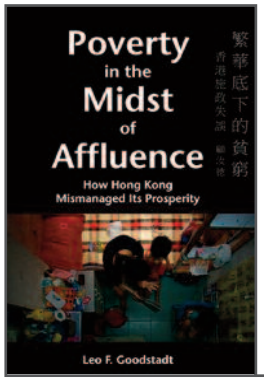
Book reviews



Leo F. Goodstadt, Poverty in the Midst of Affluence: How Hong Kong Mismanaged its Prosperity, Hong Kong, Hong Kong University Press, 2013, 264 pp.

GORDON MATHEWS

Leo F. Goodstadt's new book explores how the Hong Kong government's ongoing support of business over all else has created a society that treats its most vulnerable members with callousness and cruelty. Goodstadt, who served as the Hong Kong government's chief policy advisor from 1989 to 1997, has written this book on the basis of his extensive knowledge of inner governmental workings in Hong Kong, as well as more widely available mass-media sources. The book is depressing but essential reading for anyone interested in the recent past, present, and future of Hong Kong as a society.

The book's Introduction discusses the Asian financial crisis of 1997-1998 and its effects on Hong Kong: "For the first time since the Japanese Occupation ended in 1945, parents could not take it for granted that their children would enjoy better job prospects" than they themselves had (p. 2). Goodstadt sees this as a failure of leadership of the Hong Kong government, particularly then-Chief Executive Tung Chee-hwa, who attempted to manage Hong Kong as if it were a company rather than a society. In this, Tung was following earlier colonial-era government views of business as the model for societal management; but Tung, and after him Donald Tsang and C. Y. Leung, exacerbated Hong Kong's social injustices. Goodstadt quotes the economist Robert Heilbroner: "a society where economic activities are ruled by the market will be an attentive servant to the rich, but a deaf bystander to the poor" (p. 21).

Chapter One, "Crisis Economics: Private Profits, Public Pain," shows that the 1997-1998 economic crisis in Hong Kong was less the result of external forces than of Tung Chee-hwa's misunderstanding of the underlying robust health of Hong Kong's finances, a health he helped destroy with his policy of austerity. Tung's intervention in the financial system in 1998 was successful, but his pledge to provide affordable housing for Hongkongers was a failure as he abandoned his promises before the demands of the big property developers, leading to a drastic drop in the supply of public housing in the 2000s. This chapter also discusses "the end of the Guangdong boom" for Hong Kong, with Hong Kong companies having to undergo retrenchment in the early 2000s in response to new mainland policies; and it discusses Hong Kong taxes as "vintage Third World" (p. 43), without levies on capital gains, dividends, and inheritance – taxes that are amazingly low, and designed for aiding business rather than the larger community of Hong Kong.

Chapter Two, "The Business of Government: Less Politics, No Welfare," notes that while "the Basic Law made business pre-eminent in the political system" (p. 59), Hong Kong's government went far beyond this in its support of business, as exemplified in the rise of cronyism, the Cyberport deal, and ongoing resistance to competition laws. A major backdrop to these developments was the mainland increasingly exerting its business advantage over Hong Kong. In the 1980s and 1990s, "Hong Kong manufacturers could maintain their export competitiveness by relocating to the mainland," but by the 2000s, "Hong Kong itself became the main market for exploitation," with the property market, the labour force, and the retail consumer all serving as victims (p. 66). Given the growing gap between rich and poor, "why [...] have Hong Kong politics remained so polite and social hardships been so patiently endured?" (p. 75). This question is particularly pertinent given the misbehaviour of Hong Kong's masters, such as Donald Tsang's hobnobbing with business tycoons on private yachts and jets. Goodstadt concludes this chapter by noting that "the real threat to the governability of Hong Kong starts with misconduct by those in power" (p. 79).

Chapter Three, "Housing: Unending Crisis," discusses how the Hong Kong government has been hamstrung since Tung's withdrawal of his ambitious housing plans in the early 2000s. The effect of Tung's brief reform was that "by 2002, some of the community's worst housing problems...had been finally overcome" (p. 91), although this was eclipsed in public consciousness by a drastic drop in property prices. Goodstadt notes that after the government withdrew from the property market in 2002, property prices increased at a rate of 19% per year in the ensuing decade (p. 101), making housing unaffordable for an ever-larger number of Hong Kong's people. Hong Kong had once been world-famous for its massive construction of public housing, but in the early 2000s, "the government's exit from housing was so total that nothing was left of the machine that had formerly provided public housing for over three million people" (p. 104).

Chapter Four, "Social Reforms: Too Little, Too Late," discusses how Hong Kong has never fully recovered from the decision of its colonial administrators in the late 1940s and 1950s to provide no welfare and health services to the million people who flooded into the city. Despite the massive growth in Hong Kong's economy from the 1960s through the 1990s, "the health, education and welfare services were starved of funding...and their development remained firmly Third World till the closing years of British rule" (p. 114). The Hospital Authority, set up in 1990, transformed hospital care for the better, but the government became increasingly concerned about the high cost. In education, too, the colonial government long dragged its feet, with primary school neither free nor compulsory as late as 1971, and free secondary schooling introduced only in 1978. "The more generous funding allocated to health, education and welfare in the 1990s was too little [...] to make up for earlier decades of underspending. In the present century, health, education and welfare services were to be badly handicapped by this legacy" (p. 129).

Chapter Five, "Social Reforms: The New Poverty," shows how this is particularly the case today, in an era of increasing financial pressures. Hospitals have served as a prime target for government cutbacks, with the government increasing the numbers of critical drugs that are no longer provided free of charge. Education likewise became a matter of "higher fees, lower standards" (p. 148) despite an array of reforms. As for welfare, Donald Tsang proclaimed that "the Government must never try to assist the poor using its own resources, for this is doomed to failure" (p. 152).

Chapter Six, "The Undeserving Poor," discusses the plight of those left out of Hong Kong's wealth. "Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) has become the key issue which defines the limits of the community's compassion" (p. 169). Allegations have often been made, for example by the first Commission on Poverty, that CSSA enables individuals who might work to live off government largesse instead. Goodstadt shows the wrongheadedness of these allegations – in fact, one large problem in Hong Kong is the large number of unemployed who are unwilling to apply for CSSA despite their need. Another anti-CSSA argument is that it destroys Chinese tradition by having the government rather than offspring aid the poverty-stricken elderly. This too is a canard, Goodstadt shows. CSSA continues to be stigmatised, not just by business and government, but by a surprisingly large number of Hong Kong citizens.

In Chapter Seven, "An Absence of Advocates: How the 'Welfare' Lobby Lost Its Voice," Goodstadt shows that in the 1990s and 2000s, the defence of political rights against the encroachments of mainland China seemed more important to many Hongkongers than did the creation of a more equal Hong Kong society. There was in this era "the subordination of social policies to political priorities" (p. 202) whereby "the deprived, disadvantaged and disabled lost their traditional defenders, and the advocates of social reform declined in numbers and influence" (p. 206). In Hong Kong today, hundreds of thousands of people take to the streets in support of greater democracy, but far fewer take to the streets in support of a fairer society for the poor and disadvantaged.

The book's Conclusion discusses how poverty in Hong Kong, despite government claims to the contrary, has tragically increased with the emergence of "the new poor." This dire situation has been created by "the widespread conviction within the government that all public services were inherently wasteful" (p. 219). The solution to this situation, Goodstadt maintains, is to shift away from business models to embrace public service: a move towards providing "what the vulnerable need rather than [...] what they could afford to pay for" (p. 221). But history is repeating itself: Hong Kong's present leaders are reiterating past colonial rulers' emphasis on business over all else. However, the mainland is now emphasising the development of social services for its citizens more than Hong Kong is. Hong Kong's increasing reintegration with the mainland may eventually lead to greater social well-being than Hong Kong's own business-obsessed leaders have been able to provide.

Goodstadt's book is extremely important in providing a broad picture of how contemporary Hong Kong has been socially shaped through its government's ongoing emulation of business and foot-dragging on social welfare, including housing, education, and healthcare. This is a major part of the story of Hong Kong in recent decades, a story largely obscured by popular and scholarly emphasis on the politics of Hong Kong's return to China, and neglect of the social effects of Hong Kong's own neoliberal governance over the decades. However, although I am convinced that Goodstadt is largely right in his claims, I think he overstates his case. To give a personal example, I have been taken to the hospital by ambulance on several continents. When this happens in the United States, I am utterly terrified by the expense – I am looking at US$5,000 or more in payments. In Hong Kong this does not happen: the flat HK$100 payment is a blessing of Hong Kong's socialised medicine. Hong Kong universities, for all their problems, are provided with funding that most public universities in the United States would kill for. Medical care and post-secondary education, despite Goodstadt's comments otherwise (p. 139), are areas where the Hong Kong's government provisions have been comparatively generous compared to some other societies, and this is true in terms of various other government policies as well. I think that Goodstadt should acknowledge this rather than portraying Hong Kong government policy with a uniformly dark brush.

Beyond this, there is a huge social and philosophical debate over what kind of society is ultimately best for human well-being: one that provides much for its citizens in return for high taxes (as in many countries in Western Europe) or one that largely leaves citizens to fend for themselves and keeps taxation comparatively low (such as Hong Kong and the United States). Discussion of this larger argument would have been highly useful in Goodstadt's book. He assumes that government spending is always good without ever examining that assumption. I would have welcomed a fuller examination of the social and philosophical premises underlying Goodstadt's argument.

But this is to ask Goodstadt to have written a different book than the one he did write. The book as it is definitely is worth reading: it provides an essential window on Hong Kong society today. I very much recommend it.

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Chloé Froissart,
La Chine et ses migrants. La conquête d'une citoyenneté, (China and its migrants: the conquest of a citizenship),
Presses Universitaires de Rennes, Rennes, 2013, 406 pp.

ÉRIC FLORENCE

La Chine et ses migrants. La conquête d'une citoyenneté (China and its migrants: the conquest of a citizenship) is a major work, and along with Dorothy Solinger's *Contesting Citizenship in Urban China* (1999) constitutes the most complete and solidly documented scientific study of rural migrants in the People's Republic of China, of public policies concerning them, and of the dynamics of their relations with the Party-state. Based on a doctoral thesis, the book examines to what extent the enduring presence of migrant workers in post-Maoist China's urban areas, and the increasingly important role they play there, have led to a redefinition of criteria for social and political affiliations. In other words, how has the Party-State transformed itself so as to preserve the basis of its power while allowing the partial integration of a social group whose politico-institutional domination is

increasingly reflected in rising social, ideological, and economic contradictions? The perspective adopted is resolutely dynamic, perceiving social change as the result of interactions and conflicts between the state and society. The author, a senior lecturer at the University of Rennes 2, documents in detail not only the process of transformation of public policies relating to the management and integration of migrant populations in cities, but also migrants' practices, norms, and representations vis-à-vis the state and Chinese society.

The work is structured in five parts. In the first, Chloé Froissart offers a genealogy of the concept of citizenship and its mobilisation in the Chinese context. She contrasts the universalist conception inherited from the Enlightenment, by which "the citizen is an abstract subject of laws, implying civic, political, and legal equality of individuals," with the Maoist one brimming with the notion of a special political and socio-economic determination of individuals' rights and duties (p. 45). As a framework for interpreting society-state relations, the author offers the dialectic of this dual vision of citizenship that continues to inform the Communist Party's actions. While Chapter 1 shows that Maoist era ideology and political struggles constitute an inescapable presupposition for interpreting the reach of the constitution and laws of the People's Republic of China, Chapter 2 documents the role and effects of the "residency permit" (*hukou*) administrative system that has defined individual-state relations since the 1950s, establishing a system of statuses linked to one's position in the productive system, local inscription, and political status, and invalidating "the apparent universality of Chinese laws" (pp. 45-46).

The second and third parts form the heart of the book and are also the most impressive in terms of explanations and the richness of sources documented. In Part 2, Froissart highlights the confluence of institutional, economic, political, and sociological factors that help explain the exodus towards the cities from the 1980s until the early part of the past decade, while also showing how the migrant worker category became institutionalised. Focusing on the way in which public policies regarding migrant workers are applied in Chengdu, a city that has not been the focus of much academic study but has been at the forefront of public policies of integration aimed at migrants, she describes in great detail how the combination of myriad bureaucratic rules and procedures inherited from the planned economy days and covering accommodation, jobs, births, social security, and education contribute to fashioning the conditions for migrant workers' presence and their "second class citizen" status. The "control" and "management" logic that governs an ethic of public service for migrants appears clearly. But what chapters 4 and 5 also bring out is the production, through the subtle interpretation by state actors of these control procedures regarding the stay and employment of rural workers in cities, of a cheap and flexible labour force servicing both the formal and informal economy. In fact, the strong trend towards marketisation of administrative services since the 1990s in respect of migrant workers' residence and jobs put them in an ambiguous legal and procedural situation, given that they risk never being able to conform to the totality of such rules. As Froissart stresses, having papers in order does not guarantee escape from arbitrary treatment on a daily basis (p. 116). Such "routine repression" in urban areas, combined with the marketisation of labour and deregulation of work regimes, is crucial to the understanding of the political economy of postsocialist China. Thus the logic of state control and its effects (externalisation) meeting the needs of the market (or capitalism) in terms of the cost of labour production and reproduction becomes clear.

The daily experience of various indignities and the precariousness of existence produced by social control procedures in urban areas – modalities of repression that vary according to the place, time, and people concerned – is central to understanding the modalities of relations between migrant workers and the state as well as their conceptions of the state, its agents, and the law. Thus, in Chapter 6, the author specifies that while residency and migration are marked with a provisional seal, it is "above all because the provisional feeling is fed by the [institutionally produced] precariousness of life in the city" (p. 166). The chapter deals in a nuanced manner with the issue of migrant workers' internalising their unequal status, the author stressing that the diversity of their experiences and profiles renders any generalisation risky in this regard. She also shows how the "weakness of institutional mediation" in social conflicts and respect for the law constitutes an obstacle to migrants' recognition of their rights (pp. 179, 181).

Part 3 (chapters 7 and 8) focuses on the social, political, ideological, and economic factors that led to the urban integration of migrant workers at the start of the last decade. Froissart documents how in the decade beginning with the early 1990s, Chinese intellectual elites structured a number of observations (the major increase in the volume of migration and expansion of villagers' communities inside cities, the exponential rise in urban crime and inequality, etc.) via a stack of reports (sponsored by public authorities, research publications, etc.) inherited from the migration policies of the planned economy era. The author applies original insights to the paradigm shift, in the early 2000s, towards "a new way of conceiving order as well as of the costs and benefits linked to migration" (p. 226), meaning the authorities' realisation of the need to adapt public policies regarding management of migrant populations in cities so as to go beyond the "management and control" logic by providing "services (*fuwu*) to migrant workers" and somehow restoring their faith in the Party-state (p. 209). Thus, in Chapter 8, Froissart shows how Chinese scholars have contributed to this paradigm shift and the emergence of a discourse around citizenship. She describes the passage from a "dogmatic sociology" to an "empirical sociology," stressing that sociological knowledge thereafter concerning migrants, their conditions, and their experiences is increasingly articulated around a questioning of China's socioeconomic development, especially a critique of the reforms ushered in under Jiang Zemin's rule between 1993 and 2002. However, it should be noted that there is another dogmatic dimension to at least part of this "empirical sociology," no longer Marxist-Leninist but idealising the virtues of market economy. Chapter 8 also narrates how in the first half of the last decade, an increasing number and diversity of social actors (academics, journalists, writers, NGO activists, and artists) once again mobilised in favour of protecting migrant workers' rights, a discourse approved by new political priorities developed at the top of the Party-state (the 16th CCP Congress in 2002 and Hu Jintao's call for "putting people first"– *yi ren wei ben* – to put greater emphasis on laws and respect for rights and to raise farmers' revenues, etc.). Once considered an impediment to modernisation, migrant workers were transformed into "new heroes who sacrifice themselves for the motherland, for others, and for the common good" (p. 244). It is interesting to note that right from the early 1990s, in the special economic zones of the Pearl River Delta and especially Shenzhen, the figure of the migrant worker was the subject of intense ideological investment on both the official and popular levels. From the second half of the 1990s, migrant workers were even favourably compared with state enterprise workers and cited for their exemplary values of sacrifice, autonomy, and competitive spirit. As for the emergence of a new discourse around mi-

grant workers starting from early in the last decade, Froissart lays stress on both the overall consensual dimension and the often paternalistic tone of this discourse, which includes "patriotic" tinges but also political, legal, and ethical criticism of the system of domination (p. 248).

In Part 4, the author shows how the paradigm shift in the management of migrants in cities occurs at the local level. In particular she examines reforms of the *hukou* system, social security, and education of migrants in Chengdu. As for social security, and as regards *hukou* reform, status inequalities are compounded by socioeconomic ones, leading to a "pyramidal stratification within the migrant category between the small elite integrated into the urban residents' social regime as well as those who are covered by a regime specific to migrants, and the great majority who have no means of social security whatsoever" (p. 278).

Part 5 seeks to understand the influence that the "rights defence movement" (*weiquan yundong*) has had on the Chinese regime. Relying on interviews in Beijing, Chengdu, and Shenzhen with several more-or-less formal social organisations, the author documents both the extent and limits of actions by migrant workers themselves and by various other actors and social groups (NGO activists, mutual help networks, experts, etc.) on administrative measures and on the Party-state's policies. In the book's conclusion, Froissart summarises this far from univocal or definitive dialectic of social and political change, stating that such actions and mobilisations in support of migrants' rights "[…] contribute as much to deterring migrants' empowerment as a social group and the politicisation of their demands as to the promotion of their rights and redefine their place in society" (p. 376).

Chapter 11 is entirely devoted to the Sun Zhigang incident,[1] analysed as a revealing event for "the affirmation of a Chinese citizenship, in conscience and in act" and as establishing a "new dissenting paradigm to the extent that it [the incident] stands as a struggle for recognition of rights by the use of such rights […]"(p. 328). The last chapter studies the nature of the "rights defence movement" with an in-depth examination of the role of Chinese "NGOs" in the movement, as well as their relations and actions in relation to the Party.

The book is replete with well referenced first-hand official source material (state council documents, municipal rules, etc.), as well as the author's interviews and ethnographic observations between 2002 and 2007, especially in Chengdu, Shenzhen, and Beijing. Reference to scientific sources and works of political sociology and the sociology of migration allow comparisons between the Chinese case and migratory or integration processes in France and elsewhere in the world.

The author shows in detail throughout the book how much the issues raised by migrants' presence in cities are central political issues redefining the role of the state and its relations with different categories in society, modalities of government, and politico-ideological bases. Above all, while the book shows how diverse forms of "legitimate resistance" by migrants and the major restructuring of social space have pushed the Party-state to gradually extend urban citizenship to partially include migrant workers, it also offers a deep exploration of transformations of governance in post-Mao China. In this, it constitutes a major contribution to understanding and defining the nature of the authoritarian regime in post-Maoist China. Froissart casts light on a central dimension of the Party-state's resilience – a protean capacity to integrate and channel social demands and blur the borders between state and civil society, while altering only marginally the politico-institutional arrangements that govern the hierarchic balance between the state and different categories of the population, and which were at the heart of post-Maoist political economy. Froissart shows how, for instance, the modalities of social control of migration are redeployed even while gradually integrating the logic of services for migrants. It may be noted that it is not the Party-state alone that displays this capacity for mutation and redeployment; enterprises likewise have demonstrated and continue to prove their ability to adapt to new constraints linked to the paradigm shift in policies towards migrant workers, as for instance in the domain of labour legislation, where they have displayed great inventiveness to intensify exploitation (Chris King-Chi Kan, *The Challenge of Labour in China. Strikes and the Changing Labour Regime in Global Factories*, Routledge, 2010). Perhaps the concepts of market economy and capitalism could have been further theorised and interrogated. On this note, a detailed discussion of works such as those by Pun Ngai, Yan Hairong, and Lee Ching-Kwan (*Against the Law*) would have opened interesting paths in the matter of links between capitalism and the post-Maoist regime.

This minor flaw takes nothing away from the book's accomplishments. With its solid theoretical foundation, empirical richness, and lucid argumentation, this study is bound to become an essential French language reference work on the transformation of the dynamic of relations between the Party-State and migrant workers. It is of interest to political and social science scholars as well as to teachers and students of contemporary China.

Translated by N. Jayaram.

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1. Sun Zhigang, a young graphic designer of rural origin, suffered beatings and injuries and was found dead in April 2003 in a Custody & Repatriation Centre in Guangzhou after having been arrested the previous month for lacking identity papers and a temporary residence permit. The circumstances of his death led to unprecedented social mobilisation resulting in the abolition of such centres by June that year. The fact that Sun was a university graduate made a major impression on the public, especially in urban areas, in that their ability to identify with him surmounted the usual urban-rural divide (p. 325).

Zhu Yong, Fanyuedu: Gemingshiqi de shentishi (CounterReading: A History of the Body in Revolutionary Times), Taipei, Unitas Publishing Co., 2008, 416 pp.

SUN JIAWEN

Charles Wright Mills indicated in his classic book *The Sociological Imagination* that one of sociology's assignments is to distinguish "personal troubles" from "public issues" (1959, Chapter 1). This distinction is an essential tool of the sociological imagination, which is a term that Mills invented, and a feature of all classic work in social science. People might consider their lives traps that they cannot escape; for example, people in China who have experienced "the decade of turmoil" (referring to the Cultural Revolution, 1966-1976) will never forget the chaotic years and trauma they went through. For most of them, their reflection on the pain they suffered remains personal, at least no more than a family topic. But for Zhu Yong, a scholar in literature who was born in the late 1960s and who happened to witness the last years of the Cultural Revolution and the changes in the post-revolutionary People's Republic, personal memory is exactly the trigger for his book *CounterReading: A History of the Body in Revolutionary Times* and also, as he seeks to demonstrate, a sample of Chinese collective memory. Thus people who have been through that decade will easily find resonance in this book. Zhu Yong uses the imagination of social science and his extraordinary literary talent to show us how collective memory can become personal. He successfully achieves an understanding of people at the intersection of their own lives (their biographies) and of the larger social and historical context.

How to write a history of the body? To find a proper answer to this question, we first need to understand what role the body plays in history and what the connection is between body and history. From Nietzsche to Foucault, philosophers have never stopped their critiques of genealogy, which was originally a historical technique and then became a philosophical concept about looking beyond the ideologies in question, as well as a method to understand the relation between body and history. The body, according to Foucault, is the inscribed surface of events (traced by language and dissolved by ideas), the locus of a dissociated self (adopting the illusion of a substantial unity), and a volume in perpetual disintegration. Genealogy, as an analysis of descent, is thus situated within the articulation of the body and history. Its task is to expose a body totally imprinted by history and the process of history's destruction of the body ("Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews by Michel Foucault*, edited by D. F. Bouchard, Cornell University Press, 1980). As a writer and also an art critic, Zhu Yong constructed in his book a genealogy of literary and artistic works during revolutionary times, which can also be considered as a virtual museum of all kinds of bodies shaped by revolutionary practices. For instance, Zhu Yong notes the social function of setting exercises to radio music: a symbolic expression of body discipline, because it makes every movement of the body, even its frequency and time of appearance, restrained and controlled by the rhythm of the theme song. This sounds similar to what Foucault demonstrated about how external forces define the rhythm of collective activities (Zhu Yong, p. 53).

In his book, Zhu Yong chooses ten core concepts related to the body: posture, hunger, pain, horror, labour, sex, disease, dream, fight, and death. They also correspond to the titles of each of the ten chapters of the book. Zhu Yong defines the body as a historical element in revolutionary times, and tries to present its political functions.

The body's first political function could be regarded as a means of official ideological propaganda. Take a look at the images of heroes in art and literary works during the Cultural Revolution; we can easily summarise their appearance: tall, strong, and resolute (for a specific example, consider Mao's classic figure). Revolutionary heroes always look serious and gloriously radiant, which means you will never see any shadows or darkness around them. And of course their sexual features are intentionally obscured, which accords with the asceticism of revolutionary times. Propaganda successfully planted the image of a heroic body in the public mind and made it a model for society (p. 137).

The body's second political function can be called "discipline." Zhu Yong shows a pattern according to which physical suffering is sublimated as the only path to achieving the lofty revolutionary ideal, i.e., the endogenic connection between bleeding and revolutionary loyalty. He chooses the famous novel *Red Crag* (published in 1961 by Luo Guangbin and Yang Yiyan, who were former inmates in a Kuomintang prison in Sichuan) as an example. It is surprising to find a popular revolutionary novel of that time so full of gory scenes, details of abuse, and descriptions of broken human flesh, in a word, extremely violent. However, the extreme violence makes the spirit of the main characters (Jiang Jie and her comrades) become extraordinary. In this paradoxical work, extreme evil and extreme heroism exist at the same time and become part of each other. Only extreme torture can prove the extremely loyal soul, an illusion that can be summarised as "no bleeding, no revolution." All the violence of the Cultural Revolution seems to find its ideological root in this point of view (pp. 89-111).

The body's third political function can be seen as a reflection of collective repression. For instance, it represents the taboo topic of sex. Take the ballet *Red Detachment of Women*, for example: it is obviously a propagandistic work, but Zhu Yong also noticed the public's reaction to "long, white, naked legs running around in front of men's eyes" (p. 209). Ballet, as a kind of classic art, would gain an erotic connotation only in a society where asceticism controls private life. The examples above give a general idea of so-called "CounterReading." As Zhu Yong argues, "CounterReading" denies the regular way of understanding a text; it eliminates the control of text and finds a transition toward a new meaning to reveal hidden content that we cannot see in a regular way. I further believe that "CounterReading" can help us understand how a collective memory of suffering was constructed in an authoritarian state.

In the context of revolutionary times, the suffering of the individual is not just an independent event, but rather a tragedy of time and society. One of the major contributions Zhu Yong has made in this work is to combine memory fragments, which used to be very personal and blurry, into a complete history of revolutionary times using the body as a thread. On the body we can trace the conflicts between the state and the individual, and we can also learn how these individual experiences converge into a historical tide.

Zhu Yong is obviously good at using his writing talent to describe a vivid world in his book. Yet he also insists on precision of logic and demonstration. A historical nostalgia among the words and between the lines may be one of the characteristic features of Zhu Yong's writing. We find the same humanistic concern as in *CounterReading* when Zhu writes about the Forbidden City (*The Old Palace,* 2009), Tibetan culture (*Tibet: A Distant Spiritual Plateau,* 2010), and the traditions of the regions south of the Yangtze River (*China South: the Unsinkable Boat,* 2009). At the same time, the value of *CounterReading* is far more than as literary criticism, although all the texts he analyses in this book are taken from the field of art and literature. In fact, this book begins with literature and art but ends up in daily life.

Almost 40 years have passed since the end of the Cultural Revolution, yet this subject is still unfortunately on the shelf in mainland China. The attitude of the authorities is ambiguous: they do not completely forbid the topic, but they do not encourage it, either. Since the rise of "scar literature" in the 1970s, many memoirs and collections of oral history have been published. Those works are filled with painful memories, desperate screams, and unforgettable trauma, but analysis under a social-political framework is missing. Although *CounterReading* could not be published in mainland China, it is still a major contribution, not only to the history of literature and art in revolutionary times but also to the sociology of the body.

For Chinese who have experienced and suffered from the Cultural Revolution, this book may help them understand what affected their minds and how it succeeded. Their anxiety is placed against the background of society and history, and thus their mental suffering can find some relief. In spite of all the difficulties, Zhu Yong believes that ultimately time will make everything right. As in the foreword he wrote for the book *The Cock Doesn't Crow at Midnight* (Meng Lingqian, *Ban ye ji bu jiao*, 2011): "…the monopoly of time could be regarded as the most powerful hegemony, but it will never succeed; instead, its failure will prove the absolute authority of time." We have good reason to believe that this book is one of the first cornerstones on a long road, and a beginning for Chinese to face up to their history of suffering.

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