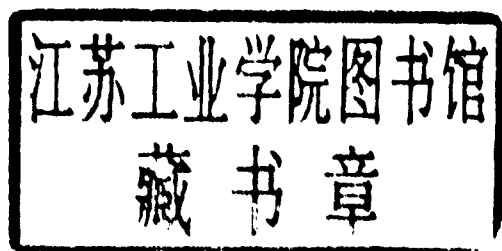


China's Literary and Cultural Scenes at the Turn of the 21st Century

Edited by
Jie Lu

China's Literary and Cultural Scenes at the Turn of the 21st Century

Edited by Jie Lu



First published 2008 by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, OX14 4RN

Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada
by Routledge
270 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

© 2008 Taylor & Francis

Typeset in Times Roman by Infotype Ltd, Eynsham, Oxfordshire
Printed and bound in Great Britain by the MPG Books Group

Reprinted 2009

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilized in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

A catalog record for this book has been requested

ISBN10: 0-415-42078-4 (hbk)

ISBN13: 978-0-415-42078-5 (hbk)

List of contributors

Yomi Braester is Associate Professor in Comparative Literature, Film Studies and East Asian Languages and Literature at the University of Washington in Seattle. He is the author of *Witness Against History: Literature, Film and Testimony in Twentieth-century China* (2003) and is currently working on a book on cinema and urban policy in the PRC.

Megan M. Ferry is Associate Professor of Chinese and East Asian Studies at Union College. Her selected publications include 'Women's Literary History: Inventing Tradition in Modern China', *Modern Language Quarterly* 66(3) (September 2005), 'Advertising, Consumerism and Nostalgia for the New Woman in Contemporary China', *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies* 17(3) (2003) and 'Woman and Her Affinity to Literature: Defining Women Writers' Role in China's Cultural Modernity', *Contested Modernities in Chinese Literature*, ed., Charles Laughlin, (2005).

Michel Hockx is Professor of Chinese at SOAS, University of London. He is the author of *Questions of Style: Literary Societies and Literary Journals in Modern China, 1911–1937* (2003) and *The Literary Field of Twentieth-Century China* (1999). He is coeditor of *The Global Literary Field* (2006), *Culture in the Contemporary PRC* (2006) and *Reading East Asian Writing: The Limits of Literary Theory* (2003).

Sabina Knight (earlier publications under Deirdre Sabina Knight) is Associate Professor of Chinese and Comparative Literature at Smith College. She is the author of *The Heart of Time: Moral Agency in Twentieth-Century Chinese Fiction* (2006). Her selected articles include 'Madness and Disability in Contemporary Chinese Film', *Journal of Medical Humanities* 27(2) (Summer 2006), 'Gendered Fate', in *The Magnitude of Ming: Command, Allotment, and Fate in Chinese Culture*, ed., Christopher Lupke (2004), 'Capitalist and Enlightenment Values in 1990s Chinese Fiction: The Case of Yu Hua's *Blood Seller*' *Textual Practice* 16(3) (2002), 'Agency Beyond Subjectivity: The Unredeemed Project of May Fourth Fiction', *Journal of Modern Literature in Chinese* 1(2) (1998) and 'Decadence, Revolution and Self-Determination in Su Tong's Fiction' *Modern Chinese Literature* 10 (1998).

Xinmin Liu is Assistant Professor of Chinese Literature at University of Pittsburgh. His selected publications include 'In the Face of Developmental Ruins: Ethical Claims of China's *Ecocinema*', *Ecocinema in China*, eds. Sheldon Lu and Mi

LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

Jiayan (forthcoming), 'Border Pedagogy in American Schooling: Reflections on China Pedagogy in Cultural Studies', ed., Ban Wang, *Concentric: Literary and Cultural Studies* 31(2) (July 2005), 'Play and Being Playful: the Quotidian in Cinematic Remembrance of the Mao Era', *AsianCinema* 15(1) (2004), 'Deciphering the Populist Gadfly: Cultural Polemics around Zhang Chengzhi's "Religious Sublime",' *The Modern Chinese Literary Essay: Defining the Chinese Self in the 20th Century* (2000) and 'Self-Making in Wilderness: Zhang Chengzhi's Reinvention of Ethnic Identity', *American Journal of Chinese Studies* 1 (1998).

Jie Lu is Professor of Chinese and Film Studies at University of the Pacific. She is the author of *Dismantling Time: Chinese Literature in the Age of Globalization* (2005) and the special-issue editor of 'Writing against Spectacular Reality: Cultural Intervention in China and Taiwan', *Journal of Contemporary China* (forthcoming), 'New literary and Culture Scene in Contemporary China', *Journal of Contemporary China* (2003 and 2004), and 'Chinese Literature in the Post-Mao China', *American Journal of Chinese Studies* (1998).

Jason McGrath is Assistant Professor of modern Chinese literature and film at the University of Minnesota — Twin Cities. He is the author of *Postsocialist Modernity: Chinese Cinema, Literature, and Criticism in the Market Age* (2008). His essays on Chinese cinema have appeared in *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture*, *The Urban Generation: Chinese Cinema and Society at the Turn of the Twenty-first Century* (2007), and *Chinese Films in Focus: 25 New Takes* (2003).

Wang Ning is Professor of English and Comparative Literature and Director of the Centre for Comparative Literature and Cultural Studies at Tsinghua University. He is the author of ten books in Chinese and dozens of articles in English, which have appeared in such journals as *New Literary History*, *boundary 2*, *ARIEL*, *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature*, *Social Semiotics*, etc.

Maghiel van Crevel is professor of Chinese language and literature at Leiden University, and author of *Language Shattered: Contemporary Chinese Poetry and Duoduo* (1996) and *Chinese Poetry in Times of Mind, Mayhem and Money* (forthcoming).

Robin Visser is Assistant Professor of modern Chinese language and culture at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She is a contributor to *Chinese Concepts of Privacy* (2002), *Chengshi piping* [Urban Criticism] (2002), and *The Columbia Companion to Modern East Asian Literatures* (2003). Her forthcoming book examines urban aesthetics in postsocialist China.

Ban Wang is Professor of Asian languages and Culture at Stanford University. He is the author of *The Sublime Figure of History* (1997), *Narrative Perspective and Irony* (2002), and *Illuminations from the Past* (2004). He co-edited (with E. Ann Kaplan) *Trauma and Cinema: Cross-Cultural Explorations* (2003).

Gang Yue is Associate Professor Chinese at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He is the author of *The Mouth That Begs: Hunger, Cannibalism, and the*

Politics of Eating in Modern China (1999). His selected articles include 'From Shambhala to Shangri-La: A Traveling Sign in the Era of Global Tourism', *Cultural Studies in China* (2004), 'The Strange Landscape of the Ancient: Environmental Consciousness in "The King of Trees",' *American Journal of Chinese Studies* (April 1998), 'Between the Classroom and the Showroom: Some Notes towards Teaching Chinese Films', *Southeast Review of Asian Studies* 19 (1997), 'Surviving (in) "The Chess King": Toward a Post-Revolutionary Nation-Narration' *positions: east asia cultures critique* (Fall 1995).

Xudong Zhang is Professor of Chinese and Comparative Literature at New York University. He is the author of *Chinese Modernism in the Era of Reforms; Post-socialism and Cultural Politics*; and, in Chinese, *Traces of Criticism*, and *Cultural Identity in the Age of Globalization*.

Xueping Zhong is an Associate Professor of Chinese Literature and Culture at Tufts University. In addition to articles in both Chinese and English, her publications include *Masculinity Besieged?: Male Subjectivity and Issues of Modernity in the Late Twentieth-Century Chinese Literature*, *Some of Us: Chinese Women Growing Up in the Mao Era* (co-editor), *Yuejie de Tiaozhan: Kuaxueke Nüxingzhuyi Yanjiu* (co-editor) and *Wenhua yu Shehui Zhuanxing* (co-editor). Her current research includes a book-length manuscript 'In and Outside the Other Chinese Box: Television Drama, Society, and Production of Meaning in the Age of Market Reform' and a collaborative project on 'Culture and Social Transformation: the Chinese Case'.

Acknowledgements

This critical anthology is based on the special sections on Chinese literature and culture since the 1990s published in the *Journal of Contemporary China (JCC)*. All except the introduction and articles by Xueping Zhong, Maghiel van Crevel, and Jason McGrath originally appeared in the JCC special sections, published over three issues (volume 12, number 37, November 2003; volume 13, number 38, February 2004; volume 13, number 39, May 2004). The authors are grateful to Dr Suisheng Zhao, the JCC editor, for providing us an initial forum to present our thoughts, views, and perspectives on Chinese fiction, poetry, art, and film at the turn of the twenty-first century. We would also like to thank Dr Zhao for his valuable comments and editorial suggestions.

Contents

<i>List of contributors</i>	vii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	x
1 Introduction <i>Jie Lu</i>	1
2 History in a Mythical Key: temporality, memory, and tradition in Wang Anyi's fiction <i>Ban Wang</i>	11
3 National Trauma, Global Allegory: reconstruction of collective memory in Tian Zhuangzhuang's <i>The Blue Kite</i> <i>Xudong Zhang</i>	27
4 Shanghai Cosmopolitan: class, gender and cultural citizenship in Weihui's <i>Shanghai Babe</i> <i>Sabina Knight</i>	43
5 Marketing Chinese Women Writers in the 1990s, or the Politics of Self-Fashioning <i>Megan M. Ferry</i>	59
6 Who Is Afraid of Lu Xun? Politics of 'Lu Xun lunzheng' and the question of his legacy in post-revolution China <i>Xueping Zhong</i>	81
7 Globalizing Chinese Literature: toward a rewriting of contemporary Chinese literary culture <i>Wang Ning</i>	103
8 Echoes from the Himalayas: the quest of Ma Lihua, a Chinese intellectual in Tibet <i>Gang Yue</i>	119

CONTENTS

9	From Real Time to Virtual Reality: Chinese cinema in the Internet age <i>Yomi Braester</i>	139
10	Links with the Past: mainland China's online literary communities and their antecedents <i>Michel Hockx</i>	155
11	Lower Body Poetry and Its Lineage: disbelief, bad behavior and social concern <i>Maghiel van Crevel</i>	179
12	The New Formalism: mainland Chinese cinema at the turn of the century <i>Jason McGrath</i>	207
13	Spaces of Disappearance: 1990s Beijing art, film, and fiction in dia- logue with urbanization <i>Robin Visser</i>	223
14	Spectacles of Remembrance: nostalgia in contemporary Chinese art <i>Xinmin Liu</i>	257
15	Rewriting Beijing: a spectacular city in Qiu Huadong's urban fiction <i>Jie Lu</i>	269
	<i>Index</i>	285

Introduction

JIE LU

The period since the 1990s in contemporary Chinese literature and culture is a time that resists mapping or grand narrative. Relentless moves towards marketization/capitalization, globalization, urbanization, and gradual dominance of a new technical order have fundamentally transformed Chinese society and its everyday life. A sense of millennial disruption occurring at the end of the twentieth century is the result of profound changes in every aspect of society and culture. Chinese writers and intellectuals have confronted a completely new social reality and cultural environment: cultural and literary markets, globally enhanced mass media and the Internet, a dominance of popular culture and a decline of interest in elite forms of culture. China's literary and artistic production has largely lost its formerly imposed role of political propaganda and social/moral education. Instead, it has become a truly individual activity as well as a commercial endeavor. This means, in practical terms, that many writers and filmmakers, particularly those of the younger generation, have begun to work as freelancers—a new condition for cultural/literary production unprecedented in contemporary Chinese literary history. All this has profoundly challenged, liberated, and inspired Chinese writers and filmmakers, and affected contemporary Chinese literary and cultural thought, imagining, and writing. In art, literature, and films, the crossover decades from the twentieth to the twenty-first century mark a turning point in Chinese literary and cultural history.

If literary and cultural production of this period resists any totalizing narrative, it is because it is heterogeneous, plural, and diverse. Its 'disparate multiplicity' and cultural chronotope mirror and express multifarious and fragmented experiences of contemporary reality and the spatiotemporal movements of modernization, yet refuse to coalesce into an architectural whole. Given its complexity, the literary/cultural production of this period can perhaps be understood most productively as a response to a global modernity that has touched and transformed all aspects of contemporary Chinese reality. Modernity is understood in our context as the totality of multifaceted and complex phenomena—socioeconomic, political, and ideological, as well as cognitive and cultural. Intensified and globally enhanced modernization has created a new phase of modernity since the 1990s; it has reshaped the physical and social geography and changed the direction of history. Literary and cultural production thus has to be understood in relation to the dynamics of global modernization as they impinge on the everyday reality and cultural consciousness of Chinese people.

To contemporary Chinese people, literature and films have constituted their imaginative lives, describing national life and articulating both their aspirations and

anxieties. But most of all, they form a site for examining the past, for reflecting on the present situation, and for debating the course of future development. It is also a site for negotiating different ideas and intervening in social and cultural realities. While socioeconomic changes certainly provide a context for the appearance of new literary and cultural production, new aesthetic practices in turn have helped to shape the new cultural ethos and create the epistemological lenses through which people perceive and make sense of their lives and reality. As a form of cultural invention and cultural intervention, this cultural production is part of a 'social praxis.' Interestingly, as cultural activities have become truly individual and autonomous, they have achieved genuine social function and agency.

Offering diverse critical insights and theoretical perspectives on contemporary Chinese literary and cultural production, this anthology aims at providing a glimpse of this complex, fast changing, dynamic, and productive period by interpreting some of the most provocative, controversial, and non-mainstream works. In doing so, it hopes to enact, in its own diverse voices, the cultural and intellectual heteroglossia that marks the turn of the new millennium. In exploring the broad contour of new developments, major trends, and radical changes, this collection in general follows two interrelated but differently focused logics of time and space to reflect and understand the cultural and intellectual chronotope of global modernity. Here the logics of time and space will be discussed in terms of renewed engagement with history and historical imagination, and the effects of urbanization on Chinese national life. The profound rupture in historical development and fundamental change in urban geography brought about by intense modernization and globalization demand new representation, articulation, and theory; in short, a new structure of intelligibility and new understanding of the chronotope of global modernity.

Historical imaginations, as Walter Benjamin argues, are conjured up in response to critical change. In his famous passage on historical imagination, he claims that 'the past can be seized only as an image which flashes up at the instant when it can be recognized and is never seen again.' The representation of the past, according to him, 'does not mean to recognize it "the way it really was."' It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up 'at a moment of danger.'¹ What is significant in this passage is that historical imagination in its response to 'a moment of danger' is anti-nihilistic and inherently active/dynamic. In other words, in response to epochal changes—'the moment of danger'—historical imaginations aim to redefine reality and reconstitute experience which is in danger of disintegration. To some extent, this view also reflects the age-old Chinese intellectual practice of using history to critique, to reflect, and to pass moral judgement upon the current situation, and to express philosophical thinking on history.

Modern Chinese history has been marked by a series of epochal changes—gigantic moments of danger; most recently the end of Mao's socialist era in the late 1970s. However, the end of Mao's socialist period is more than the end of an age; it is also the end of an idea—the idea of History. In tracing the historical development of this closure, we can detect a trajectory from initial skepticism

1. Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), p. 255.

toward Chinese Marxist historicism, to downright deconstruction of the concept of History, and finally to a re-imagining and rethinking of history informed by the globalization paradigm. This conceptual trajectory in fact sums up both developments in and empirical experiences of contemporary Chinese history. Twenty-five years earlier, the excruciating experiences of the Cultural Revolution led people to sense something wrong with Maoist-Marxist historicism, but the firm belief in History made them hope that the progressive history of genuine Marxism would bring the ultimate correction and guide history to the right track. However, as economic reform and globalization deepened in the 1990s, Marxist historicism was felt to be inadequate to explain contemporary experiential reality, and this led to speculation about the future historical orientation of China. In practical terms, Chinese socialist utopian ideals and socioeconomic practices have proven unable to create a livable society. In a broader sense, the 1990s experienced the real historical closure of China's socialist era. It is certainly true that parts of the socialist ideology, political system, and social structure are still in place, yet they have lost much of their practical functions. Large-scale economic privatization, relentless social reformation, and close links with world trade have landed China squarely on the path to global capitalism.

The deepening historical rupture between the pro-capitalist present and socialist past can be seen as another phase of the 'moment of danger' in its accelerated economic reform and transition to marketization. At the time of breakneck transformation and temporary convulsion, Chinese intellectuals and cultural workers are more than ever acutely conscious of history. History, disappearing in a rapidly changing reality and globalization, seems to have reasserted its critical capacities in their historical imagining and thinking since the mid-1990s. This response, nevertheless, differs significantly from the literary and cultural deconstruction of Chinese Marxist historicism in the 1980s and early 1990s. The earlier historical representation, mostly exemplified by experimental literary writings and some of the Fifth-generation films, tended to focus on private perspectives on and immanent experiences of history, as well as transgressive representational strategies. In retelling personal, family, and regional histories, these works represented material histories that existed but had been suppressed by the hegemony of official history. Their historical concerns, on the one hand, coincided with the postmodernist collapse of various grand narratives, and with the rise of historical investigations of dispossessed and marginalized social groups and individuals. On the other hand, their rewriting of the Chinese historical past is also a critique of Chinese Marxist historicism. Although lacking an overt political and social engagement or agenda, their radical historical representation has fundamentally changed the way of thinking about Chinese Marxist historicism, and led to a disenchantment with History itself.

As for the interrogation of history, the current historical engagement represents efforts to rethink and re-imagine the ambivalent relationship between the socialist past and pro-capitalist present, not so much to rebuild a historical continuity as to make sense of this historical rupture for future reorientation. The historical closure of the socialist era does not simply mean the disappearance of socialism as a historical process, only its social and historical negation. In other words, this

historical closure is not a static one. The apparently bygone socialism is still an active construct in the theoretical concept of post-socialism, as well as in the ongoing context of the capitalist process. The ambivalent historical status of contemporary China resulting from this historical rupture has reoriented the investigation of history.

In the broadest sense, the crucial difference between the 1980s/early 1990s and contemporary historical writing also lies in the globalization that is both the historical context and critical focus of the latter. Deconstructing the hegemony of official historical discourse and reconstructing China's rural past beyond the confines of communist revolutionary history in works of the 1980s and early 1990s focused almost exclusively on China. This centripetal tendency has betrayed the long-standing Chinese intellectual tradition. This exclusive engagement with China certainly has resulted from the historical context of the early post-socialist period when China was just beginning to open up to the outside world. As the 1990s drew to a close, China, out of its necessity of economic reform, entered the global capitalist trajectory; its economy has become an integral part of the world economy. The impact of globally enhanced economic reform, however, goes far beyond economics; it has affected all aspects of society, the textures of everyday life, and spaces of subjectivity. Its accumulated effects have deepened the historical rupture discussed above. If it is impossible to separate contemporary China from the global economy, then it is equally impossible to analyze and critique China's issues without global perspectives. This centrifugal turn also characterizes the contemporary intellectual engagement with history informed by the global discourse. However, the important point that has to be emphasized at this juncture is that the contemporary rethinking/re-imagining of history is also a radical critique of globalization as a hegemonic force that erases local, regional, and national differences and seeks only to smooth the flow of capital. In promising a better life and more prosperity, globalization has in fact increased inequality and uneven development among and within nations and regions. In doing so, its forces have further deepened the disjuncture between its promises, for instance, in media images of well-being and prosperity, and the actual existential conditions and consumer capacities of the local.² Moreover, although the global has created multiple spatiotemporalities, it cannot encompass the lived experiences of the local and national. In responding to global challenges to China's historical development, the contemporary historical imagination also represents a social force that resists the negative impacts and consequences of globalization, and continues the historical interrogation of the 1980s and early 1990s.

Perhaps the most striking outward change in contemporary China is its cities. We may describe the turn of the twenty-first century as an era of great cities: large-scale urbanization has been unknown in Chinese history. However, the city is more than a crucible of economic production, social reformation, and mass consumption. It is the very locale where global modernity is experienced and negotiated, and where our sense of historical discontinuity and rupture is registered.

2. For the discussion on global flows and disjunctures, see Arjun Appadurai's 'Grassroots Globalization and the Research Imagination,' in his *Globalization*, ed. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), p. 5.

The city, as a social totality, represents the accumulative realities of temporal and spatial changes. The rise of the city and emergence of the new urbanism has reshaped all aspects of Chinese life. The city is replacing rural experience in representing Chinese national life. This observation certainly does not mean the disappearance of the rural and its ideological, cultural, and discursive significance; rather it points to the city as the main direction of future national development in the age of globalization; the city is almost synonymous with global modernity. Nevertheless, embedded in the reality of urbanization also lies this negative spatial dialectic—the country-city dialectic—in that the rise of the urban is at the expense of the rural.

If economic reform and globalization have created a historical moment of danger, then the dramatic reconfiguration of the urban space has caused a no less profound break with the past in terms of social experience, urban culture, and urban life. The former spatial order has broken down. The unified view of the physical and social environment in the harmony of communist portrayals of the walled compound is effectively effaced. The glamorous public space of commercialization and corporation dominates and redefines the urban space and culture. Urban life and culture have become multifaceted and diversified. On the one hand, the city is identified as a site of global modernity, associated with exciting changes, new modes of life, new technologies, and metropolitan culture. On the other hand, alongside these phenomena are no less conspicuous sights/sites of tumbledown slums and quarters of poverty. Existing side by side with the fabulous department stores and skyscrapers are the inhuman subterranean city spaces of the urban poor and the ‘floating population.’ Meanwhile, there have also emerged multiformed subcultures that exist in the shadow of mainstream culture and at the edge of the urban center. The spatial configuration of myriad cityscapes thus registers and mirrors the uneven development of modernization as well as the complexity of global modernity. This ambience of physical space is also an exteriorization of inner experiences and feelings such as anxieties, alienation, disorientation, dislocation, and identity crises. The utopian/dystopian urban topography spatializes the historical ambience and temporal convolution.

As the site that represents the global phase of modernity and modernization, the city itself also demands re-imagining, rewriting, re-symbolization, and a new structure of vision/intelligibility. The changed urban topography, altered character, culture, ethos, new concepts and forms of urban everyday, and emerging urban subculture all demand a new form of urban identity, one that should be defined on a basis different from the old dichotomy of the city and country. In other words, being the ‘Other’ of the rural is no longer adequate to define the present-day city. In the broad context of urban cultural imaginaries, we find that modernity and globality, or the new global system, have given rise to an autonomous form of urban identity. And, to a certain extent, the urban has become the ‘norm’ with the rural becoming its ‘Other.’ The general direction of urbanization in China also reveals the country’s search for national/cultural identity within global modernity. Nevertheless, in the fragmented spatial history epitomized by urban spaces of old and new temporalities, neither continuities nor discontinuities are readily apparent. The altered urban reality and complexity have to be re-represented before they can

be legible because the production of the city is both material/physical and imaginary/discursive. The dual dimensions of the city are best captured by James Donald's phrase that describes the city as 'an imagined environment.'³ Thus the emergence of the new urban cannot be separated from its representation. The symbolic cultural products intersect with the built environment and material social realities to form an urban totality, in that the city forms the texture of the text, the text is actively constitutive of the city.

Unlike the cultural production of the city in the 1980s and early 1990s, in which the urban space, still in its traditional form, exists simply as a background or a setting for the stories to happen, contemporary literature and films foreground the urban space as a dominating force that has shaped all aspects of reality and given rise to entirely new forms of social existence. Indeed, the dominance of the urban space in cultural texts is only possible since the late 1990s when Chinese cities have finally gained metropolitan forms. In this new urban context, the urban space has become a point of convergence for cultural representations to reframe questions of identity, place, citizenship, subjectivity, and interstitiality. The city has thus acquired major social and artistic importance as a locus of writings, cultural intervention, and sociopolitical praxis. Nevertheless, it is also through narration and representation that the new city and new urban are produced and made intelligible. Chinese global modernity distinguishes itself as a contradictory phenomenon, containing both traditional and contemporary elements, socialist and capitalist features that are not in an obvious teleological relationship. If urban space manifests this ambivalent history of globalized modernization, then literature and culture have surmounted the illegibility embedded in the moments of danger resulting from constant historical transformations and drawn a broad chronotope of China's global modernity at the turn of the twenty-first century.

In this anthology, each of the fourteen essays emphasizes one dimension of the literary/cultural chronotope, which, in turn, represents the larger spatiotemporal movement of global modernity. In re-imagining and rethinking History in the globalized age, our contributors look at this most complex and ambivalent historical moment of transition from different aspects. Ban Wang's 'History in a Mythical Key: temporality, memory, and tradition in Wang Anyi's fiction,' and Xudong Zhang's 'National Trauma, Global Allegory: reconstruction of collective memory in Tian Zhuangzhuang's *The Blue Kite*' deal primarily with historical representation. In Wang Anyi's fiction and short stories, Wang sees a renewed effort to recapture history from a rampant consumerism that is threatening to erase it, and to account for the fast changing present. History in Wang Anyi's texts, Wang argues, is located in memory—personal life, tradition, everyday practices, and a mythical past. Memory is thus a critique of consumerism, a locale for re-engaging with history, and a source for forming community bonds. Xudong Zhang's essay is a study of Tian Zhuangzhuang's cinematic representation of revolutionary communist China. History appears in Tian's film as a series of traumatic moments that invade the mundane world, which, in its destruction, becomes a witness to

3. James Donald, 'Metropolis: The City as Text,' in *Social and Cultural Forms of Modernity*, eds., R. Bockock and K. Thompson (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), p. 427.

the futility of this History. The mundane world of *The Blue Kite*—both constant and anti-utopian—however, confirms the present ideology of smooth (capitalist) development.

Preoccupation with history takes a different turn in studies of literary theory. Literary scholars have responded to the challenges of the global age by rewriting literary history, re-examining theoretical concepts, and re-evaluating literary debates. Xueping Zhong, in her essay 'Who Is Afraid of Lu Xun? Politics of "Lu Xun lunzheng"' and the question of his legacy in post-revolution China,' speculates on the political implications and cultural issues involved in the Lu Xun debates. These debates reflect the uneasy and complex relationship with global modernity in contemporary Chinese intellectual history. Wang Ning's essay, 'Globalizing Chinese Literature: toward a rewriting of contemporary Chinese literary culture,' re-examines Chinese literature of the entire twentieth century from a global perspective, and yet strongly criticizes cultural globalization.

Gang Yue's 'Echoes from the Himalayas: the quest of Ma Lihua, a Chinese intellectual in Tibet' is a pioneering study of literary writings about Tibet by a Han Chinese. In this essay, Yue discusses the ethical dilemma, epistemological quandary, and aesthetic issue of distance a Han-Tibetan intellectual has encountered in making sense of her experiences in Tibet and in writing about Tibet. In narrating the history of contemporary literature about Tibet (by Tibetans as well as by Han-Chinese) since 1949, Yue also addresses larger issues such as the nativist ideology, the nation-state, and global influences. It is from these larger contexts that Ma Lihua's writings about Tibet have gained special significance.

Turning to the urban scene, the writing of the 'Generation X' represents perhaps the most radical changes in the ethos of the turn of the century. Sabina Knight, in 'Shanghai Cosmopolitan: class, gender and cultural citizenship in Weihui's *Shanghai Babe*', reads the novel in the context of debates on cosmopolitanism and cultural citizenship, and explores how global forces, class inequalities, and gender hierarchies both form and undermine the ideals of the cosmopolitan cultural citizen. The novel represents a changing ethical landscape in the globalized metropolis. Indeed it is the global metropolitan context that makes possible cosmopolitan choice, cultural self-representation and a variety of lifestyles. These new opportunities, however, also threaten interpersonal commitments, moral principles, and even local and national dignity. Megan Ferry's 'Marketing Chinese Women Writers in the 1990s, or the Politics of Self-Fashioning' critiques Weihui and Mian Mian who 'essentialize' women in their writings, and exposes the market forces that appropriate and exploit female sexuality. These writers, in exploring alternative sexuality, transgress the traditional notion of womanhood, and, to some extent, redefine womanhood; but as Ferry points out, in so doing, they in fact deprive women of agency and self-determination. In essentializing women, they only reinforce the feminine stereotype dominated by emotions, desires, and narcissism. This tendency to 'essentialize' women is partly a product of a newly emergent cultural market guided by publishers, media, and critics. The essay seriously questions the social effectiveness of flaunting/publicizing female sexuality in an age full of social and economic problems for women.

The Internet revolution since the early 1990s has infiltrated every aspect of social and cultural life in contemporary China. Yomi Braester's 'From Real Time to Virtual Reality: Chinese cinema in the Internet age' and Michel Hockx's 'Links with the Past: mainland China's online literary communities and their antecedents' investigate the impact of the Internet on literary writing and cultural production. In reading three films that take the World Wide Web as their subject, Braester shows how a new techno-imaginary offers a potential of alternative space that can emancipate us from specific human, political, and historical conditions. However, Braester also carefully identifies another potential consequence of virtual reality: emerging from cyberspace could be a new world order or simply another consumerist and memory-less society. Michel Hockx studies emerging Chinese Web literary writings from a comparative perspective. Comparing literary journals of the early twentieth century and literary websites of the present, Hockx concludes that contemporary Web literature is serious in its literary view, and diverse in its style, form, genre, and theme. The result of Hockx's study seriously challenges the prevailing observation that Web literary writings are simply 'literature karaoke,' or popular literature.

Maghiel van Crevel's 'Lower Body Poetry and Its Lineage: disbelief, bad behavior and social concern' studies perhaps the most controversial poetic group in 2000–2001, known as the Lower Body. In tracing its literary lineage, and introducing its texts, poetics, and poethood, van Crevel sees a crude opposition between the Sublime and the Earthly in post-Mao avant-garde poetry, and shows how that opposition is transcended by its social concern, central to traditional Chinese poetics. Jason McGrath's essay, 'The New Formalism: mainland Chinese cinema at the turn of the century' is a study of some of the most formally experimental films by the post-Sixth Generation directors. McGrath sees this new formalism as both a reaction against the Fifth Generation and independent film traditions as well as a product of the global cultural flow. To McGrath, these decontextualized and transferable stylistic quotations—a commodified modernist form—represent the first large-scale postmodernist filmmaking in contemporary China.

The radical transformation of topology and expansion of urban space have elicited vigorous creative as well as critical responses from writers and artists. The final three essays examine various impacts of urbanization on city and urban life from different perspectives. Robin Visser, in 'Spaces of Disappearance: 1990s Beijing art, film, and fiction in dialogue with urbanization,' analyzes aesthetic strategies employed in experimental art, film, and fiction that grapple with tensions and anxieties brought about by this globally enhanced urbanization. Marked by an aesthetics of disappearance, which foregrounds the effects of hybridity and achronicities, these experimental works critique commercial renovation achieved at the expense of human well-being and traditional cultural sites. Visser's brief review of the history of Beijing's city planning in the twentieth century gives her study and our understanding of these urban works a historical dimension. Xinmin Liu's 'Spectacles of Remembrance: nostalgia in contemporary Chinese art' identifies nostalgia as the critical mode of social commentary by experimental art works that criticize urban demolition. Liu makes a convincing case for the social efficiency of