

all six Chinese thinkers he studies have attempted to engage in some sort of a dialogue with Western thinkers, as they mastered the main ideas of their own brand of liberalism, applied them to the Chinese environment and reflected critically on the results. He reiterates that thinkers like Hu Guoheng and Yang Guoshu have openly expressed their concerns about the limitations of Western liberalism, but their concerns, many of which are legitimate and well-intentioned, have not been seriously considered by Western thinkers. These examples show that in the short run, given their different cultural traditions and political discourses, the two groups may have great difficulty coming to a convergence of views. But as Metzger points out, the goal of a dialogue is not to impose one's view on the other, but to provide an opportunity where both sides may begin to listen to each other. One hopes that the Western thinkers will soon follow the example of their Chinese counterparts, who have apparently been more aggressive in engaging in dialogues.

Regardless of whether Metzger succeeds in initiating a dialogue across the Pacific, it is clear that he has put political philosophy to good use. In discussing the contribution of Tang Junyi, Metzger writes, "T'ang's thought, I believe, did what philosophy is supposed to do. It did not solve the problems people everywhere should be worried about. It helped to identify them and so surpassed the great amount of philosophical discussion, east and west, unconcerned with them" (pp. 277-78). The same can be said of Metzger's own work. By identifying the problems that people on both sides of the Pacific should be worried about, it points to areas where more effort needs to be exerted in order to avoid misunderstanding. By revealing their similarities and differences, he is building a bridge between thinkers in China and the United States.

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*Trauma and Transcendence in Early Qing Literature*. Edited by Wilt L. Idema, Wai-ye Li, and Ellen Widmer. Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Asia Center, 2006. Pp. xi + 533. \$60.00.

A combined product of two successive conferences, this book is a collective study of the complex literary responses to the traumatic Ming-Qing transition between 1644 and 1700. Unlike too many conference volumes that are justified only by a common topic and a summary of chapters in the form of an introduction, this multi-author book is happily much more than the sum total of its parts. Organically structured in form and intricately interwoven in content, all aspects of this volume address, and inter-illuminate, one another. For example, critical analyses of the Qing writer Wu Weiye (1609-1672) as a cultural figure, poet, prose writer, and playwright respectively are informed by, and in turn inform, the general introduction to the book, the division introductions to the poetry, prose, and the drama sections, and other chapters on Wu's contemporaries. As a result, the book offers a richly nuanced, multifaceted, yet remarkably coherent and readable history of early Qing literature with a clear focus and far reaching implications. In this respect, this book sets an

exemplary standard for how a truly worthwhile conference volume should be done. More important, it breaks new ground in successfully executing a collective approach to Chinese literature and literary history.

The book is divided into three main parts: poetry, prose, and drama, each with a division introduction by Wai-yee Li, Ellen Widmer, and Wilt L. Idema, respectively. A general introduction, masterfully composed by Wai-yee Li, anchors the entire book. The editors also contribute individual chapters to their respective sections. In the general introduction, Li historicizes the three major critical issues of the book, namely, the existential crisis faced by Han literati after the traumatic fall of the Ming; the artistic choices the early Qing writers made to articulate, make sense of, and come to terms with the overwhelming sense of guilt and confusion over their own survival; and finally, the persistent political and moral biases shown by previous critics when evaluating literary works of this period. “Our challenge,” concludes Li, “is to examine whether moral and literary judgment can and should be separated and, if so, how and to what ends” (p. 70), which aptly summarizes the self-conscious mission of the book as a critical re-evaluation of this period of Chinese literature. Li’s study shows that early Qing literature from its very beginning had been fraught with authorial self doubts and internalized moral judgments. Therefore, a truly effective corrective of previous political and moral biases should not be simple dismissal of these issues but, rather, a new appreciation for how internalized moral conflicts contributed to the remarkable complexity and creative energy of early Qing literature. As the following summary of chapters will demonstrate, the present book has met this challenge successfully.

In her division introduction to Part I on poetry, Wai-yee Li gives an overview of late Ming and early Qing poetics, which she finds to be “politicized responses to the literary debates of the preceding century” (p. 97). The following three chapters that consist of Part I embody conscious critical efforts to move beyond the polemics of these past debates. The first chapter on history and memory in Wu Weiye’s poetry, again by Li, analyzes how Wu’s poetry explores—with compassion and ironic self-awareness—multiple historical perspectives on traumatic events in history, thereby transcending moral judgment. Lawrence C. H. Yim’s chapter on the poetry by the early Qing Buddhist monk Hanke (1612–1660) offers a case study in the critical receptions of a writer traditionally labelled a “Ming loyalist,” a designation critics have traditionally applied to advance their own various political agendas. Against this two-dimensional persona, Yim’s close reading of Hanke’s poetry in historical context reveals a much broader range of emotions and subtler shades of loyalist sentiments, thereby enriching our understanding of Hanke’s art. Kang-I Sun Chang’s chapter on the controversial poet Qian Qianyi (1582–1664) examines the critical biases underlying the changing historical perceptions of Qian as an influential poet, cultural leader, and cowardly Ming official who surrendered to the Manchu conquerors. Chang’s study of the life and works of Qian instead finds that “fewer people in history have been more misunderstood than Qian Qianyi” (p. 213). Her sensitive and sympathetic readings of Qian’s poetry reveal a fine poet and responsible person caught in a time of turmoil.

Part II features five chapters on fiction, memoirs, and other types of early Qing prose writings. Ellen Widmer’s introduction to Part II draws on, and provides a larger historical framework for, the individual chapters. For example, while the five chapters focus on early

Qing writers' fantasies, memories, and dreams in reaction to a time of historical trauma, Widmer further points to commercial publishing and the general reading public (including women readers) as other possible contributors to the escapist tendency and healing function of early Qing literature. Against this larger cultural background, Widmer finds the widespread activity of textual collecting among early Qing literati—such as Zhang Chao's (1650–1707) compilation of his famed story collection *Yu Chu xingzhi* that provides source materials for all the five chapters in Part II—as a venue for individual and communal healing. Widmer's observations about the roles of commercial publishing and literati story collections offer important implications for the nature and functions of literati story collecting in the Qing. Through various acts of writing, collecting, compiling, publishing, reading, and commenting on an anthology of shared memories and dreams, all participants are able to relate to one another's feelings, thereby validating one's own. A collection of literary fantasies thus creates a broad cultural network where both individual healing and communal cohesion may be achieved.

Yusushi Ōki's chapters examines the lives of two self-styled Ming loyalists—namely, Mao Xiang (1611–1693) and Yu Huai (1616–1696)—and the romantic personae projected by their memoirs. Central to these memoirs is the authors' loving attention to the details of women's lives and their feminine sentimentality, which come to symbolize a lost age of refinement. As Ōki's analysis reveals, Mao's and Yu's remembrances of the women in their past serve complex political and psychological purposes. On the one hand, to honour the lost women of the Ming constituted a strategy of resistance against the Qing regime. On the other hand, the authors' representations of the lost ideal feminine in various forms—including chaste wives as well as romantic courtesans—recreate a nostalgia space where their own masculinity, now displaced by the new Manchu order, may be recaptured and relieved. Ellen Widmer's chapter discusses how Huang Zhouxing's (1611–1680) imaginary garden in his writings anticipated the themes of fantasy as reality and selfhood as artifact in the great eighteenth-century novel *Honglou meng*. Widmer suggests that Huang's construction of his imaginary garden was both wordplay and a means to earn a living through commercial publishing. In the context of the immediate wake of the Manchu conquest, these themes in Huang's writings also responded to a psychological impulse to “reveal yet conceal one's shame of being alive” (p. 281).

Alan H. Barr's chapter offers a study of Zhang Chao's story anthology *Yu Chu xingzhi* as the precursor of a new breed of story collections that employed anecdotal writings as a social commentary. Barr's analysis focuses on Xu Fang (1619–1671) and Niu Xiu (1640–1704) whose short stories are prominently featured in *Yu Chu xingzhi*. In this chapter, Xu and Liu are taken to represent two successive generations of early Qing writers from the early to the mid-Kangxi era. By examining the dominate themes in their anecdotal writings, Barr discovers that dynastic loyalties that had been a major concern in Xu Fang's collection became submerged in Niu Xiu's work, which focused instead on how traditional moral values had survived the traumatic Ming-Qing transition. As Widmer points out in her introduction to Part II, although Barr does not provide a reason for why the quality of fiction reached a new height in Qing anecdotal writings, he does succeed in bringing to our attention *Yu Chu xingzhi*'s profound influence on, and high esteem held by, later Qing writers of the genre (p. 222). Widmer suggests escapism during tumultuous times and a wish

to preserve past writings during traumatic dynastic transitions as two possible factors behind the high quality of anecdotal writings during this period (p. 223).

In addition to the two factors pointed out by Widmer, I would suggest that the remarkable achievements of literati anecdotal writings during this period may be examined in light of the development of Chinese cosmology from the Ming to the Qing. As Qing intellectuals turned their interest from speculative cosmology to evidential scholarship, they took to collecting anecdotes as “evidence” for a dependable pattern of the universe. In Xu Fang’s case, tales about loyalty rewarded and treason punished seem to meet an underlying psychological need for a stable cosmic pattern of moral behaviour during a time of traumatic change. In Niu Xiu’s case, stories about how individuals and families are miraculously preserved through tremendous upheavals by heroic acts also seem to satisfy a desire for the continuing existence of the good old moral universe during a new political era. In this respect, the high quality of these authors’ works bespeaks the serious intellectual, artistic, and psychological energies that the Qing élite devoted to collecting written anecdotal evidence as cosmography.

Tina Lu’s chapter compares the evolving treatments of the perennial motif of reunion in Chinese fiction from the late Ming to the early Qing. Often at the heart of these narratives a woman’s chastity is at stake. As these fictional reunions became ever more ingeniously contrived, the fantasy of a reunion against impossible odds served as an imaginary arena where society’s deep-seated anxieties about the breakdown of the sexual, familial, social, and political order in the wake of the Manchu conquest may be acted out and purged. Drawing on anthropological theories of gift giving and exchange, Lu discusses how in these fictions objectified women are passed around in ritualized exchanges among initially unconnected men to create a new, broader, and enclosed social network with the once violated yet now repaired sexual order as its centre. Participants of the newly formulated socio-familial network sometimes include members from both the conquering and the conquered camps. At the end of these stories, the eventual return of the woman to her rightful owner and the wishful restoration of the patriarchal order offer solace and hope for a new world where the traditional moral principle of reciprocity may also help restore the fractured empire.

Robert Hegel’s chapter on dream, memory, and history in early Qing prose literature analyses how the personal and collective past is treated in literati writings of this period to create a shared emotional space where the author’s and reader’s common sense of loss and alienation from the new “unhomely” Manchu regime may be shared and transcended. In this respect, this body of literature may be considered both the means and product of a collective grieving process over the violent end of an old familiar world. The materials examined in this chapter cover a wide range of writings, chief among them personal reminiscences and prefaces by Zhang Dai (1597–1679), Yu Huai (1616–1696), Wang Shizhen (1634–1711), and Wu Weiye, and the historical novel *Sui Tang yuanyi* by Chu Renhuo (c. 1630–1703+). Hegel’s own lyrical, highly readable prose complements beautifully the dreamy quality of his primary materials, which by the very nature of their psychological impetus are direct or fictional expressions of intensely personal emotions. Hegel concludes the chapter with a discussion of *Sui Tang yanyi*. His analysis of the novel focuses on two fictional elements, both related to the theme of continuity through change. The first is the motif of reincarnation through dynastic transition. The second element concerns the fictional characterization of Li

Mo, a Tang palace musician who lived through the chaos and destruction of the An Lushan Rebellion. Hegel discusses how Li Mo, motivated by both his own love for music and heavenly decrees, recaptured and transmitted a lost melody of the Tang court, thereby preserving the memories of a glorious by-gone era. Read in the complex psychological context of the Ming “remnant subjects,” Li Mo’s ability and mandate as an artist to continue the élite cultural tradition of the fallen dynasty may be understood to provide a *raison d’être* for the surviving Ming literati and their arts.

In his introduction to Part III on drama, Wilt Idema discusses the historical development of Chinese theatre from late Ming to two generations after the Manchu conquest. Idema identifies a shift from the strong autobiographical tendency to aesthetic self-reflexivity in the two phases of Chinese theatre after the fall of the Ming, which he contributes to the literati’s gradual acceptance of the Qing as the established regime. In addition to commenting on the broader implications of the four chapters on drama, Idema offers a general overview of the state of the art of Chinese theater studies, including a new trend among contemporary critics from the People’s Republic of China to correct the previous lack of scholarly attention to apolitical Qing plays, such as light romantic comedies written for the Qing power holders.

Idema’s chapter on three plays by Ding Yaokang (1599–1669) presents a highly original playwright who has to date received little attention from Western sinologists. Inspired by historical and contemporary events and Ding’s own travels, these plays exhibit a strong autobiographical bent and offer strident sociopolitical criticisms. Idema points out that as the Qing consolidated its rule and the issue of dynastic transition came to be viewed as a thing of the past, Ding’s plays may have gradually lost their appeal to the next generation of audiences, who turned their attention to a new crop of dramatic works that self-consciously explored the imaginary nature of art itself. On the other hand, the masked self in Ding’s plays so expertly unmasked by Idema seems to prefigure the fascination with the self as an artistic construct in later Chinese literature. In this respect, Ding’s plays may be said to have been part of a continuous artistic trend that exerted profound impact on the next generations of Qing writers and readers.

Dietrich Tszchanz’s chapter on the “aesthetics of dynastic transition” examines three plays by Wu Weiye in historical context. Tszchanz points to five common elements of these plays: a pre-Song historical setting during a traumatic transitional period; Nanjing as a symbol of lost splendour and refinement; an elevated structure such as a terrace or a temple for contemplation, introspection and recollection; the search for enlightenment; and finally, the incantation of words as a performative act of connecting with other people and with the past. These common elements formulate a unique dramatic discourse by which Wu Weiye articulated and processed his evolving emotions toward the Manchu conquest. Through the power of words, Wu Weiye ensures that contemporary and later audiences may come to remember and understand him.

Judith T. Zeitlin’s chapter concerns music and performance in Hong Sheng’s (1645–1704) *kunqu* opera *Changsheng dian*, a historical drama based on the tragic love story between the Tang emperor Minghuang and his prized consort Lady Yang in the wake of the An Lushan Rebellion. The chapter offers a close reading of the overt self-reflexivity of music and stage performance in *Changsheng dian* and discusses how the play enacts its own

creative process by, for example, dramatizing the evolution of a celestial tune through the human acts of transcription, alteration, reinterpretation, and reinvention. As a piece of performing art and reading text, *Changsheng dian* is self-consciously subject to a collaborative process that requires the active participation of not only the playwright, actors, audiences, and readers, but also their collective cultural memories of both the historical and recent past. Changes in both life and perspectives are thus shown to be organic to the artistic process itself and universal to the human condition. By performing these changes and their transcendence, the play offers a process of aesthetic mediation through which a new understanding of the past and the self may be achieved.

Stephen Owen's chapter on *Taohua shan* focuses on the play's self-conscious exploration into the act of performance as the common ground between the theatre and the world beyond and as, paradoxically, the transcendental seat of the genuine. Owen's sensitive reading of the text shows how the play dramatizes, with irony and compassion, the ways characters are compelled to act their assigned theatrical and societal roles. Owen also demonstrates how the characters' performances are perceived by spectators who are themselves acting out different scripts in an intricate series of plays within plays. On the one hand, an actor executes his role in the same way that an individual performs his social identity; both act in accordance with the spectator's expectations. In this respect, all identities are mere acts. On the other hand, a truly beautiful performance brings out the genuine in the actor and resonates with the genuine in the audience. With this power to connect and to move, the play is able to capture authentic human emotions that become crystallized in the theatrical experience.

The most important historical and theoretical observation in Owen's chapter arguably lies in the following statement: "Like *Honglou meng* a half-century later, *Peach Blossom Fan* [*Taohua shan*] is part of a larger intellectual move to complicate—we might even legitimately say 'deconstruct' here—the conventional opposition between the 'genuine,' *zhen*, and 'false'/'feigned,' *jia*, that had so preoccupied the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century" (p. 494). This statement may be considered an apt conclusion to this collective study of early Qing literature and literary history. In addition, Owen's own lyrical prose lovingly brings alive a text which, notwithstanding its own self-deconstructive tendency, ultimately reaffirms the values of beauty, emotions, and the arts.

In conclusion, this book is not only a fine study of Chinese literature during a particular historical period. By focusing on literary responses to collective trauma, the book is able to offer insights into the complex psychological impetuses behind the human acts of writing, reading, textual collecting, literary criticism, theatrical and literary performance, gender construction, and the (re-)construction of a fractured community through these activities in a time of socio-political upheavals. In this respect, the book puts forward wide-ranging theoretical implications for studies of other national literatures and comparable historical periods. Finally, the remarkable scholarly collaboration among the authors and editors of the book well suites the intensely personal yet also communal nature of their primary materials and sets a high bar for future conference volumes in the field of China studies.

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