

釋門正通 (p. 340) should read 釋門正統; *Su Shih tzu-liao hui-pien* 蘇軾資料會編 (p. 342) should read 蘇軾資料彙編; *Ch'ih-hsiu Pai-chang ch'ing-kui* 敕修百丈清規 (p. 343) should read 敕修百丈清規; *Tseng-i A-han ching* 曾一阿含經 (p. 344) should read 增一阿含經; *Sheng-shui yen-t'an lu* 澗水燕談錄 (p. 345) should read *Min-shui yen-t'an lu*; *Yen-hsia fang-yen* 巖下放談 (p. 348) should read 巖下放言; Yen Keng-wang 嚴庚望 should read 嚴耕望; Yen Shang-wen 嚴尚文 (p. 348) should read 顏尚文; *Yen-yu Ssu-ming chih* 延佑四明志 (p. 349) should read 延祐四明志; *Hi Shū ten* 裴修傳 (p. 349) should read 裴休傳; Yü Ching 俞靖 (p. 349) should read 余靖; Yü Ying-shih 余應時 (p. 349) should read 余英時; Yüan Chen 元鎮 (p. 349) should read 元稹; Imamura Yoshio 今村與志 (p. 349) should read 今村與志雄。

To sum up, Halperin presents to his readers a significant amount of information on Sung literati's views on Buddhism as expressed in temple commemorations. His analysis and interpretation are sound, and his arguments well grounded. Despite the errors in translation and in references, the reader will find the book challenging and inspiring. The publisher, however, would do the readers of the book a great service if it attended to the aforementioned editing flaws.

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Mediasphere Shanghai: The Aesthetics of Cultural Production. By Alexander Des Forges. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007. Pp. xi + 278. \$55.00.

There seems to be no end in sight to the ongoing stream of writings on how the image of Republican Shanghai as the hybridized city of speed, modernity, and sensuous abandon was produced and recycled. This is not to be lamented and Alexander Des Forges's highly readable book, *Mediasphere Shanghai*, is a welcome addition to this field in which the author presents a new perspective on this interesting topic. Whereas other scholars of Shanghai literature and culture tend to read the literature from the city based on the assumption that it reflects its historical and socioeconomic status, Des Forges argues for the primacy of the text in shaping people's relations with the place. Des Forges's argument is that literature about Shanghai, originating with the instalment fiction from the late Qing period, constituted and framed people's expectations and experiences of the city. Fiction set in Shanghai created a narrative of Western development and influence and established a fixed set of conceptions about the city which in turn led people to seek out pleasures and experiences that conformed with their expectations. This included taking carriage rides, strolling leisurely in Yuyuan 豫園, and visiting the tea houses or brothels. Writings about Shanghai and the representation of the city thus ultimately played a key role in cultivating and giving shape to long-time residents' identity as *Szahaenin*, i.e. Shanghai people.

Des Forges bases this argument on a wide range of sources from fiction to guide books, photographs, and film. These different media constitute the "mediasphere" of the

title, a term borrowed from Régis Debray, which Des Forges uses to characterize the media industry centred around Shanghai. The bulk of his analysis is based on the popular instalment fiction serialized in newspapers from the 1890s to the 1920s. These works, such as the well-known *Lives of Shanghai Flowers* 海上花列傳 (1892–1894) by Han Bangqing 韓邦慶 and *The Huangpu Tides* 歇浦潮 (1916–1921) by Zhu Shouju 朱瘦菊, are the main focus of the first five chapters in the book. The two last chapters are principally concerned with showing how later writings were indebted to such instalment fiction in their representation of the city. These echoes of earlier modes of writing are found in Mao Dun's 茅盾 *Midnight* 子夜 (1931) and Hou Hsiao-hsien's 侯孝賢 film *Flowers of Shanghai* 海上花 (1998) as well as in a few short stories by the modernist writers of the 1930s. Lumping this diverse bundle of literature and art together, Des Forges proposes the material be seen as part of a genre or historical family which he calls "Shanghai fiction." Through these works he traces linkages across the supposedly traditional late Qing instalment fiction, the fiction of the 1920s and 1930s, and the nostalgic revival of Shanghai found in contemporary art. He posits that such literature displays four main "aesthetic forms" or tropes, namely *simultaneity*, *interruption*, *mediation*, and *excess*. These forms structure the way in which readers of fiction came to perceive Shanghai and it is the study of these forms that more or less guides the readings and analysis of texts throughout *Mediasphere Shanghai*.

The serialized novels which became so popular in the Shanghai newspapers of the late nineteenth century are characterized by their length and narrative complexity. Without main protagonists or over-arching plots, the narrative focus shifts between a multitude of individual storylines that are interwoven as characters meet and travel about the city. Characters appear briefly, thus setting them up for reappearance many chapters later, or they are never heard from again. Storylines are cut off abruptly between instalments or even in the middle of them. Des Forges likens the narrative effect to the cross-cutting technique of cinema. To this reader, the narrative approach seems to have much in common with contemporary British TV soap operas such as *Coronation Street* or *EastEnders* which have run for decades. These long-lived series similarly feature a multitude of simultaneous plotlines which cross back and forth and develop on or off stage with the camera shifting between characters as they meet at random outside their homes, at the market, or in the local pub—the modern parallel of the courtesan houses serving as hubs in which characters argue, relax, flirt, and make new acquaintances. In any case, Des Forges's aesthetic forms *simultaneity* and *interruption* are suitable labels as the fundamental structure by which both late Qing instalment fiction and modern British TV shows create a rambling multi-layered episodic framework that can carry on for years while spellbinding sizeable audiences.

The notion of *excess* also seems to be a natural fit in attempting to characterize literature about Shanghai. The well-known epithet as the "Paris of the Orient" conjures up associations with dance halls, taxi girls, neon lights, and vulgar displays of consumption and wealth. In late Qing serialized novels, the trope of excess seems to manifest itself mainly in overindulgence and dissipation fuelled by the consumption of opium. An excess of leisure brings ruination, harms the body, and can lead to public humiliation. Des Forges

has presented the notions of simultaneity, interruption, and excess before.¹ The inclusion of *mediation*, however, is new and principally signifies the function of the brokers in various novels who bring different people and their crossing storylines together. The four “aesthetic forms” characterize not only the fiction analyzed but the whole “mediasphere.” For example, mediation characterizes the author of popular fiction who becomes a mediator by introducing readers to the city’s allure or modern narrative techniques—such as inner voices and the use of the westernized vernacular—while still retaining links with literary tradition. Des Forges similarly highlights the excess of Shanghai authors whose popular novels were extensively prolonged or extended in lengthy sequels to satisfy reader demand.

Des Forges also shows how later, supposedly modern, representations of Shanghai echo the pattern seen in instalment fiction of the 1890s. Mao Dun’s *Midnight* is singled out for special attention in an interesting comparison which shows how the novel’s narrative structure resembles late Qing forms. Commonalities with the modernist fiction of Liu Na’ou 劉呐鷗, Mu Shiyong 穆時英, and Shi Zhecun 施蟄存 are found as well. The expressionistic narrative breaks in Mu’s short stories and the attention paid to consumption and expenditure clearly resemble earlier instalment fiction. In a similar manner, a comparison is drawn between the “modern woman” of modernist fiction and the courtesans of late-Qing writings. Straining the comparison, Des Forges finds that the modernist writers’ expressionistic narrative style, use of foreign words, and complex shifts between narrative voices also draw upon earlier Shanghai writings as the modernist author is placed in a mediating position between the native and the western. This echoes how earlier authors juxtaposed various regional groups and mixed literary registers, such as the shifts between Wu and northern dialects found in *Lives of Shanghai Flowers*.

Des Forges moves deftly back and forth between analysis of fiction and comments on the publishing and media industry as a whole. The wide range of sources used in this book is a strength and makes it an interesting read, yet there is also the danger of a lack of focus in this eclectic approach. The four aesthetic forms which guide the study are identified at different times and at various levels ranging from within the texts themselves to the publishing industry at large. They end up being applicable to such a multitude of forms and relationships that they risk becoming amorphous. Part of this danger stems naturally from the attempt to present a cogent theory that covers such a diverse body of texts and cultural practices. We also need to question Des Forges’s idea of a relatively homogeneous body of “Shanghai fiction.” Is there really a coherent Shanghai genre which spans from the late nineteenth century to the late 1930s that justifies any sort of broad generalizations? Personally, I find that the identification of various commonalities between Shanghai’s late Qing instalment fiction and 1930s modernism does not justify Des Forges’s use of broad categorizations such as *haipai* 海派—a term which seems mostly

¹ Alexander Des Forges, “Building Shanghai, One Page at a Time: The Aesthetics of Installment Fiction at the Turn of the Century,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 62, no. 3 (August 2003), pp. 781–810.

useful to signify what the May Fourth intellectuals were opposed to rather than anything which the authors thus designated had in common. Des Forges is far more wary of the term “Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies” which is sensibly cordoned off within citation marks. A more explicit discussion of such terms would have been useful. Des Forges’s arguments are indeed convincing, but I wish the differences in the material had been delineated more clearly. In this vein, the study might have benefited from paying greater attention to the competing discursive agendas that attempted to appropriate and represent various elements of modernity, such as the contested “modern woman.” Similarly in the study of the formation of *Szahaenin* identity, Des Forges borders on glossing over the continued importance of regional identities among immigrant groups.²

Des Forges’s focus on the formative influence of literature is useful, particularly the overview of late Qing instalment fiction and the argument that it influenced later perceptions of Shanghai. As such, it complements historical studies, such as Wen-hsin Yeh’s 葉文心 recent *Shanghai Splendor* on the formation of capitalist middle class sensibilities.³ I also agree with Des Forges that we should treat the writings of Shanghai authors such as Shi Zhecun and Mu Shiying more often in the context of Chinese literature as opposed to seeing them as simple reflections of foreign influence or Shanghai’s political and social status. The strength of Des Forges’s book is not so much in bringing new literature to light, but rather in questioning the approach of others who have looked at the same material. His analysis is a welcome addition to the field with its discussion on how Shanghai was represented in literature with linkages drawn to the formation of regional identity, leisure pursuits, and modern nostalgia.

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² Bryna Goodman, *Native Place, City, and Nation: Regional Networks and Identities in Shanghai, 1853–1937* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995).

³ Wen-hsin Yeh, *Shanghai Splendor: Economic Sentiments and the Making of Modern China, 1843–1949* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007).