China Perspectives

2020/4 | 2020
Facets of Global China

CHOW, Yiu Fai. 2019. Caring in Times of Precarity: A Study of Single Women Doing Creative Work in Shanghai. Camden: Palgrave Macmillan.

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Electronic version
URL: https://journals.openedition.org/chinaperspectives/11088
DOI: 10.4000/chinaperspectives.11088
ISSN: 1996-4617

Publisher
Centre d'étude français sur la Chine contemporaine

Printed version
Date of publication: 1 December 2020
Number of pages: 62-63
ISSN: 2070-3449

Electronic reference
Gladys Pak Lei Chong, "CHOW, Yiu Fai. 2019. Caring in Times of Precarity: A Study of Single Women Doing Creative Work in Shanghai. Camden: Palgrave Macmillan.", *China Perspectives* [Online], 2020/4 | 2020, Online since 01 December 2020, connection on 10 December 2021. URL: http://journals.openedition.org/chinaperspectives/11088 ; DOI: https://doi.org/10.4000/chinaperspectives.11088

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thoroughly studied by, among others, the authors listed in the bibliography, who should have been read with greater attention. Amalgams such as these lead not only the reader astray, but also the author herself, who later tells us that according to the villagers of Hongpo 紅坡, their territorial god is a "demon" (p. 230), a term that Tibetans would never use for this god. Here again, rendering non-Chinese concepts and representations via Chinese proves limited.

Moreover, on p. 20 we read that "the town of Shangri-la, the administrative centre of this prefecture and administrative centre of the district, was previously known under the Chinese name of Zhongdian," and that in the late 2000s, "the specificity of the clothes and the visibility of Buddhism gave one the impression of being in Tibet." Yet the region of Gyalthang – a toponym that appears for the first time on p. 70 – clearly belongs to the sphere of Tibetan culture, and its inhabitants never considered themselves within a Chinese frame of references. Lack of knowledge of the Tibetan world has led the author to describe the association of mountain and water (pp. 126 and 285) as "a perfect example of Chinese landscape" whilst in Tibet it represents the perfect example of a sacred place. Moreover, it is not because "the local populations cannot read Tibetan" (p. 120) that the inscriptions in this language are always smaller than the Chinese. The reason is simply that the language and writing of the coloniser take precedence over that of the colonised.

A lack of rigour is at the root of anachronisms but also inaccuracies such as on p. 53, where we learn that the tenth Karmapa lived in the seventeenth century "between Lijiang and Shangri-la." Although the choice of the very recent toponym of Shangri-la is perhaps understandable in a contemporary context, it is a pity that it is overused. Furthermore, the assertion (p. 61, and p. 61 n. 3) that "Lhasa was taken in three days (…) against which the Tibetan authorities had organised no resistance, since the Dalai Lama had already fled to India" is difficult to defend. Whilst it is true that the Dalai Lama did leave for Dromo (Yatung) in the valley of Chumbi (central Tibet) in the face of the Chinese advance in 1950, it was only in 1959 that he fled to India.

The third section, which deals with the creation of the park, is by far the best. Valérie Vandenabeele explains the intrigues and issues surrounding the park, the objectives of the various players, and the methods they used to achieve them. The important role of the Diqing authorities and the benefit Beijing gained from opening this "national park with provincial status" are highlighted.

Work based on Chinese sources would be totally legitimate provided it defined its boundaries more modestly, and was presented, for example, as an analysis of Chinese discourse and practices in a context of colonisation. It is more than regrettable that the author did not have the benefit of a co-direction by a Tibetologist. Moreover, certain articles that might have given a Tibetan point of view on the region in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were not consulted (Peter Schwieger 2010; 2011; 2016).

Nonetheless, despite the weaknesses described above, Valérie Vandenabeele's work has the merit of showing how economic development of the region has been achieved through the creation of Pudacuo Park, with the aim of attracting mass tourism but with no consideration whatsoever for environmental damage, and accompanied by the folklorisation of the local culture, a phenomenon that can be seen in other Tibetan regions.

▌Translated by Elizabeth Guill.

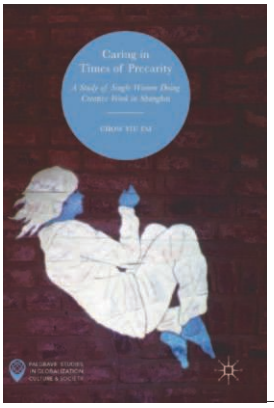
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GLADYS PAK LEI CHONG

Single women in China, socially stigmatised and marginalised as *shengnü* (剩女, literally, leftover women), are popular subjects of cultural productions that deserve but are yet to receive systematic scholarly attention. Yiu Fai Chow's *Caring in Times of Precarity: A Study of Single Women Doing Creative Work in Shanghai* is a pioneering study that examines the relationship between single women and creative work. Apart from being an academic, Chow is also a creative writer, and this role has given him "direct access" and curiosity for this exceptional ethnographic and political project. The author has brought his observations in the East Asian context to a theoretical level, shedding new light on the dynamics and complexities of precarity, while also shifting the gaze from the political economy to the politics of (self)-care.

This book is distinguished by its resistance to "dishistorizing and flattening precarious experiences" (p. 13). Chow discerningly draws "Asia as method" (Chen 2010) to accentuate the use of Shanghai and China so as to enrich and rethink the theoretical scholarship in single womanhood and precarity in creative work. By bringing in the subjective experiences of single women, the author demonstrates the importance of empirical understanding that

does not universalise precarious experiences. It challenges the dominant understanding and critique of precarity – "increasing informalization, flexibilization, and precarization of employment" (p. 12) – that gravely overlooks intersectional subjective experiences. Although sharing similar experiences of exploitation, long working hours, and job insecurity, these single women in creative industries "do like the work they do and find ways to do" (p. 14), and their experiences are "affectively different from one posited by critical thinkers" (p. 16). The author argues for the politics of recognition (p. 19) that acknowledge individuals' ability to refuse social expectations, and to care for themselves.

The contents of the book are well-organised and presented with a strong sense of coherence. Its nine chapters are well-connected with each other, but each can easily be turned into independent reading on a specific aspect in singlehood studies. The book's empirical and analytical core lies in chapters 3 to 8. The introductory chapter provides an investigative framework of this study of single women in Shanghai along with two intersecting areas of study: 1) single woman studies and 2) creative class and precarity. Chow presents a comprehensive scholarship in these fields, skilfully bringing them into dialogue.

Chapter 2 examines the media representations of single women in popular cultural productions. The author first offers a lucid overview of these representations across a wide array of genres and platforms, from dating shows to TV dramas. This is followed by a detailed textual analysis of *Ode to Joy* (*Huanle Song* 歡樂頌), the most popular TV drama series in mainland China in 2016, about five single women living in the same Shanghai residential complex. Chow's analysis demonstrates powerfully how popular media productions can represent "the symbolic realities single women in China have to live with" (p. 73). Chapter 3 examines how these single women experience the generational discourses – the post-1970s (*qilinghou* 七零後), the post-1990s (*jiulinghou* 九零後), and the post-1980s (*balinghou* 八零後). The author draws on three women's narratives of their generational experiences to investigate the merits and limitations of such generational discourses, urging readers to consider the intra- and intergenerational complexities.

Chapter 4 examines the intertwining relationship between single lives and their creative work. Chow engages critically with studies in creative work. Paying specific attention to informants' experiences in creative work and start-ups (*chuangye* 創業), he proposes to look beyond the concerns of exploitation and alienation, at least briefly, to understand a sense of achievement experienced by these single women in creative work. Chow unfolds three overlapping scenarios about the mutual constitutions of singlehood and creative work, calling for the urgent need to insert gendered perspective in creative work studies. Chapter 5 inquires further into these single women's lives in domains of intimacy. Not only does he discuss parental persuasion against singlehood, including matchmaking (*xiangqin* 相親), but, more intriguingly, Chow demonstrates the various tactics these single women use to reject these social pressures and their tactics for finding a partner (e.g. Love Club).

Chapter 6 is a unique case study that examines single women's after-work lives. Intrigued by the informants' devotion to *Kunqu* (昆曲), the author investigates how and why this traditional operatic art builds an "informal society" (p. 189). It extends sociality among creative labourers beyond the professional sphere by engaging debates on community, citizenship, and fan studies. Chapter 7 explores an alternative research method – "mattering map" – to look into these women's spatial relationship with Shanghai. From their mobile narratives to Shanghai and daily (im)mobility, Chow probes into the issues of belonging, security, convenience (*fangbian* 方便), choice, and freedom, and above all their rights in the city. Chapter 8 creatively employs a visual methodology – "cultural probing" – to let the informants use their creative skills to express and represent themselves. These self-portraits vigorously display these women's intense longing for change and transformation. In the epilogue (Chapter 9), Chow critically reflects on how he, "not a single woman," can "speak on their behalf" (p. 287). He closes this book with an eloquent quote from D. H. Lawrence – "Ours is essentially a tragic age, so we refuse to take it tragically" (p. 288) – hope despite desperate circumstances.

Caring in Times of Precarity is well-structured and innovative in design, methodologically rich and strong in combining conventional qualitative interviews and ethnographic research methods with alternative ones, such as mapping and cultural probing. The narrative accounts of informants' lives present not simply data or research materials, but also lively sharing that lures readers to engage, think, and reflect on their struggles, joys, pain, and hope. Chow's criticality and reflectiveness is revealed in how he successfully bridges the relationship with the informants as a friend and as an academic.

This book is full of valuable insights, engaging brilliantly with theoretical debates and existing literature on creative industries, singlehood, sex and gender studies, Chinese and Asian studies, and fandom studies. Chow's work, as part of the European Commission's funded research project on Asian woman in Shanghai and Delhi, has powerfully generated curiosity, urgency, and importance toward contemporary Asian women that invites further comparative studies of the regional, national, cultural, social class, and age impacts on singlehood. *Caring in Times of Precarity* will be a classic and a must-read for those interested in singlehood and creative industries.

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