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*Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* publishes scholarly essays on all aspects of the culture of twentieth-century China, including literature, film, television, performing and visual arts, architecture, popular culture, material and print cultures. The journal seeks essays written in a style that is comprehensible to non-specialists in other fields and disciplines, but that at the same time present theoretically-informed and original research. The journal is also committed to publishing translations of research by scholars working primarily in the Chinese language. Submissions should be sent to the Editor. All book reviews are published online. All correspondence concerning book reviews should be directed to the appropriate Book Review Editor.

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## Editor's Note

This is my final editor's note: after twenty-two years, I am stepping down from the editorship of *MCLC*. I am thrilled to announce that a two-person editorial team—Natascha Gentz and Christopher Rosenmeier, both of Edinburgh University—will officially take over beginning with the fall 2021 issue, although as I write they have already begun to process new submissions. Professor Gentz has published extensively, both in German and English, on Chinese drama and on journalism and print culture in the late Qing and early Republic. For his part, Professor Rosenmeier specializes in the fiction of the new sensationist writers of the 1930s, but he has also published a book on the more popular fare of Xu Xu and Wumingshi. With these two scholars at the helm, *MCLC* is in excellent hands. We will also be adding several scholars to the editorial board: Rossella Ferrari, Michael Gibbs Hill, Charles Laughlin, Bingchun Meng, Barbara Mittler, Carlos Rojas, and Nicolai Volland. A hearty welcome to them.

The academic life does not always come with a tangible sense of accomplishment. We toil alone, publish articles and books, and then wonder if anyone actually reads them or whether they are making any kind of impact. My view of what "making a contribution" means has always been a modest one: each in our own ways, we contribute to filling in the picture of, say, a literary text, a film, a writer's life, a filmmaker, a historical period, etc. Paradigm-shifting scholarship is rare, and most of us just plug away in our specialized bailiwicks in the hopes that we might reach the ears of someone who "knows the sound" (*zhiyin*) and appreciates and

cares about the music we make. Still, I have often been nagged by a sense of doubt about the value of what I have done, including editing this journal. At a dinner celebrating the conclusion of a conference in Edinburgh a few years ago, however, several now established senior scholars reminded me that their very first published articles had appeared in *MCLC*, and they told me how instrumental the journal had been in advancing their careers. But I also began to take note of the increasing number of essays from *MCLC* that were listed in the bibliographies of published scholarly works, as well as of the numerous times (around 100, by my count) *MCLC* essays have been reprinted in books. I came to realize that people are indeed reading our essays and engaging with them in their own work, which is immensely gratifying and makes it all worthwhile.

Over the years of editing the journal, I have seen dramatic changes in our field. On the mundane level, the quality and quantity of submissions has increased steadily, suggesting a scholarly community that was growing stronger and healthier as it aged. We've also seen an increase in submissions (and publications) by scholars who earned their degrees from and hold academic positions in Sinosphere universities. On a broader level, the journal reflects and has actively contributed to some key intellectual transformations in our field. Perhaps the most salient is the cultural studies paradigm and its legitimizing of the study of all facets of culture, from elite literature to cartoons, from auteur film to popular genre film, from media studies to architecture and visual art. *MCLC* has contributed, I hope, in some way to pushing out the edges of our field to accommodate an array of topics that a generation ago might have seemed trivial or unbecoming of scholarly scrutiny. A second tectonic shift in our field has been "alternative modernities" and its unearthing of facets of literature and culture repressed because of various political agendas—the May Fourth downplaying of the late Qing's contribution to cultural modernity; the Communist suppression of, well, so many forms of culture that did not conform to its narrow prescriptions; and the post-Mao erasure of the

Cultural Revolution. With the hardening of the political situation in the PRC today and the effect it appears to be having on Chinese universities and academic life there, the work we do in alternative modernities is all that much more important. A third obvious paradigm has been the transnational/Sinophone turn. *MCLC* has published numerous essays that break with conventional nation-state approaches to literary history and that seek to “world” Chinese literature.

These scholarly trends have been expressed through our many special issues guest-edited by leading scholars in the field: Reportage and Its Contemporary Variations (Charles Laughlin and Li Guo); Chinese Literature as World Literature (Yingjin Zhang and Kuei-fen Chiu); Hong Shen and the Modern Mediasphere in Republican China (Siyuan Liu and Xiaomei Chen); Disappearance of the Political Mass in Contemporary China (Anup Grewal and Tie Xiao); Discourses of Disease (Carlos Rojas); Comic Visions of Modern China (Christopher Rea and Nicolai Volland); Modernisms’ Chinas (Eric Hayot); Chinese Culture in Inter-Asia (Laikwan Pang and Kwai-Cheung Lo); Taiwan Film (Yomi Braester and Nicole Huang); Gao Xingjian (me); Poetry (Michelle Yeh); Visual Culture and Memory in Modern China (Julia F. Andrews and Xiaomei Chen). I am grateful to all of these scholars for helping to make *MCLC* the cutting-edge journal we like to think we are.

When I took over editorship in 1999, the journal had, of course, no digital presence. Over time, we developed an extensive website that has become, I like to think, something of a home for a community of scholars in our field. In addition to its blog and bibliographies, the *MCLC* Resource Center publishes online essays and book reviews. Even as I leave the editing of the print journal in the capable hands of Natascha Gentz and Christopher Rosenmeier, I will continue on as “web editor,” overseeing the publication of book reviews, essays, and translations, and updating the bibliographies. With regard to book reviews, I am pleased to announce that Michael Gibbs Hill will be taking over from Michael Berry the position of translation/translation studies book review editor.

The present issue of the journal, like most of the general issues we have published over the years, reflects the diverse foci of our field in the age of cultural studies. Bozhou Men presents a fascinating account of the social position of “prostitutes” who worked the “roof gardens” of the major department stores in Republican-era Shanghai. These prostitutes, who were not hired directly by the department stores, served patrons tea and snacks, but they also plied their own trade among the well-heeled clientele. Bozhou Men shows that prostitutes were agents in the shaping of their own lives, not just passive victims or social pariahs, which is how they were usually portrayed in the hyperactive Shanghai media of the day.

Shuk Man Leung introduces the figure of Lü Da, a writer for the Hong Kong-based but mainland-affiliated newspaper *Wen Wei Po* (Wen-hui bao) in the 1960s. Leung focuses on this writer’s negotiation between the Cultural Revolution discourse and local Hong Kong socio-economic conditions. According to Leung’s analysis, Lü Da “localized” the Cultural Revolution to make it palatable to a Hong Kong readership. His writings in *Wen Wei Po* also point to the importance of a leftwing thread in the history of Hong Kong literature, which has conventionally been characterized as almost exclusively in the modernist mode.

Qiu Jing investigates the history of an Yi poetry movement and its use of poetry for the expression of an Yi ethnic identity, sometimes in the Yi language but more often than not in Chinese. Qiu delves into the early history of the movement in the 1980s, with a particular focus on a group of Yi students studying at Chengdu’s Southwest University of Nationalities, and the journals they edited to promote Yi poetry and the literary tropes used by some of its main practitioners—Jidi Majia, Aku Wuwu, and others. Qiu also traces a historical shift in representations of “Yi-ness” from cultural purity to a more inclusive notion of the diversity and heterogeneity of Yi experience.

Hang Tu writes on the “left melancholy” of Taiwan writer Chen Yingzhen and the mainland writer Wang Anyi. Chen was a socialist who pro-

moted reunification with the mainland, but whose fiction is often despairing about the possibility of resurrecting the left in a Taiwan dominated first by the Nationalists during the Cold War and then by a neoliberal ethos. Wang Anyi, who lived through the excesses of the Cultural Revolution and became disillusioned with the radical leftist project, explores in her writing the legacy of the Maoist past. The pairing of these two writers is not just some fanciful scholarly conjecture on Hang Tu's part: the two writers met in 1983 at the Iowa International Writing Program, where they developed a mutual admiration and a friendship, though one tinged by their radically different politics. Juxtaposing Chen and Wang brings to the fore mirrored forms of "left melancholy" by writers of different literary styles and historical experiences.

In his essay, Philip Marzluf presents a reading of Jiang Rong's 2004 novel *Wolf Totem* from the perspective of travel literature, in particular Western travel accounts about Mongolia. Like Western travel writers before him, Jiang Rong essentializes Mongolians and Mongolian culture as pure, primitive, and masculine, in contrast to a corrupted and feminized Han Chinese self. Marzluf's reading marks an important alternative to prevailing environmental interpretations of the novel.

Kejun Xu argues in her essay for the heterogeneity of wartime literature in occupied China by analyzing works of three different writers with three different styles and politics: Yuan Xi, who lived and wrote in occupied Beijing, adopted a vaguely modernist aesthetic to counter the Pan-Asianism promoted by the Japanese propaganda machine; Tang Tao, who was in Shanghai, was explicitly political in his promotion of national resistance; and Jue Qing, mostly living in Manchukuo, eschewed politics in favor of a decadent style tinged with a Japanese aesthetic sensibility. Xu complicates our understanding of literature written under the constraints of colonial oppression.

Mei Yang analyzes "the screen presence of poetry" in three mainland Chinese films made in the new millennium: Jia Zhangke's *24 City*, Chai



Chunya's *Four Ways to Die in My Hometown*, and Bi Gan's *Kaili Blues*. The films vary in how they incorporate poetry into the cinematic language. The first adds texts on-screen of a variety of poems to underline certain themes in the film and to serve as transitions from section to section. The second includes a "lunatic poet," a character whose laments for the fallen state of the world serve as a thematic mainstay for the film. In the third, the main character recites poems at key moments in the film narrative. As a whole, the films demonstrate a faith in the power of poetic language to forge links between past and present, self and others. In their use of poetry, the films also eschew narrative linearity and the ideologies it is often based on.

I would like to thank the Department of East Asian Languages and Literatures and the East Asian Studies Center at The Ohio State University for their generous long-term support of the journal. Over the past twenty-two years, I have been fortunate to have had numerous graduate student assistants who have done tremendous work keeping things running smoothly: Thomas Chan, Brian Bare, Jeanne Tao, Ying Bao, Timothy Thurston, Qiong Yang, Mario De Grandis, and Jennifer Nunes. I am extraordinarily grateful for their assistance and good cheer. Dan O'Dair has been the journal's art director since I took over the editorship from Howard Goldblatt in 1999. Dan designed our logo and every single issue of the journal from then till now. He steadfastly stuck with *MCLC*, even as he took up a career in the film industry in California. Similarly, our copy editor, Melissa Gruzs, has stayed with us since 1999 and has done much to make *MCLC* essays clear and readable. My thanks also to Lauren Barrett of Foreign Language Publications for dealing with journal-related budgetary issues.

I would also like to thank the many, many scholars who have served as external reviewers of submissions over the years. This work goes largely unrecognized, but it is an invaluable part of the peer review process, which is key to producing scholarly excellence. If *MCLC* has published

excellent scholarship, it is due in large part to the sage advice and recommendations of these reviewers. Finally, to the members of the *MCLC* editorial board, I extend my sincere gratitude for your counsel. There are things about editing a journal that I will not miss, but I will sorely miss the community of scholars it takes to produce something excellent.

***Kirk A. Denton***

***Editor***