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SHEN CONGWEN. *Imperfect Paradise: Twenty-four Stories*. Edited by Jeffrey Kinkley. Translated by Jeffrey Kinkley and others. Fiction from Modern China. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1995. 537 pages. Cloth US\$42.00; ISBN 0-8248-1635-8. Paper US\$19.95; ISBN 0-8248-1715-X.

"Welcome the revolution; beware the revolutionaries" might well be the epigraph for this wonderful collection of twenty-four short stories aptly titled *Imperfect Paradise*. Shen Congwen (1902–1988), greatly sympathetic to the sufferings of the common people under the landed rich and petty officials, nevertheless saw the same foibles in both the Nationalist and Communist revolutionaries. Writing stories that tell of his experiences as a child soldier under the old order and that now satirize the Communist ideologues, now criticize those in power for unjustly eliminating Communist supporters, Shen made himself welcome nowhere. He had belled the cat. Having had his say, he stopped writing fiction in 1949. In that same year he also tried to stop living. Over thirty years later his stories came to life again. In 1983 his collected works, with a few revisions for safety's sake, were published in mainland China. In 1987 the ban on his works was lifted in Taiwan.

The title of the collection serves as a reminder that, regardless of how much Shen criticized the rich, the powerful, the citified, and the academic, he was not unaware of the jealousies and evils lurking in the hearts of the rural folk he loved. China, with its long history and marvelous people, is a paradise but an imperfect one, just as the Garden of Eden became an imperfect one. If this Judeo-Christian Biblical image seems out of place in a Daoist, Buddhist universe, it should be noted that Shen's stories show Western literary, philosophical, and religious influences as well as traditional Chinese and ethnic Miao elements. With his rich mind and sympathetic heart Shen wrote lyrical, direct stories that resonate on several levels. When I first read some of the short introductions to the stories (each story is introduced by its translator), I felt that they were claiming too much for Shen. However, as I read the stories I was fascinated by the range of characters, backgrounds, and approaches to life and art. The claims are justified.

The twenty-four stories are arranged into seven groups, with an appendix containing nonfiction work: 1) New and Old; Paradise and Perdition; 2) The Vitality of the Primitive; 3) Military Lives; 4) Country Folk; 5) Revolution and Urban Malaise; 6) Later Elegies and Meditations on the Country; 7) Modernist Works; Appendix: Nonfiction Works. This arrangement helps the reader appreciate the stories in context, as it were, since the stories in

each group reinforce one other. The general introduction prepares the reader by giving an overall view of Shen's work and influence. The one- to two-page introductions to the stories then explain topical matters and offer several possible literary interpretations. The interpretations are more like suggestions as to where to look than argued positions, but they are effective in assisting a reader new to Shen and to modern Chinese literature.

The translations themselves read easily. (Chinese language experts may find fault, and even others might wonder at using "dollar" as the unit of currency, but the translations serve their purpose by providing delightful reading.) Those in literature studies will be interested by the echoes of Western writers. Though the stories may have some similarities, I feel Shen has improved or enriched the spark. Thus Shen's stories of social reform have a deeper human dimension than much of the socially concerned literature of the American 1930s. And if there are intimations of Freud and D. H. Lawrence in Shen's stories of lovers, Shen's language is less solemn, more naturally lyrical, and the characters' actions flow with the course of the seasons.

This collection is particularly valuable for readers of Chinese-American fiction, backing up Maxine Hong Kingston's (*The Woman Warrior*, 1976) and Amy Tan's (*The Joy Luck Club*, 1989) claims of village vindictiveness and female subjugation in rural China during the 1920s and 30s. Folklorists will be attracted to this collection because Shen took pride in his home area and wanted to preserve the memory of folk songs and traditions. However, he himself admitted that for the sake of his stories he sometimes fashioned a tradition. He was, after all, a novelist.

I enjoyed these stories very much. Sometimes I wished that the introductions were a little longer or at least that they refrained from making generalizations such as "to embrace a truly transcendental morality that finds more beauty in a spiritually examined Life than in the rationally examined life prized by the West." There is a point to be made here, but it needs to be explained more in the context of Shen's original contributions, or readers may take this as the usual East-West mental division.

A final small matter, but one that had me confused for a while. The description on the back cover lists Shen Congwen as having lived from 1902 to 1988, but on the copyright page we find "Shen, Ts'ung-wen, 1902-".

The editors and translators, as well as the University of Hawai'i Press, are to be praised for making the stories of this great writer available in such an accessible and attractive format. Highly recommended.

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SHEPHERD, JOHN ROBERT. *Marriage and Mandatory Abortion among the 17th-century Siraya*. American Ethnological Society Monograph Series 5. Arlington, VA: American Anthropological Association, 1995. iv + 99 pages. Map, table, figure, bibliography. Paper US\$12.50 (AAA members), US\$15.00 (nonmembers); ISBN 0-913167-71-1. (Order from: The American Anthropological Association, 4350 North Fairfax Drive, Suite 640, Arlington, VA 22203-1621, USA.)

This is an excellent piece of historical ethnography. Shepherd, an American anthropologist known for his remarkable book *Statecraft and Political Economy on the Taiwan Frontier, 1600-1800* (1993), discusses here the interesting problem of mandatory abortion among the