

FACULTY IN FOCUS

A Eunuch's Story: How a Book that Never Should Have Been Published, Was

While pursuing her ongoing research interests in the art and politics of imperial publishing in Ming China, art history professor Ju-Yu Scarlett Jang made an unlikely discovery. Sometime in 1620, a palace eunuch had compiled and published a sophisticated, illustrated book on the art of rulership for the education of the crown prince.



Ju-Yu Scarlett Jang

Though by then the role of eunuchs had evolved from mere servants to the imperial family into close personal and political advisers to the emperor, publishing such a book—a task usually done by or under the auspices of the emperor—was far beyond the scope of a eunuch's responsibility.

Now Jang is working to answer the many questions surrounding the book's existence. Among them, why is it that the book never reached the crown prince and, according to a contemporary author, no one dared mention its publication? Who funded the beautifully illustrated, 300-page book? Who were the calligraphers, woodblock carvers, printers

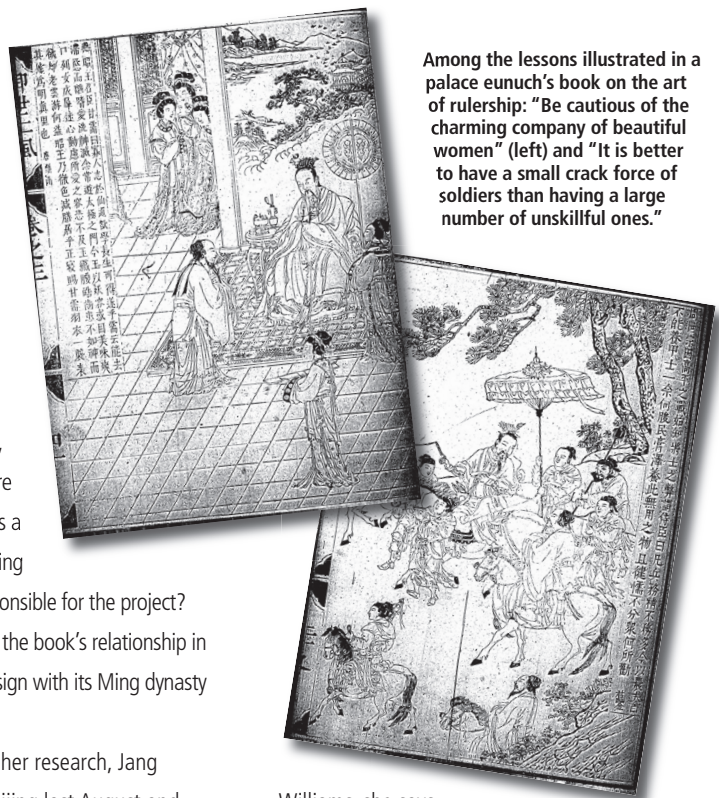
and illustrators, and where were they from? Was a particular printing workshop responsible for the project? And what was the book's relationship in format and design with its Ming dynasty precedents?

As part of her research, Jang traveled to Beijing last August and

viewed the original text, which is being housed in and preserved by the Beijing Library. The chance to see in person the only known copy of the book was a highlight of the project, she says.

Jang plans to publish her findings as a chapter in the forthcoming book *Art, Politics and Palace Eunuchs in Ming China (1368-1644)*.

After completing her undergraduate work at the National Cheng-chih University in Taipei, Jang came to the United States to pursue a doctorate at UC Berkeley. She has been in the States ever since, teaching at UC Berkeley and Ohio State prior to coming to Williams in 1991. She enjoys



Among the lessons illustrated in a palace eunuch's book on the art of rulership: "Be cautious of the charming company of beautiful women" (left) and "It is better to have a small crack force of soldiers than having a large number of unskillful ones."

Williams, she says,

because it is small enough for her to "really engage brilliant students and faculty intellectually in a more intimate atmosphere."

Trained also as a painter and calligrapher, Jang teaches courses in Asian art, including a Chinese calligraphy course that has studio art and art history components, the only such course currently offered at Williams. Among her course offerings are "Introduction to Asian Art: From the Land of the Buddha to the World of the Geisha" and "Images and Anti-Images: Zen Art in China and Japan."

—Jennifer E. Grow

Beyond Borders: International Studies' New Look

One week, the presenter might be a student just back from a year abroad, describing Egyptians' attitudes toward Americans. The next, it might be a political science professor discussing the implications of Taiwan's economic development for a "one China" policy. Or it might be a visiting

lawyer explaining how the Central European Eurasian Law Institute trains judges in the former Soviet Union. Whoever is presenting and whatever the topic, Williams' International Studies Colloquium attracts students and faculty whose interests cross many disciplines and span the globe.

The colloquium is the centerpiece of the International Studies Program, a new academic concentration that provides an umbrella for a growing

number of curricular content tracks, some focused on an area of the world (Africa, East Asia, Latin America, the Middle East, Russia and Eurasia), and others on a theme (economic development).

The premise is that it is illuminating for students and scholars of different parts of the world to compare notes and gain broader perspective on their areas of interest.



Bill Darrow

Jackson Professor of Religion Bill Darrow, a specialist in Iran and Islam, is the program's organizer and its first chair. "Since World War II," he says, "the trend in undergraduate

education has been toward foreign area studies. We all became specialists in our own particular region and went our separate ways. While we were doing excellent work talking

On Language and Reality (TV)

As a teen, Nathan Sanders loved languages—up to a point. Though he studied French, German, Russian, Greek and Latin, he rarely got far enough along to be able to use any of them proficiently. “I would stop once I understood how a language worked, how sentences were constructed, how words were pronounced. I thought I was just lazy,” he says. But a sophomore-year linguistics course at MIT opened his eyes to an entire discipline devoted to what intrigued him most about languages: their capacity to reveal the logic of the human brain.

One-Man Show

Sanders is the sole faculty member of Williams’ Linguistics Program. “Put simply,” he says, “linguistics is the scientific study of patterns in human language. We try to find out how languages are fundamentally different or the same. Then we ask, ‘What do these similarities and differences tell us about how humans construct language? Why does this pattern exist?’” His 101 course introduces students to most of the important aspects of language: sound, syntax (word order), semantics (the basic meanings of words and phrases), morphology (how words are built from smaller units) and pragmatics (how context, word choice or intonation confers extra meaning).

Socrates and Scientific Inquiry

Sanders uses the Socratic method in his courses, presenting students with a discrete bit of linguistic information and asking them to develop theories to explain the data. Then, to develop the objectivity required for scientific inquiry, students evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of their theories. Unlike neuroscience,

about specific parts of the world, we weren’t preparing students with other courses that would provide a broader perspective. And we were ignoring the fact that some students are more interested in studying an abstract concept, such as democracy, across cultures.”

In its first year, the program has attracted 30 students. Those completing the concentration choose an “area studies” or thematic track, each requiring six courses:

International Studies 101 (a new course team-taught by Darrow and Michael MacDonald, the Frederick L. Schuman Professor of International Relations), three courses in the content track, one comparative course and a senior exercise. Study abroad is integral, and students are urged to attend the colloquia.

The Class of 1955 is working with the College to help fund these and other components of the program with its 50th reunion gift,



Nathan Sanders



which attempts to understand language via the hard wiring of the brain, linguistics attempts to derive universal principles from language patterns. “Linguists and neuroscientists approach language from two different directions,” Sanders says. “Somewhere in the center, we meet.”

Winter Study Survivors

Sanders also took advantage of Winter Study this year to explore his interest in reality TV. His course “Surviving Your Fifteen Minutes” examined “how malleable reality can be, how lies can be spun out of truth and how heroes and villains can be edited from the same source.” In addition to reading scholarly works on the topic of reality TV, 18 students participated in a Williams version of *Survivor*. They competed in mathematically simulated physical trials (climbing mountains, finding food in the wild) and real-life challenges (solving puzzles, untying knots). Like their TV counterparts, they engaged in lying, backstabbing and collusion to increase their chances of winning. Those voted out in each “Tribal Council” became producers, writing descriptions of subsequent episodes.

—Zelda Stern

Each week throughout the spring semester, Sanders is posting one episode of “Surviving Your Fifteen Minutes” on the Web site wso.williams.edu/~nsanders/LING010. Read it and derive your own principles of human behavior.

“Bringing the World to Williams and Taking Williams to the World.”

The International Studies Program also functions as a seedbed for new curricular directions. As program chair, Darrow identifies regional gaps that need filling as well as new thematic tracks derived from logical groupings of existing courses. Two new area tracks—in “South and Southeast Asia” and “Borders, Exile and Diaspora” studies—were recently approved by

the faculty. Tracks in human rights, urbanization and in agriculture and food security are also under consideration.

For Darrow, the impetus to organize the International Studies Program arose from the events of Sept. 11, 2001. “Ambrose Bierce once said that wars are God’s way of teaching us geography,” he says. “I hope we don’t have to wait for war to learn.”

—Zelda Stern