the White Snake Demon—as blood and hair of the single Bodhisattva Guanyin. Her death in childbirth was caused by the demon. By subduing her demon double and reuniting with it in death, Chen Jinggu overcame her bad death, as well as her kinship roles in the Confucian tradition, and became a female divinity. Baptandier argues that this cult represents the fundamental conflict between the role of women's fertility to ensure the Confucian patriline and their alchemical pursuit of an immortal self. Women could assume a prominent place in Chinese religions only through a social and biological rejection of their roles in male lineages. The career of a female medium in modern Taiwan demonstrates the contemporary currency of Chen Jinggu's legacy (chapter 10).

Baptandier's assumption of Chinese ritual traditions as "of Daoism and the popular religion that is a manifestation of it" (p. 2), however, raises questions. To what extent did Daoists use ideas of internal alchemy to reinvent the medium cult of Chen Jinggu? What is the role, if any, of popular Buddhism in shaping the cult? Readers would like to learn more about the historical trajectory of the cult's development in modern times and whether the cult's symbolic meanings have changed for its followers. A Chinese glossary would be very helpful, especially when the meanings of many characters and terms are critical for the author's argument.

Overall, this book is full of insightful analysis. It greatly enriches our understanding of the symbols of the "feminine" and the role of women in Chinese religious culture. We should also thank Kristine Ingrid Fryklund for a lucid translation. The book is a must-read for scholars and graduate students of gender and Chinese religions.

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The Chinese Cultural Revolution: A History. By Paul Clark. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008. xii, 352 pp. $80.00 (cloth); $22.99 (paper).
doi:10.1017/S0021911809000771

In this cultural history, Paul Clark argues that the Cultural Revolution was much more than disastrous chaos. Rather than being a wasteland in which the arts were limited to a handful of hyperpoliticized model works, in Clark's view, the period witnessed considerable artistic innovation and success. Reminiscent of Joseph Levenson's argument in *Revolution and Cosmopolitanism: The Western Stage and the Chinese Stages* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1971), Clark sees the Cultural Revolution not as a historical rupture, but as part of a long-term twentieth-century modernization project.

Clark's survey covers opera, film, theater, dance, fine arts, and literature. For Clark's purposes, "culture" does not include jokes, holidays, clothing, food, and other aspects of nonelite life. Thus, Clark's goal of going beyond elite politics

to explore "what these years meant for the ordinary citizen" (p. 2) is stymied by his narrow definition of culture. Even so, Clark's book should put to rest the old canard that culture during the Cultural Revolution meant "eight-hundred million people watching eight shows" (*ba yi ren kan ba ge xi*, p. 2). Red Guards staged unique dramas, foreign films were screened, local troupes presented variations on the model works and created new productions, and sent-down youth circulated subversive writings. Especially after 1971, official and underground works expanded significantly. By taking the efforts of talented artists seriously and by bringing to light a rich variety of cultural offerings, Clark has filled a gap in our understanding of the period.

Some readers may complain that Clark's focus on artistic achievement turns a blind eye to the Cultural Revolution's repression and violence. While Clark is certainly aware of widespread suffering, only a few pages are devoted to disruptive persecution and factionalism in cultural work units (pp. 117–18). But this type of criticism is largely unfair. Clark's point is that exclusive focus on the period's horrors obscures important details of cultural production.

More troubling are shortcomings related to sources and methodology. Although scholarship on the Cultural Revolution remains constrained by political fears and closed archives, it is now possible to draw upon underground sources (diaries, manuscripts, and files sold at used book markets), archival documents (a number of archives have been quite open in recent years, especially with materials related to the cultural sphere), memoirs, and interviews. Recent works that best exemplify this trend include Roderick MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals's *Mao's Last Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006) and the essays in *The Chinese Cultural Revolution as History*, edited by Joseph W. Esherick, Paul G. Pickowicz, and Andrew G. Walder (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2006).

At first glance, Clark's sources seem impressive. I counted at least eight interviews in the footnotes, as well as five archival documents (four from the China Film Archive Library and one from Archives New Zealand), plus colorful observations from Clark's time as a student at Peking University in the mid-1970s. But aside from these examples, two types of sources dominate: articles from journals and newspapers of the 1960s and 1970s, and recent books and articles by Chinese scholars. It is important to draw upon secondary literature, and Clark deserves credit for bringing the contributions of Chinese authors to an English-language readership. The trouble is that Clark tends to reproduce his sources' weaknesses, which include a lack of human color and personality, and a tendency to list names and titles encyclopedically.

This is a minor quibble compared with the half conclusions that appear when Clark uses contemporary sources but reads them uncritically, or when he fails to take the crucial second step of in-depth research necessary to grasp the Cultural Revolution's complex politics. For example, instead of speculating on the likely differences between Jiang Qing's original speech on Peking opera in 1964 and the official published version of 1967 (p. 275), why not track down the original source and resolve the question? Instead of accepting at face value a 1975 report about opera-singing villagers in suburban Tianjin and concluding that

"[t]he results were impressive" (p. 82), why not go beyond the propaganda to ask what really happened? And instead of voicing suspicions about the authenticity of peasant paintings from Hu County in Shaanxi Province (pp. 208–9), why not get to the bottom of the story and explain how production actually worked?

The costs of staying safely on the surface are errors of fact: In 1975, Xiaojinzhuang was in Tianjin municipality, not Hebei Province (p. 104); Wang Guangmei went to Taoyuan, not the fictionalized Taofeng (p. 233). More importantly, Clark misses a chance to portray the full humanity and complexity of the Cultural Revolution. Clark's work is an important first step and a useful reference on the diverse culture of the period. However, only by digging deeper and making fuller use of grassroots sources can we better understand the era's tensions and contradictions.

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Tears from Iron: Cultural Responses to Famine in Nineteenth-Century China. By Kathryn Edgerton-Tarpley. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2008. xxiii, 332 pp. $39.95 (cloth).
doi:10.1017/S0021911809000783

The "Incredible Famine" of 1876–79, which claimed between 9 million and 13 million lives, was the second most lethal famine in China's history. Only the Great Leap disaster (1959–61) killed more people. Through the imaginative use of local sources gathered on visits to Shanxi Province, Kathryn Edgerton-Tarpley provides an insightful account of the episode and describes a perfect storm of severe drought, serial crop failures, a beleaguered Qing state, and transportation problems that proved to be deadly impediments to relief efforts. The numbers and images are shocking. Shanxi, the epicenter of the disaster, lost one-third of its population; in some counties, up to 80 percent of the people perished. Families were forced to make agonizing decisions about sacrificing some members so that others could live. Beyond capturing such traumatic experiences, the core of the book explores debates about the meaning of the famine, and it analyzes images of women and cannibalism as examples of the "semiotics of starvation" (p. 159ff). Edgerton-Tarpley convincingly demonstrates that for survivors and observers, interpretations of the Incredible Famine varied widely. By juxtaposing local accounts against elite debates and drawing parallels to contemporaneous disasters in Ireland and India, the book provides both "ground-level" and panoramic views of an event that fatally transformed Shanxi's landscape.

The book is divided into three sections. The first part recounts the course of the disaster, drawing from survivor accounts that describe the experience of famine in moving and disturbing detail. The second part shows how observers explained the famine in divergent ways, as local literati, high imperial officials, treaty port residents, missionaries, and Chinese philanthropists debated its causality, assigned blame, and proposed solutions. The third part explores cultural images