

## Editors' Note

As readers of *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture*, we trust you will join us in congratulating and thanking Kirk A. Denton for the tremendous job he has done during his editorship. Over twenty years, he has helped support the field of modern Chinese cultural studies, and we are grateful that he will continue to do so in running the MCLC website, including its review section. This issue is transitional, as Kirk still selected the articles for inclusion and shepherded them through peer review before handing over to us.

As the incoming editors of MCLC, we are fully aware of the expectations of the field resting upon us as we take on this job. The journal is essential to us all and comes with a history now approaching half a century. Looking at the distinguished scholars who have served as editors before us—not only Kirk, but also Howard Goldblatt, Ted Hutters, and more—we are honored to have been entrusted with the journal's care. We will strive to maintain their high standards and MCLC's reputation as a leading outlet for compelling new research.

When Kirk started in 1999 and gave the journal its current name, MCLC was the only publication of its kind. In the intervening years, other academic journals and online publications have appeared, focusing on various aspects of Chinese literature, culture, and film studies. Scholars today have several options in considering where and how to publish their work. Equally importantly, far more Chinese literature has become available in translation, and films have increasingly transitioned from arthouse cinema to popular blockbusters. As a result, the study of Chinese culture has expanded beyond Chinese studies to many other academic fields. Chinese culture is everywhere.

It is the diversity of scholarship and globalization of Chinese culture that still give MCLC a unique role to play in covering its field as broadly

as possible, spanning literature, architecture, music, design, performance, print culture, media, folk art, etc. It is this encompassing scope, both thematically and geographically, that lets the journal's readers trace and juxtapose the various elements of the ever-changing Chinese cultural landscape. As editors, we look forward to supporting the journal's contributors, both new and established, in presenting their work across this full range of topics. And as political clouds increasingly cast their shadows across our field once again, we believe that MCLC's role in presenting nuanced research remains as important as ever.

MCLC's Editorial Board will be a great help to us, and we are grateful that Kirk is willing to join it. We are also happy to be able to welcome several new members: Meng Bingchun (LSE), Rossella Ferrari (Vienna), Charles Laughlin (Virginia), Barbara Mittler (Heidelberg), Carlos Rojas (Duke), and Nicolai Volland (Penn State). Together with the current Board, their expertise and experience will help support MCLC in future years.

Starting from Volume 34 in 2022, MCLC will be published by Edinburgh University Press. This will lead to several changes, including new digital subscription options, color images online, and an online repository alongside JSTOR. Unfortunately, subscriptions cannot carry over, so we encourage current and potential future subscribers to check the information and pricing online: <https://www.eupublishing.com/loi/mclc>.

For authors submitting papers, there will be some minor updates to the journal's style guide. Details can be found at the link above and at the journal's online home at OSU: <https://u.osu.edu/mclc/journal/submissions/>

The articles in this issue cover a remarkable range of materials and topics, showing the diversity of research covered:

Anatoly Detwyler presents a richly illustrated study of how data, diagrams, and quantitative analysis were developed to analyze literature from the late Qing to the 1930s. Well before the advent of "digital humanities," scholars like Zhang Yaoxiang developed novel methods of

analysis and visual illustration of data, attempting to bring scientific rigor and objectivity to the task.

Moving on to avant-garde abstract art, Yiqing Li delves into the heated debates around this style in the 1980s, showing how non-figurative art gradually won wider acceptance despite initial setbacks. Intellectuals, artists, various institutions, and political views all struggled to represent and frame the discourse on an art style that inevitably was seen through the lenses of the politics of the day.

Yuanhang Liu and Michael Seats analyze fiction reflecting the experiences of elderly college-educated women: Shen Rong's *At Old Age* and Yan Yan's *The Aunt's Postmodern Life*. They present the debate on how such women in China tend to be overlooked in both literature and culture and examine to what extent such literary works might be seen as a counter-discourse, reflecting the experiences of this marginalized group and giving them a distinct voice in the post-reform era.

Amy Xiaofan Li looks at Xi Xi's essays, rather than her more famous fiction, demonstrating how these works are often playful, or ludic, in creatively juxtaposing various material and artistic elements in surprising and clever ways, such as incorporating teddy bears and collages into her discussions of history, legends, and fiction. We refer readers to the image of Zhuangzi as a teddy bear with a butterfly perched upon his head on p. 158.

That image conveniently leads to Jannis Jizhou Chen's study of how short stories by three different authors all find intense spiritual or religious significance in the relationships between humans and animals. The authors are of different religious and ethnic backgrounds, but they still share common ground in this search for the sacred, which Chen analyzes through the notion of *ling*, the numinous.

Wai-Siam Hee engages with the contentious debate about the Chinese diaspora in Malaysian culture and history, focusing on the views of Ng Kim Chew and how they compare with the opposing views of Shih



Shu-mei, who has written arguments against diaspora. He traces how Ng's statements and understanding of ethnic relations reflect a certain discourse about the Chinese Malayan people. The study presents a sharp critique of Ng's statements and works that is sure to have an impact on current debates on Chinese diaspora studies.

Spanning across centuries and national boundaries—from analytical to playful, from political to religious, from social to ethnic, from utilitarian to avant-garde—the articles of this issue jointly exemplify the journal's breadth and tremendous scope. We hope you enjoy reading it and look forward to showing you MCLC's next steps in 2022.

*Natascha Gentz and Christopher Rosenmeier*

