

all intellectuals and officials during the period. A 1977 article discusses the harm done to the *pingtan* world by the Cultural Revolution and the “gang of four,” and contains suggestions for redirecting the path of Suzhou storytelling performance. These observations, of course, are in line with the prevailing directives of the day. Later articles from the 1980s and 1990s delve into such topics as the nature of the traditional arts as mediums of entertainment and education, the necessity of fostering young talent, aesthetics, and reminiscences about older performers. One article from 1986, suggests that the storytelling troupes be dissolved and remain organized only in *pingtan* societies (like writers or artists). If this were to occur, performers would have to give up their “iron rice-bowls” and would operate more efficiently in pairs, as they did traditionally. (Although the wage structure was changed in the early 1990s, the troupes remain.)

It should be noted that a majority of the articles were written under pen names, the most common being “Zuo Xian,” which Wu adopted when working as an underground activist before 1949. Originally meaning “Left Lyre,” inspired by the idea of left-leaning ideology (a common stance among Chinese intellectuals by the mid-1930s) and the Greek god of poetry, who carries a lyre. Later, however, the “lyre” was interpreted as a Chinese *sanxian* banjo used in *tanci* performances. Another pen name is Xia Shi, which he used in co-authoring several *tanci* works with performers such as Chen Lingxi.

In all, the selected works of Wu Zongxi brings together valuable articles by one of the most influential officials in the local administration of the Shanghai storytelling troupes and presents a chronology of the political history of *pingtan* storytelling in the post-1949 era.

This collection, though issued in a very limited press run, will be of great value to any researcher on Suzhou storytelling in the PRC period.

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ZHANG HENSHUI. *Shanghai Express: A Thirties Novel*. Fiction from Modern China. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997. 259 pages. Map. Cloth US\$28.00; ISBN 0-8248-1825-3. Paper US\$12.95; ISBN 0-8248-1830-X.

This is a novel that is certain to please a wide-ranging reading audience. As a prime example of the so-called “Mandarin Duck and Butterfly” genre of Chinese literature that began its ascent in popularity in 1910 and peaked in the late 1930s, it offers the standard love pairing between a clumsy duck (the male lead Hu Ziyun) and his captivating but dangerous butterfly (the female lead Liu Xichun). Readers acquainted with this school of now somewhat dated entertainment fiction will not be disappointed in the author’s mastery of the essentials of mystery, trickery, and seduction. In his pursuit of Miss Liu, the would be philanderer Mr. Hu has just the right air of a sophisticated but bumbling Don Juan. He is socially perceptive, conceited, manipulative, eloquent, and yet ultimately naive in the hands of the lovely professional swindler, Miss Liu.

The two meet in the first minutes of a more than 900 mile journey from old Peiping to Shanghai on the train that bears the novel’s title. Readers are immediately ushered into the romantic flow of the story; but there are more interesting aspects in *Shanghai Express* than sentimental play alone. I was particularly taken by the author’s sardonic sense of social criticism, which runs throughout the work, and by his use of stream of consciousness narratorial devices more or less common to Western writers in the first part of the twentieth century, but

still generally unconventional for their counterparts in Chinese literature at the time Zhang's narrative was published in 1935.

As for the social point of view, the train itself is a microcosm of China in the 1930s. The author argues, and only half humorously, that in the eyes of society, you are where you sit on the Shanghai Express. "Don't judge me from the first-class passenger you see before you now," remarks butterfly Liu Xichun in a mere hint at the theme (34). The text offers frequent specific details on just what the seats on the train mean. Early on, for example, a third-class seated friend of Xichun asks her, "Which class are you riding in?" "First," she replies. Here is the description that follows as she steps into the lower-class car for a hello.

When she pulled the door to third class open, her nostrils were assailed by a coach full of stagnant air. Inside the car, two rows of hard two-seat benches were crammed with passengers.... [Her friend] was seated in the corner... An old couple sat on the two-seat bench... four people, eight legs. And in the space between the young couple and the old couple a large bamboo basket with a large high handle, two bulging bundles, assorted bags of fruit, and a scattering of small boxes of various kinds of snacks. (31–32)

When in a similar scene the lead male character Hu Ziyun later visits an acquaintance named Chengfu, we learn a bit about second-class accommodations:

Had you provided the compartment with a set of gongs and drums going full blast, it could hardly have been any noisier.... Before he had a chance to say anything, Ziyun was brought up short by a very strange odor. He frowned, flared his nostrils in and out, and asked, "What's that smell?" Looking at the man in the berth across from him, Chengfu smiled and responded, "Hard to say." (59)

Here is information about nighttime comfort for the fortunate passengers in first-class:

In the first-class sleeper, some of the compartments had only one passenger, others two .... The springs supporting the berth were so soft and gentle that you would have thought you were riding on clouds. (86)

Later in the story, a down on his luck bureaucrat named Zinning manages to panhandle ten dollars from Xichun, and goes on to ask the porter for a pot of tea. "You want tea, too?" the porter responds. "You'll have to wait a bit." Zinning muses with a smile, "Seeing the ragged clothes I'm wearing, he added that too when he asked if I wanted tea" (126).

The novel is replete with quoted proverbs which readers of this English version will particularly enjoy, thanks to the imaginative work of translator William A. Lyell. A short list of favorites, formatted in italics to conform with Lyell's style: *Tobacco and tea belong neither to you nor to me* (15); *Refuse and you'll be downright rude, accept and you'll be in a guilty mood* (19); *Cash is courage and clothing is clout* (111); *For a thirsty man, water's a treat, and a hungry man knows how to eat* (130).

Unabashed appreciation for the physical beauty of women, and the enjoyment of food and cuisine are frequent concerns in Chinese writing of all times, and the popular "entertainment" literature of the 1930s is no exception. In an interesting connection that may be intentional, the author finds that just as certain places in China are noted for types of womanly beauty, stops along the railroad are also celebrated for their distinctive delicacies.

"Hey, we'll be pulling into Tsangchow pretty soon. Tsangchow's famous for its fruit. I

don't remember whether it's apples or pears they produce, but I do remember that they are very, very large."

"No," said Ziyun. "It's Potou that's famous for its pears, while Tehchow's known all over for its watermelon. As a matter of fact, from Tsangchow on south, every station has fruit of some kind. If you want to talk about fruit, the honey peach grown around Yucheng is something else." (72)

Compare the above conversation between the hapless Ziyun and the former brothel madam, Mrs. Yu, with this one between the same Ziyun and his sentimental target Liu Xichun. To the reader's delight, as is evident here, Liu is occasionally adept at outright flirtatious banter.

"We've been so interested in our talk," she said, "that we haven't been paying attention to where the train's going. I wonder what place we've come to now?"

"It's probably Yangliutsing."

"What a beautiful name for a town,"

"You don't know the half of it. The town is really worthy of its elegant name. Produces beautiful girls galore. In Tientsin, all a matchmaker has to say is that the girl's from Yangliutsing, and the match is already three-tenths guaranteed."

"In that case I'll try and be born in Yangliutsing my next incarnation," said Xichung with a smile. (46)

Space limitations prevent details on narratorial techniques that establish Zhang's *Shanghai Express* as accomplished in its writing strategies when compared to other fictional works of the "Butterfly and Duck" entertainment variety, but I cannot completely pass over this feature of the text. Here is a narrative moment which features beautiful interior monologue, as well as a cutting revelation of the nastiest of Hu Ziyun's character traits. Hu has just found himself alone in his first class compartment. He begins to contemplate Xichun's womanly charm, and suddenly decides to rifle through her possessions. (The plot allows Xichun the last hurrah on this scene, the specifics of which I'll dutifully remain silent on.) Readers will enjoy the art of stream of consciousness here, and the wise absence of even an iota of moralization, too.

And so it was that Ziyun went back to the compartment alone. A purse lay on the chair, and a woman's coat hung from a hook next to the door.... Sure enough, he detected an odor reminiscent of powder and rouge. It was a scent that made him think of the person who wore the coat.... He began going over things in his own mind again. She said she couldn't get along with her husband, that she was thinking of getting a divorce. Wonder if there just might be any secrets related to all of that concealed there in her purse? As long as I've got the chance, why not take a peek! He pulled together the two sides of the curtain on the compartment... [and] picked up the purse. (49-50)

As is obvious, this reviewer thoroughly enjoyed his ride on *Shanghai Express*. I should also say the text offers a very readable nineteen-page overview on Zhang Hengshui and his

literary period, which includes mention of his meetings with Zhou Enlai and Mao Zedong. In addition, there is aesthetic pleasure to be had in the sweet and sour cover portrait of the novel's duck and butterfly, and the three illustrations within the text. How could we wish for more? My sole disappointment here was the utter lack of Chinese characters to match titles and names in the afterward and—shame on the publishers!—the same deplorable fault in the otherwise valuable twenty-six endnotes. Surely a writer of Zhang Henshui's abilities and importance deserves better than that.

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### MONGOLIA

HEISSIG, WALTHER. *Götter im Wandel. Gesammelte Aufsätze zum Synkretismus der mongolischen Volksreligion*. Studies in Oriental Religions, Volume 38. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1996. 281 pages. Tables, illustrations. Paper, DM148.—; ISBN 3-447-03702-4. (In German and English)

*Götter im Wandel* is a collection of essays (one in English) that Heissig has published in various places over a period of about thirty years (1964–1992). They all treat topics related to Mongol folk religion, a field that has been one of Heissig's main research interests for many years.

The arrangement of the essays disregards the time order in which they were originally published and gives precedence to the interrelatedness of their topics, a point that is explained in the introduction. In this way the reader is led rather naturally from one topic to the next. In the first essays Heissig traces changes in the names and cult of divinities (*ingri*) and discusses their significance. He continues with a brief description of an unbloody offering or consecration of animals to divinities. This leads him to an extended discussion of the fire sacrifice, especially that of the fox, and to a comparison of its prayers with prayers for purification. The analysis of purification prayers then reveals their similarity with rites for banning illnesses. And finally, an analysis of fire offerings to Gesar Khan allows Heissig to come to conclusions about the possible time when the epic of Gesar Khan might have been introduced among the Mongols.

A common feature of all the essays is that they make ample use of texts, both vernacular and their translations. In this manner the reader is given the opportunity to see the evidence for Heissig's arguments. Heissig himself emphasizes the importance of text analysis and comparison in order to achieve a better understanding of aspects of folk religion. His own impressive command of original texts allows him not only to analyze their structure, but also to show how many passages of similar content are used in quite disparate types of texts, such as prayers, epics, or legends. It is particularly striking that such passages are often used in very similar, if not even practically identical, formulas. Comparison of such texts in addition allows Heissig to draw conclusions or make at least informed guesses about possible historical connections between the different traditions he isolated. This procedure is possible on two levels. On a literary level he suggests how oral or written traditions share an earlier (written) source, and how the tradition has transformed the source in the process. On the level of content, i.e., as far as the texts contain information concerning religion, he is able to isolate