

mode of representation. In the following chapters, where individual television dramas are discussed, Zhong still does not explain clearly what the characteristics of this melodramatic representation are and how exactly it manifests itself in different subgenres. The most relevant discussion of the melodramatic mode only comes in the last chapter, a unique but insightful piece where Zhong examines the theme songs composed for television dramas, and in particular their lyrics. Zhong's argument that at a deep level the pathos, emotions and sentiments in these songs stem from and reveal social tensions, cultural uncertainties and moral ambiguities would have gained more power if she had related this argument to her earlier discussion of narrative patterns, representation of characters and the aesthetic style of Chinese television dramas as a whole.

The book's strength, beside its detailed and sophisticated textual analysis, is that Zhong's broad knowledge of Chinese culture and intellectual history enable her to contextualize these televisual discourses within their cultural and historical background. She manages to tease out the rich but often hidden meanings of television texts. For example, when discussing youth drama, Zhong first traces the changing meaning of youth and youth-related issues through the major historical periods of the 20th century, enabling her to highlight the fact that the desire for meaning in these dramas indicates an ideological ambiguity. Similarly, in Chapter 5, by comparing the televisual discourse of happiness in TV dramas by women in the new millennium to that in Chinese women's literature of the early 1980s, Zhong makes clear how TV dramas represent the impact of consumer capitalism on women's sense of self and self-worth, and the continuing lure of modernity for Chinese women.

While Zhong's nuanced analysis of the ambivalence and complexity of TV drama is convincing in justifying treating this mainstream cultural form seriously, her book remains a "personal" reading in the tradition of literary criticism of texts. There is an almost total absence of audience studies in the form of receiving rates, fan responses or critical reviews of the TV dramas (the only exception being some brief and general comments in Chapter 4 about the reception of *Soldier Be Ready*). Since TV drama is a typical mass cultural form and its multiple uncertain meanings are often generated through the process of reception, a more reception-oriented discourse analysis might have provided deeper insights into the social meanings of Chinese TV drama.

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Art in Turmoil: The Chinese Cultural Revolution 1966–76, edited by Richard King. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2010. xii + 282 pp. HK\$195.00/US\$28.00 (paperback).

The growing critical importance and market status of Chinese art makes this multi-disciplinary scholarly examination of the complex ties between art and

society in the modern and contemporary periods a valuable contribution to our understanding of contemporary China. *Art in Turmoil: The Chinese Cultural Revolution, 1966-76*, edited by Richard King, is a survey of an important period in the history of Chinese art and provides rich empirical accounts that argue for the continuing relevance of the Cultural Revolution to artistic practices, identities and meanings during the reform era. Art specialists will be gratified by the expert attention to the form and content of the iconic art works and performances examined in this work, while researchers of Chinese history and society will appreciate the discussion of how politically-motivated efforts by the leadership to control the arts in the mid-1960s continue to influence artistic production and reception today.

The introductory chapter by Richard King and Jan Walls promises “nine new takes” (p. 21) by artists and scholars analyzing the changing meanings of Cultural Revolution artifacts over the past forty years. In this effort, the book generally delivers. King and Walls argue that national and local leaders, jockeying for political supremacy, launched an unprecedented “revolution in the arts” (p. 6) exemplified by Jiang Qing’s efforts to transform key operas and ballets into revolutionary model works. The book further analyzes the linkages bridging three benchmark periods in art–society relations: the 1942 Yan’an Talks, the Cultural Revolution decade and the reform era since 1978. This broader framework incorporates historic, thematic and political insights to account for the plural political, commercial, nostalgic and ironic meanings now associated with Cultural Revolutionary art.

Part I, “Artists and the State”, juxtaposes two perspectives on the use of art as a political and personal weapon. Chapter 1, by art historian Julia F. Andrews, investigates the institutional roots and consequences of the Cultural Revolution, which, she argues, resulted in a narrowly construed definition of aesthetic correctness as structured by the mandate of “serving the people”. In Chapter 2, the tension between top-down directives and individual artistic interpretation is explored by Shelley Drake Hawks, who argues that, while much has been written on the appropriation of art as a tool by the state, little attention has been paid to the use of art as a tool of resistance to oppression. Her account of the artist and poet Shi Lu provides a compelling interpretation of how he channeled Confucian thought in his work as a “weapon of spiritual resistance” (p. 60) to deal with the collapse of his personal faith in Mao, and thereby redefined notions of artistic agency and individual personhood.

In Part II, “Artists Remember: Two Memoirs”, artist and curator Shengtian Zheng (Chapter 3) and artist Gu Xiong (Chapter 4) personalize their descriptions of political confinement and rehabilitation (Zheng) and re-education in the countryside (Gu) during their youth. Zheng’s account of his unflinching belief in Maoist ideology at the height of the Red Guard phase of the Cultural Revolution (“Everything Mao said sounded so right to me”, p. 101) goes some way to demonstrating the interpenetration of art, psychology, violence and politics in those days. Gu’s essay is generously illustrated with pencil and ink drawings and

inscriptions of his experiences as a sent-down youth. His sketches, he informs us, served as his only means of coping with the vacuity of his everyday existence and reaching out to the outside world. While the anecdotes presented in these two essays speak to the cultural contradictions of balancing political imperatives against individual expressivity, I occasionally wished for more explicit analyses of the linkages to broader historical processes shaping artistic identities during this period.

Part III, “Meanings Then and Now”, revisits the question of how cultural survival and political economic change are intertwined. Britta Erickson’s chapter traces the multiple incarnations and changing discourses surrounding the significance of the “model” 1965 sculptural installation, *The Rent Collection Courtyard*, after it was reproduced and exhibited by contemporary artist Cai Guoqiang to a Western art audience in 1999. Accusations by Chinese art critics of selling out Chinese culture for commercial ends and “neo-colonial” interests (p. 133) show that, while audience responses may be “unconstrained” (p. 123) by comparison to the past, they are still actively influenced by concerns over national sovereignty. In Chapter 6, Ralph Croizier’s in-depth analysis of Hu Xian peasant paintings attributes their endurance to artists’ pragmatic blending of political correctness and folk experimentation during the Cultural Revolution and willingness to capitalize on nostalgic forms in the international market.

Finally, Part IV, “Beyond the Visual Arts”, turns to performance art as a site of contentious meaning-making. In Chapter 7, Paul Clark attacks the myth of a passive, mass audience being strong-armed by an authoritarian regime into ingesting a finite number of model theatrical works during the Cultural Revolution. Evidence of a widespread “mass cynicism” (p. 185) meant that cultural producers could not take the success of their operas for granted, in spite of their central role in nation-building exercises. In her reading of two model ballets, Bai Di asks in Chapter 8 how we can move beyond viewing these works as simply another example of “propaganda”. She suggests that, besides defending the virtues of class struggle, the ballets ushered in a novel discourse of women’s liberation from feudal familial constraints. Richard King’s concluding chapter investigates the use of a “vocabulary of battle” (p. 213) in the construction of archetypal Communist heroes across three artistic genres. However, he also shows the limitations of these “fantasy” heroes in reaching audiences once the Cultural Revolution reached its finale.

If there is a criticism that one can level at this book, it is that the chapters do not collectively make any significant theoretical or methodological breakthroughs in thinking about the art of the Cultural Revolution. However, this is not an explicit goal of the book, and there is a role for richly illustrated and well-documented studies to further our understanding of a critical era, as well as to stimulate new thinking about the survival of artistic forms and how they set the stage for the emergence of alternative notions of art and identity.

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