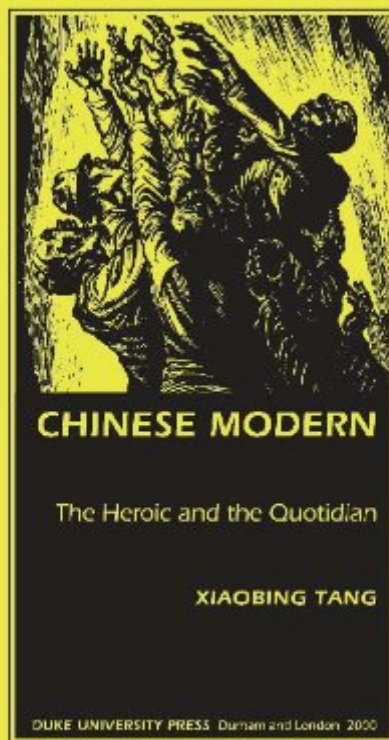


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Chinese Modern: The Heroic And The Quotidian (Post-Contemporary Interventions)



Synopsis

Chinese Modern examines crucial episodes in the creation of Chinese modernity during the turbulent twentieth century. Analyzing a rich array of literary, visual, theatrical, and cinematic texts, Xiaobing Tang portrays the cultural transformation of China from the early 1900s through the founding of the People's Republic, the installation of the socialist realist aesthetic, the collapse of the idea of utopia in the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution, and the gradual cannibalization of the socialist past by consumer culture at the century's end. Throughout, he highlights the dynamic tension between everyday life and the heroic ideal. Tang uncovers crucial clues to modern Chinese literary and cultural practices through readings of Wu Jianren's 1906 novel *The Sea of Regret* and works by canonical writers Lu Xun, Ding Ling, and Ba Jin. For the midcentury, he broadens his investigation by considering theatrical, cinematic, and visual materials in addition to literary texts. His reading of the 1963 play *The Young Generation* reveals the anxiety and terror underlying the exhilarating new socialist life portrayed on the stage. This play, enormously influential when it first appeared, illustrates the utopian vision of China's lyrical age and its underlying discontents—both of which are critical for understanding late-twentieth-century China. Tang closes with an examination of post-Cultural Revolution nostalgia for the passion of the lyrical age. Throughout *Chinese Modern* Tang suggests a historical and imaginative affinity between apparently separate literatures and cultures. He thus illuminates not only Chinese modernity but also the condition of modernity as a whole, particularly in light of the postmodern recognition that the market and commodity culture are both angel and devil. This elegantly written volume will be invaluable to students of China, Asian studies, literary criticism, and cultural studies, as well as to readers who study modernity.

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Customer Reviews

The book, as thick as it is, looks ambitious. However, I find it is not up to its ambition. For two things:

(a) this book is not theoretical enough. Sure, the academic books do not need to be theoretical.

However, this book, situated in a series edited by Fred Jameson, could have been more theoretical

than it is now. It is theoretical, at least for 2 reasons. (i) the book employs the idea of INTERIORITY

(p. 373) generously. However, what is this interiority in question? The book fails to theorize it

sufficiently. It simply treats the term as an everyday word, but it is NOT. The book fails to include

consideration of, say, Merleau-Ponty, who is such a important figure on Interiority. I do not

understand why Merleau-Ponty is not mentioned at all when the book is so dependent on

INTERIORITY. (ii) The book relies on many shorthand words of psychoanalysis too. But again, the

terminology of psychoanalysis is more like decoration than locomotion in the book. What is

DESIRE? What is SUBJECTIVITY? They are not everyday words, but they are not theoretically laid

out in the book. The book simply assumes that they do not need to be theorized. If such is the case,

WHY does the book depend on the decoration of psychoanalysis in the first place? (b) another

minor question, which can be important too. Professor Tang is famous in Chicago University for his

academic interest in Taiwan studies, Chinese female studies, woodcut print aesthetics etc. Now I

would like to interrogate why Professor Tang will choose the Taiwanese writer Xiaoye in the book.

Xiaoye is a popular writer in Taiwan, and more and more popularized. He used to write more

serious literature, but currently his works tend to be catering to the wider readership. It is fine.

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