

Can We Paradigm? Re-examining the Mimetic Heresy and Some Other Imbroglis in Recent Western-language Academic Studies of Modern Chinese Literature¹

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ABSTRACT

This article summarizes some key achievements in the field of modern Chinese literary studies in the West, while pointing to areas where major deficiencies remain. One major problem is the common poststructuralist assumption that literature and language are "closed" systems of a purely self-reflexive sort; complex and fascinating mimetic aspects of literature are hence often overlooked or even scornfully dismissed. This mimetic heresy or referential anxiety is a symptom of a larger problem: the tendency to accept the positions of a Western academic literary "authority" like Jameson or Said largely on faith, instead of subjecting even the most popular academic hypotheses to critical scholarly scrutiny. A more critical approach to handling ambiguous interpretive terminology and variant editions would also improve the field's long-term intellectual standing and its prospects for broadening its interdisciplinary reach.

KEY WORDS

poststructuralism
feudalism
ambiguous terminology
variant editions
Saussurean linguistics
mimesis

hypotheses and theories
Saidian Orientalism
bowdlerized texts
bibliographical standards
"resistance to theory"
referential anxiety

illusory “closed” systems

Eurasian rivalries

logical fallacies

intellectual skepticism

hegemonism

conceptual absolutism

Gramscian subversion

evidential research



Introduction

The study of 20th-century Chinese fiction began somewhat later in North America than in Europe, yet has chalked up some impressive advances since its establishment in the 1960s by such treatises as C.T. Hsia's *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction, 1917-57*.² For instance, a growing contingent of multi-author studies and anthologies of fiction and criticism in translation has supplied a quite representative sampling of what the period's writings have to offer.³ Numerous book-length studies of key individual writers have provided a more focused, personalized, and in-depth acquaintance with the Chinese literary scene.⁴ Individual authors' novels and story anthologies have increasingly appeared in English translation, the quality of which has improved overall.⁵

On the other hand, the relative popularity of both 20th-century Chinese fiction in college courses and Chinese movies based on this fiction has not yet been matched by a consistent increase in the field's scholarly rigor. No matter whether one compares modern Chinese fiction scholars to modern Chinese historians or traditional Chinese fiction scholars, the former group tends to come up short in overall thoroughness, rigor, and sustainability of scholarly effort. To be sure, modern Chinese fiction is a younger field, having produced its own North American journal only since 1984.⁶ Still, the field could move beyond its present state of advanced apprenticeship in Chinese studies through steady improvements in: 1) retooling terminology of a confusing or ambiguous nature; 2) maintaining a balanced and long-term view of the field's development, including intellectual skepticism for

any overreaching claims by hypotheses or theories that may be in vogue at a given juncture; and 3) handling variant editions responsibly and with high bibliographical standards.

Retooling Terminology of a Confusing or Ambiguous Nature

Many terms that have become commonly used in academic studies of 20th-century Chinese fiction are so misleading as to confuse rather than clarify the issue at hand. For instance, *fengjian* 封建 or “feudal” should not be used to characterize Chinese society or government since the time when the last remnants of the old Zhou 周 feudal states were crushed once and for all by the first Qin 秦 dynasty emperor in 221 B. C. E. However, a number of factors have led most Chinese scholars of 20th-century Chinese fiction to use “feudal” or “feudalism” as a blanket pejorative term for premodern Chinese cultural and society—and a surprisingly large number of Western scholars in this field have uncritically followed suit.

The institutionalization of various Marxist schemas in the PRC since 1949 played an important role in entrenching Karl Marx’s incredibly crude four-stage model of social development from a “slave society” to “feudalism,” then to “capitalism,” and finally on to “communism”—a New Hegelian version of “the end of history.” Because capitalism had not been fully developed throughout China at any time during the twentieth century, this Marxist model could easily suggest that the country was still partly stuck in the bad old “feudal” ways of the past—or at least that certain negative “feudal remnants” continued to be present in modern times. Moreover, unlike China, Japan had actually emerged from a feudalistic mode of governance in recent centuries; because the bulk of Western social-science terminology reached China by way of Japan, many terms like *fengjian* that were far more applicable to Tokugawa Japan than to Qing 清 China nonetheless were accepted uncritically within China since the latter half of the nineteenth century.

In actuality, the *fengjian* model of governance discussed by

many premodern Chinese scholars offered a potentially proto-federalist alternative to the state-enforced *junxian* 郡縣 model of centralized authoritarian government, which had been the norm since 221 B. C. E. By twisting the long-standing meaning and significance of *fengjian* into a mere pejorative blanket dismissal of China's premodern social order, modern Chinese intellectuals have tended to limit their choices to either affirming the Chinese *junxian* tradition of centralized authoritarianism, or else to turning to the modern West for a less repressive, more democratic alternative. Most social scientists and historians of 20th-century China in the West, such as Charles W. Hayford (1998) and Prasenjit Duara (1995), have clearly understood how terms like *fengjian* have been twisted into very misleading shapes throughout this century. Yet instead of criticizing improper patron-client relations or straightforward abuses of authority in specific terms, generations of modern Chinese fiction scholars in the West have tended to use blurry blanket pejoratives like "feudal." One of the elder statesmen of the field, Jaroslav Prusek (d. 1980), commonly used "feudal" and "feudalism" in a most uncritical manner.⁷ Prusek's somewhat younger leading intellectual adversary of comparable intellectual stature, C. T. Hsia, used considerably more precise terminology in discussing China's cultural inheritance, but occasionally slipped into uncritical references to "feudal" morality in the later stages of his career.⁸ Among a younger generation of Chinese literature scholars who began publishing books in the 1990s, Rey Chow is one of many who uncritically resort to misleading terms like "feudal" on a regular basis (1991: 96; 1995: 150).

Among Chow and other scholars who would like to see approaches in academic Cultural Studies dominate modern Chinese literary studies, an uncritical adoption of Edward Said's critique of "Orientalism" has become depressingly familiar.⁹ These mostly younger scholars' monotonously glowing references to Said's polemic, *Orientalism*, betray an ignorance of the poor reviews this book received from practically every serious learned journal in Asian studies.¹⁰ Cultural-studies partisans who simply assume that Said's polemic is authoritative on the basis of his elite standing within the

Modern Language Association reveal how very little they know about the devastating critiques of Said's error-ridden polemic by eminent scholars of Middle Eastern studies, such as Fu'ād Zakaria and Bernard Lewis (1993: 114-17). Deferential academics from fields outside of Near Eastern studies who gullibly parrot Said's opinions about that field simply have no inkling that a sizeable number of the many howlers in *Orientalism* derive from Said's cavalier misapplication of the conceptual framework in Raymond Schwab's *La Renaissance orientale* (1950), which focuses upon India rather than on the Arabic-speaking region discussed by Said (especially Egypt and the Levant).¹¹

Even if we were temporarily to accept the main points of Said's polemic strictly for the sake of argument, putting aside for the moment the many errors and groundless assertions in *Orientalism*, the applicability of his Levant-focused polemic to the widely divergent cultures of East Asia is extremely limited. That is why esteemed veterans in Chinese studies such as Jonathan Spence, Benjamin Schwartz, and Pierre Ryckmans (pseud. Simon Leys) have argued that the academic critique of "Orientalism" that became all the rage during the final two decades of the 20th century has little or no relevance to Chinese studies.¹² The only empires that ever successfully absorbed all of China into its domains were the Inner Asian empires of the Mongols (13th-14th cent.) and the Manchus (or Qing dynasty, 1644-1911). Yet when English Professor Said and his imitators denounce imperialism, they invariably mean Western imperialism, as if Europeans have had a global monopoly on empire-building and have never been colonized themselves by empires from afar.¹³ Nor do these ideologues seem much troubled by the PRC's harsh occupation of Tibet, or Indonesia's imperial expansion into the western part of New Guinea or the eastern part of Timor—unless, that is, they can ferret out some sort of Western complicity or implicit backing of an instance of non-Western imperialism.¹⁴

None of these examples of non-Western empire-building is meant to excuse the acts of aggression and prejudice committed by various Western governments and individuals in Asia in recent centu-

ries. However, these documented actualities do indicate that the history of Eurasian international rivalries and conflicts is far more complex and much less one-sided than some professors of English in the West seem capable of even imagining. This is particularly the case when the English professor in question has a lifelong personal grievance against some Western countries' support of the Israeli occupation of his old family home in Palestine—and when Said grossly exaggerates the extent to which Western scholars in Oriental studies served as colonial administrators or in some other insidious capacity on behalf of this seemingly omnipresent Western imperialism (ergo Said's narrow preoccupation with English and French Orientalists and his neglect of their colleagues from Germany and the Low Countries, whose governments had no colonies or protectorates in the Middle East).

The cavalier mouthing of high-frequency but misleading terms like “feudalism” and “Orientalism” not only confuses issues that require clarification, but distracts scholars' attention from more substantive issues. The worst consequence of extravagant fame for a distorting buzz word like Said's “Orientalism” may be that sloppy research methodology is inappropriately validated in the process.

Skepticism for Poststructuralism and its Heresy of Mimesis

Poststructuralism and related varieties of free-wheeling cognitive relativism have pervaded academic literary studies in North America for some years now, especially within departments of English, modern Western languages, and comparative literature.¹⁵ In spite of the fact that Western Marxist theorists and other poststructuralists have long since suffered a severe erosion of influence on the European continent itself, they continue to enjoy a vigorous extended half-life at many universities in North America—and anyplace else, for that matter, where humanities academics seem anxious to counter possible charges of ivory-tower provincialism through the adoption of seemingly radical stances.¹⁶ It is thus hardly surprising that many North

American departments of East Asian literature have also recently absorbed various inroads or “interventions” from poststructuralist adepts, and to an extent that would have been unimaginable three decades ago during the heyday of poststructuralism in its native France (Yenna Wu 1997).¹⁷ Yet a number of independent-minded literary scholars retain a healthy skepticism for poststructuralist doctrine, and thus resemble the typical contemporary French scholar of East Asian literature in finding little of interest in dramatic but logically inadequate “nouvelle critique” doctrines couched in neologistic prose that is more performative than communicative.¹⁸

By absolutizing intertextuality, the process in which one literary work borrows from another instead of articulating something based on the author’s personal sense of “behavioral probability” in the literary scenario at hand, Derrida and his extreme nominalist confreres have attempted in vain to bar extralinguistic reality from the world of writing and literature (Storey 125; Tallis 127; Ellis 114-115). Starting from the rather commonplace Saussurean view of language as a system in which the relationship between the sound-shape of a word and its meaning is conventional and in a sense arbitrary, poststructuralists typically leap to the erroneous conclusion that language and literature are “closed” systems utterly cut off from any extra-linguistic reality; as Derrida’s “axial proposition” notoriously puts it, “there is nothing outside the text” [Il n’y pas de hors texte] (1976: 163). Such post-structuralists typically develop a full-blown case of what David Ellis has aptly termed “referential anxiety” (1993).

Yet the mere fact that language is a system does not at all imply that it is a “closed” system, any more than the nervous system could be “closed” off from the circulatory system that delivers nutrients and oxygen to the brain and carries away wastes from it (Tallis 79). In a similar fashion, the attempt by many Chomskian transformational linguists to analyze language as a purely syntactical structure has failed, because semantics has to be brought in to make sense of syntactically correct but meaningless sentences such as “The sandwich ate Mary” or “Tennis plays Bill.” As Tallis notes, “Linguists are now on the whole agreed that not even syntax can be studied as if it were a

set of rules governing the combination of meaningless tokens into strings: a speaker's knowledge of the grammar of his native language can be understood only by taking into account his knowledge of the world in which he uses it" (72).

Poststructuralism's adversarial stance towards literary mimesis and realism has prompted many North American commentators on Chinese literature to exaggerate the shortcomings of mimesis, both in practice and in theory. Marston Anderson makes the sweeping claim that mimesis was totally absent from Chinese aesthetics until imported under the guise of Western ideas about catharsis (1990: 18, 20, 24). Counterexamples to Anderson's first claim abound in the literary writings of Ming-Qing scholars like Zhang Xuecheng 章[學誠] (1738-1801).¹⁹ Anderson also fails to prove his odd assertion about the supposed equivalence between realism and catharsis—a concept generally linked with tragic drama instead of mimesis, which includes a vast realm of catharsis-free comedy. Moreover, there is an unconvincing circularity in Anderson's argument that early 20th-century Chinese writers adopted this cathartic realism only to reject it totally “as a trapping of colonialism” in the 1940s (202), especially in light of the high price that critical realist writers like Hu Feng 胡風 paid in their struggle against the confines of Maoist revolutionary romanticism during the 1950s (Shu 2000: 156, 178-180).

Anderson's problems with handling the subtleties of mimesis in both theory and practice lead him to the kind of ridiculously categorical dismissal of mimesis found in other poststructuralists like de Man.²⁰ “Since a linguistic construct can never truly replace reality, the mimetic undertaking is destined to fail” (Anderson 200). Anderson does not and could not cite a significant modern Chinese realist author who wrote of seriously expecting to “truly replace reality” with a piece of fiction, for it flies in the face of common sense to imagine that a small if interesting portion of reality such as a novel could ever “replace” reality in its multitudinous and immense entirety.²¹ Some prominent Chinese literary realists *have* said that they were trying to supply the reader with a “slice” of reality or life; yet none, to my knowledge, has pretended to write a true *substitute* for

reality that would somehow be *wholly* indistinguishable from reality.

When discussing literary realism in 20th-century China, Theodore Hutters takes the hard poststructuralist line that realism is an odd and foolish illusion about a similarly illusory “representation,” both of which strike him as deserving extensive “interrogation” and dismantling (Liu and Tang 147-73).²² Hutters proclaims an odd and harshly dismissive definition of realism as “the idea that something virtually tangible can be generated out of nothing”; he imposes an ethereal interpretation of realism’s supposed “utopian” and bankrupt essence on Mao Dun’s 茅盾 ideologically straightforward portrayal of a rural economic system’s bankruptcy in the story “Autumn Harvest” [“Qiu shou” 秋收] (166-67).²³ In claiming that Chinese realism is purely an imposition on China from Western imperialism, and thus in need of insistent “interrogation” by academics who brandish the tools of postcolonial critique, Hutters manifests a narrow comprehension of realism and an over-reliance on Mao Dun’s amateurishly cantankerous dismissal of all premodern Chinese fiction as unworthy of the label “realism”—since it all supposedly boils down to either pornographic works or else “novels of complaint” like the late Qing novelistic exposés (147, 171).

Literary realism is not so easy to dismiss if one is truly aware of its semantic range. René Wellek has pointed out that “realism” is generally used in two key different ways: not simply in Hutters’ sense as a particular European literary movement that matured in nineteenth-century France, but also “in the wide sense of fidelity to nature” and thus “a main stream of the critical and creative tradition of both the plastic arts and literature” from Homer’s *Odyssey* and the Hebraic story of Abraham’s sacrifice all the way down to 20th-century works like Joyce’s *Dubliners* (1963: 223). We can infer the existence of late imperial Chinese literary realism in this second and broader sense through the way traditional commentators on fiction like Zhang Xuecheng made heavy use of concepts like *shi* 實 [truth] versus *xu* 虛 [fabrication], a pair of terms which in many contexts means “direct [*shi*] or indirect [*xu*] mimesis of action in a work of fiction,” according to a noted scholar of traditional Chinese fiction

(Plaks 1990: 104). Since Hutters' poststructuralist premise of a China totally "undefiled" by literary realism prior to 19th-century Western treaty-port incursions is unfounded, his conclusions about the absolute lack of mimesis in Chinese literary practice or theory prior to the Western impact are not at all convincing.

Admittedly, there are reasonable grounds for poststructuralist complaints about much of what claims to be "realist" interpretation of literature—especially when religious literalists or Party hacks have parroted baseless claims that literature simply "reflects" reality in a mechanical or simplistic way. The complexities of both authorial psychology and the social milieu portrayed by the writer are merely two of the many factors responsible for generating a bewildering amount of variety within the realm of mimetic literature. Yet it is narrow-minded and perhaps even slothful of poststructuralists to dismiss mimetic approaches on the basis of the weakest and most marginal proponents of realism, instead of taking the trouble to explore the complexities of mimesis with a literary scholar the caliber of Storey (1996), Ellison (1993), Pavel (1986), or Auerbach (1969).

Above-board Skepticism about Gramsci's "Subversion"

In an argument that encapsulates the surprisingly pervasive influence of the old Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci on recent North American academic literary studies, Zhang Yingjin views post-Mao reportage by Liu Binyan 劉賓雁, Hu Ping 胡平, and others as a "subversive discourse" (Liu and Tang 231).²⁴ Admittedly, many Chinese Communist Party (CCP) leaders would surely agree with Zhang here, for they habitually blame home-grown dissent on the insidious and omnipresent machinations of foreign "hegemonism" [*baquanzhuyi* 霸權主義]—a Gramscian term that the CCP has thoroughly domesticated as an important *tifa* 提法 [formalized term] in the restrictive parlance of state-sanctioned political discourse.²⁵ Yet even though Gramscian "subversion" has also been a favored or "privileged" term in North American academic literary studies for some years now, the

word's connotations of furtive and underhanded opposition grievously mischaracterize the functions and typical self-image of critical and conscientious Chinese reportage writers. Contemporary Chinese reportage writers have tended to view themselves as forthright social commentators whose consciences impel them to dig up and reveal openly in print controversial or sensitive stories based on (but not limited to) factual material.²⁶ Neither the reportage writers nor their readers would likely view the general public as being in "hypnotic states of subjection" to the "ruling ideology," as Zhang claims, (Liu and Tang 232)—but rather skeptical of the Party line, and interested in frank and public portrayals of topical issues they have heard about on the grapevine but have long been ignored or glossed over in the state media.

The Althusserian anti-humanist vision of the individual as a passive conduit for robust abstract forces of an ideological nature has once again herded what could have been a relatively effective "New Theory" interpretation onto a predictable and unedifying course. To be sure, Zhang rightly questions the cogency of Louis Althusser's system at various junctures, and is much more cognizant than fellow "New Theorists" Liu Kang or Xiaobing Tang of Althusser's severely diminished stature even among his fellow Western Marxists such as Terry Eagleton (Liu and Tang 220, 228). However, his discussion remains yoked too tightly to moribund Althusserian terminology and categories to make a great deal of headway in addressing issues of literariness and subjectivity in recent PRC reportage.²⁷

Self-confirming Frameworks: De Man's "Resistance to Theory"

The renowned literary scholar Ihab Hassan has challenged the overreaching tendencies of hypotheses that anoint themselves "theory" in the crisis-ridden field of academic literary studies: "When is 'theory' theory, and when not? What is the obligation of an ideology to its others, to commitments or desires other than its own?" (1993: 4). When, indeed, does "critical theory" actually become uncritical con-

jecture, taking on the contours of unfounded, even dogmatic, assertion—a type of assertion that often has little or no connection with the concrete actualities of an individual writer's communication with an individual reader?

Just as one of logic's major subfields is the study of common logical fallacies, literary theory can hardly pretend to be immune from harboring numerous types of erroneous or misleading lines of argument. As logically incoherent hypotheses and theories become more widely accepted in a field of inquiry, they become part of the fallacious premises for other tainted theories and arguments, resulting in a vicious cycle of error replication and magnification that threatens the long-term viability of a discipline—especially in the face of academe's increasingly heated competition for limited budgetary resources. Therefore, more is at stake than what first meets the eye when numerous younger-generation scholars of Chinese literature conform with a vocal portion of the MLA elite in voicing unqualified approval of an unfounded "theory" such as Paul de Man's pronouncements on "the resistance to theory."²⁸ De Man's notion of "resistance to theory" is commonly invoked in response to an outside challenge to a cultural-studies or "postist" theory; the usual result is that even reasonable objections to a hypothesis get dismissed out of hand rather than met head on.²⁹ Such rhetorical tools have the potential of degrading a community of scholars who debate *with* one another into mere cliques of polemicists and ideologues who talk (or shout) *past* each other.

De Man's essay on "The Resistance to Theory" met with rejection for inclusion in an edited volume by a committee within the Modern Language Association, the elite of which had long lionized him for the most part (1986). It was deemed of little relevance to the volume for which it had been commissioned, *Introduction to Scholarship in Modern Languages and Literatures*, and an essay by Paul Hernádi was substituted in its place.³⁰ Mustering at least the appearance of Olympian detachment, de Man claims to have agreed with the committee's decision to reject his essay, ascribing the essay's problems to "pedagogical" factors of an "inauspicious" sort (3).

A closer examination of this botched project, however, reveals de Man's account of his essay's rejection to be sheer rationalization. He had simply refused to provide the MLA committee responsible for *Introduction to Scholarship in Modern Languages and Literatures* with the essay material that they had clearly set out as required for the project, namely a summary but comprehensive account of the major trends and publications in recent literary theory, a classification of key problem areas, and an estimate of how some of those problems could be solved over the coming years. Instead, he tacitly sneered at the project and its significance by dashing off a self-indulgent and largely unannotated essay that claimed the "main theoretical interest of literary theory consists in the impossibility of definition" (3).

Clearly, if even operational definitions in literary theory are summarily ruled out as impossible in this way, then logical argumentation and rational discourse have no foundation or premises on which to exist, and a realm of pseudo-argumentation—more or less arbitrary pronouncements and attitudinizing—winds up being all that the self-styled theorist has to offer the hapless reader. In effect, de Man is taking the easy way out of the task he had been assigned: instead of laboriously combing through recent theoretical scholarship to summarize and document its main directions, he simply claims that such scholarship can never result in workable definitions, let alone demonstrate the validity of a certain thesis. This sort of view is not merely "inauspicious" or "pedagogically" invalid, but rather whimsically despairing as to the prospects of future intellectual advances in the field (3).

De Man's essay soon enmeshes itself even more deeply in contradictions and *non sequiturs*. For one thing, he lurches from one tacit definition of "theory" to another wholly different use of the term without providing any explanation for this ambiguity. In the title of his essay and throughout most of the essay, he uses "theory" in the ordinary and rather arrogant poststructuralist sense, in which "theory" refers only to properly poststructuralist theory—any other interpretive thesis can be dismissed out of hand as pretheoretical, nontheoretical, or anti-theoretical. In this way he is marching along in lock-step with

the bulk of his fellow poststructuralists such as Jameson (Liu and Tang 1993: 2) and Michael Bérubé (1993: 191), who have used the term “theory” to refer only to the types of poststructuralist theorizing that they generally approve of, while erroneously and sweepingly rejecting rival conceptual approaches as nontheoretical.

Moreover, like Jameson and Stanley Fish, de Man tends to set up a rigid dichotomy between the self-described proper “theory” and the New Criticism, in spite of the fact that New Critics have been about as common as the white rhinoceros for over two decades; the “New Criticism” turns out to be very serviceable as a pejorative catch-all categorical label to pin on non-poststructuralist literary scholars and other literary miscreants supposedly headed for the post-structuralist dustbin of history.³¹ In contrast, de Man is perceptive enough at one point to reverse himself and admit that “the predominant trends in North American literary criticism, before the 1960s, were certainly not averse to theory” (5). As Karl Popper has argued, even the baldest presentation of facts presupposes some theoretical activity behind the arrangement of the facts in some pattern or other, and literary criticism has tended to be elaborately patterned for centuries, not merely decades; moreover, a fact totally divorced from theory is all but unimaginable in literary and other real-world contexts.³² With respect to de Man, however, he soon forgets his momentary insight, and lapses back into the commonplace poststructuralist notion of “theory” that pretends to be all-encompassing and yet is extremely narrow and exclusionary in its endless elaboration upon a tiny handful of “oppositional” thinkers of anti-rationalist and illiberal bent, especially Nietzsche, Heidegger, Marx, and their modern offshoots such as Derrida, Foucault, Said, and Jameson.

De Man’s disingenuous propping up of the all but defunct New Criticism as a straw man of “resistance to theory” is only one example of the many logically fallacious arguments he uses (6).³³ He also creates a number of false dilemmas, such as the virtually absolute dichotomy he sets up between rhetoric and logic through his claim that rhetoric has an “actively negative relationship to grammar and logic” (17). Although rhetoric certainly may be at odds with logic and

grammar at times—the ubiquitous Left Bank hyperbole and tortuous prose of a Jacques Derrida would be a prime example—there are at least as many instances in which highly rhetorical writings such as Jonathan Swift's "A Modest Proposal" are both syntactically lucid and logically congruent.³⁴

The sort of "rhetorical" approach to literary interpretation that de Man advocates peremptorily dismisses evidential scholarship as "phenomenalization"; it is little wonder that he provides so few scholarly citations to his grossly overrated essay (19). De Man also shows hostility to varieties of practical criticism that address the values and emotional life of the writer, rejecting biographical approaches to literary study as totally worthless, and effete lambasting the "dreary prospects of pragmatic banality" that such projects supposedly entail (19).³⁵ Yet even as de Man is rejecting the relevance of vast realms of evidence pertinent to literary studies, he makes the audacious claim of being able to make not only "technically correct rhetorical readings," but also interpretations that are "irrefutable" (19). Surprisingly enough, in a moment of candor he admits that these "technically correct rhetorical readings" are likely to be "boring, monotonous, predictable, and unpleasant," and even "totalizing (and potentially totalitarian), for since the structures and functions they expose do not lead to the knowledge of an entity (such as language) but are an unreliable process of knowledge production that prevents all entities from coming into discourse as such" (19). His claim of irrefutability is merely an unsupported pronouncement that only an uncritical disciple would accept, while the boredom, monotony, predictability, unpleasantness, and totalizing quality of so many post-structuralist readings is directly related to their rejection of reasoned, evidential argument, and its replacement by "an unreliable process of knowledge production" that blocks coherent "entities from coming into discourse."

De Man's essay concludes with a fanfare of dubious paradoxes that leap above the realm of ordinary human concerns to soar amidst clouds of mystifying rhetoric. The rhetorical interpretations that he advocates are thusly described:

They are theory and not theory at the same time, the universal theory of the impossibility of theory. To the extent however that they are theory, that is to say teachable, generalizable and highly responsive to systematization, rhetorical readings, like the other kinds, still avoid and resist the reading they advocate. Nothing can overcome the resistance to theory since theory *is* itself this resistance. The loftier the aims and the better the methods of literary theory, the less possible it becomes. (19)

There are so many contradictions in this rhapsodic tissue of proclamations that readers in the habit of using their critical faculties may be tempted to go no further with de Man's train of thought, and simply walk away from it as self-indulgently sophistical gibberish. Yet I believe a brief catalogue of de Man's logical absurdities in this one passage is illuminative of the problems facing any field of study that has come under the grip of fashionable irrationalism and turgid, sophistry-laden discourse. De Man seems ignorant of the basic rule of identity in logic whereby a thing cannot be identical to its opposite at a given time ("they are theory and not theory at the same time"). A similar kind of contradiction is involved in his subsequent pronouncement, since a theory which is "impossible" cannot by definition be a bona fide theory, much less a "universal" theory.

De Man's subsequent claim that theory is its own resistance is not only absurd and unsupported by evidence, but also conflicts with poststructuralists' repetitious pigeonholing of "resisters to (post-structuralist) theory" as closet New Critics. The pronouncement that the "better" theory is, the "less possible" it is contradicts the claim about its "impossibility" made just above, and also betrays how banal good-bad distinctions easily creep in to the most abstruse and fustian poststructuralist writings. As to the unsupported claim that "nothing can overcome the resistance to theory," one can simply note that the essential meaninglessness and self-contradictory nature of "the resistance to theory" makes the pseudo-problem of "overcoming" it a moot issue.

De Man's essay betrays itself as far from theoretical in nature, but rather a tissue of pseudo-theoretical conjectures that are rarely backed up with convincing evidence. Could the fact that embarrassingly woolly lines of argument such as de Man's have been so celebrated by much of the MLA elite have anything to do with the crisis that has engulfed North American departments of modern literature in recent years, with the severe reduction of literature faculty lines through attrition? When college administrators are repeatedly told that literary theorists are incapable of producing or transmitting knowledge, but are still "brilliantly" succeeding in doing the impossible with their poststructuralist "theory"—and thus redeeming literature from the "blindness" and biases of mere novelists and poets—how could these decision-makers not hesitate to weigh the disadvantages of investing scarce university resources in this brave new corner of academe?

Specifying Editions and Maintaining High Bibliographical Standards

Serious scholars of premodern Chinese narrative almost invariably specify which edition of a novel or a story they are discussing or translating. After all, there is a world of difference between any 120-chapter Ming edition of *Shuihu zhuan* 水滸傳 [*Water Margin*] and Jin Shengtān's 金聖嘆 truncated seventeenth-century edition of that classic Ming novel.³⁶ Jin Shengtān (1608-1661) not only cut away the last few dozen chapters of the original *Water Margin*, but also intervened to bowdlerize or otherwise modify a large number of passages within the original two-thirds of the novel that his edition retained. Jin Shengtān was especially anxious to tone down or undercut the novel's generally positive portrayal of the outlaw leader Song Jiang 宋江, whom the early Qing critic considered a crafty and villainous bandit chieftain. In somewhat similar fashion, Jin Shengtān heavily bowdlerized Wang Shifu's 王實甫 Yuan dynasty play *Xi xiang ji* 西廂記 [*Story of the Western Wing*] in order to make his cherished female protagonist Cui Yingying 崔鶯鶯 seem considerably more strait-

laced *vis-à-vis* her sexual mores than the dramatist originally intended.³⁷

To be sure, Jin Shengtan carried the practice of heavily revising and even bowdlerizing novels and plays further than many other premodern scholars. However, his lack of interest in preserving the textual integrity of an inherited literary classic was typical in premodern times, when authorship was viewed in a much less personalistic and legalistic manner than is common nowadays. Practically all scholars of premodern Chinese fiction thus clearly indicate which edition or editions are under discussion, for the variations between one edition and another can loom very large. This has been especially true among the field's Western and Japanese scholars; and as the endnote and bibliographical apparatuses in such scholarly studies have been gradually improving in China and especially Taiwan and Hong Kong, readers of such scholarship in Chinese have also benefited from the reduction of ambiguity about source materials.

Quantitatively speaking, few twentieth-century Chinese novels suffered so much alteration by zealous editors as *Water Margin* did at the hands of Jin Shengtan. In qualitative terms, however, modern Chinese editors and other scholars have still had a fairly casual attitude about making unacknowledged revisions to a story or novel, particularly during the first several decades of the 20th century. Novels as prominent as *Luotuo Xiangzi* 駱駝祥子 [*Camel Xiangzi*] by Lao She 老舍 (1899-1966) have had entire chapters expurgated from them, often for ideological reasons.³⁸ In the case of *Camel Xiangzi*, the concluding chapters struck Party censors as too negative in their portrayal of the most prominent working-class laborer in the novel.

Occasionally, an entire novel or story would be banned and its author punished, especially during outbreaks of extremism such as the Cultural Revolution. More commonly, however, Party editors would expurgate a sentence here and alter a paragraph there, or else demand that the authors themselves change the offending passages.³⁹ As a result, many post-1949 editions of stories and novels originally published during the first half of the century differ quite substantially

from their original versions.⁴⁰

Unlike scholars of premodern Chinese fiction, however, specialists in the 20th century have tended to neglect the problem of variant editions. The problem is especially acute among anthologies of Chinese literature in English translation, which have too seldom indicated the exact source for a given translation.⁴¹ There are numerous cases in which neither the translator nor the editor has bothered to check the original version of a story or novella against the post-1949 edition he is using as a source for the translation.⁴² If neither a translator nor an editor cares enough about scholarly rigor to check the original source of a translation against later editions, there is little reason for other scholars to have much confidence in the reliability and quality of the resulting translations. Bowdlerizations and other corruptions of a literary text should simply not be translated into another language unless a scholar truly does not mind misleading the readers of that second language about the literary work in question.

Conclusion

Enduring scholarship requires patience in formulating testable hypotheses that are grounded on a genuine conversance with primary source materials and relevant secondary sources. Scholars of modern Chinese fiction would also benefit from adopting historians' and social scientists' more critical and skeptical approach to problematic terms like "feudalism" and "Orientalism." Moreover, readers would have more confidence in the translations and research of modern Chinese literature if the scrutiny of textual issues and variant editions were brought up to the higher standards generally maintained in premodern Chinese fiction research and academic sinology as a whole.

Above all, there is simply no good reason to defer to a Western-based academic authority heralding the newest catchy "ism" when so many primary and secondary source materials in Chinese literary research remain neglected or at least underutilized—including local or indigenous hypotheses and theories. Ideologically overblown hypotheses and self-styled theories from North American departments

of Western literary and cultural studies should be scrutinized especially carefully for possible problems with logical argumentation and the competent marshaling of evidence for a given hypothesis. Improving standards of argumentation and a more meticulous presentation of evidence would not only enhance the development of modern Chinese literary studies itself, but also improve the field's articulation with other disciplines in Chinese studies.

NOTES

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² This literary history's (Hsia 1971) detailed analyses of many distinguished novels and stories have made it a work of enduring value. Decades would pass before the publication in English of the field's second ambitious history of comparable scope, McDougall and Louie (1997). The latter work includes important new material on fiction and critical studies from the 1960s to the mid-1990s, and covers a broader range of writers from earlier periods than may be found in either Hsia or most other earlier literary historians—though with less sustained focus than Hsia on the truly excellent writers. Marián Gálik (1986) emphasizes a comparative approach to literary history. Two other important general introductions to 20th-century Chinese fiction are Dolezelová-Velingerová (1988) and Slupski (1988). Finally, there is much material relevant to 20th-century Chinese fiction in Idema and Haft (1997).

³ Some excellent examples in the way of anthologies are Jing Wang (1998), Denton (1996), Martin and Kinkley (1992), Duke (1991), and Lau et al. (1981). The many fine edited collections of scholarly studies in this area include Widmer and D. Wang (1993), Larson and Wedell-Wedellsborg (1993), Kinkley (1985), and McDougall (1984). Key multi-author studies include Kinkley (2000),

D. Wang (1997), Y. Zhang (1996), Hagenaar (1992), Larson (1991), Louie (1989), Link (1981), Gunn (1980), and Prusek (1980).

⁴ Representative single-author studies include Williams (1993), Kinkley (1987), Lee (1987), and Feuerwerker (1982).

⁵ Three of modern China's best story writers are expertly translated in Shen Congwen (1995), Lu Xun (1990), and Wu Zuxiang (1989). The recent bumper crop of skilfully translated contemporary mainland and Taiwan novels includes Wang Shuo (1997) and Wang Chen-ho (1998). Two lively translations of top-notch pre-1949 novels are Lao She (1979) and Ch'ien Chung-shu [Qian Zhongshu] (1979).

⁶ Howard Goldblatt edited ten volumes of *Modern Chinese Literature* from its inaugural issue in 1984 until 1998, at which time its title changed to *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* under the new editorship of Kirk A. Denton.

⁷ See, for example, Prusek 1980 (51, 99, 200).

⁸ See C.T. Hsia's introduction to Lau et al. (1981: xxvi).

⁹ See Chow (1993: 1-15) and Zhang Longxi (1998: 188-96).

¹⁰ In discussing Said (1978), the distinguished Princeton scholar of Middle Eastern studies Bernard Lewis points out "the predominantly unfavorable response among reviewers in learned journals (with the curious exception of *The Journal of the American Oriental Society*)" (1993: 113).

¹¹ As pointed out by Lewis (109-12) and Windschuttle (1999: 34), Said's amazing ignorance of Islamic history is revealed in such howlers as his claim that Britain "annexed" Egypt and his foolish placement of Islamic armies' conquest of Turkey earlier in time than their invasion of North Africa (1978: 35, 59). This would be equivalent to switching the Manchu conquest of China to an earlier period than the Mongol conquest in Chinese history, or placing the Spanish-American War earlier in time than the French and Indian Wars in American history. The fact that such "howlers have been preserved in the 1995 edition of the book suggests that Said lacks friends, admirers, or advisers with expertise in history who might have sent him a list of corrections" (Windschuttle 34). Moreover, Said inadvertently betrays his dependence on Raymond Schwab (1950) for a large part of the

conceptual framework of *Orientalism* by devoting an entire chapter in praise of Schwab's work in Said (1983: 248-67); Lewis analyzes this wrong turn in some detail (109-11). Among the more amusing generalized accusations Said flings at scholars of Asian studies in the West are the following unsubstantiated charges of racism, antisemitism (a rather unlikely charge to be coming from Said, in light of the sexual innuendo he has flung at the Jewish scholar Bernard Lewis), and fascism: ". . . Race theory, scholarly antisemitism, and proto-Fascism are literal products of nineteenth-century Oriental philology . . . The contemporary academic Orientalist is the direct heir of the nineteenth-century (*sic*) Oriental philologist . . . They take the Oriental to be an essentially backward, primitive human in need of civilizing control. Their views as Orientalists, no matter how sophisticated the form in which they are put, are debased in the extreme" (1983: 264). As a cynical extremist fond of blanket epithets, Said voices his belief that Western scholars in Asian studies have always been motivated to defame and "possess" the Asian cultures that they are studying. When some contemporary specialists in Semitic philology and history publicly objected to these grossly uninformed and sweepingly generalized denunciations by Said, he merely dismissed them *en masse* instead of engaging any critique point by point: "[It] is as if criticism itself were an impermissible violation of their sacrosanct academic preserve" (1995: 5). Yet by resorting to blurry *ad hominem* attacks on his critics, such as the respected Princeton historian Bernard Lewis, Said reveals that he neither practices the openness to criticism that he preaches, nor has any direct or cogent reply to the most damning exposure of the many absurdities, incongruities, and simple howlers in *Orientalism*.

¹² In response to Said's claim that academic Oriental studies has been hopelessly mired in Western ethnocentrism, Ryckmans replies, "From the great Jesuit scholars of the sixteenth century down to the best sinologists of today, we can see that there was never a more powerful antidote to the temptation of Western ethnocentrism than the study of Chinese civilization . . . Further, it should be noted that today a significant proportion of the leading sinologists in the aca-

demie world *are* Chinese: through their teaching and research, they play a decisive role in Western sinology” (Leys 1985: 98, 97). Finally, in contrast with Said’s presentation of “Orientalism” as a static and pernicious mind-set almost impervious to change, Jonathan Spence points out that even the most exoticized novelistic representations of China in France changed in fundamental ways from the middle of the nineteenth century to the subsequent *fin de siècle* (1998: 148).

¹³ From ideological postcolonialists, we seldom hear a word about the Ottoman Turks’ imperial advance through the Balkans to the gates of Vienna, the conquest and occupation of Spain by the North African Islamic Caliphate, or various Persian imperial conquests of lands ranging from Greece to India, as in the subcontinent’s Mughal Empire. When Said occasionally admits that imperial expansion was not a one-sided affair always emanating from the West, he tends to use the “awesome” expansion of Islam to argue for the unending pervasiveness of pathological European “fear” and “contempt” for Islamic civilization (1978: 59-62). Yet in absolutizing the dichotomy between Islamic and European civilizations in this way, Said indulges in the same sort of essentializing and stereotyping of which he has so often sweepingly accused the Orientalists. Moreover, Said conveniently overlooks the strong alliances an Islamic nation like Turkey forged with Western countries like Germany during World War I and the United States during the Cold War. At the same time that Said exaggerates the cultural divide between Islam and the West, he cavalierly minimizes the differences in the way the West interacted with India and China *vis-à-vis* the Middle East: “. . . the Arab, Islamic, Indian, Chinese, or whatever became repetitious pseudo-incarnations of some great original” (1978: 62). The complexities of transnational cultural history have hereby given way to Said’s rigid and primitive monochromatic schema of “West versus The Other.”

¹⁴ The long silence from most Western governments on the plight of East Timor under Jakarta’s rule makes conspiracy theories about omnipresent Western imperialism seem almost plausible at times. However, a sober political scientist might reply that tacit Western support for Indonesia’s former conquest and military occupation

of East Timor sprang largely from hesitation to criticize an old Cold War military and diplomatic ally, along with reduced concern for human rights crises in seemingly remote and geopolitically marginal territories. While this Western complicity is regrettable, it would be both misleading and simple-minded to place Jakarta's former occupation of East Timor under the rubric of Western imperialistic "hegemonism."

¹⁵ See the comments of the Berkeley literary theorist Frederick Crews in his introduction to Easterlin and Riebling (1993: vii-viii). One can get a sense of this doctrinal "hegemony," or in plainer terms the relatively narrow spectrum of acceptable viewpoints that have dominated recent North American academic literary studies, from the strongly overlapping views in op-ed essays by J. Hillis Miller, Naomi Schor, and Stephen Greenblatt in the *Modern Language Association's Profession 1992* (21-27, 28-34, 39-41).

¹⁶ Many French scholars in the humanities have been startled to discover that a flight to North America for an academic speaking engagement often resembles traveling decades back in time to their own past, when poststructuralist thought was still widely and determinedly assumed to be the ultimate of cutting edge thought. They "hear historians deconstructing the Middle Ages, meet literary theorists disquisitioning upon the death of the text, and late-structuralist feminists sorting society into linguistically gendered spheres. But it is a two-dimensional past, where time and place have disappeared, where the body of French cultural and political life has faded away, and all that is left is a postmodern Cheshire Cat with a Ph.D., grinning" (Judt 1992: 300).

¹⁷ One example of the all-too-familiar blend of neo-Marxism and poststructuralism is a paper by Liu Kang (Liu and Tang 1993: 33-55), a true-believing disciple of Fredric Jameson, and predictably preoccupied with ideological issues. In his paper on subjectivity in Hu Feng, Li Zehou 李澤厚, and Liu Zaifu 劉再復, Liu Kang chides Li Zehou for having neglected to turn to Lacan or some other Western poststructuralist for guidance: "Li Zehou's laborious effort to wed Piagetian cognitive psychology with historical materialism . . . does

not seem to lead to a tenable alternative, either to the poststructuralist aporia of linguistic predeterminations or the domination of the Lacanian Symbolic” (1993: 42). Liu Kang later demonstrated the compatibility between academic neo-Marxism and jingoistic ultranationalism by co-authoring a sequel to *Zhongguo keyi shuo “bu”* 中國可以說不 [China Can Say “No”] entitled *Yaomohua Zhongguo de beihou* 妖魔化中國的背後 [The Background of China’s Demonization], which has been astutely critiqued by Chen Ming 1997.

¹⁸ Note, for example, the understandable absence of references to long since deflated poststructuralist impresarios in the excellent French conference volume (Chen-Andro, Curien, and Sakai 1993). Compared to the work of specialists in East Asian literature, including indigenous writers and scholars immersed in a given local literary scene, the tangled old speculative webs of a Lacan or Althusser provide little or nothing of use in the serious interpretation, analysis, or evaluation of this literature.

¹⁹ A prominent counterexample from Zhang Xuecheng will be provided later in this section.

²⁰ Instead of taking serious cognizance of classic studies of mimesis by fine scholars like Auerbach (1969) or Wellek (1963), de Man merely derides mimesis as just “one trope among others,” and smugly dismisses “mimetic conceptions of art” as “uncritical” (1986: 10-11).

²¹ One finds similarly dismissive comments about mimesis in modern Chinese literature from Lydia Liu, who indignantly criticizes what she calls the “mimetic fallacy”: “the idea that the novel reflects an unmediated reality” (1995: 109). The problem is that Liu cites no promulgator of this absurd idea that the mimesis or imitation of reality could be undertaken without the involvement of an active imitator—a novelist whose consciousness necessarily filters whatever it perceives, with a certain amount of distortion inevitable. To be sure, many vulgar Marxist ideologues, some of whom are Chinese, have advanced this naïve reflectionist notion of realism for largely political reasons, especially during the dictatorships of Mao in China and Stalin in Russia. Yet Liu’s insinuation that serious scholars of mimesis in

literature still tend to believe in crude reflectionism is either uninformed or misleading.

²² Hutters' hostility toward representation has become a common stance among North American academics beholden to poststructuralist or postmodernist literary theory. The leading apostle of French postmodernism, Jean-Francois Lyotard, romantically lionizes the student-led mass demonstrations in France during the spring of 1968 as both a "critique" and the "destruction" of "representation" (1993: 61).

²³ David Wang also focuses upon the potentially manipulative and overtly didactic uses of realist conceptions (1997: 46), but neglects to point out that there is nothing inherently didactic about mimesis per se, for avowedly romantic writers have written in a no less didactic manner than any self-professed realist writer.

²⁴ Tonglin Lu embarks upon a similarly predictable Gramscian interpretation when contending that Mo Yan's novel *Red Sorghum* stands as a landmark of the "subversion" of "socialist realism" (1993: 189). As Harry Levin has pointed out, "socialist realism" does actually not amount to realism at all, but is instead a variety of heavily-handedly didactic romanticism that almost always bears the strong imprint of party-state supervision. Socialist realism had already fallen into eclipse in the PRC for several years before Mo Yan wrote *Red Sorghum*; it is very unlikely that Mo Yan had this sort of old state-controlled subliterate uppermost in mind when writing his novel. Although there is no evidence of Mo Yan's alleged desire to subvert "socialist realism," there is evidence that he was attempting to draw upon the magical realism of Garcia-Marquez, a novelist he read with great interest.

²⁵ For a full examination of the CCP's institutionalization of formalized terminology, see Schoenhals (1992).

²⁶ For analysis of Liu Binyan's reportage, see Duke (1985: 98-122); and on Hu Ping's 1989 reportage novel, *China's Eyes Unpeeled*, see Williams (1991).

²⁷ The shortcomings of one-size-fits-all theory scavenging apply to many such "New Readers" in North American literature depart-

ments, who have repeatedly brought back glittering trophies of speculative thought from bookish forays into France, and yet cannot be bothered with serious study of the intellectual history and baggage that places this French thought in a broader and more meaningful context. Nor does the fact that Xiaobing Tang's "New Theory" reaches China mainly through North American intermediaries strike him as yet another source of distortion and misreading that may impede his yearned-for expansion of the latest postmodernist thought in China (Liu and Tang 1993).

²⁸ Unreserved and uncritical support for De Man's notion of "the resistance to theory" may be found in Zhang Yingjin (1993: 826-27) and Zhang Longxi, who goes so far as to eulogize De Man's formulation as "prophetic," and of apparent use in rescuing the hapless reader from the so-called "cultural ghetto" of Chinese literary studies (1998: 128). David Palumbo-Liu also deferentially accepts De Man's notion as a given in his "Forum" piece in *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, and Reviews* 14 (1992).

²⁹ For more information on the academic phenomenon of "postism" [*houxue* 後學] in literary studies, see Williams (1999).

³⁰ Wlad Godzich, forward to De Man (1986: xii).

³¹ See Jameson (Liu and Tang 2) and Fish (1980: 371). Zhang Yingjin follows a similar pattern when inaccurately categorizing Wayne Booth's rhetorical criticism, which Perry Link drew upon in discussions of irony and the implied author, as part of the New Criticism, which in fact rarely dealt with fiction (1993: 825).

³² See Magee (1985: 29-30). Karl Popper's philosophical ideas have been highly influential among younger PRC natural scientists and social scientists in recent years, and even helped fill the void left by discredited Marxist notions among many of the more reflective democracy activists of 1989. The relative lack of interest in Popper among younger PRC literature scholars in North American universities is partly due to the hostility toward pragmatism and the philosophy of science typically found among opinion leaders in the MLA, whose elite is often rashly assumed to embody the "cutting edge" in humanities research.

³³ The straw man fallacy involves the attacking of an opposing theory or idea at one of its weakest points, or even a caricature of such a weak point, rather than at one of its strong points. It is largely through the contestation of the *stronger* points of opposing theories' arguments that knowledge is advanced. Stephen Greenblatt resorts to a straw man style of argumentation when erroneously claiming the third-rate right-wing columnist R. Emmett Tyrrell's poorly argued critique of recent academic trends in literary studies to be representative of that critique, when he could have addressed the arguments of his former Berkeley colleague Frederick Crews or any number of stronger arguments against certain controversial standpoints of elite figures in the MLA (1992). A common variation of the straw man fallacy of argumentation is the derisive gesture of placing snippets or sound bites of an opposing theory in scare quotes without even bothering to respond to the argument. The veteran University of California literary theorist John M. Ellis analyzes the frequency with which Jameson resorts to this sleight-of-hand manoeuvre (1994: 35-36). A similar example of this in Chinese literary studies may be found in Yingjin Zhang's dismissal of such terms as "liberal" and "humanist" (1993: 826-27).

³⁴ Swift's highly ironic narration in this work functions as a strong logical rebuttal to the widespread English understatement of Ireland's socio-economic problems in the eighteenth century.

³⁵ De Man's most sweeping dismissal of any biographical approach to literary studies is found in an earlier piece: "Considerations of the actual and historical existence of writers are a waste of time from a critical viewpoint" (1983: 35).

³⁶ For more information about Jin Shengtan's heavy-handed editorial revisions of *Water Margin*, see Yenna Wu (1996), Plaks (1987), and John Wang (1972).

³⁷ See Stephen H. West and Wilt L. Idema, Translators' Introduction to Wang Shifu (9).

³⁸ The expurgated chapters at the end of *Camel Xiangzi* were restored in English translation in Kao (1980). The PRC movie of the same title (1982) followed the expurgated version of *Camel Xiangzi*,

but the collected writings of Lao She published that same year in Beijing finally restored the expurgated chapters in Chinese (Lao She 1982).

³⁹ A remarkable essay by the PRC playwright Wu Zuguang (b. 1917) has vividly described the process of literary censorship and bowdlerization (Wu Zuguang 1992). This essay's translator, Michael S. Duke, has carefully compared the censored Guangzhou version of this essay with its uncensored Hong Kong counterpart. Duke has astutely revealed the very process of censorship by reversing it: he has restored the censored portions of the essay and italicized them, so as to distinguish them from the unexpurgated portions of the essay.

⁴⁰ Official mechanisms and literary examples of ideological bowdlerization are discussed in Williams (1998-99).

⁴¹ For example, the anthologies of Lau and Goldblatt (1995) and Lau, Hsia, and Lee (1981) provide a given selection's initial year of publication, but do not indicate the original publisher, the original place of publication, or the edition that the translator has consulted. While the 1981 anthology provides a Chinese-character list of authors' names and story titles, the 1995 collection lacks such a character glossary, thereby further reducing its usefulness to both specialists and advanced students in the field. Among other expurgations, both of these anthologies include a translation of a severely bowdlerized story from a doctored post-1949 edition, Wu Zuxiang's 吳組緝 "Young Master Gets His Tonic" (1995: 159-73; 1981: 372-81); for further discussion of this issue, see Williams (1998-99). By way of contrast, multi-author anthologies that include a specific citation about the source for a translation include Denton (1996), Martin and Kinkley (1992), and Link (1984, 1983). Denton's anthology comes very close to perfection in its full citation of the original source of a given translation, including interspersed characters and pagination in the entry. Dolezelová-Velingerová (1988) and Slupski (1988) resemble Denton in their thoroughness of citation, but contain more typos and wrong characters due to some problems at the copy-editing stage of book production.

⁴² See Williams (1998-99). On one occasion in the early 1980s, I

mentioned this problem to a certain Western scholar whose translation followed the bowdlerized post-1949 version of a modern Chinese story. The startling reply I received was that he intentionally remained silent about such ideologically motivated bowdlerization—he reproduced the bowdlerized portions in his translation because he feared that he would no longer receive invitations to conferences in the PRC if he had insisted upon translating unexpurgated texts. I looked in vain for a trace of irony or mirth in his somber visage, and concluded that his reply was a serious one. I still do not know whether this individual was truly apathetic about a translator's responsibilities to the reader and to the field, or whether he was simply rationalizing a significant scholarly oversight.

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