REVIEWS

Reviews are published in alphabetical order according to the last name of the author reviewed.

Jenny Chan, Mark Selden, and Ngai Pun. ***Dying for an iPhone: Apple, Foxconn, and The Lives of China's Workers.*** Haymarket Books, 2020. 273p.

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Dying for an iPhone discloses the real lives of Chinese workers at Foxconn, one of the worlds' leading electronics workshops, especially well known for manufacturing Apple products such as iPhones, iPads, iPods, and Macs. While consumers worldwide are quite familiar with the trending and high-tech digital devices sold by Apple, they hardly know the suffering of the Chinese workers who spend day and night assembling iPhones and other electronic products. *Dying for an iPhone* thoroughly portrays the pain, violence, and struggles encountered by Foxconn workers. It accuses Foxcnn of inhuman management and treatment towards its employees, as well as Apple's negligence and labor violations. It further calls for domestic and international action to protect workers' rights.

To investigate Foxconn's labor issues, the scholars did many years of firsthand research and fieldwork in Foxconn's primary manufacturing bases in nine cities in mainland China. They not only interviewed different groups of people, including "Foxconn employees, student interns, teachers (who monitor the internship programs of their students), managers, and government officials," but also collected many documentary materials such as "poems, songs, open letters, photos, and videos" (12).

Chapter 1 focuses on the story of suicide survivor Tian Yu, a 17-year-old girl who was half-paralyzed after jumping from the Foxconn Longhua factory dormitory. Tian Yu's own narrations of her experience and feelings about working at Foxconn unveils how workers like her become submerged by desperation due to exhausting workdays, strict

supervision of line leaders, social isolation, and delayed salary payment.

The following chapter introduces the history and business of Foxconn, originally a plastic and metal processing company set up by Terry Gou in Taiwan that later became the largest electronics manufacturer in the world as well as the "biggest private sector employer" in China (26). Foxconn's development is heavily dependent on low labor cost in China. The rural migrant workers employed by Foxconn are trained as "harmonious men" or "Foxbots" who are expected to work tirelessly like robots. Chapter 3 discusses the intimate relationship between Apple and Foxconn. It further shows how Apple has been damaging the welfare of Chinese workers in various ways that have violated China's labor laws and Apple's "own supplier code of conduct" (33).

Chapter 4 examines Foxconn's management system and concludes that instead of developing effective methods to increase wages or improve workers' wellbeing, Foxconn continues to enforce strict regulations over its employees, who are considered "animals" by Terry Gou. Chapter 5 focuses attention on the experience of abused student interns. Abundant statistics demonstrate how Foxconn cooperates with the Chinese government, vocational schools, and teachers to use the student labor force to save money.

Chapters 6, 7, and 8 delineate various challenges that migrant workers have encountered at the workplace. In addition to low wages, Foxconn workers are also put in physical danger. For example, polishing workers have to breathe toxic aluminum dust while working in the airtight environment. The metallic dust can also be ignited and lead to fire and explosions, which happened in 2011 and caused the deaths of four workers. Chapters 7 and 8 use poems written by Foxconn workers to show their unsettled lives in big cities. As individuals who left their hometowns in rural areas to make a living in a strange land, young workers often feel lost and hopeless for their future. Some fail to gain a sense of belonging and to deal with "fantasy" and "reality" while working in the modern city (98).

After briefly discussing the environmental crisis caused by Foxconn, Chapters 10 and 11 concentrate on workers' efforts to protect their legal rights. Even though they applied various strategies to fight against unfair treatment from Foxconn, such as labor arbitration,

appealing to the courts, work slowdowns, labor actions, suicide threats, riots, and seeking help from unions, they failed to change or improve their situation.

The final chapter and epilogue summarize the causes of the unsuccessful worker protests and provide deep insights on labor issues. Importantly, Chan, Selden, and Pun point out that under the leadership of President Xi Jinping, worker's actions in China have been severely constrained or monitored. As a result, those who aim to engage in strikes and protests can face more challenges. However, even though currently worker activists cannot achieve the goal of strengthening labor rights, the authors believe that labor activism in China still plays a significant role of supporting Foxconn workers as well as inspiring global labor activists.

Frederik H. Green, translator and editor. ***Bird Talk and Other Stories by Xu Xu: Modern Tales of a Chinese Romantic***. Berkeley: Stone Bridge Press, 2020. 223p.

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For the first time, the popular fiction of Chinese writer Xu Xu (1908-1980) is available in English with its full beauty and mysterious pathos, thanks to Frederik H. Green's brilliant translation and commentary. Xu Xu was a highly popular urban author active in twentieth-century China, or as Green aptly puts it, a modern Chinese Romantic. He was particularly renowned for melancholic or even nostalgic romances in metropolitan settings such as Shanghai and Hong Kong. *Bird Talk and Other Stories* includes five of Xu Xu's stories of this type, all translated by Green into a language that is readable, clear, full of literary nuance, and faithful to the originals' sentimental style. The collection also features two extended commentaries by Green: a biographical and historical introduction, providing an overview of Xu Xu's "literary journey through twentieth-century China" and his reception; and a critical and theoretical afterword titled "A Chinese Romantic's Journey Through Time and Space: Xu Xu and Transnational Chinese Romanticism," situating Xu Xu's work in a broader context of transnational romanticism.

In the first romance, "Ghost Love" (1937), the first-person narrator and male protagonist, Human, falls in love with Ghost, a mysterious nocturnal woman who always dresses herself in black and claims to be a ghost. With all the street names dropped in the narrative flow--and with the help of Green's annotations--today's readers will be able to rechart the routes of the long walks of Human and Ghost in 1930s Shanghai and its suburbs, while the whole plot hinges on the suspense over whether the female protagonist is indeed a ghost or just a human in disguise. This love story can then be interpreted as a mapping of old Shanghai as a dreamland, a threshold between fantasy and reality, between romantic dreaming and historical awakening (after all, Ghost may "in fact" be a former revolutionary fighter whose parents are a Jew and an overseas Chinese!).

"Ghost Love" remains the most popular and best-known work by Xu Xu, but Green chooses the title of his edition from a different story, "Bird Talk" (1950), because this piece epitomizes a transition of Xu Xu's literary career. The first-person narrator and male protagonist (a pattern in Xu Xu's fiction) falls in love with a village girl (Yunqian) who shows intuitive understanding of bird talk, Tang poetry, and Buddhist wisdom. However, Yunqian does not fit into the metropolitan life of Shanghai and aspires only to the other-worldly realm. Eventually, she becomes a nun, and the narrator "drifted to Hong Kong." The fiction starts and ends with the male protagonist's mourning of loss in Hong Kong. As Green reminds us repeatedly, Xu Xu was also drifting. In the 1930s, he was a vital part of the pre-war Shanghai literary scene. After the founding of the People's Republic, he decided to leave the mainland and went into exile in Hong Kong in 1950 where he transformed himself into a key figure of post-war and Cold War Hong Kong literature. As Green notes, "Bird Talk" was among Xu Xu's first works published after arriving in Hong Kong (93). The composition, theme, and plot are emblematic of the metamorphosis of his poetic world in parallel to his life journey and physical whereabouts. In this sense, "Bird Talk" forms a middle-point of the five fictional works: before it, "Ghost Love" and "The Jewish Comet" are gems from the pre-war Shanghai genre of pop exotic romance; after it, "The All-Souls Tree" and "When Ah Heung Came to Gousing Road" represent the development of post-war Hong Kong writings.

"Bird Talk," or the Shanghai-Hong Kong "drifting," marks another, deeper, transition in Xu Xu's fictional world. Green insightfully points out: "for the most part, the fantastic in Xu Xu's prewar fiction eventually was unmasked as merely uncanny encounters or else as dreams…. Xu Xu's use of the fantastic in his postwar fiction from Hong Kong was of a different nature" (214). In "Ghost Love," even though the reader may leave with a lot of second thoughts, the plot is sustained by the narrator's questioning and efforts to unmask the true identity of Ghost. But "The fantastic in his postwar fiction is no longer questioned by a supposedly enlightened narrator" (216). In "Bird Talk," for instance, Yunqian's (whose dharma name is to be Juening, Peaceful Awareness) intuition for the bird language and otherworldliness needs no explanation but is ultimately (not without a sense of reversal) linked to the Buddhist "awakening from reality" preached in the *Diamond Sutra*. Similarly, with this deepened longing for the fantastic, the theme of spiritual nostalgia surfaces in Xu Xu's Hong Kong period.

It is with this focus on nostalgia that Green powerfully links Xu Xu's literary journey to the trajectories of global romanticism. The author traces the global explosion of romanticism as a critique of capitalistic modernity to a condition of the modern human known as philosophical homelessness and the resultant emergence of "nostalgia for the absolute" (213). Xu Xu shared the Romantic reflections of our modern condition. As Green shows, the kind of nostalgia displayed in Xu Xu's later works does not merely indicate a bygone era or a lost location in reality. It is nostalgia for a spiritual realm that is real, but attainable only through the fantastic, the mythical, and the surreal. Green's afterword therefore ends with a comparison of Xu Xu's writings with Marc Chagall's paintings.

Green demonstrates that this redefinition of romanticism through modern Chinese literature is relevant to us today. This volume of Xu Xu's fiction is not only a welcome and highly anticipated addition to the must-read list of Chinese literature, but will also captivate many contemporary minds who, faced with this trying age, long for "metaphysical sanctuaries" (219) and reversals between the fantastic and the real.

Li Guo. ***Writing Gender in Early Modern Chinese Women's* Tanci *Fiction*.** Purdue UP, 2021. 273p.

Christopher Lupke
University of Alberta

The Chinese literary genre *tanci* 彈詞, a prosimetric form that mixes fictional narrative with poetry of various sorts, has been referred to in English translation as chantefable, plucking rhyme, or simply by its original Chinese term *tanci* or *tanci* fiction. It emerged in the late imperial era as the preferred medium of expression for literate women in China. Its mixed storytelling and singing structure suggests that it evolved out of an oral tradition. Long overlooked or dismissed as middlebrow, it has received little scholarly attention until recent decades. But in the past 30 years, and especially recently, it has attracted much serious scholarship, such as the Chinese-language book-length work of Hu Siao-chen, studies by Mark Bender, Maram Epstein, Yu Zhang, Lingzhen Wang, and others, as well as by Li Guo, this volume's author, her second on the topic of *tanci*.

Guo's book comprises a lengthy, informative and sophisticated introduction, five main chapters--each devoted to the study of one *tanci* work—and a brief conclusion. As Guo indicates, the Chinese bibliographer Sheng Zhimei asserts that 538 novel-length *tanci* survive down to the present. Guo's rationale for selecting the five on which she focuses is to choose significant *tanci* that have received little to no scholarly attention in English. Of these five, one exists only in a handwritten manuscript in the Shanghai Library. Another has only recently been discovered, and Guo's discussion is its first such scholarly treatment in English. Having devoted her graduate research and first book to *tanci*, Guo presents these five *tanci* with the authority of a true expert—one of the leading scholars on the topic in the world. Her intimate understanding of the genre as a whole, her theoretical sophistication, and her exhaustive analysis of these five texts makes *Writing Gender in Early Modern Chinese Women's* Tanci *Fiction* an exemplary work of scholarship and a significant intervention into world feminist literary studies. It will be of great interest to any scholar who is curious about the development of literature written by women in Chinese but who does not have a knowledge of Chinese, and will assist Chinese

Studies scholars unfamiliar with the genre as well.

It is not merely that *tanci* are mainly written by women. The themes of the narratives are deeply informed by the concerns of women and their status in late imperial China at a time when the onslaught of the Taiping and other rebellions, as well as the imperialist incursion of such military powers as the British, were posing a major threat to the millennia-long dynastic system and governmental structure. Additionally, the texts reflect the emergence of nascent global capitalism. Given these stresses, it stands to reason that the unprecedented social problems that Chinese people were confronting would surface in literature. Within these texts, traditional notions of gender roles, the established system of patriarchal kinship, as well as the relationship between subject and state were all called into question. And yet, as Guo demonstrates, the texts were doubly inscribed, which is to say that while genuinely subversive elements were at the center of these texts, they also depicted characters who ultimately returned to the fold, seeking readmission to the heteronormative hierarchies from which they initially strayed and rebelled.

Among the theoretical reasoning that she draws upon, Guo turns to the notion of "spatialization" pioneered by Susan Friedman, who developed her ideas out of the writings of Julia Kristeva and Mikhail Bakhtin. "Spatialization" works on two axes, a horizontal and a vertical one. Guo sees Friedman's theory as fashioning a "horizontal" relationship between writer and reader and a "vertical" line in the space and time that the reader occupies. Space indeed does play a crucial role in most *tanci*, which frequently feature a woman who, in the disguise of a man, ventures out into the external world, leaving the domestic sphere behind. Guo also engages Nancy Armstrong's classic cornerstone essay "The Rise of Feminine Authority" to show how *tanci* seek to construct a new form that contains specialized language by, about, and for women.

Cross-dressing occupies a central role in many of the *tanci* fictions, as women wandering on their own out in public, especially if far from home, in dynastic China was a virtual taboo. Guo develops a reading of the female protagonists as split subjects: on the one hand, an "I now" and on the other, an "I then." How does this work? Typically, the woman is raised in an affluent household and is expected at some

point to be wedded to someone of comparable class and economic bracket, usually agreed upon years in advance. When she does so, as an initial matter of resistance, she may seek to escape the bonds of conventional, heterosexual bonding and the reproductive logic that underlies and perpetuates it, electing to set off on her own in the guise of a man. However, at some point, she inevitably will return home in a process Guo refers to as "refeminization" of the female protagonist when she resumes her more conventional, mainstream, elite domestic life. In other cases, the woman takes on the ostensibly subversive role, such as a cross-dressed man, in order to effect a filial or other orthodox goal, as in cases where a woman may seek to avenge a father or fight in the name of the country. The women almost always return to their conventional position. Guo spends much time illustrating the interesting point that this refeminization is normally a natural and voluntary choice rather than an act of reluctant conciliation. The woman chooses to return.

The fascinating thing about most *tanci* is that they are neither anti-patriarchal nor do they embrace the conventional gender roles that one would expect of orthodox Confucian society. Rather, throughout these texts irony and ambiguity abound. There is toying with reversed gender roles and subversive behavior. And there is a recognition of the inevitability of conformist behavior. Within the depictions of women out and about in their disguised roles as men, there nevertheless are present classic Confucianist principles such as filiality, fraternity, and loyalty to the emperor. Back in the domestic sphere, conversely, there frequently lurks what Guo calls "a haunting predicament," constant challenges, the fear of exposure, in other words, intrigue: the stuff of which good fiction is made. It is precisely this tension that causes the texts to dance on the razor's edge of iconoclasm and compliance, endowing *tanci* with their allure. On a deeper level, *tanci* offer images of what Tani Barlow, whose work Guo cites as an inspiration, describes as "womanly becoming," a sort of protofeminism that anticipates the full-fledged advent of women's literature in the twentieth century—writing by women, about women, and for women—in uncompromising plots and character development. One might speculate, for example, that *tanci* paved the way for such illustrious figures as Ding Ling, Eileen Chang, Can Xue, Wang Anyi, Chen Ruoxi, Li Ang, and other such major female writers.

Guo's book encompasses *tanci* that date from approximately 1805 in the first case to the latest in her study, probably written around 1883. The texts bookend the historical events of the Taiping (and other) Rebellion(s) and the Opium Wars, cataclysmic events of world history. She illustrates not just the wide range of *tanci* texts in various ways, but also the way the genre evolved over several decades. The earliest *tanci* date from the eighteenth century, but the genre continued in regular practice as late as the early 20th century. Guo is careful to show how elastic the genre can be, as one of the most revolutionary of these texts was written by the early 20th century feminist writer Qiu Jin. Although Qiu Jin's work is not within the scope of this particular volume (Guo's first book *does* cover early modern *tanci*), Guo's scholarship indicates a pathway from the earlier to the later *tanci* that foreshadows the appropriation of this genre for the liberation aesthetics of modern Chinese women's writing. Li Guo's treatment of this important genre, on which much more study and translation is warranted, is a thorough, thoughtful, and engaging contribution to our understanding of Chinese literature. *Writing Gender in Early Modern Chinese Women's* Tanci *Fiction* is the epitome of first-rate scholarship.

Hua Li. ***Chinese Science Fiction during the Post-Mao Cultural Thaw***. U of Toronto P, 2021. 234p.

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For many, the short-lived blooming and sudden withering of science fiction (hereafter SF) after Mao's demise is enigmatic. Hua Li's in-depth and comprehensive investigation dedicated to this phenomenon is an exciting read for scholars and general readers interested in Chinese SF history and in the intricacy of political-cultural dynamics during the period.

With solid scholarship, masterful knowledge of SF history, and illuminating discussions, *Chinese Science Fiction during the Post-Mao Cultural Thaw* offers a kaleidoscopic picture of SF during the unique historical juncture. Chapter 1 first lays out the political and cultural conditions for the development of SF from 1976 to 1983. Chapters 2-5 delve into the works of four major SF writers. Chapter 6 treats

the unique SF form that features technology and the circulation of SF across different media formats, followed by Chapter 7's focus on the lack of media convergence during the period. The author concludes in the final chapter that, as a government-backed literary genre, SF aligned with the state's science-oriented modernization project. Through the process, SF transformed itself from the simpler popular science writing for juvenile readers of the Mao era to a full-fledged, sophisticated literary genre for adult readers during the post-Mao cultural thaw. It functioned as a bridge between the didactic and pragmatic writing of the Mao era to the New Wave of SF in the 2010s.

The book's core is the thorough examination of four SF writers' unique contributions. For Zheng Wenguang, his Mars Series stands out. While Zheng continued to write about the journey to Mars from the Mao to Deng era, he demonstrates a distinctive transformation from the utilitarian and optimistic understanding of the role of science to an attitude with more humanistic concerns and apprehension about the disastrous results of science. In the chapter on Ye Yonglie, Li argues that with his series featuring police officer/detective Jin Ming, Ye "almost single-handedly originated and promoted" (56) the SF thriller in China, but its popularity also has been controversial. Tong Enzheng's uniqueness lies in his writings on the advanced civilization of space aliens and their intricate interactions with human beings, which reveal the author's optimism and confidence in the "unstoppable co-evolution of human beings and their advancing technology" (95). The chapter on Xiao Jianheng focuses on his writings regarding posthuman conditions. It stresses the "uncritical attitude known as scientism" (103) in Xiao's writings on cryogenics during the Mao era and his increasing apprehension of the role of AI and robots in human society in the post-Mao era.

It is noteworthy that Li always artfully puts the textual production of SF into its broader contexts, including the mainstream literary field, domestic political requirements and predicaments, ever-changing international relationships, and Western SF traditions in Europe, the former USSR, and the United States. This study emphasizes the post-Mao moment, but often brings the Mao era into discussion to trace continuity and change. The genealogical linkages between Chinese and Western SF that Li discovers are particularly commendable. She makes it clear that, although Chinese SF has kept

receiving inspiration from foreign predecessors and peers (within the parameters of political permissibility) in terms of subject matter, motifs, themes, and so forth, Chinese SF writers overall are noticeably less critical and more optimistic than their foreign counterparts regarding the consequences of the application of technology, the possible alienation and marginalization of humanity while facing AI products, and ethical issues. She insightfully attributes such attitudes to a blind scientism, which has been encouraged and endorsed by Mao's mandate of conquering Nature as well as Deng's modernization project (chapter 6).

If I could ask for more from this already satisfying volume, I would have loved to see more space devoted to the political and cultural power struggles that caused the sudden death of SF (mainly discussed in the first chapter on page 14). Otherwise, some readers might wonder, why, all of a sudden, an ephemeral political campaign could cause the perdition of a thriving new genre, which, as Li argues, ardently followed the state's directives to promote modern science. A close investigation into such power struggles at different levels might help clarify how the academic debates eventually became politicized. Besides the literary circle's territorial hostility, with his enormous political influence on the policy makers, the prominent scientist Qian Xuesen's (1911–2009) harsh disapproval of Chinese SF for its "misrepresentation" of scientific knowledge has played a critical role. Furthermore, it might be useful to tackle the actual process of the ideological debates over humanism and "alienation in socialism" between the Party's conservatives and the more open-minded figures, which triggered the "Anti-spiritual Pollution Campaign."

Christopher Lupke, translator and editor. ***A History of Taiwan Literature*** by Ye Shitao. Cambria Press, 2020. 385p.

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Ye Shitao 葉石濤 (1925-2008), a pioneering writer and historian, specialized in the literary history of Taiwan and the lives of ordinary Taiwanese people. *A History of Taiwan Literature* is his most important work that conveys the uniqueness of Taiwanese culture, ethnicity, and historical experience in contrast to mainland China. In this masterful translation of Ye Shitao's opus, which won the 2021 MLA Aldo and Jeanne Scaglione Prize for a translation of a scholarly study of literature, Christopher Lupke allows readers to gain insight into the evolution of Taiwan literature throughout centuries of colonization and subjugation by foreign powers. He highlights the crucial link between literature and "a new consciousness that reflects an awareness of the historical legacy" of Taiwan (12). Framed by Lupke's incisive introduction and epilogue, this book presents a rigorous, comprehensive treatment of Taiwan's literary history in a fair and even-handed way. It devotes attention to major and minor writers whose accomplishments were ignored for decades since there was a virtual denial or ignorance of their literary worth. The work foregrounds Ye Shitao's outlook as a "doubly marginalized" (4) *bentu* 本土 (of this land) writer of southern Taiwan who advocated an understanding of Taiwanese culture and literature as separate from mainland China. Due to Lupke's inclusion of extensive notes for each chapter, both by Ye Shitao and two Japanese scholars, as well as a rich bibliography and a helpful index, this work is a valuable resource for anyone interested in learning about the historical events, authors, literary journals, and texts that lie at the core of Taiwan's literary heritage.

Published in the watershed year of 1987, when martial law in Taiwan was finally lifted, the ultimate goal of this history is to consider Taiwan's literature as a complex, variegated whole and to correct the unbalanced role Taipei had played in Taiwanese literary history. Evoking the "centripetal" effect of Taipei as a "cultural island within the island of Taiwan" (4), Lupke's introduction emphasizes Ye Shitao's life-long purpose to focus on and elucidate other locations and

cultural elements on the island, such as the rural south, that have little in common with the northern capital Taipei. What also becomes clear is Ye Shitao's strong concern with authentic realism that reflects the lived experiences of the vast majority of Taiwanese people.

The book begins 220 million years ago "when land first protruded from the sea to form an island" (15) and then concisely traces millennia of contact with mainland China when "diplomats were sent to mollify, and troops to quash Taiwan" (17) while the dissemination and transplantation of traditional Chinese literature continued. Discussing travelogues, travel poems and essays by emissaries to Taiwan, Ye Shitao draws a clear distinction between travelers and native people, stating that texts by visiting officials "lacked the depth that could only be attained from the point of view of a native, whose works described hardship among the people" (23). This powerful sense of "native consciousness" (31) is a quality that Ye Shitao situates in the poetry and prose of Taiwanese writers.

The heart of Ye Shitao's treatise is Chapter 2, where he describes the historical significance of the Taiwan New Literature Movement during the fifty-one years of the Japanese Colonial Period (1895-1945). During these years, the Taiwan cultural enlightenment movement, strongly influenced by May Fourth thinkers on the mainland, became linked to the Taiwan vernacular movement as well as Taiwan's striving for national self-determination and resistance to the Japanese. The problem of language comes to the foreground here since nativist writers sought to emulate the people's spoken vernacular to "penetrate the world of the broad masses" (70). Tracing the difficult tensions at the heart of this moment in Taiwan's literary history, Ye Shitao sheds light on thinkers like Zhang Wojun 張我軍 (1902-1955) and Lai He 賴和 (1894-1943), who sought to provide a theoretical foundation for the "essence, content, and style of New Taiwan Literature" (75). Ye highlights that since writing in Japanese was the only conduit to using modernity as a way to resist Japan, the Japanese language became a useful tool and even a weapon of resistance for Taiwanese intellectuals against the Japanese (99). Ye calls attention to the high literary quality of Japanese-language literary texts by Taiwan writers as well as the anti-colonial and anti-feudal themes within them. In fact, Ye asserts that new Taiwan literature under the Japanese was synonymous with

Nativist Literature due to its emphasis on realism and regionalism, rather than abstractness and internationalism.

In the ensuing chapters, Ye describes the tensions between immigrant writers from mainland China writing in Chinese and Taiwan-born writers who had always written in Japanese. In Chapter 7 titled "Taiwan Literature in the 1970's: Nativism or Human Nature?" Ye describes the Debate over Nativist Literature, which became crucial to finding a new path for the development of literature that would reflect the hearts and minds of Taiwan's 19 million citizens. While many intellectuals participated in this debate and advocated a broad range of views, Ye staunchly asserts that "only Nativist literature, applied to the real lives of ordinary people in Taiwan, could serve as the spiritual sustenance of the common folk of Taiwan and rise to the level of world literature" (296).

Christopher Lupke and Thomas Moran, eds. ***Chinese Poets Since 1949***. Dictionary of Literary Biography, vol. 387. Detroit: Gale Cengage / Columbia, SC: Bruccoli Clark Layman, 2021. 461p.

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Few reference works have accompanied me as reliably throughout my career—first as a student, then as a scholar and teacher—as Gale's *Dictionary of Literary Biographies* (DLB) series. With the publication in 2007 of *Chinese Fiction Writers from 1900-1949* and in 2013 of *Chinese Fiction Writers from 1950-2000*, the DLB series finally paid tribute to the rich legacy of twentieth-century Chinese literature. These are still the most comprehensive and authoritative bibliographical reference works on modern Chinese-language novelists, and Editor Thomas E. Moran must have known that he had set the bar high for any subsequent volume dedicated to modern Chinese literature. With the publication of DLB # 387 *Chinese Poets Since 1949*, Co-editors Christopher Lupke and Thomas E. Moran have clearly risen to the challenge. Encompassing some forty-five poets who have all contributed in significant ways to the flowering of Chinese-language poetry in the second half of the twentieth- and the first two decades of the twenty-first centuries,

the tome under review impresses with its sheer breadth as well as its academic rigor.

Clocking in at 461 pages, *Chinese Poets Since 1949* is a behemoth that, at first sight, displays all the usual characteristics of the DLB series. Besides the elegantly written and thoroughly researched bibliographical essays by forty international scholars, it features a general introduction by the two co-editors, a comprehensive checklist of Further Readings, and a cumulative index to the entire DLB series. In addition to the conventional qualities of such a reference work, *Chinese Poets Since 1949*, upon closer inspection, reveals a host of unexpected treasures. Accompanied by a photograph of the poet discussed, each entry further includes reproductions of a wide variety of documents, ranging from select book covers and dust jackets to handwritten manuscripts, such as pages from poems by Aku Wuwu (11) or Ling Yu (92). The entry for poet-painter Yan Li reproduces a painting by the artist (229), while the one for Lü De'an includes a photo of the mountain dwelling that the poet painstakingly built himself and which, according to Paul Manfredi, is "a kind of sweeping analogy for Lü's writing process writ large" (99). The general introduction further replicates covers from key literary journals such as *Lanxing Shikan* (Blue Star Poetry Journal) and *Jintian* (Today). These documents, painstakingly assembled from various archives across the world or made available courtesy of the authors or contributors, thus provide valuable additional clues to understanding the production, dissemination, consumption, and reception of Chinese-language poetry since the mid-twentieth century.

Most users will probably treat *Chinese Poets Since 1949* as a reference work to be consulted when researching one or more modern Chinese-language poets, and it excels beautifully at this function. Each essay begins with a complete list of the featured author's Chinese-language poetry books, editions and translations in English, and other relevant publications and concludes with a reference section. Sometimes in collections that incorporate a large number of contributors, the quality of entries varies greatly, but not in this case. All forty-five essays are solidly researched, well written, and complete in their presentation of bibliographical information. This consistently high academic quality throughout is the result of the two co-editors' feat of assembling a veritable who's who in the field of English-

language scholarship on modern Chinese language poetry. Based at universities in the US, Europe, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Australia, all are established scholars (and in most cases translators) of modern Chinese poetry, and many have been instrumental in introducing one or more of the authors discussed to readers in the West.

While each entry exhibits great academic rigor and attention to detail, the approach contributors have taken in presenting their respective poets' biographies varies somewhat. All include at least some examples of poetry in translation to complement the theoretical and socio-historical contextualization of the given poet's oeuvre, yet the quantity and use of these excerpts differs considerably. Some, like Joseph R. Allen in his highly engaging essay on Gu Cheng, frame their biographical exploration with plenty of excerpts from poems by the author under discussion--in the case of Gu Cheng, many examples were translated by Allen himself and have appeared in anthologies or single editions. Others, such as Howard Y.F. Choy in his equally insightful study of Leung Ping-kwan, offer only minimal poetic examples, but instead include excerpts from Leung's own commentary on the nature of his poetry. Steve L. Riep's meticulous biography of Ya Xian provides detailed summaries of the poems to highlight the poet's artistic and political inclinations. Most entries successfully position the poets within their immediate poetic coteries and the larger framework of the era's poetic and historical developments. Lucas Klein's comprehensive essay on Mang Ke, for example, details the poet's close connection to Bei Dao and their shared stewardship of the journal *Jintian* and subsequent promotion of other Misty poets such as Jiang He, Duo Duo, Shu Ting, Yang Lian, and Gu Cheng. Unfortunately, poets mentioned in an entry who have their own biography included elsewhere in the volume are not marked for cross-reference.

One particularly noteworthy aspect of *Chinese Poets Since 1949* is the editors' holistic approach to the question of what exactly constitutes Chinese poetry of the past seventy years. Well aware of the fraught nature of the adjective "Chinese," Lupke and Moran's general introduction acknowledges that "the Chinese language, its culture, and literature exceed the political bounds of the nation-state of 'China,'" before asserting that since 1949, "the literatures of mainland China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong have developed distinctive characteristics,

even while sharing a heritage and influencing one another" (xxi). As a result, the poets collected in *Chinese Poets Since 1949* represent all three political entities where Chinese or one of its dialects is the dominant language, and almost one third of the entries are on female poets. In addition, it includes those who belong to ethnic minorities, such as Mark Bender's extensive entry on Aku Wuwu, a poet of the Yi ethnic group, or Darryl Sterk's insightful study of Walis Nokan of the Atayal tribe who is "among the most important figures in the indigenous literary movement in Taiwan" (160).

Another strength is that it introduces readers to poets who have thus far received less attention in Western scholarship. Lupke's informed entry on Xiao Kaiyu, for example, profiles a poet whose works are "as complicated, sinuous, radically structured, sophisticated, and erudite as any Chinese poetry of the past one-hundred years" (209). Nikky Lin's comprehensive entry on Lin Hengtai discusses how his career is "representative of important literary trends prevalent in his native Taiwan during the second half of the twentieth century, moving from realism, through modernism, and into localization and transitioning from Japanese to Chinese influences" (80). Even entries on the best-known and most-researched authors still offer new insights. Moran's thorough discussion of Yu Guangzhong, for example, extensively draws on the most recent Chinese-language scholarship and English translations, while Yanhong Zhu's exhaustive entry on Zhai Yongming also elucidates the ways Zhai more recently came to "explore[s] new ways of poetic expression in film, music, and photography" (306).

Finally, the book underlines its relevance by including poets who have been discovered only recently by readers and critics because their work has previously been marginalized or because of the poet's young age (or both). Hangping Xu in his entry on Yu Xiuhua, for example, compellingly illustrates how "one of the most discussed poets in China as the country enters the third decade of the twentieth century" (286) seeks to "take representational control over what it means to live with disabilities in contemporary China" (290). Xiaojing Zhou's entry on migrant poet Zheng Xiaoqing, the youngest poet included, convincingly shows how Zheng "exposes social problems while exploring new possibilities of language and form" (331).

Meanwhile, Steve Bradbury's engaging review of Ye Mimi argues that she is "among the most innovative poets and filmmakers to have emerged in Taiwan in the twenty-first century and one of the few to have attracted significant interest abroad" (255).

Whether using *Chinese Poets Since 1949* as a reference or casually browsing through the alphabetically arranged entries, users will appreciate its kaleidoscopic quality that offers forty-five glimpses of the colorful and constantly evolving field of twentieth-century Chinese language poetry. However, when read in its entirety--as in this review--the volume turns into a prism through which we can grasp the entire spectrum of Chinese poetry in the second half of the twentieth century. The general introduction is of particular value here. Lupke and Moran first position twentieth-century Chinese-language poetry within the context of the three-thousand-year-old Chinese poetic tradition before aligning each of the forty-five poets with one or more larger trends or schools of poetry. These include (but are not limited to): the modernist movement in 1950s Taiwan, Taiwan's native soil poetry, the glocalism found in Hong Kong poetry, Misty poetry of 1970s China, or the Third Generation that flowered in China in the 1990s. Thanks to this comprehensive categorization, it hardly matters that a number of notable poets are not included, such as Taiwan's Lo Chih Cheng (Luo Zhicheng), Hong Kong poet Xi Xi (Sai Sai), or Duo Duo from mainland China, to name only a few. On the other hand, maybe these omissions are reason enough to persuade the co-editors to embark on a follow-up volume. After all, there are also two DLB volumes dedicated to Chinese Fiction Writers, and with many more modern and contemporary Chinese-language poets worthy of biographical entries, Lupke and Moran, it would seem, already have their next challenge cut out for them.

Shaoling Ma. ***The Stone and the Wireless: Mediating China 1861-1906***. Duke UP, 2021. 312p.

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"Media determines our situation, which—in spite or because of it—deserves a description." The term "determine" in this powerful dictum by Friedrich Kittler draws generations of scholars into reimagining the ways media preconditions our existence. The eagerness to unmask media's robust materiality and technicality (as evidenced by the infrastructural, posthermeneutic turns in media studies), however, reduces mediation—a complex worlding process—to the technological real. In *The Stone and the Wireless*, Shaoling Ma takes mediation as the subject and method of her study, not only challenging the presumption of new materialism by returning media to language and interpretation, but also seeking to carve out a mode of media theory in fin-de-siècle China. Ma should be applauded for her timely reappraisal of the techno-centric and instrumental approaches that currently dominate Euro-American studies in the so-called Edison era.

The work poses a thoughtful question: how does one write a media history of China when the late Qing people were deploying media devices without themselves having a clear conception of what media are? Ma takes us to the lively scenes where men and women innovatively grafted mediation onto their primal encounters with machines and allows historical realities at the turn of the twentieth century to generate her theorization of media. The volume deliberately eschews a conventional periodization of the late Qing (1840-1911): it is bookended by two moments crucial to the history of mediation: the establishment of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 總理衙門 (*Zongli yamen*) in 1861 and the centralization of postal service under the Ministry of Posts and Communications 郵傳部 (Youchuan bu) in 1906. This period bespeaks the dynamic processes of mediating China and points to the embeddedness of media technologies in national, racial issues generated by China's semicolonial status and global technological transfers.

At the heart of the study is the integration of mediation—as both material processes and concept—into what media *do*. Media

exist to mediate, yet no media device mediates on its own without being already mediated by some "form" of it—its linguistic or visual representation. Ma condenses the clustered concept of media into two inseparable elements—*media forms* (the physical properties and mechanical processes of communicative devices) and *forms of media* (linguistic and visual representations) to analyze the reflexive loop of mediation between the two. Drawing on an extensive array of real and imaginary media including diaries, letters, newspapers, phonographs, telegrams, photography, brain electricity and feminine sentimentality, Ma shows that the discursive forms of media objects animate rather than undermine the materiality of media.

The volume is smartly organized around three communication modes and mediating principles: *ji* 紀 (recordings), *chuan/zhuan* 傳 (transmissions or biographies), and *tong* 通 (interconnectivity). Serving as both verbs and nouns, the three key terms "actively reconstruct what inscriptions, transmissions, and interconnectivity *do*" (207), corresponding to the stone, the female medium and the wireless respectively. Part I (Chapters 1 and 2) analyzes the record-keeping practices (*ji*) of inscription, storage and reproduction in relation to new media technologies. Part III (Chapters 4 and 5) moves away from inscription media and examines the material and cultural manifestations of interconnectivity (*tong*) through telegraph networks and the wireless. Subsumed under *chuan/zhuan*, Part II (Chapter 3) not only explores the idea of feminine sentimentality as a medium that interrupts the dominance of male voices in Parts I and III, but also instantiates that idea of feminine sentiments as an intermediation that also fails to connect the first and the second half of the book.

Chapter 1 takes issue with the claim made by the fin-de-siecle sinologist John Fryer that Chinese learning, like a storage device, records and copies but fails to create. Ma compares the efforts (or the lack thereof) made by three contemporaneous Western diplomats--Guo Songtao, Liu Xihong, and Zheng Deyi--to envision alternative communicative mediums and mediating processes. In Ma's reading of these diplomats' recordings of the mechanics of new audio and visual recording technologies, all induce creative processes of mediation between technical objects and their textual and cultural legibility.

Chapter 2 examines the changing media environment in

semicolonial Shanghai within and without Wu Jianren's *New Story of the Stone* 新石頭記 (1905-1906). The protagonist Jia Baoyu serves as both the curious observer of new media and the stone medium upon which the narration of his time-travel experiences are inscribed, and it therefore complicates the binary between inscriptive media and their discursive significations. The detailed descriptions of documenting, editing, and delivering during his adventure in the Civilized Realm not only imitates the mundane tasks carried out by clerks in late imperial China, but also parallels the reception of Baoyu's stone inscription as a copied and edited manuscript with a title, whereby the content of recording is inseparable from the material infrastructures of recording in fiction and historical reality.

The intermediary chapter reformulates feminine sentimentality as exceeding orthodox codifications of lyricism and emphasizes the incipient gendered consciousness facilitated by new technologies (telegraphy, telephony, photography). Drawing on Huang Zunxian's parting poetry "Modern Parting" 今別離 (*jin bieli*,1899) and female martyr Qiu Jin's "Self-inscription on a Photograph" 自題小照 (*ziti xiaozhao* 1906), Ma upends the masculine construction of female sentimentality for nation-building projects. She renders legible the technical conditions that make possible sentimental longings and shows, in turn, the ways women's poetic renditions of technology heighten the reflexivity between poetic form and technological content.

Chapter 4 juxtaposes the telegraph networks in the late nineteenth century with the transnational circulation of telegram reprints, newspaper articles, photographs renditions representing the crisis of infrastructure breakdowns in the aftermath of the Boxer Rebellion (1899-1901). Ma reads the breakdown of transport and telegraphic communication in tandem with the Boxer's supplementary spiritual media network and shows how telegrams relaying messages about the Boxers' blockage of communication to other parts of the globe paradoxically heightened their own infrastructural presence and mechanical functions. Interconnectivity (*tong*) and blockage—instead of opposing one another—are mutually sustaining, as manifested in media's augmented role in advancing overseas "Chinese" or Sinophone consciousness in the wake of the tumultuous events.

The theme of interconnectivity is carried over in Chapter 5,

which foregrounds brain electricity as a communicative device aspiring for perfect universal connectivity in Xu Nianci's 徐念慈 "New Tales of Mr. Braggadocio" 新法螺先生譚 (1904-1905). The first-person narrator Mr. Braggadocio invents and institutionalizes brain electricity, which then unsettles the divides between body and spirit, the biological and the technical, the individual and the collective. More than a symbol for interconnectivity, brain electricity plays an organizing role in the novel that enacts the production of subjectivities under burgeoning industrial capitalism. As an *ur*-medium that ends all media, it speaks to the late Qing's obsession with political and technological connectivity on the one hand, and the leveling of labor and the totality of social production on the other.

Readers will be pleasantly surprised by Ma's evocation of Chen Qiufan's 陳楸帆 sci-fi *Waste Tide* 荒潮 (2013) in the conclusion. In the vein of cyberpunk, the feminine repossession of media technology (i.e., the female cyborg Xiaomi) testifies to the violence inflicted upon the female body compounded by capital exploits. Xiaomi as an intermediary between the underpaid e-waste works and the privileged classes evokes negative repercussions of a feminist appropriation of media technologies, a theme explored in Chapter 3.

The Stone and the Wireless: Mediating China 1861-1906 excavates a media archaeology of Chinese modernity and offers a much-needed inquiry into the communicative milieu that shaped China. Crucially, rather than writing a story of mediations in the language of Western theories, it aspires to *re*theorize media by attending to the historical specificities of local media cultures and rendering key literary texts in a new light. At times, though, Shaoling Ma's original voice or critique are lost amidst the many, dazzling rehearsals of Western theory. We should also note that Ma's admirable re-conceptualization of mediation occasionally risks overinterpreting literary sources. Nevertheless, Ma's monograph merits a wide readership by scholars and students across Chinese literature and media culture. It will appeal to scholars of comparative studies, as driven by her passionate pursuit to bridge the disciplinary gap between media and communication studies on the one hand and literary studies on the other.

Jiwei Xiao. ***Telling Details: Chinese Fiction, World Literature***. Routledge, 2022. 212p.

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Jiwei Xiao's book is a new addition to the Routledge series: "Literary Criticism and Cultural Theory." The monograph is a fruitful exploration of the novel in Chinese literature and an insightful study of Chinese literature as part of world literature. More specifically, it analyzes the importance of "detail" 細節 (xijie) in fictional narrative. Xiao calls this narrative tradition "*xijie xiaoshuo*" 細節小說 (novel of details), which originated in China in the late 16th century during the Ming Dynasty. The detail in such a narrative work does not play conventional supporting roles to the plot. Such a text "shifts the weight of the narrative from storytelling to scene-making, intricately pivoting away from plot and didacticism towards a new, aesthetically dynamic form. It continues to evolve, to exert a deep influence on Chinese fiction writing and literary imagination in modern and contemporary times" (1). The sensory experiences of seeing, feeling, and experiencing are key elements of these works.

The book starts with an Introduction and is then effectively divided into two parts. Part One: Detail and Difference, is a theoretical, historical, and comparative study of the aesthetics of *xijie xiaoshuo.* Part Two: Fiction of Details, comprises six chapters. Each chapter tackles one important Chinese novel or an important Chinese author. These six chapters treat respectively (1) the late Ming novel *Jin Ping Mei (The Plum in the Golden Vase)*; (2) the writings (essays) of late Ming writer Zhang Dai; (3) the novel *The Sing-song Girls of Shanghai* by Han Bangqing from the late 19th century; (4) Eileen Chang from the 20th century; (5) Shen Congwen from the 20th century; (6) the novels of contemporary writer Jia Pingwa. Overall, Xiao's choice of primary texts and writers is judicious and well made. She offers penetrating, provocative analyses of details in these works. The texts she examines are mostly narrative works. One exception is Zhang Dai who writes essays rather than narrative fiction. Xiao's discussion of details in his writings is interesting and informative. However, it is not clear why a full chapter is devoted to an essayist in a book on the "novel of details."

Although the book is a study of Chinese narrative literature from the early modern period to the present time, it also makes a more general contribution to relevant scholarship in comparative literature and world literature. The author makes numerous comparisons between the East and the West. She discusses the similarities and differences in ideas and literary conventions among world cultures such as China, Japan, and Europe. She weighs in on the ideas of influential Western scholars such as Erich Auerbach, Roland Barthes, and Fredric Jameson for their relevance to the Chinese literary tradition.

Details alone do not account for the emergence of the modern novel. One can think of numerous examples of world literature full of abundant descriptive details, such as the shield of Achilles in Book 18 of Homer's *Iliad*, or the elevated Chinese genre of rhapsody 賦 (*fu*) which gives exhaustive descriptions of objects, animals, and capital cities. Xiao is prescient in pointing out the treatment of the quotidian, the everyday, and the humble, and the mixture of the high and the low in the evolution of realist poetics.

The book is an illuminating study in many ways, but there are areas that could improve and might need more clarification. It is one thing to analyze the significance of "detail" (*xijie*) in the modern novel. It is another thing to establish a literary convention called "*xijie xiaoshuo*" in China. Xiao writes: "I use a familiar but fuzzy Chinese term, *xijie xiaoshuo*" (1); "*Xijie xiaoshuo* is less a fictional genre than a literary phenomenon" (2); and "*Xijie xiaoshuo* has been used as a loose term to refer to any detail-rich novel. It has never been taken seriously in literary criticism" (35). The author does not point to or cite any original Chinese usage, discussion, or scholarship surrounding the notion of *xijie xiaoshuo*. When, where, and how does the term first appear? The reader has no idea how this phrase has been defined and used over the years before witnessing the radical adoption of such a term in this English-language publication. If the novel of details has been intrinsically important in the evolution of a modern narrative sensibility, the final sentence of the book is puzzling: "the novel of details, or *xijie xiaoshuo*, has become the poetry of Chinese modernity" (199). The genre of poetry is abruptly brought up to conclude a book on narrative.

Despite the above minor caveats, the book offers a refreshing angle in the study of narrative, modernity, and Chinese literature.

The book is meticulously edited and elegantly written. More broadly, it makes a timely, intriguing, and invigorating contribution to literary criticism and cultural theory in a global frame.

Ping Zhu and Hui Faye Xiao, editors. ***Feminisms with Chinese Characteristics***. Syracuse UP, 2021. 408p.

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Feminisms with Chinese Characteristics paints a vivid, capacious, and often contentious picture of Chinese feminisms in the modern and contemporary periods. It does not describe different waves of feminisms as static aggregates but as a shifting and entangled web of interrelations and calls for a method of plurality. The substantial critical introduction elucidates the editors' central vision. Plurality is theorized as not "fragmented strategies" but "systematic thinking" (2). By juxtaposing feminisms with Chinese characteristics, the volume uses the multitude of feminisms to dismantle the binary structures underlying the normative category of Chinese characteristics in different historical and political times. Two salient and interrelated themes are accentuated. First, the genealogy of Chinese feminisms is inseparable from the paradigmatic and layered transformations of modern China. Chinese feminisms have emerged at different moments and are invariably a key site of contention, conflict, or negotiation that has conditioned political, social, and cultural developments. Chinese feminisms in their plural manifestations, early nationalist feminism, state feminism, socialist feminism, or NGOization of feminism, are enmeshed with modernity, national revolution, nation building, and politics in the age of globalization, such as the rise of New Left thinking in response to neoliberalism, circulation of transnational capital, or the decolonization of knowledge in a global context. Second, there exists nonetheless a concrete thread to this assemblage of diverse feminist articulations. This book is a well-argued case for restoring political potential of feminisms and reconciling Marxism and feminism at large. In many ways, it is a broad inquiry into dynamics of power. Early feminist He-Yin Zhen's enlargement of gender beyond a male-

female binary into power configurations remains deeply relevant to today's discussion. Chinese feminisms have bloomed because of, and are limited by, dominant structures, institutional forces, and ideologies. The volume as a whole resounds in nuancing gender and reintroducing class as a critical lens in understanding it.

This composite of articles, a speech, and interviews brings together major scholars and activists in multiple disciplines and from diverse regions, illuminating not only the plurality of Chinese feminisms but how they are "an active component of transnational feminisms in the age of globalization" (4). The opening chapter by Nicola Spakowski examines theory building of Chinese feminism, privileging not the concepts that originate in the West, but the dynamic and discursive local contexts and influences. Spakowski presents a full spectrum of responses to the importation of gender, charts its two extremes of universalist and particularistic positions, and concurs with the "semi-stable approaches" that "preserve contradictions" (62). Li Xiaojiang's chapter, a speech given in Madrid, complicates the issue of equality by foregrounding its "different causes" and "different origins" (66). Chinese revolution has legitimized gender equality and at the same time subjected women to the nation-state. Equality is relational to "the entire reality" and takes on shifting meanings such as "shedding blood together" (70). Women's liberation may also mask the more pressing issue such as the rural-urban divide. Echoing the first chapter, Li questions the smooth theory transfers between the West and China. Xue Pingzhong's chapter explores questions of class and gender through comparing films across cultural contexts of China and India and analyzing the phenomena of Fan Yusu and Ni Hongmei. Xue shows that class characteristics are more than a legacy of women's liberation and remain central to gender issues of post-revolutionary China. Dai Jinghua's interview, the last entry of the first section, surrounds the specter of polygamy in contemporary China. Dai discusses how the attributed cause of New Confucianism is ineffective because "tradition cannot be reanimated" (104). She warns against contemporary mass psychology and diagnoses that it is the internal logic of capital that has "summoned and resurrected the specter of polygamy" (106). Dai argues that the 1960s remain an exception and valuable legacy. She also discusses how the "internal transformation," women happily returning

to the home, is more of a "structural violence" to gender equality than "outright patriarchal chauvinism" (111). The second section, "Chinese Feminism on the Ground," features three feminist activists/scholars. Wang Zhen's chapter is a comprehensive study of the continuities and discontinuities of Chinese feminist struggles and their shifting political and cultural environments. One insight is Wang's illustration of how the conventional treatment of the socialist state as a singular entity has eclipsed state feminists' skillful means of camouflaging and actualizing feminist visions within Party language and the socialist state. Li Jun takes issue with how Chinese male dominant liberals, unlike the May Fourth generation of intellectual elites who were allies of feminist movements, are complicit with and beneficiaries of patriarchal hierarchies. Ke Qianting considers the Chinese localization of *The Vagina Monologues* and shows how young Chinese feminists creatively adapted Eve Ensler's script to address local concerns and needs. Chinese writer Wang Anyi's interview, the opening entry of the last section, voices Wang's strong and repeated rejection of being seen as a feminist. Wang speaks of the "balanced ecology" of men and women and emphasizes organic demand of aesthetics (206). Wang also questions what feminist activists prescribe to be correct articulations of women. Drawing on Michael Hardt's conception of affective labor, Ping Zhu's essay reads Wang Anyi's novel *Fu Ping* and shows how Wang carves out a different space in Shanghai that is feminine, connected, non-consumerist, nurtured by unproductive and aesthetic labor of working women and uncontainable by either socialist or capitalist narratives. Hui Faye Xiao's chapter reads Fan Yusu's autobiographical writings not as a singular phenomenon but an intersectional one. Hui investigates "synchronous and diachronous links" and shows how Fan's writings are deeply related to both feminist literary traditions and local networks of grass-roots literary practices (244). A case study of Jiang Jie's massive sculpture installation *Over 1.5 Tons,* Shuqin Cui's chapter provides a psychoanalytically inflected reading of Jiang's art as a counter-monument and studies contemporary Chinese art through transnational and gendered lenses. In the last chapter, Gina Marchetti emphasizes the unique history and politics of Hong Kong and the diversity of Hong Kong female filmmakers' political interests that may concern or transcend issues of the Hong Kong Special Administrative

Region. In addition to the plurality and transnational nature of Hong Kong feminisms, Marchetti also addresses "deep political fissures" within Hong Kong feminisms in their contrasting positions to Beijing (302).

The wide range of positions and diverse feminist articulations are illuminated by a unifying vision of creating possibilities and imagining different worlds. *Feminisms with Chinese Characteristics* will be an essential and fruitful reading for students and scholars interested in China, Chinese women, methods of feminism from a transnational perspective, politics of translation, and globalization.

Ping Zhu, Zhuoyi Wang, and Jason McGrath, editors. ***Maoist Laughter***. Hong Kong UP, 2019. 224p.

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In the beginning of *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852), Karl Marx adds to G. W. F. Hegel's remarks that history always appears twice: "the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce." Could it be tragedy and farce at the same time?

With the trademark smiley faces of Chinese artist Yue Minjun's 岳敏君 hilarious acrylic pink painting *The Sun* (*Taiyang* 太陽, 2000) as its cover image, *Maoist Laughter* is a groundbreaking addition to laughology, after similar works like *Not Just a Laughing Matter: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Political Humor in China*, coedited by King-fai Tam and Sharon R. Wesoky (Singapore: Springer, 2018). The new publication's ten essays represent the most recent American and British studies of laughter in modern and contemporary Chinese literature, culture, cinema, dance, and theater.

Zhu's introduction begins by discussing the healing effects of laughter, arguing that the Mao era actually "institutionalized laughter as a social practice and an ideological discourse" (1). Such "socialist laughter" had a "class identification function" (5) and "was closely intertwined with the production of Maoist discourse" (7). Dating the genealogy of Maoist laughter back to the Yan'an period (1935-1948) when Mao Zedong advocated Lu Xun's 魯迅 (1881-1936)

satirical essays and transformed the libidinal energies of humor into the revolutionary, militant spirit, Zhu traces the regulation of cartoons and comedies to the time of turmoil from the 1940s through 1976. Her claim that laughter marked the end of the Mao era's legitimacy and the beginning of "a new historical force" (12) is quite unclear and it is uncertain whether "Maoist laughter" is limited only to its historical context or a specter that is still haunting post-Mao China.

The volume is divided into three parts: "Utopian Laughter," "Intermedial Laughter," and "Laughter and Language." Based on Zygmunt Bauman's assertation of socialism as an "active utopia," Zhu suggests that utopian laughter is "a revolutionary apparatus" for "a collective dream" (12). In the two case studies of film comedies, Wang Jiayi's 王家乙 *Five Golden Flowers* (*Wu duo jinhua* 五朵金花, 1959) and Guo Wei's 郭維 *Happily Ever After* (*Hua hao yue yuan* 花好月圓, 1957) based on Zhao Shuli's 趙樹理 novel *Sanliwan Village* (*Sanliwan* 三里灣, 1955), Ban Wang observes in the former that eulogistic and transethnic laughter was essential to the socialist agenda of national unity with ethnic minorities, while Charles A. Laughlin addresses the problem of socialist leisure in the latter where "no rigid boundaries in space or time between physical labor and rest and relaxation" exist (52). Using cross-cultural comparison with the "joke rite" found in post-WWII US sitcoms and "interracial buddy film" (67, 69), Emily Wilcox points out the "unpredictable, surprising, and rebellious" (64) potential represented by the choreography underneath the joke pattern of "conformist humor" (57) in the Chinese military dance "Laundry Song" ("Xi yi ge" 洗衣歌, 1964), created to promote Han-Tibetan and soldier-civilian harmony after the 1959 Tibetan uprising.

In the second section, Xiaoning Lu demonstrates how the film *Wandering in the Zoo, Awaking from a Dream* (*You yuan jing meng* 遊園驚夢, 1956) innovated the interplay between cinema and Hou Baolin's 侯寶林 *xiangsheng* 相聲 or "cross-talk" to produce "sociopolitically appropriate laughter"—even though Hou himself "named satire as the first and most important element in the humor of a good *xiangsheng* piece" (73, 75n)—before the suspension of film comedy projects during the Anti-Rightist Campaign (1957-59). Yun Zhu's chapter illustrates how Yang Xiaozhong's 楊小仲 1963 screen adaptation of Zhang Tianyi's 張天翼 novella "The Magic Gourd" ("Bao hulu

de mimi" 寶葫蘆的秘密, 1958) played between "satire" (*fengci* 諷刺) and "extolment" (*gesong* 歌頌) in the aftermath of the hyperbolic Great Leap Forward (1958-60) that resembled the young protagonist's unrealistic ambitions. Then Li Guo investigates how adaptations between traditional *pingtan* 評彈 storytelling, film, folk performances, and radio-broadcast songs negotiated between individuals and the nation-state through vernacularization and redefinition of "'laughter' as an ideological act" with class consciousness (108).

The final four essays explore laughter as a popular language. John A. Crespi studies, in terms of W. J. T. Mitchell's ideas of the "imagetext" and "metapicture" (126-27), how the political and educational goals of mass mobilization were achieved through the visual language of the satire pictorial *Cartoon* (*Manhua yuekan* 漫畫月刊, 1950-52). Roy Chan examines the embedment of "radical democracy" (147, 149, 154) in the use of humor as a metapragmatic language in Zhao Shuli's "The Rhymes of Li Youcai" ("Li Youcai banhua" 李有才板話, 1943) and "The Marriage of Little Erhei" ("Xiao Erhei jiehun" 小二黑結婚, 1943). Ping Zhu then analyzes socialist Shanghainese farce (*huajixi* 滑稽戲) in light of Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the heteroglossia and in the context of Maoist linguistic reform. Finally, Laurence Coderre focuses on the performance of translingual failure found in Ma Ji's 馬季 *xiangsheng* "Ode to Friendship" ("Youyi song" 友誼頌, 1973), a piece about the Tanzania-Zambia Railway project, whose "deployment of nonsense as laugh lines undermines the ideological status of action" (195).

"Laughter" is therefore diversely seen as a physical and psychological reaction to amusement, comedy, entertainment, farce, fun, happiness, humor, irony, joke, mockery, nonsense, parody, playfulness, sarcasm, wit, etc. The volume as a whole showcases how laughter was managed and manipulated in Mao's China, yet the chapters appear to complement and contradict one another. For instance, while Ban Wang and Laughlin highlight eulogistic film comedies in their respective essays, Xiaoning Lu notes that film comedy "was suppressed" during the period (78n). Moreover, core concepts such as "radical democracy" are not clearly defined. The bibliography at the end of the book includes all Chinese references with traditional characters, which, however, do not appear in the footnotes. As an edited volume of chapters by ten different contributors, stylistic inconsistencies and minor mistakes are

found throughout the text and notes. For instance, Chinese characters are provided arbitrarily; uppercase and lowercase are employed capriciously in certain *pinyin* romanizations; some *pinyin* and magazine titles are set in Roman type instead of italics; and romanization of the seventeenth-century playwright Tang Xianzu 湯顯祖 is misspelled (81). Finally, the index would be more useful had it included key words such as "humor" and "nonsense." Notwithstanding, this collective effort unveils the significance, subtlety, and complexity of the (un) forgotten laughter in the tragic time.