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A few pieces that have appeared recently that feature the work of China Beat contributors...

1. Ken Pomeranz was interviewed earlier this month for this NPR Planet Money feature on medieval China (jump to about minute 4 for the beginning of the interview).

2. Xujun Eberlein’s book, *Apologies Forthcoming* (which Jeff Wasserstrom mentioned in this review essay), was reviewed at China Geeks. Charles Custer writes, "Apologies Forthcoming is not perfect, but parts of it are. Florid praise draped over the back cover as it is, I think I shall put it more simply: it is a book you should read. Eberlein has done what we so often forget to do, she has put people into history and let them tell their own stories."

3. At PopMatters, Jack Patrick Rodgers has interviewed Leslie T. Chang about her book, *Factory Girls* (see here for the interview between Susie Jakes and Chang at China Beat last year):

*Factory Girls* was released in October 2008, right around the time the global financial meltdown was happening. Do you feel any of the information in the book might be outdated?

I know that some readers and reviewers felt that way, but I don’t. I’ve been in touch with the young women that I wrote about and they’re both still gainfully employed and doing pretty well.

I think when you take a longer view you see that there have been migrants going to the city for over two decades and they’re used to having a lot of ups and downs. They’re used to coming from a very poor background and making do with very little. So I think that they take this latest economic downturn in stride, as well.

When I talk to the people I know there, they say that a lot of factories are slowing down. Min – the younger woman I wrote about – had to take a 15 percent pay cut at her factory because their orders are down. But no one sounds panicked about it; everyone’s just taking things in stride. There are good times and bad times.

4. Last week, we stumbled across a funny set of blog postings concerning Peter Hessler’s impact on expat life in China. In his post, titled "How Peter Hessler Ruined My China Life" and written in March 2009, Thomas Talhelm wrote:

Peter Hessler, the American writer of bestselling *Oracle Bones* and *River Town*, has singlehandedly ruined my China life. I’ve never actually seen Peter Hessler in China, but I live everyday in his footsteps...

I’ve always had an adversarial jealously of Hessler, seeing as how he’s achieved the fame and success as a China writer with Princeton connections that I’d take in a moment. I’ve scoured his writings to find faults and thereby a basis for my rivalry, but I still have yet to come up with anything.

Living in China in the shadow of Peter Hessler is a bit like what a real-life Harry Potter would feel toward J.K. Rowling if Potter were an aspiring novelist and he one day discovered someone had beaten him to the punch—and made a tidy sum in the process. I suspect that nearly every Princeton in Asia fellow has a tinge of jealousy-based grudge-tinged-with-respect for Hessler.

To understand how Hessler has stolen my thunder, it’s necessary to understand one of the most essential benefits of choosing to live in China. That is you get to wrap yourself in the plush, velvety illusion that you’re the first one to experience all of the crazy aspects of China life....As much as I know that other Americans have been here and done this, I succumb to the sweet-scented myth just like any other.

In early September, Talhelm updated the saga with "How My Blog Entry Ruined Peter Hessler’s Google Life".
In a twist of cosmic injustice, my blog entry on How Peter Hessler Ruined My China Life now comes in 5th when you Google “Peter Hessler.”

Strangely, this puts the Google rank of my rant above all but one of his articles...

Then, a week later, Hessler weighed in at Talhelm’s blog, in a posting titled (tongue-in-cheek) “Hessler Issues Apology,” in which it was revealed that before Hessler began crushing expat dreams, his own life was ruined by Mark Salzman:

During the years that I was in Fuling, “Iron and Silk” was the book that all foreign teachers read, and sometimes complained about. When I sent out the unsolicited manuscript of “River Town,” a lot of reactions were clearly shaped by Mark Salzman’s book. Most agents and publishers rejected it, probably because there was already a successful book about teaching in China. Or they wanted to build on it in narrow ways: one agent wanted me to cut my manuscript down into very short vignettes, like Salzman’s book. I’m glad I resisted; over the years it’s become clear that these are very different books and each has its own place. A couple of years ago, I met Mark Salzman at a literary event, and I told him that the foreign teachers now complain about me as well as him. He laughed; he knew what I was talking about.