added to the need to justify *xushu*. A *xushu* writer in the wake of *Honglou meng* would feel even more pressure to combat the impression that a *xushu* was an act of redundancy or the superfluous legs added to a snake (*huashe tianzu*), as suggested by the common Chinese saying. While chapter 1 is by no means a chronological account of *xushu*, it does address what I consider to be some of the important issues in the history of this genre.

In chapter 2, Qiancheng Li concentrates on three *xushu* to the Ming clas-
sic Xiyou ji (The journey to the west), namely Xu Xiyou ji (A sequel to the journey to the West), Hou Xiyou ji, (The later journey to the West), and Xiyou bu (A supplement to the journey to the West, also translated as The tower of myriad mirrors). If we follow the definition that a sequel is the chronological extension of a completed work, then the famous Xiyou bu must be excluded from consideration, because Xiyou bu’s story is supposed to have taken place between chapters 61 and 62 of Xiyou ji. In his chapter, Li likewise disregards this strict definition of sequel. He also concludes that each sequel is a reinterpretation as well as a rewriting of the parent novel. If we read the original novel Xiyou ji as an allegorical journey of “mind,” then in one way or another all three sequels continue as well as repeat this “journey.” However, in the continual journeys of the mind presented in these sequel texts, Li notes a subtle process of “inward turning,” an increasing focus on the inner workings of the human mind. This “inward” journey, according to Li, eventually reaches its “innermost destination” in the last sequel, Xiyou bu, a narrative characterized by its masterful exploration of “mind” in terms of its reactions to various subtle forms of desire. The “inward” journey exhibited in Xiyou ji and its three sequels, while reflecting a larger trend in the development of the Chinese novel during the seventeenth century, was also related to the neo-Confucian school of the mind (xin-xue) movement that dominated the late Ming intellectual scene. If we accept the dating of these three sequels as works of the late Ming, they are the earliest xushu dealt with in this volume. The possible presence of cross-references among the three sequels (the author of Xiyou bu was probably taking aim at another sequel, Xu Xiyou ji), as some traditional commentators have called our attention to, could be a quite new xushu phenomenon that anticipated the kind of high degree of self-consciousness shared by many authors of the Honglou meng sequels in the nineteenth century, as I discuss in chapter 1.19

Xushu as a literary genre seems to have provided the seventeenth-century writer Ding Yaokang (1599–ca. 1670) with an important medium to search for the reasons behind the collapse of the Ming dynasty. In chapter 3, Siao-chen Hu seeks to demonstrate how Ding presents his own sequel Xu Jin Ping Mei as the correct reading of the parent novel Jin Ping Mei. To that end, Ding tried to drive home the painful message that it was the indulgence in excessive desire as reflected in many people’s “misreadings” of Jin Ping Mei that contributed to the collapse of the Ming. By blaming the fall of the dynasty on the readers’ failure to heed the kind of stern warnings delivered in Jin Ping Mei about the dire consequences of excessive desire (therefore, a “misreading”), Ding also tried to come to terms with his own dilemma as a subject under the new alien rule. While harboring certain nostalgic and even possibly loyalist sentiments toward the fallen dynasty, Ding seems to have come to acknowledge the inevitability of the cycle of history and the mandate the alien Manchu monarchy appeared to enjoy. Ding’s sequel to the classic novel, Hu points out, was his desperate attempt to rationalize the painful dynastic transition in terms of the ruthless operations of karmic retribution—the fall of the Ming was heaven’s severe punishment of its people for their massive moral failure to curtail their rampant desires. By assigning so much importance to the “correct reading” of a novel
and by symbolically relating it to the tragic fall of the Ming, the author of Xu Jin Ping Mei also tried to elevate the status of his own xushu to new heights. Ding presented his novel as the most accurate interpretation of the popular morality book admired by the new Manchu ruler, the Shunzhi emperor—Taishang gan-ying pian (The supreme tractate of actions and retributions). Hu also explores in detail how the author of Xu Jin Ping Mei tries to come to terms with the parent text’s eroticism in order to provide further justifications for his own sequel.

Given the sheer number of sequels Honglou meng has inspired, it is only appropriate that two contributors to this volume have chosen to focus on several of these sequels, although their approaches and concerns are quite different. In chapter 4, Keith McMahon offers his readings of a dozen Honglou meng sequels (most of them produced in the nineteenth century) in terms of three areas: first, how these sequels attempt to “improve” Baoyu, the male protagonist of their common parent novel, by making him healthier, more sexually proper, and more compliant with the social expectations of an aristocratic male; second, how the sequels seek to vindicate Daiyu, the female protagonist in the parent novel, in various ways (having her become the first wife of Baoyu or the capable mistress of the household, etc., while her personality also becomes much more pleasant); and third, how these sequels try to provide resolutions for the love affair between Baoyu and Daiyu. Functioning as interpretations as well as rewritings of Honglou meng, these sequels, while adopting different strategies, all attempt to “simplify” the complex masterpiece by aiming at transparency (making what is obscure in the original novel more obvious or simpler to understand). Almost all these sequels share a common tendency toward “stability” as well as a strong desire for a more gratifying closure where all the “traumatic antinomies” are happily eliminated. At the end of his chapter, McMahon cautions us against dismissing these sequels too hastily merely because of their tendency toward “elisions” and “erasures.” He observes, “The innovative attempts to work through Honglou meng’s intractabilities are also remarkable as the sequels insist on female agency within polygamy or expand upon scenarios of direct and pragmatic resolutions of youthful love affairs independent of adult direction.” Here McMahon’s interesting explorations of gender relationships within the institution of polygamy as they are constructed in these Honglou meng sequels can be considered a “continuation” (a sequel?) of his earlier admirable study on the issue of polygamy raised in other Ming-Qing fictional works. McMahon’s references to several sequels’ new emphases on female agency lead us to Ellen Widmer’s discussions of Honglou meng sequels in terms of the larger issue of fiction’s female readership in the nineteenth century.

Due to the paucity of relevant data, there have been relatively few studies of the important question of readership and, especially, female readership of traditional Chinese fiction. However, Honglou meng sequels, Widmer suggests in chapter 5, provide us with some important clues on this question. Widmer points out that because of its subject matter and unique narrative styles, Honglou meng, as evidenced in many sources (prefaces, collections of poems, etc.), appeared to have attracted an unusually large number of female readers.
This tendency toward a larger female readership continued and became even more pronounced for many of the *Honglou meng* sequels. As the "written-down" versions of their parent novel (a fact McMahon explores from a different angle in chap. 4), these sequels tended to target "an audience that was larger, less well educated, and significantly more female than the one Cao Xueqin had in mind." Several of these sequels project "a strong sense of women’s importance as readers and critics, even more than was the case with *Honglou meng.*" Many female characters in these sequels are explicitly presented as readers and even critics of the parent novel and other earlier sequels (cf. my discussion of the high degree of *xushu* self-consciousness in several *Honglou meng* sequels in chap. 1).

The most important testimony to this large female audience for *Honglou meng* and many of its *xushu,* however, is a sequel titled *Honglou meng ying* (The shadows of dream of the red mansion), authored by the famous poetess Gu Taiqing (1799–1877). Here a woman was not only a "passive" reader but also an active participant in this phenomenon of *Honglou meng* sequels. The fact that the earliest extant Chinese novel by a female author was a sequel to *Honglou meng* was by itself very significant: it points to the dramatic impact of *Honglou meng* on female readership in part because it was one of the few popular fictional works deemed by a significant group of people as appropriate reading for women. At the same time, this fact also gives us enough reason to believe that *xushu,* with its relative "humble" generic status, probably made the idea of a female fiction writer much more acceptable to the public (including some female authors themselves) during a time when fiction by women was still relatively rare. Writing a sequel to a widely acknowledged "classic" rather than starting a novel on one’s own was a much less "presumptuous" act, especially in the case of a woman. In other words, *Honglou meng* and its sequels provided not only "appropriate reading terrain" but also "appropriate writing terrain" for women. Widmer discusses several important features of *Honglou meng ying* in terms of their relationship to its author’s unique female sensibility. Moreover, she relates them to other contemporary works authored by women in the poetic narrative genre (*tanci*) to present a more comprehensive picture of women’s direct participation in the development of Chinese popular narrative during the nineteenth century. Widmer’s findings in this chapter should go a long way in helping us better appreciate women’s roles in the development of traditional Chinese fictional narrative.

Next to *Honglou meng,* *Shuihu zhuan* can perhaps boast the largest number of *xushu.* Among all these *xushu,* Yu Wanchun’s (1794–1849) *Dangkuo zhi* (The suppression of the bandits), the focus of Shuhui Yang in chapter 6, is arguably one of the most sophisticated as well as the most famous. Few *xushu* writers had taken writing *xushu* so seriously as Yu did (he spent almost two decades writing and revising *Dangkuo zhi*). Ostensibly Yu wrote his *xushu* to *Shuihu zhuan* because he did not like its last part (in the 100- or 120-chapter versions), where the Liangshan bandits or rebels are granted amnesty by the Song imperial government. He was convinced that no rebels deserved amnesty. Consequently, his sequel, as its title explicitly reveals, was designed to show how
these rebels were all finally executed rather than pardoned by the imperial government. Structurally speaking, *Dangkou zhi*’s acknowledged parent work was not the 100- or 120-chapter versions of *Shuihu zhuang*, since its plot starts right after chapter 71 of the latter. Rather, it is intended to be a sequel to Jin Shengtan’s truncated edition of *Shuihu zhuang*, which contains the first seventy-one chapters of the “original” *Shuihu zhuang*. Yu was inspired by Jin’s conclusion to his truncated version where the character Lu Junyi dreamed that all the “heroes” of the Liangshan were executed. Apparently feeling that Jin’s truncation and added conclusion were not good enough, Yu wrote his sequel to turn this “dream” at the end of his acknowledged “parent text” into reality, further detailing how these rebels received their deserved tragic ends. In his chapter, Yang shows how Yu was trapped by his own *xushu*, or rewriting agenda. The original novel was so successful in exposing the corrupt and incompetent imperial government that it would be very difficult for Yu to be persuasive if he simply had the Liangshan rebels defeated and executed by governmental troops in his sequel. He had to go to the trouble of creating a group of entirely new characters like Chen Xizhen, who also took up arms due to persecution by corrupt officials and who, therefore, were able to maintain a measure of independence from the imperial government. In Yu’s sequel, these are the people who later, with the blessing of the imperial government, defeat the Liangshan rebels. Instead of the Liangshan rebels helping the imperial government to suppress other rebels, as narrated in the last part of the original *Shuihu zhuang*, which Jin Shengtan had coyly designated a bad “sequel” by another writer, model characters like Chen Xizhen manage to quell the Liangshan rebels on behalf of this same government in Yu’s “genuine” sequel. Consequently, despite Yu’s painstaking efforts to differentiate his “new” characters from the Liangshan rebels, the former come very close to resembling the latter since in the original novel it is the Liangshan rebels who helped the imperial government to suppress other “bandits.” These new characters eventually end up becoming the “replicas” of the bandits in the original novel, whom this sequel author set out to repudiate in the first place. As a sequel to a “formidable” precursor text, Yang points out, *Dangkou zhi* could not free itself from the original novel’s powerful “mimetic” logic. While utterly repulsed by what he perceived to be the pernicious ideology of his precursor text, Yu was caught in a quandary as a *xushu* writer in that he was too “respectful” or “faithful” to the narrative logic of the original novel, despite his announced intention to repudiate its ideology. *Dangkou zhi* is an interesting case where a conscientious *xushu* writer struggled “heroically” but “tragically” within the constraints set up by its precursor. It is precisely this ambivalence on the part of its author—the combination of repulsion and fascination—that turns *Dangkou zhi* into such a compelling *xushu*. Yu Wanchun was a great storyteller and apparently an excellent student of the masterful narrative art exhibited in the original *Shuihu zhuang*. Artistically, *Dangkou zhi* is a sophisticated sequel not least because of its carefully wrought *xushu* structure. Yu’s ambitious and yet implicit agenda was to rewrite the entire *Shuihu zhuang* (including the part Jin had already denounced as a bad “sequel”). He tried to show how, when persecuted, one did not have to rebel, as many characters had
supposedly done in the original Shuihu zhuan. However, as Yang has persuasively argued, Dangkou zhi, constrained by the powerful “mimetic” logic firmly established in the original novel, ultimately fails to persuade us that this is ever possible. Rewriting ended up becoming repetition, a fascinating repetition nonetheless.

Among the fictional works examined in detail in this volume, the pseudonymous eighteenth-century Shuo Tang quanzhuan (Stories about the Tang, complete) and the nineteenth-century Ruyijun zhuan (The lord of perfect satisfaction) by Chen Tianchi (fl. early nineteenth century) are two novels that many readers would not readily associate with xushu. If we accept the Chinese scholar Lin Chen’s broad definition of xushu to include rewriting, Shuo Tang quanzhuan can be read as a continuation to, as well as a rewriting of, several previous works in the so-called Sui-Tang romance series (Sui Tang xilie xiaoshuo), even though, strictly speaking, it is not a chronological extension of the plot of any of these works.

In chapter 7, Robert Hegel proposes that Shuo Tang quanzhuan can be read as an “outrageous” parody of the seventeenth-century Sui Tang yanyi by Chu Renhuo (ca. 1630–ca. 1705). Having elsewhere written extensively on several important works in the Sui-Tang romance series, such as Suishi yiwen and Sui Tang yanyi, Hegel reminds us here about the intricate transtextual (he uses the term “intertexual”) relationships among these texts. Focusing on the Shuo Tang quanzhuan’s “rewriting” of several important characters from its “progenitors” such as Sui Tang yanyi, Hegel is able to demonstrate how its author parodies lofty literati values in these precursor texts by turning those relatively “realistic” characters into “far larger than life theatrical types, at once both grotesque and wonderfully entertaining.” Here in Shuo Tang quanzhuan, the “moral seriousness” typical of a literati historical novel such as Sui Tang yanyi is replaced with the “entertaining pleasure” of an adventure romance. Shuo Tang quanzhuan initiates an important alternative reading of “history” in the Sui-Tang romance series; in fact, it was to inspire many sequels of its own, such as the Shuo Tang houzhuan (Stories about the Tang, later collection). One of Hegel’s important arguments is that Shuo Tang quanzhuan is a sophisticated work by a literati author rather than a work assembled from the scribes for professional storytellers, as earlier scholars have conventionally proposed.

The Qing novel Ruyijun zhuan’s relationship with the classical-language Ming novella of the same title is an intriguing one. Chen Tianchi, by adopting for his novel the same title as the famous Ming erotic narrative, was apparently attempting to make sure that his readers always kept in mind this Ming text when reading his own novel. After a careful comparison of these two novels in chapter 8, H. Laura Wu concludes that Chen Tianchi conceived his novel as a corrective rewriting of the Ming text. She demonstrates in detail how the author of the Qing Ruyijun zhuan carefully reversed everything from the Ming Ruyijun zhuan for the purpose of moral critique and censorship. What must have particularly disturbed the author of the Qing Ruyijun zhuan about the Ming text was the supposed “dominance by women”; consequently, his own novel was designed to be a story of “male dominance regained and patriarchy
restored.” Wu concludes her chapter with an argument as to why the Qing Ruyijun zhuan should be considered a xushu, albeit a quite unconventional one. Like any xushu, the Qing Ruyijun zhuan, she contends, should not be considered an autonomous text. Instead, it is a secondary text in that it would become a quite different work were it to be read without any reference to its Ming precursor, precisely what its author Chen Tianchi tried to avoid by adopting the earlier title for his own novel.

Obviously, the relationship between Chen Tianchi’s Ruyijun zhuan and the Ming Ruyijun zhuan is quite different from that between Shuo Tang quanzhuan and its precursor texts. On the one hand, the setting and plot of the Qing Ruyijun zhuan are concerned with people in the Ming dynasty while the Ming Ruyijun zhuan is about an empress from the Tang dynasty; on the other hand, Shuo Tang quanzhuan is presented as a different “version” of the same story (i.e., it is peopled by many of the same characters as in the precursor texts). However, both Hegel and Wu propose that these two works can be considered xushu because both texts are critical “readings” of previous texts in the form of rewritings. Hegel observes that “Shuo Tang is a sequel in the sense that it came after important and widely appreciated novels in the sequence and dramatically, even radically, reinterprets much of the material it adapts from them.”

However, to approach this issue from a slightly different perspective, we might argue that the xushu status of these two works largely depends on the manner in which they are read. These texts are recognizable as rewritings only when the reader, in his or her reading, recalls their respective precursor texts. While a typical sequel compels the reader to recall its parent text by chronologically extending the plot of the latter, Shuo Tang quanzhuan and the Qing Ruyijun zhuan are able to make the reader do the same “recalling” only by constantly and explicitly parodying their precursor texts. As Hegel acknowledges at the end of his chapter, some readers may not choose to read Shuo Tang quanzhuan as a parody. That is to say, the novel will not acquire the status of a secondary text if the reader has not read or chooses to ignore its precursor texts such as Sui Tang yanyi.

Consequently, whether fictional works such as Shuo Tang quanzhuan or the Qing’s Ruyijun zhuan can be considered a work of xushu (a secondary text) is largely an issue of “reading.” Here a reader’s “training” becomes a more important factor (whether he or she is familiar with the precursor text or sensitive enough to be aware of the possibilities of parody). In the case of a more typical sequel, its relationship with its parent text is so explicit that it can be read only as a secondary text. In fact, to make sure that their readers keep this secondary nature of sequels in mind through “recalling,” some writers, such as the author of Hou Honglou meng (The later dream in the red mansion), even provided plot summaries of the parent texts at the beginning of their own sequels. In other words, without having read the parent Honglou meng or, at least, the summary of its plot, the reader would feel as if he or she were starting from the middle of a novel when beginning a sequel such as Hou Honglou meng.

Although Shuo Tang quanzhuan and the Qing Ruyijun zhuan are not typical sequels in the sense that they are not the chronological extensions of their
respective precursor texts, the chapters in this volume by Hegel and Wu should position us better to appreciate the complexities of the xishu phenomenon and place in a broader perspective other contributors’ explorations of many of those fictional works that can be defined more narrowly as sequels. In fact, Shuo Tang quanzhuan’s parent text, Sui Tang yanyi itself, as Hegel has convincingly demonstrated elsewhere, is largely made up of an earlier text titled Suishi yiwen by Yuan Yuling (1599–1674) and a continuation probably by Chu Renhuo. This is because the bulk of the first two-thirds of Sui Tang yanyi was copied from Suishi yiwen with little alteration, and the last third was another “text” added by Chu Renhuo. That is to say, Sui Tang yanyi might be considered a novel roughly composed of two large textual entities: the parent text plus a sequel. However, to further complicate the matter, Suishi yiwen was not the only major written source Chu Renhuo relied on in “compiling” his Sui Tang yanyi. He also substantially incorporated into the first half of his novel (though far less than Suishi yiwen) an earlier novel, Sui Yangdi yanshi (The romance of Emperor Yang of the Sui), and, at the same time, this same text was already a source for Suishi yiwen. More recently, Ouyang Jian has argued that the last third of Sui Tang yanyi was actually based on a little-known novel, Hun Tanghouzhuan (Devastating the Tang: A later tale), while the title of the work suggests that it might have been conceived of as a xishu to another work considered the earlier story (qianzhuan). If Ouyang Jian is indeed correct, then Sui Tang yanyi is basically a rewriting of three earlier texts—Suishi yiwen, Sui Yangdi yanshi, and Hun Tanghouzhuan)—while Hun Tanghouzhuan itself, in all likelihood, is a sequel to another work that is no longer extant. Moreover, Sui Yangdi yanshi and Suishi yiwen were also the “sources” from which the author of Hun Tanghouzhuan must have derived some of the material for his novel, as openly acknowledged in the preface attached to the so-called Jiezi yuan edition of the novel. Consequently, the textual “evolution” from the three earlier texts (Suishi yiwen, Sui Yangdi yanshi, and Hun Tanghouzhuan) to Shuo Tang yanyi to Shuo Tang quanzhuan was also a xishu process in which rewriting and sequencing often became indistinguishable. Here I am suggesting a concept of a xishu continuum with rewriting and sequencing as the respective polarities at both ends of the continuum. While strict rewriting, such as editing, can hardly be considered an act of sequencing, more creative rewriting often overlaps with sequencing (rewriting and expanding a work at the same time). This should help us see a more general trend in the history of Chinese xiaoshuo—the xishu phenomenon of “sequel” was often, though not always, preceded by another, less explicit xishu phenomenon of rewriting. In other words, initially xishu often took the form of rewriting, and rewriting in turn led to sequencing (especially after the original work had achieved textual stability when it was attributed to a particular “author”), although the distinctions between these two forms of xishu were not always clear.

An important subgenre of xishu popular during the late Qing was what has been called fiction that imitates old works (nijiu xiaoshuo) or fiction that brings the new out of the old (fanxin xiaoshuo). The titles of these sequels typically contain the character xin (new). By using devices such as anachronism,
“misplacement,” and especially parody, writers of such sequels often tried to take advantage of the medium of xushu to address their concerns with their rapidly changing contemporary society (a xushu phenomenon I discuss further in chap. 1). Two of the three sequels to the nineteenth-century classic Jinghua yuan (The destiny of flowers in the mirror) discussed by Ying Wang in chapter 9 can be classified as fanxin xiaoshuo. Both are titled Xin Jinghua yuan (New destiny of flowers in the mirror), one by Xiaoran yusheng and the other by Chen Xiaolu. Wang seeks to show how Xiaoran yusheng’s Xin Jinghua yuan became a “vehicle” through which the author attempts to air his bitter disappointment over the contemporary “reform movement.” Here the sequel becomes a “topical novel.” Continuing the journey motif from Jinghua yuan, the author turns his own sequel into a novel of exposure (qianzhe xiaoshuo), a genre that became extremely popular during the last decades of the Qing. At the same time, this self-reflexive sequel also satirizes this narrative genre for its overuse or abuse by many other writers (while the sequel itself participates in the very “abuse” it purports to satirize). Wang points out that the modern scholar Hu Shi and others of his generation were actually not the first to pay serious attention to the women’s issues raised in Jinghua yuan. Both Chen Xiaolu’s Xin Jinghua yuan and Hua Qingshan’s Xu Jinghua yuan (A continuation of destiny of flowers in the mirror) could be read as two very different late-Qing attempts to “re-voice” the women’s issues presented in their common parent text. While Chen Xiaolu, as an author of fanxin xiaoshuo, tried to reframe the women’s issues in the late Qing context of his sequel by advocating “moderate feminist views,” Hua Qingshan, apparently appalled by the nascent women’s movement during the late Qing, tried to “correct” what he perceived to be the dangerous feminist tendency exhibited in Jinghua yuan by adopting various strategies of “inversions.” Wang contends that such diametrically different responses to Jinghua yuan in the form of xushu could at least in part be attributed to the “indeterminacy” that characterizes the original novel and its self-conscious inclination to solicit rereadings as well as rewritings. After all, she affirms that sequels are invariably rereadings in the form of rewritings.

Another late-Qing xushu examined in detail in this volume is Liu E’s (1857–1909) sequel to his own famous Lao Can youji (The travels of Lao Can). So far all the works of xushu explored in this volume are allographic (sequels written by someone other than the authors of the parent works), a focus reflecting the general situation of xushu in traditional China; autographic xushu (sequels written by the authors who wrote the parent works) were relatively rare prior to the twentieth century. The only extant autographic sequel prior to the late Qing period, to the best of my knowledge, was Fang Ruhao’s (fl. early seventeenth century) Chanzhen houshi (The later tales of the true way), which was a sequel to his own Chanzhen yishi (The forgotten tales of the true way), although these two works are not that closely linked in terms of plot and characters.31 The author of Jin Ping Mei was said to have also written a sequel to that famous work, but it is no longer extant.32 Entering the twentieth century, with the professionalization of fiction writers (although Liu E was not a professional writer), autographic xushu became much more common. In
chapter 10, I examine some of the features associated with autographic xushu. I note the increasingly explicit “autobiographical tendency” of the sequel in terms of “a journey from self-vindication (in the original) to self-celebration (in the sequel).” I attempt to demonstrate how this autobiographical explicitness in the sequel compels the reader to reread the parent novel from a new and more “autobiographical” perspective. Different from the rewriting of the original work attempted by an allographic sequel writer, Liu E’s “rewriting” of his own previous work in the form of an autographic sequel is sanctioned and legitimized by the authority of the intention of a “single” author. This is an interesting example where an autographic sequel “reshapes” as well as “rewrites” its precursor text by making more transparent the latter’s implicit autobiographical agenda. In other words, the sequel turns the precursor text into a work more autobiographical than it otherwise was. This is possible because its sequel is not only “autobiographic” but also “autographic.” The chapter on Liu E’s autographic sequel serves as a fitting conclusion to this volume on xushu produced during the Ming-Qing period in that the increasing popularity of autographic sequels was symptomatic of many changes that were happening to the xushu genre in the early twentieth century, reflecting the changing generic status of fiction and its authors in general.

Although this volume focuses on fictional works produced prior to the Republican period (1911–1949), here at the conclusion of my introduction it might be helpful to have a quick look at the direction xushu took in the several decades following Liu E’s writing of his autographic sequel. The first Chinese copyright laws were adopted by the Manchu government in 1910, but their impact on the practice of xushu was limited, and unauthorized xushu still remained quite common. For example, soon after Zhang Henshui’s (1895–1967) hugely successful romantic novel Tixiao yinyuan (Marriages in laughter and tears) was serialized between 1929 and 1930, there appeared a dozen unauthorized sequels. A publisher even put out an advertisement in a newspaper inviting people to submit their manuscripts for publication as sequels. Zhang Henshui’s reputation also caused many writers to produce fiction under his name (maoming), and this, according to Zhang himself, was one of the reasons he decided, much against his previous pledge not to write any sequels to Tixiao yinyuan, to write one of his own, presumably in order to vindicate himself as the only legitimate author who could write an authentic sequel to his own novel. Zhang had to compete with other writers in producing the “best” or most authentic sequel to his own Tixiao yinyuan. Someone even believed that the reason Zhang had many of his main characters die in the sequel was because he intended to make it much harder for others to produce more sequels. Consequently, he was an autographic sequel meant to prevent all other unauthorized allographic sequels. Here, writing an autographic sequel became a means of asserting his ownership of the parent novel as the original author. One new facet of the xushu phenomenon during the first few decades of the twentieth century, when copyright laws, though adopted, were seldom rigorously enforced, was that now one had to compete with others in producing sequels to one’s own works. In a way, there was more pressure for some writers, such
as Zhang, to write sequels to their own works largely due to the radically new ways of circulation: the much quicker pace of publication and the coming of age of mass media in terms of newspapers, journals, radio, and even motion pictures. However, it is curious that in the first half of the twentieth century xushu was a phenomenon largely confined to the so-called old-style (jiupai) fiction writers such as Zhang Henshui. We seldom come cross a May Fourth writer (or a writer of the so-called “new literature”) who wrote a sequel to his or her own work. It is equally rare that the work of such a writer would inspire allographic xushu by others. Even when May Fourth writers such as Ba Jin (b. 1904) felt the urge to write autographic sequels to their own works, they rarely chose to use the term “xushu” to refer to the sequels. Ba Jin, instead, much preferred the term “sanbu qu” (trilogy), as in the case of his Jiliu sanbu qu (The current, a trilogy), probably to underscore that these works should be considered an “organic” whole rather than attempts to exploit the success of a previous work for profit. For these “serious” writers of New Literature, “xushu” was a term often associated with traditional literature, from which they were supposed to break away. Writing xushu was a practice associated with those jiupai writers who sold their souls for money, against whom these May Fourth writers often defined themselves. Writing allographic xushu to classical novels continues even today, but many of them were written in the name of “scientific” reconstruction of the supposedly missing part of a text—as in the case of Honglou meng—known as the “study of the missing texts” (tanyi xue). Writing a sequel is now considered part of literary research. Here, having come a full circle, literary interpretations are now explicitly presented as xushu. Interpretations and xushu become indistinguishable (a topic discussed in chap. 1).

While this volume is not meant to be a historical survey of xushu in Chinese literary history, it contains detailed discussions of representative individual works, many of which have so far received very little scholarly attention. As a whole this volume should help to shed light on the “contours” of the development of this important narrative genre in traditional China. Although there are many important questions that deserve further exploration (such as the relationship between xushu and the development of publishing in late imperial China and other motivating factors for reading and writing xushu), I hope that the chapters presented here serve as a good starting point for future studies of this important narrative genre.

Notes
1. Terry Castle, Masquerade and Civilization, 133–134.
2. Throughout the volume, when referring to the title of a similar Chinese work, different contributors may provide different English translations as he or she sees fit in the context of his or her discussion.
5. In his essay “Sequels to the Red Chamber Dream: Observations in Plagiarism, Imitation,
and Originality in Chinese Vernacular Literature,” Lucien Miller apparently feels compelled to repeatedly apologize for the “disappointing quality” and “lack of originality” on the part of the three sequels he is discussing. The partial title of a recent book-length study of Honglou meng sequels is “wucai ke butian” (not talented enough to patch up the broken sky). This phrase is taken from the poem in the original Honglou meng referring to the piece of stone left unused by the goddess in her efforts to repair the broken sky. Borrowing this phrase from the original novel, the author of this study of Honglou meng sequels obviously tries to show how disappointing these sequel authors were in their attempts to provide continuations to the masterpiece. See Lin Yixuan, Wucai ke butian: Honglou meng xushu yanjiu.

6. Zhao Jianzhong, Honglou meng xushu yanjiu, 3. Zhao’s estimate must have included many works that cannot be defined strictly as sequels, since he may have adopted a fairly broad concept of xushu, an issue to be explored further in this introduction and in chapter 1.

7. Zhongguo tongsu xiaoshuo zongmu tiyao. This catalog, however, does not cover many fictional works that are written in literary Chinese. Many Chinese scholars of Chinese fiction tend to use the term "tongsu xiaoshuo" (as it appears in the title of the catalogue) to refer to fictional works written in vernacular Chinese.

8. Li Zhongchang, Gudai xiaoshuo xushu manhua, 3. Elsewhere, Li broadens his concept of xushu to include “works imitating a precursor text” (xufang) and estimates that about 20 percent of works of traditional xiaoshuo could fall into this category. See Zhongchang, “Lun Zhongguo gudai xiaoshuo de xuyan xianxiang ji chengyin,” 125.

9. Li’s introductory study, however, was written as a brief book in a series that targeted high school students as the main audience. Those studies in English focusing on individual works of xushu include Widmer, The Margins of Utopia; Xiaolian Liu, The Odyssey of the Buddhist Mind; and Brandauer, Tung Yüeh. Studies in Chinese that concentrate on individual xushu, besides those two on Honglou meng sequels mentioned above, include Fu Shiyi, Xiyou bu chutan.


12. Li Zhongchang, Gudai xiaoshuo xushu manhua, 16.


15. Genette, Palimpsests, 206.

16. Ibid., 162.

17. Cf. the definitions given in the OED (1989): sequel is "the ensuing narrative" or "the following or remaining part of a narrative" or "that which follows as a continuation, especially a literary work that, although complete in itself, forms a continuation of a preceding one." See also my discussions in chap. 1.

18. "Transtextuality" is a term coined by Genette to refer to “all that sets the text in a relationship, whether obvious or concealed, with other texts,” while he uses the more familiar term "intertextuality" in a much narrower sense referring to “quoting,” “plagiarism,” “allusion,” etc.; see his Palimpsests, 1–2. For a list of "transtextual" relationships between xushu and their parent texts, see Li Zhongchang, Gudai xiaoshuo xushu manhua, 22–55.

19. Of course, this depends on the validity of the theory that Xu Xiyou ji predated Xiyou bu.

21. Fiction readership is an issue explored at length by Hegel’s study, *Reading Illustrated Fiction in Late Imperial China*, although it does not focus on the particular question of female readership.

22. According to Li Zhongchang (*Gudai xiaoshuo xushu manhua*, 5–6), there are altogether fourteen *xushu* to *Shuihu zhuan*, and the number could reach seventy-four if the broad definition of *xushu* is adopted.


24. Li Zhongchang (*Gudai xiaoshuo xushu manhua*, 45) regards *Shuo Tang quanzhuan* and other works in the Sui-Tang romance series as cases of flexible sequels (*huoxu*) in their relationship to their common parent text, *Sui Tang liangchao zhizhuan* (Chronicles from the courts: Sui and Tang), the supposed first work in the series. (There is still controversy concerning the dating of this work because the date of its earliest extant edition was rather late [1619].) They are like different fruits growing on the same vine.

25. For a detailed investigation into the question of how the bulk of *Suishi yiwen* was copied almost verbatim into the first two-thirds of *Sui Tang yanyi*, see Hegel, “*Sui T’ang yen-i: The Sources and Narrative Techniques of A Traditional Chinese Novel,*” 38–53. Hegel concludes that “it is wholly appropriate that Yuan Yuling’s name should appear on the title page of *Sui Tang yanyi* as one of its authors” (53). In his postscript to the modern typeset edition of *Suishi yiwen*, Liu Wenzhong uses the term “*xudiao*” (a disappointing sequel) to characterize the last part of the novel supposedly written by Chu Renuhu himself (513).

26. In his commentaries to his own *Suishi yiwen*, Yuan Yuling often mentions how he has made changes with regard to “the old edition” (*yuanben*). Consequently, *Suishi yiwen* resulted from the rewriting of an earlier text too!

27. See Hegel, “*Sui T’ang yen-i,*” 53–69.

28. Hegel, “*Sui T’ang yen-i,*” 63. In fact, elsewhere Hegel (*The Novel in Seventeenth-Century China*, 190) has made the observation that *Sui Tang yanyi* is in a sense a sequel to both *Sui Yangdi yanyi* and *Sui shi yiwen*.

29. Ouyang Jian, “*Sui Tang yanyi* ’zhui ji chengzhi’ kao,” 353–396, esp. 383–395. The degree of similarity between the last one-third of *Sui Tang yanyi* and *Hun Tang houzhuan* is indeed remarkable. However, to determine which text was the “source,” one needs to date *Hun Tang houzhuan* more accurately. For example, scholars such as Sun Kaidi and others believe that *Hun Tang houzhuan* is the earlier source; see Tan Zhengbi and Tan Xin, *Guben xijian xiaoshuo huikao*, 227. While Ouyang Jian does provide some circumstantial evidence (mainly the use of taboo characters in the text) suggesting that *Hun Tang houzhuan* should predate *Sui Tang yanyi*, more convincing evidence is needed before this issue can be resolved with certainty.

30. “*Hun Tang houzhuan* xu,” in *Hun Tang houzhuan*, 967.

31. Other possible autographic *xushu* are some of the sequels to *Shuo Tang quanzhuan*, such as *Shuo Tang houzhuan* and *Fan Tang yanyi zhu*. Many of these sequels are attributed to Rulian jushi, while on the inner cover of the Yugu shanfang edition of *Shuo Tang yanyi quanzhuan* (an alternative title of *Shuo Tang quanzhuan*), Rulian jushi was also presented as the compiler. However, the 1783 edition of *Shuo Tang yanyi quanzhuan* was anonymous, and it listed only Yuanhu yusou as the editor or someone who did the collation (*jiadong*). At the same time, Yuanhu yusou also wrote a preface to *Shuo Tang houzhuan*. All of this makes one wonder whether Rulian jushi and Yuanhu yusou were the same person. It was possible that Rulian jushi was the author of *Shuo Tang yanyi quanzhuan* as well as many of its sequels, if the attributions of authorship are reliable. For relevant bibliographic information, see *Zhongguo tongshu xiaoshuo zongmu tiyao*, 490–494; and Xu Shuofang’s prefaces to the *Guben xiaoshuo jicheng* series reprint of these works collected in his *Xiaoshuo kaoxin bian*, 545–550.
32. Shen Defu (1578–1642) reported that the author of *Jin Ping Mei* wrote a sequel titled *Yu jiao li*. See his *Wanli yehuo bian*, 25.652.

33. For the text of this copyright law (*Zhuzuoquan lu*) announced by the Manchu government, see Zhang Jinglu, *Zhongguo jindai chuban shiliao: Erbian*, 397–404. The Nationalist government adopted the copyright law in 1928. However, its exact effect is difficult to gauge mainly due to lack of relevant data. See Alford, *To Steal a Book Is an Elegant Offense*, 50.


37. See my discussion of Zeng Pu’s (1872–1935) novel *Niehai hua* (*The flower in the sea of sins*) in chap. 1.