

to this event as one of the examples of Tzevi's strange actions in his elevated mood, and interpreted it as symbolizing the slow growth toward the fullness of Israel's redemption.⁴ This episode is neither a mere fiction nor an extemporaneous performance. It appears to be latent in the Sabbatean tradition, and had some repercussion on another idiosyncratic custom which Scholem did not mention in his monograph. We have a later testimony that the believers called the Dönme, whose ancestors had converted to Islam after Tzevi, had a nuptial custom, whereby, in hope of fertility, a bride passed over a large fish dyed with henna. It was called *knalı balık* in Turkish, meaning "henna-dyed fish". Abraham Galanté (1873–1939) pointed out the phonetic similarity between "*kná*" and "*cuna*", which means cradle in Judeo-Spanish, and associated this ceremony with the apparently cryptic behavior of Tzevi.⁵

It is true that the believers of the Dönme had forgotten the origin of *knalı balık*, and so far no other testimony in the Sabbatean sources supports Galanté's assumption. However, we know the kabbalistic dietary custom of eating fish on Sabbath, especially at the third meal. The custom dates back to the Talmud,⁶ and appears in several writings of the Safedian kabbalists in the sixteenth century, where fish are said to contain souls of the righteous or have eyes without eyelids open towards heaven. Therein lies a redemptive connotation. Though additional evidence is required to explain the possible connection between the knowledge of Tzevi and the sign of the fish in medieval astrology, the symbolic rite of the garmented fish in the cradle is very likely to have a similar sort of salvific implication as the planet Saturn. Thus, further knowledge of Sabbateanism can be drawn by the adoption of broader and more universalistic perspectives.

Backward Glances: Contemporary Chinese Cultures and the Female Homoerotic Imaginary. By Fran Martin.

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Backward Glances identifies some of the common female same-sex storylines in Chinese literary and visual texts with a view toward teasing out their significance in the identity formation of women in the Chinese-speaking world. The book makes a case for the "unsuspected centrality" of the "passionate love of one woman for another" through the recurrence of two female same-sex scenarios found across the Chinese-speaking world.

As the dominant form, Fran Martin identifies what she calls a "memorial mode of representation" enshrined in the ubiquitous "schoolgirl romance." In this scenario, an adult woman recalls the forced termination of same-sex love between two school girls and dwells on the pain and regret associated with the transition to a hetero-marital arrangement, thus prompting Martin to coin the term "going in narrative" in contrast to a Western-style "coming out narrative." Martin argues that this scenario is potentially presented as a universal experience for "any woman," irrespective of what an adult woman's sexual commitments might be. Alternatively, in a second, less common narrative, the main protagonists exhibit secondary gender characteristics with one assuming feminine, the other

4 Scholem, *Sabbatai Ševi: The Mystical Messiah*, p. 161.

5 Abraham Galanté, *Nouveaux Documents sur Sabbetaï Sevi* (Société Anonyme de Papeterie et d'Imprimerie, Istanbul, 1935), p. 52.

6 For example, Babylonian Talmud 119a.

masculine features. In this emplotment, this storyline takes a minoritizing stance towards the masculine character. Typically, a tomboy-like character on track to a permanent attachment to same-sex love is invariably disappeared through death, suicide, or some other plot device. Accordingly, this storyline converges on the “impossibility of lesbian futures,” while compulsively resurfacing in the present of the surviving feminine protagonist.

For both storylines, Martin seeks to query how these narratives affect the identity construction of the female consumers – both heterosexual and lesbian – in the Chinese-speaking world. In particular, she wants to establish to what extent such stories enable or stifle the public conceivability of love between women, whether or not they constitute a critique of the existing heteronormative imperative, and to what extent they point to a distinctive mode of heterosexuality among modern Chinese women. To that end, Martin offers a series of richly nuanced, attentively historicized, and carefully comparative readings of short stories of the literary and pulp variety, TV series, and film, focusing primarily on the period from the 1970s through the 2000s originating in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the PRC. At the same time she also discusses reader and audience responses to these texts.

In Chapter 1, Martin traces the emergence of these two patterns in Republican era fiction when Western sexuality was introduced via the mediation of Japan and its culture of the single-sex “girls” culture on the one hand and the emergence of the narrative formula of modern love stories on the other. First she points to the seminal schoolgirl romances by Lu Yin and Ling Shuhua among others, arguing that these writers’ use of the tragic-love story formula universalized rather than minoritized such experiences. Second, Martin locates the prehistory of the tomboy in one of Yu Dafu’s stories that stigmatizes a woman, who exhibits a masculinized body and takes female lovers among others, as a monstrous literary personage who embodies the newly introduced Freudian notion of “perversion” more generally. In Chapter 2, Martin delineates the second wave of schoolgirl romances covering the 1970s through the 1990s. Through close readings of Chu T’ien-hsin’s “Waves Scour the Sand” (1976) and Wong Bikwan’s “She Is a Young Woman and So Am I” (1994), Martin concludes that these stories portray marriage not as a natural or sentimentalized outcome but rather as a “premature, violently enforced, and tragic truncation of the ‘real’ (same-sex romance) story” (p. 63). Through the use of the formula of tragic fiction, these stories constitute a critique of heteronormative accounts of romance. In Chapter 3, Martin situates Liu Suola’s “Blue Sky Green Sea” (1985) in the context of the 1980s PRC debates on humanism. In a variant on the memorializing theme, Liu’s narrative relies on the Freudian emplotment of “authentic desire repressed” to create an implicitly utopian space of authenticity for the same-sex romance between narrator and her deceased best friend. In Chapters 4 and 5, Martin turns to the literary and visual discourses surrounding the minoritized figure of the tomboy in Taiwan. Through analysis of pulp novels, popular fiction, and corresponding TV adaptations, Martin argues that melodramatic narratives of the tomboy create sympathy for the tomboy, while subscribing to an etiology of insufficient mothering to explain the formation of the tomboy. Through an examination of audience responses to the TV miniseries, Martin proposes the possibility of a mournful rather than melancholic formation of heterosexual femininity predicated upon the public, ritualized mourning over the forceful imposition of the hetero-marital imperative. In Chapter 6, *Backward Glances* explores the rewriting of the two main narratives in new lesbian-themed cinema primarily from 2000 onward from all three regions to make a case for the new insistence on the possibility of a present and a future for adult lesbian love, an argument most fully realized in the discussion of the Hong Kong film *Butterfly* (2004).

The book succeeds in demonstrating the importance of these recurrent narrative patterns as far as the contemporary cultural production of Taiwan and Hong Kong is concerned, even if the idea of the cultural “mainstream” is somewhat fuzzy and may not encompass all of the literary and visual texts discussed. Perhaps the most compelling case in that regard is the reception of *Love Eterne* in Hong Kong and Taiwan in the 1960s that the introductory chapter invokes. Contrary to Martin’s assertion

that the ill-starred love between Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai is the best-known love story in Chinese history, that place of honor prior to the twentieth century was surely occupied by the *Xixiang ji* (Story of the Western Wing), a heterosexual story set in a temple, rather than the Liang Zhu story that made a school the central locus of the protagonists' growing attachment to each other. Hence, the unquestionable popularity of the Liang Zhu story in twentieth-century Chinese cultural production underscores Martin's argument about the centrality of a youthful same-sex attachment in a modern context. However, when we closely compare both the production of the Liang Zhu story in the PRC's first color film (1953) with the Hong Kong *Love Eterne* (1962) rendition, we notice asymmetries in both the films themselves and in the audience response. Not only does the PRC version compress the school years to a condensed sequence of quickly alternating seasons, the interaction between the two protagonists is clearly coded as "female" and "male" through operatic and other conventions respectively, thus downplaying the same-sex aspect at either the level of the actor's body or the role-type in favor of a heterosexualizing scenario. By contrast, Ivy Ling Bo's performance in *Love Eterne* explores secondary gender through a conscious enjoyment of her maleness, an aspect exploited at great length in the extended school scenes. Similarly, in terms of audience, it was the women in Taiwan and Hong Kong that made *Love Eterne* not only a blockbuster, but a cult phenomenon for decades to come. Contrary to Martin's nuanced, yet persistent insistence on the transnational circulation of such narratives, *Backward Glances* makes a much more compelling argument for the popular significance of such narratives in Taiwan and Hong Kong.

Accordingly, the case studies of literary and visual texts from the PRC discussed in *Backward Glances* do not exemplify the narrative patterns themselves or their popularity to the same degree. For one thing, none of the PRC texts and films *Backward Glances* discusses can confidently be classified as "mainstream." As Martin herself notes, in China, even PRC feminist critics intent on constructing a genealogy of same-sex narrative have overlooked Liu Suola's "Blue Sky Green Sea". For another, Li Yu, the producer of the first openly lesbian-themed PRC film *Fish and Elephant* and originally a CCTV documentary filmmaker, not only lost her job over her "underground" debut, but the film did not have an official release and is shown primarily in pirated copies, in contrast to the broadcasts of the Taiwan and Hong Kong films and TV series under discussion. Second, one of the strengths of Martin's methodology is her ability to incorporate ethnographic research, interviews, and internet-based audience responses to Taiwan and Hong Kong productions in arguing for the coexistence of universalizing and minoritizing readings of renditions of the "schoolgirl romance" among heterosexual and lesbian-identified women. However, similarly fine-grained evidence does not appear to be available from the PRC, the full-length interview with one of the openly lesbian actresses, Shi Tou, from *Fish and Elephant* and included in an appendix notwithstanding. Third, neither "Blue Sky Green Sea" nor the film *Fish and Elephants* denaturalize hetero-marital arrangements in the manner of the literary and visual texts from Taiwan and Hong Kong discussed in *Backward Glances*. Furthermore, none of the examples discussed from the PRC recuperate the tomboy as a site of the sympathetic gaze of the social collectivity and/or the loving gaze of the female lover despite the adoption of secondary gender as a lived experience among lesbian-identified women in the PRC. Hence, in terms of the quantitative and qualitative differences of female same-sex texts from the three Chinese-speaking regions, it seems less likely that such stories function as a universalizing discourse for a utopian phase of same-sex love in the constitution of female subjectivity in the PRC, nor does there seem to be cause to think that they instigate a form of public mourning among women for a purer, more spiritual kind of love in the face of a violent heteronormative system.

In sum, *Backward Glances* is an important and timely study of how cultural production intersects with female identity formation. The book will be a touchstone for further inquiries in the construction of both normative and queer female identities in the Chinese-speaking world. In its informed engagement with Western scholarship on gender, sexuality and the media, Martin sets an example

of how to attend to historical localization while simultaneously opening up productive rather than reductive possibilities of transnational comparisons within and beyond the ken of the different Chinas.

Eurasian Regionalism: The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. By Stephen Aris.
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The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) has long been viewed as an emerging strategic rival to the United States and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in Central Asia. Aris's monograph *Eurasian Regionalism* points out that many Western analysts and policymakers perceive the SCO as a traditional regional security organization focusing on military cooperation. The member-states share the concerns with international and domestic security threats, including the risks associated with attacks from an external force. Contrary to this view, the author demonstrates that the SCO should be understood as a regional international organization that primarily focuses on member-states' domestic regime stability and regional cooperation. For example, the author points out that the Central Asian regimes perceive themselves as facing severe domestic challenges; both Russia and China are confronting secessionist groups in certain far-flung regions. The SCO was created in part to address those domestic as well as regional concerns. Using interviews with officials from the member-states, secondary sources such as analyses from regional experts, and the official documents of the SCO, this line of argument is supported, for example, by the narratives of combating the "three evil forces" as stressed by the SCO, that is, terrorism, separatism, and extremism.

As an expert of security studies on the post-Soviet space, Aris argues that the SCO represents a different approach to regional security governance, as opposed to the European Union (EU) approach favored by many scholars and policy analysts. The EU approach is understood as "legal-functional" (p. 15) that relies on supra-nationalism. For the author, the SCO represents a different multilateral response to non-traditional threats. An important difference between the SCO and the EU in their security governance is the strong reluctance of the SCO member-states to compromise their sovereignty. Aris attributes the difference to regional contexts and different understandings of security and multilateralism, among others. Moreover, the focus on "non-traditional security threats" (p. 102), that is, non-state threats coming from within the states or the region in the forms of terrorism, separatism, and extremism, enables the author to make the argument that the SCO represents "a new approach to regionally coordinated security in Eurasia" (p. 102).

While the monograph offers an understanding of the formation and development of the SCO from the member-states' perspective, it also suffers from considerable empirical and theoretical weaknesses. First, parts of the empirical analysis fall short of consistency. For example, when examining the perceived norms among the member-states, based on interviews with officials, the author identifies the key words "Shanghai spirit" and "Asian values" as the socialized norms within the SCO. The author argues that "the SCO is more similar to ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) and other Asian regional organizations than to the EU, because ASEAN is also primarily based on norms. As a result of the SCO's focus on promoting the Shanghai spirit, it has become a prominent part of the regional picture in Central Asia" (p. 53). However, earlier in the book the author argues otherwise that "at present, there remain some significant limitations to the SCO's ability to socialize its