

narrative provides keen insight into the social and cultural function of the tale. I believe that such an approach to the narratives will be highly useful to students studying Korean legends for the first time. Grayson's comments provide concrete examples of each narrative's social function and how it reflects various values. In this aspect, the work is at the van of Korean folklore studies.

Researchers will also find this volume useful for cross-cultural studies. By providing cross listings of the Korean narratives with Chinese, Japanese, and even Western narratives, this work will assist those wishing to examine larger thematic concerns in folktales.

I thus believe that this volume is an excellent addition to a growing body of literature on Korean folklore and highly recommend the volume to both students and researchers.

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## CHINA

BENDER, MARK. *Plum and Bamboo: China's Suzhou Chantefable Tradition*. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2003. xiii + 259 pages. Photos, appendices, glossary, bibliography, index. Cloth US\$44.95; ISBN 0-252-02821-x.

The book under review is a study of one of the time-honored and currently most vital genres of professional storytelling in China, *Suzhou tanci* 蘇州彈詞 (Suzhou chantefable). The title "Plum and Bamboo" refers to an opening ballad, *kaipian* 開篇, signaling the romantic contents typical of most narratives in this kind of storytelling (67). *Tanci* is usually performed by a pair of storysingers, often a man and a woman (bamboo and plum), who tell and sing a story in daily installments about two weeks of serial performances in the public storyhouse. *Suzhou tanci*, as indicated by the name, is the locally and dialectally defined subgenre of *tanci* that has its centre in Suzhou and is performed publicly in the Lower Yangtze area where the dialect is readily understood (as a genre for the radio, it reaches even further; compare BENSON 1996).

Mark Bender's broad and intensive studies of Chinese oral performed literature and folklore, whether belonging to the Han majority or to the ethnic minority groups, constitute an important contribution to the field. The present book-length study is the fruit of his research since the 1990s on Suzhou chantefable, and the work is likewise characterized by his deep penetration into the world of Chinese performing artists. With a solid background in Western and Chinese performance theory, his commitment to serious field work among the performers and audiences in China and his wealth of observations on their behavior and interaction give his studies singular value as authentic and original research.

In the preface, Bender defines the aim of his book as follows: "I hope that this work can help with a general appreciation of the Suzhou storytelling arts, especially the *tanci* (chantefable) tradition, and that the study may contribute to discussions of oral-delivered and oral-connected narratives" (xii). As a study in English for a Western readership, it is precisely the invitation to discussion of oral performance that would appeal to the potential readership and lead to understanding, perhaps even appreciation, of an art form that seems deeply rooted in Chinese territory. Just as Beijing opera, *Jingju* 京劇, and Kunshan opera, *Kunqu* 崑曲, have had considerable success with Western audiences in recent decades, both as live performance and as film, the same could happen with the storytelling arts, since they have much to offer in the extra-linguistic domain. Masters of storytelling operate on many levels of communication and are often able to attract both locals and outsiders with a verbal art that is based on mime, sound

imitation, body language, and many other factors, just as much as it is based on the linguistic message. In the chantefable tradition, song and music are of course fundamental components, further promoting the extra-linguistic sides of the art (see TSAO 1988).

“Oral-delivered narratives,” that is, “*tanci* episodes performed orally,” can be experienced as live events and registered on audio- or video-tape, implying the possibility of detailed, recurrent observation and analysis, as well as “close-reading” of transcripts. This category of data seems ideal, in particular when several recordings of the “same” episode as told by the same performers at different times is available, something that seems to be the case with some parts of Bender’s primary materials (160). Many genres of storytelling of the twentieth century were transmitted and performed on the basis of oral-aural education, *kou chuan xin shou* 口傳心授 (transmission by mouth and teaching from the heart), implying only sporadic, if any, reference to written texts (BØRDAHL and ROSS 2002, IGUCHI 2003). Even though there is generally no prompter or promptbook available for the Chinese performer, who must during performance rely entirely on his memory and creative abilities, the existence and function of scripts is highly genre-dependent. Bender’s field work among Suzhou *tanci* performers leads him to stress the significance of written scripts, both diachronically—for the development of the genre—and synchronically, for the individual training of the artists of the twentieth century. During the period investigated, mainly the early 1990s, written materials (scripts) were prepared and studied before and after each performance. Scripts are used for teaching, for memorization, and for reference in breaks during performance; they are constantly rewritten and seem to play a key role for the performers, particularly for their mutual cooperation in duos or small groups. Actually the reader might get the impression that Suzhou *tanci* of this period is close to certain drama forms, based on written roles learned by heart. But on the other hand, the description of the way performers interact, cover up mistakes, add jokes, stretch or shorten the performance time as necessary, and so on, is indicative of fairly strong features of “creation-in-performance.” The degree of freedom or restriction of a *tanci* performer in the selection of phrases and expressions for prose dialogue and narration in opposition to the (probably) more fixed lines of the sung portions is an area that might be worth further study.

“Oral-connected narratives,” that is, printed texts or manuscripts “connected” with *tanci* as performance art, constitute another kind of sources on the oral tradition. The different ways written texts may be connected to performance—“in the sense of being influenced by or influencing an oral tradition” (9)—are not only linked to individual text history, but there are certain categories of “connection” that are expressed in the naming of such texts: “chantefable narratives” *tanci xiaoshuo* 彈詞小說 (*tanci* fiction) for reading, written mainly by women during the late Qing period, in a mixture of vernacular Mandarin and literary (classical) Chinese; “Wu dialect chantefable narratives” *Wuyin tanci* 吳音彈詞 (Wu dialect *tanci*), for reading, written in a style of vernacular Mandarin incorporating Wu dialect expressions; “scripts,” *yanchuben* 演出本 (libretto) aide-mémoire for performance, usually written in Mandarin with occasional dialect expressions. Thus, *tanci* has had not only a rich history of performance, but also a strong written tradition as literature for reading (4, 152–56, see also HODES 1991, HU 1994, WAN 2004). Only “scripts” have a main function as performance aids, while the other categories may serve as inspiration for oral performance, beside their main function as silent entertainment for a reading audience. The oral and written origins of most *tanci* repertoires are intertwined from the very beginning. In Bender’s study the give-and-take between the oral and the written media of *tanci* is, however, given detailed treatment as a contemporary on-going process. While the “oral-connected narratives” are primary sources for the study of the written tradition of *tanci* literature, can they also function as such vis á vis the oral performance? To answer this question is perhaps not quite simple, as we shall see below.

The main body of the book is arranged in three large chapters:

1. Introducing Suzhou Chantefable
2. Opening Oral Territory in Suzhou Chantefable
3. Performing “Two Women Marry”

In the first chapter the author presents a historical overview of the genre and places it in its relationship to other storytelling genres in China. He introduces the performance contexts and conventions of the art, describes the “arena” of the genre, the storyhouses of earlier and recent times, in rural areas and in cities. Further he examines the performers’ social position, their professional training, the audiences and aficionados, as well as the repertoires and performance constellations. Drawing on the relevant Chinese and Western sources, this exposition is distinguished by Bender’s personal familiarity with the places and milieux—his accounts as an eyewitness. The final part of the chapter (44–61) is devoted to a detailed explanation of Suzhou *tanci* as a performance event, referring ever so often to the storytellers’ own aesthetic concepts and comments. In this connection the reader is also introduced to the linguistic and musical variants of the oral performance. Under the term “register” the author treats not only dialectal/socio-dialectal languages, which constitute a highly intricate system of differentiated idioms, used for narration and impersonation, but also the song and musical accompaniment.

In the second chapter, the “oral territory” of *tanci* is put to a test: Western performance theory, in particular the ideas of Richard Bauman, John Miles Foley, Greg Sarris, and the late Lauri Honko, are discussed in their relevance to performed art “on another shore of the Pacific Rim” (70). The Western theories are used “as a kind of theoretical road map for examining basic possibilities inherent in live performances” (72). In the mapping out of live performance, Bender does, however, walk on two legs and to good advantage: he uses the “emic” terms, the storytellers’ own jargon, *hanghua* 行話, along with his preferred Western theoretical concepts. Western readers, with or without previous knowledge of Chinese culture and performance traditions, will probably have more to learn from the storytellers’ terminology, which is clear, unpretentious, and serves the purpose well.

As mentioned, Bender emphasizes throughout the book the interplay between written versions and oral performance. He also points out, however, that “published, performance-based versions of *pingtan* stories [...] do not accurately represent the dynamic possibilities of live performance” (71) and “Suzhou storytellers cover a range of oral territory in performance that often does not make its way through editorial filters and onto the printed page” (72). It is therefore puzzling why this chapter, which is foremost devoted to “live performance,” draws so heavily on published texts of various kinds (68). The examples that are rendered in translation and analyzed (88–121) are likewise taken from a printed primer for teaching *tanci* during the 1930s.

In order to introduce the “richness of the local commentary on storytelling and the story repertoire” (4), the author seems forced to keep a sometimes uneasy balance in his handling of primary and secondary sources. On one hand, he emphasizes the importance of studying “the event,” the live performance. On the other hand, he often uses various categories of “oral-connected” texts to provide examples.

Only with the third and final chapter of the book do we definitely enter “oral territory,” in so much as the central part of the chapter is based on a transcription of a live performance of one episode of the love story “Meng Lijun,” named after the heroine of the tale. From the background information on this text (159–60), we learn how it was prepared from a tape-recording of the oral performance in December 1991 (day nine of a sixteen-day engagement), which was transcribed by students in the Chinese Department at Suzhou University. Obviously the students had a good command of Suzhou dialect and were able to provide a “surprisingly” precise transcription, as was later confirmed by the performers. Next, it turned

out that the performers themselves had already made a similar transcript, based on an earlier—likewise tape-recorded—performance of the same episode by their teacher. They had used this as “script” for their own performance. No wonder that the distinction between “oral-delivered” and “oral-connected” texts is sometimes difficult to maintain! As we can see from the present example, a tape-recording with transcription may function as an “oral-delivered” text for the researcher, while it may constitute an “oral-connected” text, that is, a script, for the performer. Most “oral-connected” types of texts, however, tend to stand in a far more precarious relation to the performance genres they reflect. Using such texts as sources for the study of oral performance/oral deliverance is equally precarious, even if inevitable in the study of long lost oral traditions.

The book bridges not only the gap between Chinese and Western performance studies; it also bridges academic and non-academic readership. It is written in a clear and lively style that will be inviting to readers far beyond the circles of Sinologists, linguists, folklorists, and so on and has the potential to reach the interested general reader. Mark Bender’s serious exploration of the contexts and paralinguistic features of performance are of particular value. Another topic of major interest is the rich variety of linguistic registers adopted by the professional artists during narration, dialogue and singing. In this book the emic terms relevant to these registers are given blood and flesh through the open-minded and well-informed discussion. The reader is guided through a large range of narrative components of the oral chantefable. These are features of human ways of communication that will undoubtedly enrich our understanding of the universal possibilities of verbal art.

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