

Old Floating Cloud deserves attention. Its mingling of the folklore elements valued by ancient Chinese storytellers and its hard-driven parabolic references outweigh its occasional ungainly formulations. Although it is too soon to name Can Xue a successor to Lu Xun, surely it is fair to consider her an innovative and brave experimentalist with a flair for splashing bright, provocative, and disturbing portraits upon the canvas of contemporary Chinese fiction.

REFERENCE CITED:

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YEN PING-CHIU. *Chinese Demon Tales: Meanings and Parallels in Oral Tradition*. Harvard Dissertations in Folklore and Oral Tradition, edited by Albert B. Lord. New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1990. xiv+194 pages. Appendix, Chinese texts, bibliography, index. Cloth US\$70.00; ISBN 0-8240-2529-6.

The construction of theoretical bridges between Chinese and Western literary systems has long posed a challenge to scholars of literature and folklore. While European folklorists have historically undertaken a great deal of cross-cultural comparison between Chinese and Western folk traditions, this has tended to take the form of fitting Chinese materials to Western theoretical molds. Yen's *Chinese Demon Tales*, the published version of his 1971 Ph.D. dissertation, tends to do the same, applying the theories of Albert Lord and Mircea Eliade to a group of classical Chinese narratives.

Using LORD's formulaic theory of oral narrative (1960), Yen identifies a consistently recurring pattern of formulaic themes in Chinese tales of otherworldly journeys. Especially prominent among these themes are those of illness or dismemberment, the initiation or precipitation of the journey itself, magical helpers, knowledge acquired in the otherworld, and illness cured. Lord's theories are again shown to be applicable in the Chinese context, indicating the oral origins of the texts. (In fact, Yen's dissertation was written before the appearance of C. H. WANG's work in this area [1974].)

The recurrence of these themes leads Yen to conclude that they hold some significance for the culture that produced the tales. In his strongest and most innovative chapter, "Meanings in Chinese Tradition," Yen identifies specific religious and ritual elements in the themes that he says refer to ancient and specifically Chinese traditions of shamanism. Drawing on historical accounts of shamans (*wu* 巫), he demonstrates that the later otherworldly narratives are analogues of the older traditions of shamanic ritual. He closely compares historical and literary texts using linguistic, literary, and philological tools, establishing the existence of a complex

transmutation from a traditional ritual performance to a traditional narrative . . . [The] ritual aspect of a performance as experienced and reported by performers has been highly aestheticized in a verbal form, the presentation of which differs from narrative to narrative, while each narrative claims its identity with the traditional ritual by its basic thematic pattern. (93)

Yen's next discussion, "Meanings in Cross Cultural Traditions," is an application of Mircea Eliade's theories of shamanism (ELIADE 1964). He analyzes several folk narratives from disparate cultures in an effort to bring the Chinese tales into a coherent worldwide tradition of shamanism. This part of his thesis is less convincing, since the range of tales and themes is quite broad. Furthermore, he does not articulate either the reasons for or the means of the comparison.

This book will be useful to scholars of folklore and narrative since it points to two methods for the cross-cultural comparison of Chinese and European narrative, one employing Lord's oral-formulaic theory and the other Eliade's studies of shamanistic ritual. It would have been interesting to see, in turn, what the Chinese materials could have added to the Western theoretical frameworks.

One weakness in the book lies in the way the author uses the narrative texts. In addition to translating the texts, he indicates in several places that he has altered, shortened, or even summarized them. Nowhere, however, does he describe the criteria of his editing or the extent and nature of his alterations. This has the effect of weakening his argument, since he uses these texts as his data.

There are frequent careless errors in his references and notes, even errors in the dating of the tales. For example, on page 81 he says that a tale from the *Soushen ji* 搜神記 antedates one from the *Sanguo zhi* 三國志 by one thousand years, when in fact the difference in their ages is closer to one hundred years. Problems such as this are perhaps related to the book's origin as a dissertation; certainly it would have profited tremendously from a thorough revision. Yen especially needs to clarify his use of data and to further explain his own thesis. The dissertation was written in 1971; possibly the author's later work (under the name of Alsace Yen) resolves many of these issues.

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1964 *Shamanism: Archaic techniques of ecstasy*. Translated from the French by Willard R. Trask. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

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1960 *The singer of tales*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

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1974 *The bell and the drum: Shih Ching as formulaic poetry in an oral tradition*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

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SIBERIA

ADAMI, NORBERT R. *Religion und Schamanismus der Ainu auf Sachalin. Ein Beitrag zur historischen Völkerkunde Ostasiens* [Religion and shamanism of the Sakhalin Ainu: A contribution to historical ethnology of East Asia]. München: Iudicium Verlag GmbH, 1991. 171 pages. Bibliography. Paper DM 42.00; ISBN 3-89129-278-3. (In German)

Norbert R. Adami's monograph deals with one of the most intriguing and least-studied