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The third part, "Excretions," encompasses one more chapter on "Sense of Time" and the conclusion. Møller-Olsen brings forth the notion of the "world line"--the lifetime trajectory of an object or subject through space-time--which highlights the struggle between "social temporalities and bodily rhythms" (229). Aging, landscapes of decay, seasonal cycles, and end-of-world narratives engage with what Henri Lefebvre calls "rhythmanalysis" to enact the constant negotiations between different temporal scales such as "psychological time, body time, social time, solar time, and universal time" (229). The conclusion raises the interesting notion of "memory activism," where narrating memory "becomes a way of activating urban history in protest against its own destruction" (258). *Sensing the Sinophone* is a rich study of the metropolitan Anthropocene that ingeniously brings a new mnemonic and sensory methodology to literary studies. Valuable to any literature curriculum, the discussions of embodied senses within texts create a special intimacy between reader and character that activates new depths of complex thought. Furthermore, this form of intervention does not seem to be limited to just the discussion of the metropolis. It should be noted that the chosen primary texts uniformly represent characters from certain privileged class backgrounds, and I think the study would benefit from more diversification. The framework itself does lend itself well to being expanded into other designations of space such as the countryside, or even the different sensory experiences within the dichotomy of the island/archipelago versus the continent. Overall, the book could benefit from more streamlining of the structure and condensing of its theoretical framework to be more focused. Already lengthy and expansive, consisting of nine chapters plus a conclusion, many of the chapters conclude with a call for multiplicity and reflexivity to be preserved in interpretations of the city, memory, and history that could be refined further. Nonetheless, *Sensing the Sinophone* is a great addition to the corpus of Sinophone studies scholarship that will continue on to become an indispensable resource for students and researchers.

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Rethinking Chinese Socialist Theaters of Reform: Performance Practice and Debate in the Mao Era, edited by Xiaomei Chen, Tarryn Li-Min Chun, and Siyuan Liu. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2021. Pp. x + 310. \$80 (hardcover); \$69.95 (ebook).

Going against the grain, this collection counters the common perception of the Maoist era as a time of ideological conformity. The contributors persuasively demonstrate that theatre activities were varied and lively between the 1950s and 1970s. While there was state control over the arts, performances in urban spaces were more frequently censored than those in the countryside. This admirable collection of an Introduction, nine chapters, and Xiaomei Chen's "personal reflection" on her experience growing up

in Maoist China which serves as the epilogue, covers a wide range of performance genres, including *xiqu* 戲曲 operas, *huaaju* 話劇 spoken drama pieces, *wuju* 舞劇 dance drama productions, and propaganda performances. Featuring research by “theater specialists, literary scholars, historians, comparatists, and cultural anthropologists,” this co-edited book is truly multidisciplinary (271).

The idea of revolution is understood in the book on two levels: communist ideological reforms of culture and formal renovations of traditional theatre genres with modernist techniques. Tarryn Li-min Chun, in the Introduction, draws readers’ attention to the dialectical relationships between reform and revolution, stating that the concept of reform was sometimes at odds with revolution “in the struggle to transition to socialist modes of cultural production and in the shifting discourse surrounding the goals of literature and the arts” (3). Contextualizing state control of and individual creativity (including repertoires) of Chinese socialist theatre practitioners, Chun’s Introduction sheds a new light on the crucial role theatre played in the Chinese Communist Party’s ideological campaigns as well as key Soviet influence on performance practices.

The chapters are organized chronologically, beginning with Max Bohnenkamp’s accessible study of *The White-Haired Girl* 白毛女 through the notion of integrated art-form (*Gesamtkunstwerk* or *zonghe yishu* 綜合藝術). The chapter argues eloquently that the music theatre piece gains political and cultural legitimacy, particularly in the Mao era, through its synthesis of Western romantic nationalist and Chinese socialist aesthetics. This factor, according to Bohnenkamp, ensures its long afterlife in diverse performance genres. Chapter Two, by Siyuan Liu, turns to “post-1949 gentrification of [Tianjin’s lowbrow, actor-centric] scenario plays” (61) in which, traditionally, actors create their own lyrics and arias. In the 1950s, reforms of traditional scenario plays emphasized fixed scripts, which reflected the People’s Republic of China’s tightening control of theatre troupes. The last of such troupes was closed down in 1968. Liu does note usefully that, beyond stifling policies, the demise of this genre was also linked to the rise of television of film in China in the period.

Against the common assumption that governmental control of the arts invariably stifles the arts, chapter Three by Anne Rebull, posits that a complex range of aesthetic and political factors shaped socialist theatre. Her case studies to support this claim focus on *yueju* 越劇 (Shaoxing opera) and *xiangju* 湘劇 (Hunan opera) adaptations of the Yuan-dynasty play *Chasing the Fish Spirit* 追魚. The adaptation of this play into theatrical and cinematic forms is quite an extraordinary story in 1960, since its supernatural elements could have been condemned by regulators as evidence of feudal superstition. However, Rebull has shown that what appears to be the same story worked both as politically subversive drama and as propaganda internationally with the government’s blessing.

Of course, cultural policies do eventually affect the arts, and, in a continuation of the line of thought in Chapter Three, Maggie Greene demonstrates in Chapter Four that rapidly shifting policies made it difficult for theatre artists to keep up in the

“bureaucratic gusts of wind” of the 1950s (129). From 1949 to 1966, the eve of the Cultural Revolution, according to Greene’s impeccable archival research, traditional plays dominated Shanghai’s theatre scene which contradicts common assumptions that cultural reformers would prefer modern plays.

Popular and folk traditions were never eradicated by the reformers. The next two chapters speak to each other in terms of their examination of dance drama as a genre with a focus on the “deep continuities in the transmedia and transnational qualities of Chinese socialist theater reform” (25). In Chapter Five, Liang Luo analyzes 1950s adaptations of the White Snake legend, arguing that, despite the obvious conflict between folktale characters and Marxist-Leninist ideologies, the spirit of experimentation prevailed. Dance, in particular, is an area of intercultural fusion. Emily Wilcox argues in Chapter Six that the national dance drama of the 1950s is culturally hybrid with a great deal of Soviet influence. The frequently touted “Chinese” choreography of such works as *Dagger Society* 小刀會 is more accurately characterized as cultural assemblage. The piece is infused with movements from Chinese opera, ethnic dance, martial arts, and other performance traditions. Wilcox demonstrates the lasting impact of *Dagger Society* in terms of the methodologies it sets up which are practiced around the world today.

Chapter Eight reveals a different side of the internationalism of socialist theatre. Christopher Tang examines two *huaju* plays that stage narratives about struggles against imperialism in Congo and Vietnam respectively: *War Drums on the Equator* and *Letters from the South*. From 1961-1968, these plays imagine a new, alternative world order in which, despite the disastrous Great Leap Forward, revolutionaries around the world look up to China, and Mao Zedong is admired as the leader of international socialist communities. Chapter Nine, by Tarryn Li-min Chun, moves along the timeline to examine the popularization of *yangbanxi* 样板戲 model plays during the Cultural Revolution in rural China. Chun tells a lesser-known story about the operation of these propaganda works--initially conceived as performances in large theatre spaces with modern technologies--in environments starved for resources. The ingenuity of ad-hoc troupes took these plays to remote mountain villages without reproducing the full effects as designated by the Party. However, interestingly, their undaunted efforts, in the end, reinforced the narratives about the revolutionaries’ perseverance.

Rounding out the book is Xiaomei Chen’s epilogue. The history charted in this book in many ways resonates with Chen’s personal experience growing up in China. In the epilogue, she reminisces, for example, about her participation “in the mass performance of singing The Brilliant Red Sun Shining over the World ... next to Tiananmen Square in celebration of the International Workers’ Day and the PRC National Day” (272). She witnessed first-hand what Tang describes in Chapter Eight as political theater surrounding the performances of a Third World revolution. This is a case of the personal being political, and the politics bearing personal dimensions.

Rethinking Chinese Socialist Theaters of Reform masterfully demonstrates the fissures within Maoist ideologies, “a constellation of interweaving and often contradictory

concepts" (2). Stories told by these chapters dispute the orthodox narrative that the Maoist era was simply a time of hegemonic control of the arts. This research is possible due, in equal parts, to the diligence of the book's contributors and to "the obsessive record-keeping of lower-level bureaucrats" (20). Contending with and fine-tuning the prevailing ideology of one's time period not only became a performative part of theatre-making but also the artists' offstage life.

The book is designed to appeal to a broad readership beyond Chinese theatre specialists. Scholars and students alike will appreciate the book's companion website featuring 14 high-resolution images such as the Central Academy of Drama's 1950 production of *The White-Haired Girl*. These images can be sorted by the chapter in which they appear, their associated keywords such as *yangbanxi*, by sources such as *Renmin huabao* 人民畫報, and by year.

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Performing the Socialist State: Modern Chinese Theater and Film Culture, by Xiaomei Chen. New York: Columbia University Press, 2023. Pp. xi + 384. \$65.00 (hardcover); \$64.99 (ebook).

The magnum opus of one of the leading scholars in the field in our times, *Performing the Socialist State* establishes the study of Chinese drama as an integral part of world theatre. Currently Distinguished Professor of Chinese Literature at the University of California, Davis, Xiaomei Chen has written extensively on modern Chinese theatre. The eight chronologically- and thematically-organized chapters in this book provide a much-needed critical survey of spoken drama (*huaju* 话剧) from its inception through the Republican and Maoist eras to the first decade of the twenty-first century. Spoken drama, as Chen's diachronic study shows, has evolved across an astonishing range of media in the forms of women's theatre, socialist theatre, "red classic" films, and even in the "sonic theatre" of the Internationale, the unofficial anthem of various communist and socialist movements.

The book stakes two important claims that are a consistent thread throughout Chen's career. First, the book demonstrates, as Chen's other monographs and anthologies do, that several key, shared political and aesthetic elements inform the development of modern theatre in various periods that have previously been regarded as siloed and distinct, including the Republican, socialist, and postsocialist eras. For instance, the legacy of such *huaju* founding figures as Tian Han 田汉, Hong Shen 洪深, and Ouyang Yuqian 欧阳予倩 is still felt well into the twenty-first century. Secondly, the book argues that, contrary to common wisdom, state regulation and censorship affect, but do not stifle, artistic imagination. In the spirit of arts always finding a way out and giving credit where credit is due, the book deftly charts unexpected histories

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