SCENTS OF CHINA

In this vivid and highly original reading of recent Chinese history, Xuelei Huang documents the eclectic array of smells that permeated Chinese life from the High Qing through to the Mao period. Utilizing interdisciplinary methodology and critically engaging with scholarship in the expanding fields of sensory and smell studies, she shows how this period of tumultuous change in China was experienced through the body and the senses. Drawing on unexplored archival materials, readers are introduced to the ‘smellscape’ of China from the eighteenth century to the mid-twentieth, via perfumes, food, body odours, public-health projects, consumerism and cosmetics, travel literature, fiction, and political language. This pioneering and evocative study takes the reader on a sensory journey through modern Chinese history, examining the ways in which the experience of scent and modernity have intertwined.

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SCENTS OF CHINA

A Modern History of Smell

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Acknowledgements

The idea of writing a book about smell germinated in the scents of a Taiwanese summer. A coincidental encounter with Alain Corbin’s *The Foul and the Fragrant* lured me into a decade-long journey in search of lost smells. It was a privilege to start this project at Academia Sinica: its remarkable libraries allowed me to explore the feasibility of such a bold (if not whimsical) idea by delving into a vast collection of physical and digital resources; conversations with its learned scholars brought timely encouragement, stimulating questions, and a steady supply of source materials from their packed bookshelves. I am especially indebted to Chang Che-chia, Chang Li, Chang Ning, Lei Hsiang-lin, Lien Ling-ling, Lin May-li, Sun Huei-min, Wu Jen-shu, Yu Chien-ming, and Yu Miin-ling for their help.

A refreshing whiff of autumn greeted me when I landed in France to continue my olfactory adventure. My deep gratitude goes to the Nantes Institute for Advanced Studies for the fellowship awarded to me and for the exceedingly welcoming, inspiring, and supportive environment. The weekly seminars, guest lectures, film club events, and conversations in our offices overlooking the Loire opened my eyes (and nostrils) to an intellectual garden of forking paths. I benefited tremendously from feedback and book/source recommendations from my fellow fellows: Perry Anderson, Joseph Bergin, Tatiana Bulgakova, Emmanuel Droit, Barbara Duden, Roberto Fragale, Parvis Ghassem-Fachandi, Danouta Liberski-Bagnoud, Vidya Rao, Suresh Sharma, and Wang Chaohua.

Vienna did smell of *fin de siècle* splendour when I was climbing up to the top floor of a grand building on Reichsratsstraße. The International Research Center for Cultural Studies (IFK) located in this building was
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

the next stop of my smell research journey. I am grateful for the grant, for the equally stimulating intellectual atmosphere, and for the inspirations, critiques, and suggestions I received from Peter Höyng, Helmut Lethen, Jutta Wimmler, and Felix Wemheuer.

With an Alexander von Humboldt research fellowship, I not only became a privileged lifelong Humboldtian, but also returned to my alma mater, the University of Heidelberg. The old sinology library had a distinctive mixture of odours hanging in the air; just by inhaling it my nerves were calmed. While there I consulted a collection of travel writings, and with the funding provided by the Humboldt Stiftung my research assistant Zhao Cheng combed through the collection and extracted all smell-related content. Cheng’s excellent work is greatly appreciated. In Heidelberg I had (still have) the wonderful support and guidance of Barbara Mittler, and I shared memorable times with Sun Liying, Wu I-wei, Ronald Po, and other friends. I owe a special debt of gratitude to the late Prof. Rudolf Wagner, whose learning, wit, and generosity set a remarkable example of how to be a scholar. In his last email to me (sent ten weeks before his passing in 2019), he shared a Shenbao article about Beijing’s stinking streets in 1879, which I used in Chapter 2, in memory of his teaching.

Both experience and science tell us that our nose tends to stay muted to familiar things. It is true when it comes to my olfactory perception of Edinburgh, where I have spent most time during this smell research journey. While this charming city may smell of whisky or Scottish history to other noses, for me it smells of my everyday, my home away from home. I am fortunate to work in a congenial environment along with my great colleagues: Natascha Gentz, Joachim Gentz, Daniel Hammond, Youngmi Kim, Duo Luan, Mark McLeister, Aaron Moore, Christopher Rosenmeier, Holly Stephens, Julian Ward, Sophia Woodman, and others. My special thanks go to Joachim and Julian, who, in keeping their noses to the ground, supplied many olfactory sources they sniffed out. Support from librarian Shenxiao Tong and research office administrators Janet Black and Laura Tomlinson is deeply appreciated. My students Chen Silin, Dominic Hall, Liu Yixin, Pan Chienwei, Piotr Strzalkowski, and Zhao Yiran generously shared research materials with
me and the Chinese Cultural Studies Reading Group offered constant intellectual stimulation.

My smell research journey also included many places where I presented my work and immersed myself in diverse smellscapes: Aberdeen, Beijing, Glasgow, Hong Kong, Hsinchu, Leeds, Leicester, London, Oxford, San Diego, Shanghai, St. Andrews, Taipei, Tokyo, and so on. I thank Isabella Jackson, Norman Stockman, Zhang Lihua, Wang Feng, Wu Shengqing, Guan Kean-fung, Stephen McDowall, Toby Lincoln, Andrea Janku, Margaret Hillenbrand, Zhang Chuntian, Mario I Aguilar, Cheng Wen-huei, and Iris Borowy for their kind invitations and hospitality, and I enjoyed discussions and appreciated comments and criticisms offered on these occasions.

The final phase of the project was a strange ‘odourless’ time when the world was hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. Whilst communications were confined to the inodorous Zoom screen, I profited from some immensely thought-provoking exchanges with fellow smell scholars. I wish to thank William Tullett for introducing me to a burgeoning network of historians, literary scholars, librarians, perfumers, art historians, and curators with a common passion for smell. My manuscript was reshaped by the insights I gained from our conversation for the AHR History Lab, an online smell studies workshop, and finally an in-person workshop in Amsterdam completed with a smell tour through the odoriferous canals and historic buildings. A historian’s nose was finally in action!

I also want to acknowledge the generous funding from the Gerda Henkel Stiftung, the LLC research fund from the University of Edinburgh, the International Center for Studies of Chinese Civilization at Fudan University, and the Institute of Chinese Studies at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, as well as the following friends and colleagues who shared research materials, read my drafts, and offered help and support of many kinds: David Cheng Chang, Chen Jianhua, Chen Yunlian, Ka-Kin Cheuk, Lena Henningsen, Rachel Hsu, Huang Jin-zhu, Kien Ket Lim, Liu Wentsui, Lu Hanchao, Cristiana Messina, Paul Pickowicz, Christopher Rea, David Der-wei Wang, Wang Jialin, Wang Yan, Wangjiang Jiazhi, Xiao Zhiwei, and Yang Chia-hsien. Paola
Zamperini read an early draft of Chapter 1, and her insightful comments are most appreciated.

I am indebted to my editor, Lucy Rhymer, for her enthusiastic support for this unusual subject matter, and for her admirable efficiency and professionalism. I am also thankful for Emily Plater’s expert guidance with preparing the manuscript. The final draft benefited greatly from perceptive comments offered by the anonymous readers, especially a ten-page report that was rigorous, insightful, and encouraging beyond comparison – to which the final shape of my book owes a great deal. All mistakes and flaws, of course, are my own.

Words are inadequate to express my gratitude to my parents and my sister’s family in Shanghai: thank you for the sweetest aroma that is called home and forgive me for being so far away. Finally, this book is for M.D. – my smell journey has been joyfully enriched by his loving companionship, his pungent sense of humour, his peppery ‘prickles’ offered when reading and editing my drafts, and, last but not least, the rich aromas of the Yorkshire countryside, including cow muck, wild garlic, Farmer’s Blonde, and everything that smells of real life I have enjoyed with him.
A Note on the Text

Chinese characters are provided for most Chinese names, terms, and titles in the main text when they first appear. Traditional characters (fanti) are used throughout unless the original source is published in simplified characters (jianti).

The following abbreviations are used in the notes:


DTRC Decennial trade reports of the Chinese Maritime Customs, in Zhongguo jiu haiguan shiliao.

HLM Cao Xueqin and Gao E, Hongloumeng (Dream of the Red Chamber).

MSMC Shanghai shi dang’an guan, ed., Gongbuju dongshihui huiyilu (Minutes of the Shanghai Municipal Council).

MXJ Mao Zedong, Mao Zedong xuanji (Selected Works of Mao Zedong).

NCH North-China Herald

RMRB Renmin ribao (People’s Daily)

SB Shenbao (Shanghai Daily)

SMA Shanghai Municipal Archive (Shanghai dang’an guan)

SS Cao Xueqin, The Story of the Stone, translated by David Hawkes.

SWM Mao Zedong, Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung.