

Another valuable resource incorporated into the research is the large number of interviews with people who were involved in creating these works and even some commentary from their intended target audience. It is possible that some of the enthusiasm expressed by these people is affected by nostalgia, patriotism or self-interest. My recollection of the grand Tiananmen parades of 1959 still focuses on the inconvenience and boredom of standing around for hours before and after the main event, and for the participants themselves it must have been an even more punishing ordeal. The attention to detail by the army of administrators organizing these events is impressive, as Hung rightly points out, but the extravagant waste of time, effort and scarce resources must have been obvious to those involuntarily present. As a foreigner I was not a typical spectator, but many Chinese privately confessed dismay at these mass demonstrations of power. Hung is careful to warn against the problem of false memories, and it remains difficult to tell whose memories are false and which perceptions were most common and lasting.

Some readers like myself will find of most interest in this book the framework and background that fills out our understanding of familiar phenomena such as paintings of Mao Zedong, Babaoshan and the Monument to the People's Heroes. Other readers, political scientists and historians, will find the objects and performances described here significant evidence on how inner-Party conflicts were resolved. Both groups should be impressed by the author's interdisciplinary approach, above all his insistence that cultural phenomena are not autonomous. The author also delivers his own informed opinion in many cases, a practice that I found helpful. In this respect, his chilling account of the counterrevolutionary campaigns of the early 1950s is a valuable counter to the claim sometimes given of these being the "golden age" of the new republic.

Some of the chapters were first published separately as journal articles, perhaps the reason for some inconsistencies in terminology, and not everything can be covered (it would have been good to have a few paragraphs on ballet). Nevertheless, the book is an excellent comprehensive survey of the visual culture that emanated from Beijing and was most evident in the capital itself. Hung stresses the CCP's creative use of propaganda and its determination to teach the masses to become active supporters of the new regime. Still, as he reminds us, the CCP's grand narrative was not the only story of these years.

BONNIE S. MCDUGALL

*Chinese Poetry in Times of Mind, Mayhem and Money*

MAGHIEL VAN CREVEL

Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2008

xviii + 518 pp. €121.00; \$166.00 (paperback €37.00; \$49.50)

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Maghiel van Crevel's previous book, *Language Shattered*, has become a trusted guide to the place of poetry in Chinese literary history of the 1970s and 1980s. *Chinese Poetry in Times of Mind, Mayhem and Money* does the same for the 1990s and early 2000s and, with the benefit of historical distance, helps us understand the continuities and changes that took place in poetry during the cultural, economic, and political transition between these two periods. The product of a rich and thoughtful engagement with avant-garde poetry written in the PRC over the past three decades, Van Crevel's latest book is more than just an insightful survey: it makes an

impassioned and informed case for poetry's on-going vitality and for what it has to teach us about China – and indeed the world – today.

The book comprises 13 chapters, which address in detail the work of 11 avant-garde poets, including well-known figures such as Han Dong, Yang Lian and Bei Dao, and younger, lesser-known poets, such as Yan Jun. Through these “case studies,” Van Crevel surveys and synthesizes a vast range of poetry and literary criticism, in prose that is always clear, cogent, and readable. The book has two major advantages over similar studies published in the PRC: extensive coverage of criticism in Western languages as well as in Chinese; and the ability to address directly sensitive political matters, such as the Tiananmen incident. These advantages, along with Van Crevel's personal contacts, meticulous research, and encyclopaedic command of his material, make this the definitive sourcebook for the study of contemporary Chinese poetry in any language.

Van Crevel does a remarkable job of covering the diversity of the avant-garde poetry scene and of identifying its key tendencies. While the two key features of the book – literary historical survey and case studies – inevitably stand in some tension with one another, this is always a productive tension. As a literary historian, Van Crevel tracks avant-garde poetry's – still contested and incomplete – stylistic and conceptual shift away from “elevated” styles and towards “earthly,” everyday forms. As a close reader of both poetry and the discourses surrounding it, he shows the limits of such literary historical generalizations through the contradictions and complexity of the poetry itself, the poetic theories and debates that frame it, and the personal, group, institutional, cultural, social, historical, political and economic dynamics that shape it.

Van Crevel never allows close reading to be subordinated to the broader literary historical narrative. He is particularly effective in showing the multivalent nature of contemporary Chinese poetry, in which reference and meaning are but elements in an art form including sound (as in his discussion of rhythm in Xi Chuan's “Salute”), wordplay, narrative intricacy (as in the poetry of Sun Wenbo), and multiple media (as in his final chapter, on Yan Jun). This “attention to ‘minute detail’” reflects Van Crevel's resistance to “content bias” – to the reduction of poetry to direct statement and social, historical, and political information. Traditional notions of the poet's role as moral voice and a persistent romantic view of poet-hood, along with the politically charged approach to culture in 20th-century China, mean literary texts are often read as reflections of their authors' lives or as social and political commentary. Van Crevel illustrates this point through his documentation of the obsessive attention given to the lives, rather than the poetry, of writers who committed suicide between 1989 and the early 1990s (his main example is Haizi). Of course, content bias is by no means limited to 20th and 21st-century China, as Zhang Longxi has shown in his study of allegorical readings East and West, or as Jonathan Culler has illustrated in his recent discussion of the dominance of hermeneutics over structuralism in 20th-century Anglo-American literary criticism. For historical and institutional reasons, however, China studies in the West have been especially prone to this bias, reducing complex cultural forms to simplified political and social statements.

Instead, Van Crevel's book reveals poetry's enmeshment in the cultural, social and political complexity of China today, including technological change, the rise of the internet, and urban youth culture (as in “lower body” poetry); the tension between national language policy and regional dialects (as in Yu Jian's poetics); the relationships between Beijing and provincial centers, between North and South, and between China and the West; anxiety over commercialization; and the resurgence of Chinese nationalism. Many of these concerns are on display in the debate between

“intellectual” and “popular” poetry – the book’s most extensive case study. Here too Van Crevel’s attention to detail – not just in poetry but in social and political dynamics – pays off: he reveals the internal contradictions and complications in the positions adopted by the both sides in the debate, as for example when those opposed to foreign influence cite foreign authors to make their point.

If at times it is hard to know how to put all the pieces together in *Chinese Poetry in Times of Mind, Mayhem and Money*, that is part of the book’s point: complexity and plurality are what makes poetry irreducible to overarching theories. Van Crevel’s insistence that poetry transcends its local historical context and his refusal to gloss over complexity – emphasized by his study’s massive bibliographical and textual detail – perhaps lead him to underplay this broader point and the import of his book for the study of contemporary China. Only in the book’s concluding lines does Van Crevel finally articulate his work’s most intriguing claim: our age of digital technologies and globalization – in which China plays an increasingly central role – demands precisely poetry’s attention to complex, multivalent and ambiguous cultural forms. Van Crevel’s superb study shows us that we cannot easily summarize in prosodic terms what this new world means or what it might become.

JACOB EDMOND

*Popular Culture in Taiwan: Charismatic Modernity*

Edited by MARC L. MOSKOWITZ

Abingdon and New York: Routledge 2011,

xi + 187 pp. £75.00

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Popular culture in China has been tracked by scholars long before the advent of popular culture studies as a discipline, a fact which Marc Moskowitz notes in his virtuoso introduction to *Popular Culture in Taiwan*. Despite this assertion, his own earlier co-edited collection, and the impressive bibliography in this volume, Moskowitz bemoans the difficulty of creating “a cohesive social science course on Chinese or Taiwan popular culture – there just isn’t enough written on the subject” (p. 1).

Such a paradox arises from the contested arena of what is considered “Chinese popular culture” today. This is not simply a matter of defining “Chinese” beyond geographical boundaries, or untangling the cultural strands already flowing in, across and out of China itself, but of reading the ambivalently transnational situation of Taiwan within overlapping spheres of local, national, regional and cosmopolitan identity. Understanding Taiwan as “Chinese” (or not) is achieved through tackling the issue of viewing the Chinese diaspora as a centred periphery (p. 7).

Moskowitz persuasively anchors Taiwanese cultural industries as local entities unto themselves, beyond their relationships to politico-economic flows. At the same time, he acknowledges and then subverts several familiar tropes: Japanese colonization and the resulting anti- and pro-Japanese waves of nostalgia; the influence of the Kuomintang (KMT); ambivalent cultural borrowings from America and the imagined West. He states: “localised popular culture in Taiwan is in many ways a merging of Chinese, Japanese, American, and indigenous cultures, and is therefore a form of hybridity that arose long before the term became popular. ... The transnational character of Taiwan’s popular culture is one of the more important ways that it distinguishes itself from mainland China. Paradoxically, then, it is precisely Taiwan’s