

famine relief.) China-based British newspapers blamed the Qing government for their lack of understanding of the laws of the market economy. The reader gets the impression that “master narratives,” such as liberalism, offered very similar interpretations of famine during the late Qing Dynasty as during the world food crisis today.

In the final section, the author presents some very interesting findings regarding the icons of starvation. Illustrations of the famine which should “draw tears from iron” became very popular and helped to stimulate private relief activism in Shanghai. Even though women mainly represented the suffering in these narratives, females often had a better chance to survive than males, because they were sold to other places by human traffickers (p. 188). Despite the fact that the “feminization of the famine” could mobilize public support for the victims, the Shanghai-based journalists did not use the image of the suffering women as a marker for national decay, as did reformers after the May Fourth movement of 1919. Furthermore, the author points out that cannibalism within the family took place in some cases, and she suggests interpreting these images as metaphorical expressions of the catastrophic deconstruction of the social order (p. 225). These images of cannibalism are rooted in the Chinese past.

The convincing arguments of the author are based on a large variety of sources; such as county gazettes, local poems, picture books, diaries from journalists, official documents and both Chinese and foreign newspapers. Edgerton-Tarpley also conducted interviews with local historians who collected materials about the Incredible Famine in the aftermath of the Great Leap Forward in the early 1960s. Even today, progeny of famine victims remember their grandfathers’ warnings: “In Guangxu 3 (1878) we didn’t have that – eat it.” The author also masterfully links the symbolism of the Incredible Famine to other cases such as the Irish famine (1845–1849) and the colonial discourse on cannibalism. There is no conclusion of the main outcomes at the end of the book; instead the author adds a long epilogue about a temple in Pingyao which is not helpful for all readers hoping to complete the book.

Nevertheless, *Tears from Iron* is an important contribution to the fields of Chinese studies and history. As with the Great Leap Forward, most famines receive insufficient attention in academic research. In contrast to Mike Davis’s important but polemic book, *Late Victorian Holocausts: El Nino Famines and the Making of the Third World* (Verso, 2000), *Tears from Iron* is a careful study on famine in the 19th century. The research design does not aim to give final answers as to why the Incredible Famine happened; rather it demonstrates the cultural resources used to deal with starvation in the Chinese context. As a result, the book will also be of use to experts in Republican China and post-1949 history. For students, the book could offer a chance to become more passionate about late-Qing history. To this effect, one critical remark about the academic publication system should be made. Edgerton-Tarpley already worked out the arguments presented here in her dissertation in 2002: why did the publication of an important book such as *Tears from Iron* take so many years?

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Bringing the World Home: Appropriating the West in Late Qing and Early Republican China
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Are we modern yet? This seems to be a question that has dominated Chinese artistic and intellectual discourses, leading later critics to characterize late-Qing and

early-Republican China as “merely transitional” or as a “modernity manqué” (p. 4). It is often assumed that across the historical divides, the here and now is always more progressive than the there and then. Some studies of the thorny question of Chinese modernity have inherited their objects’ tendency to favour dichotomized and teleological historical narratives, echoing Lu Xun’s judgment that it is a pity that “the moment foreign things reach China they change their colour as if they had fallen into a vat of black dye.”

These contentions inform the framework of Ted Hutters’s *Bringing the World Home*, a persuasive study of the many paradoxes in the intellectual and literary history of an “indeterminate age.” What he calls “China’s crisis of accommodation” initiated the transformation of novel after 1895, as evidenced by the works of a unique generation of thinkers and writers who struggled to reconcile the worlds of Chinese learning and Western ideas between China’s war with Japan (1894–95) and 4 May 1919 (pp. 11, 15, 19). Drawing upon and critiquing the work of Paul Cohen, Joseph Levenson, Homi Bhabha, and Judith Butler, the book explores numerous contradictions of modernism in both well- and less-known narratives, including Wu Jianren’s *Strange Events Eyewitnessed in the Past Twenty Years*, Zeng Pu’s *Flower in a Sea of Retribution*, and optimistic essays on the “New Novel” of the time. Hutters not only reveals what is relevant to 21st-century readers in non-canonical literature from this period, but also reassesses the institution of Sinology itself. Recognizing that at this point in the Sino-Western relations the West has been hated and admired by Chinese intellectuals at the same time, he argues for the era’s need of its own research paradigm that transcends the teleological pull of historiography.

Eloquently written, the book takes readers right to the heart of an enduring debate: the notion of indigenous (Chinese) origins of foreign technology. Chapter one, “China as origin,” argues for the need to recognize the “indispensable rhetorical role” of the late Qing reformers’ idea that certain cultural dimensions of Western modernity originated in China. It is futile, Hutters suggests, to think that cultural essentialism is an issue that can or should be settled by chronicling historical facts. Chinese intellectuals involved in the *yangwu* movement used “China as origin” as a rhetorical strategy to facilitate accommodation of non-Chinese ideas. Chapter two turns to the “paradoxical combination of archaism and iconoclasm” in Yan Fu’s search for “indigenous local [Chinese] instances of universal truths” (p. 73). Tracing the impact of Yan’s essays, chapters three and four examine another key arena where similar discourses arose, the world of literary theories, with a focus on debates surrounding such fraught terms as *wenxue* (literature) and *guocui* (national essence) among such figures as Liang Qichao, Lin Shu and Zhang Binglin.

Explorations of these meta-narratives lead into in-depth analyses of late-Qing novels in the second part of the book (chapters five to seven) that seek to answer a larger question: “To what extent were literature itself and its modern manifestations regarded as part of the very problem of foreign origins that national forms were meant to overcome?” (p. 16). Wu’s *Strange Events* and *New Story of the Stone* and Zeng’s *Flower in a Sea of Retribution*, among other works, are used to show subtle differences among individual writers of the same era often considered to share the same concerns or shortcomings, and that a political agenda would not necessarily reduce the artistic value of a novel.

In part three, “The New Republic” (chapters eight to ten), Hutters revisits the questions of universal truths in the debates about “East” and “West” in a different era: the fall of the Qing dynasty and the literary and social reforms in the 1920s. Analyses of narratives in Lu Xun’s *Hesitation*, polemic articles by Huang Yuanyong (penname, Yuansheng), and Zhu Shouju’s *The Shanghai Tide*, among other texts, reveal the centrality of literature and literary discourses in the complex processes of

cultural accommodation. New space for fiction emerged from the confrontations between cultural hybridity and local authenticity (contested indigenous origins of certain ideas). There is much to recommend to students and scholars of China in *Bringing the World Home*, not least in its many innovative ways of thinking about a difficult period in literary history. With this new interpretive energy, such works as Zhu's *Tide* will never again be overlooked by anyone studying the myriad ways to write and read in late-Qing and early-Republican China, and to interpret modern China in a broader context.

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