

2 with only Chinese characters, and not phonetically, leaves this aspect of the performance out of sight of the readers, who can only taste it through the small sampling that she gives in chapter 3. Still, this is a pioneering, and otherwise successful, attempt to describe and define the role of pronunciation and its manipulation in Chinese storytelling.

Chapter 4 moves on to explore how Yangzhou grammar might be manipulated by the storytellers to color their product. Børdahl's analysis reveals that there is little stylistic variation among square mouth/round mouth and public talk/private talk modes on the grammatical level. Apparently, the storytellers do not perceive grammatical variation to be an important mark of differing levels of language and usage. An exception is seen in the pattern of alternation between literary and colloquial forms (see pp. 124–29). Yet because the difference between literary and colloquial forms is most obvious in their respective pronunciations, even despite their differing lexical distribution, it is clear that the storytellers probably are most aware of this variation at the phonological level here as well.

In her treatment of style in chapter 5, Børdahl finds little specific correlation between the dialectal nature of the texts and their use of prosody and parallelism. She concludes that features of style broadly reflect more generally Chinese literary characteristics (p. 176). The same conclusion would appear to hold true for the issues of narration that the author discusses in chapter 6—including voice and person, commentary, digression, and summary.

Yet while the performances of the storytellers exist within a literate society and are inevitably influenced to some degree by the written tradition, the concluding chapter, "Orality and Literacy," finds that Yangzhou storytelling is nevertheless a strictly oral genre, whose texts are presented, transmitted, and appreciated entirely independently of the written page. The author sees a strong link between the overall framework of literary and oral story versions; but she notes that the content of the oral versions evidences a great deal of creative manipulation and modification taken outside of the written tradition.

Part 2 includes translations for the Chinese character transcriptions of nine different story excerpts by performers representing three different Yangzhou storytellers' schools. These materials collectively provide a sampling of the ways traditional story lines can be variously treated by different performers. They nicely round out this study, which is altogether a useful record of, and enthusiastic witness to, the rich, living tradition of Yangzhou storytelling.

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Pearl S. Buck: A Cultural Biography. By PETER CONN. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996. xxvi, 468 pp. \$29.95.

Following the publication in 1931 of her novel about Chinese peasant life, *The Good Earth*, Pearl S. Buck blossomed into one of the best known, widely read, and most respected American women of her generation. Although her writing and public involvement ranged widely beyond China, she carefully cultivated that connection throughout her career. Peter Conn, developing a theme first voiced by Harold Issacs in 1958, writes, "Never before or since has one writer so personally shaped the

imaginative terms in which America addresses a foreign culture. For two generations of Americans, Buck invented China” (p. xiv).

What, then, was the China Pearl Buck presented to her readers? In this and other matters involving critical judgment about Buck’s work, Conn takes a modest, sometimes almost off-hand, approach, summarizing his views in short paragraphs salted through his narrative account of her eventful life and extensive writing. He confirms her skill in piercing the veils of literary exoticism that typified most fiction set in China and applauds her careful, almost documentary, descriptions in which she made the strange aspects of Chinese life seem both familiar and acceptable. Although Buck’s writing is marked by propagandistic certitude and didacticism that reflects her missionary upbringing, Conn finds she still manages to fashion plausible characters who face life in “narrow limits of circumstance” (p. 220) for her readers. Pearl Buck emerges from this account as a much better interpreter of Chinese life and politics than most of the scholarly world both in the past and at present has been willing to concede.

As an example of Conn’s style when he comes to discuss Buck’s popularity with women readers, he quotes Elizabeth Janeway writing in the *New York Times Book Review* in 1952, but does not expand the discussion with his own comments. Instead, he implies through quoting Buck’s correspondence about Eisenhower’s election that she knew and understood women were not taken seriously in literary circles, but preferred to write for her known audience in order to maintain her considerable income (pp. 329–32).

Conn, like Buck’s other biographers—including her sister Grace Yaukey, Irwin Block, Paul Doyle, and Nora Stirling—found the breadth of Buck’s activities and the complexities of her personal life too much of a good story. It is these other aspects of Buck’s life to which Conn devotes his major attention and thus he subtitles his book “A Cultural Biography,” rather than a literary one.

Conn provides a well-informed treatment of Buck’s life in China, fleshing out his account through careful use of recent scholarship about the early-twentieth-century China of her childhood. He also provides the best available account of Buck’s life after her return to the United States in 1934 at the age of forty-two. Although she kept up a dizzying pace of publication over the next thirty-nine years, the diversity and remarkable breadth of her activities during this American phase of her life inevitably command a biographer’s attention.

Buck herself described much of this in her autobiographical works, especially *My Several Worlds* (1954) and *A Bridge for Passing* (1962), as well as in fictionalized versions in novels and stories. Conn adds considerable new material from Buck’s correspondence he has uncovered in libraries throughout the U.S. The result is a rich, balanced, and careful appraisal of Pearl Buck as a public figure. His account only confirms the judgment that she was one of the most important progressive American women of twentieth-century America.

In general, Conn does not depart from earlier critics in his judgments about Buck as a writer. He agrees she wrote too much, published too quickly in order to maintain the large income needed to sustain her social and humanitarian causes. He applauds her writing for attentive descriptions of place, mood, and persons which he finds “more eloquent than her pious pronouncements to her cross-cultural commitments” (p. 336). Conn believes such pronouncements lessen her literary reputation, but suggests that nevertheless these sentiments had considerable impact on her readers. Although he praises a number of her books about China, specifically, *The Mother* (1934), *First Wife and Other Stories* (1933), *Sons* (1932), *Dragon Seed* (1942), *Imperial Woman* (1956), and

Kinfolk (1949), Conn never attempts a discussion of how the contents of her China books might have influenced readers' views about China and the Chinese.

Conn presents a more somber Pearl Buck as a workaholic who kept herself busy in a life "darkened by the failure of her first marriage, her daughter's mental illness and her sterility" (p. 219). Although personally happier after her second marriage to Richard Walsh, he believes her unexpected fame after receiving the 1938 Nobel Prize for Literature damaged rather than bolstered her self-confidence and turned her more toward public advocacy of her humanitarian concerns. Hovering in the background Conn sees the shadow of her patriarchal father who disdained novels and prized evangelical religion. Yet, Buck embodied her mother's values, promoting humanitarian causes and devoting herself to a progressive ideal of the United States rather than her father's religious purposes. Having read most of Buck's work—but I must hasten to add that in spite of a shared surname I am not related either to Buck or her first husband, John Lossing Buck—I concur with Conn's evaluation that Buck remained "an essentially isolated woman" (p. 372) who could share little of her inner self except through her writing.

There are some aspects of Buck's life into which Conn does not penetrate. Her relationship with her second husband—Richard Walsh, who served as both her editor and publisher, until becoming an invalid following a stroke in 1953—remains underdeveloped; we learn almost nothing of the sometimes difficult relations between Buck and her adopted children. While suggesting that she could be distant and imperious, he does not quote many of the chilling judgments Buck could voice to those closest to her, such as this one that appeared in a March 7, 1973, obituary in the *New York Times*: "I married two men in my lifetime who were unable to support me; I have always supported myself and my family, and it's been a large family." In his treatment of Buck's long fascination with children of mixed Asian and Caucasian heritage, Conn does not plumb fully the meaning of this enduring motif in her fiction and humanitarian activities. I had expected a somewhat more daring book from Conn, but he has presented a solid one, carefully documented, balanced in judgment and still generous to its subject.

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Language Shattered: Contemporary Chinese Poetry and Duoduo. By MAGHIEL VAN CREVEL. Leiden: Research School CNWS, 1996. x, 355 pp.

The very first full-length book in English devoted to the study of Chinese "experimental poetry," Maghiel van Crevel's *Language Shattered: Contemporary Chinese Poetry and Duoduo* merits attention primarily for the highly valuable yet hitherto neglected subjects it chooses to examine: Chinese "experimental poetry" and its most innovative and maverick representative, Duoduo. Divided into two relatively independent parts, the book first elaborates on the general history of the development of Chinese poetry since its earliest detachment from the communist orthodoxy and then focuses on Duoduo's poetic texts as a model of experimental poetry.

Despite his regret that "unfortunately the study of PRC literature often involves PRC politics" (p. 3), Crevel, in part 1, conscientiously charts the historical/cultural milieu in the PRC, with an emphasis on the rise of nonofficial (what he calls "unofficial") literary activities and publications. It is most significant that the book