

Although the book does not set out to explain the mechanism by which social tensions and ideological conflicts in reform-era China are articulated in the production of mainstream culture, the author highlights the crucial role of writers/intellectuals in turning mainstream culture into a site of contestation. She observes that “these new debates [regarding different assessments of the economic/market reforms, legacies of Chinese socialism and the communist revolution, and the ideological positions that inform the different assessments] [...] are manifested in television dramas when writer/critic/scholar intellectuals engage with this major form of storytelling, either in creative or in critical terms” (163). This crucial insight points to a story that has yet to be told of the “changed and changing relationships between mainstream culture and intellectuals” (163). Another story that remains untold concerns viewers’ role in the collective meaning-making processes. As the book urges critics to take mainstream dramas seriously, one wonders about how those who already do so, i.e. the large numbers of ordinary Chinese viewers, come up with their own critical readings and interpretive frames. In sum, Xueping Zhong’s book is of inestimable value to anyone who takes interest in Chinese media, culture and society. It provides numerous insights into the complexity and ambivalence that characterize Chinese television dramas, and serves as a powerful reminder of the value of refocusing our attention to the “most invisible place right underneath a light” (9).

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SHANGHAI’S DANCING WORLD: Cabaret Culture and Urban Politics, 1919-1954. By **Andrew David Field**. *Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2010. xv, 364 pp. (Tables, maps, B&W photos, illus.) US\$25.00, paper. ISBN 978-962-996-448-1.*

This is a refreshingly well-written and richly detailed account of the world of cabarets, nightclubs and elite ballrooms in Shanghai during its jazz-inspired “golden age” from 1919 to 1954, as well as a wider social history of this important city during an extraordinary period of political upheaval in China. It intertwines its stories about nightlife adeptly with critical episodes in modern Chinese history, and is therefore also a story about China itself, as well as about its most hedonist city. Others have described Shanghai’s famous nightlife too, but this book is based on previously untapped government documents, newspapers, magazines, novels, photo archives and other materials, and stands out as the most comprehensive and most detailed source on the subject. The book is a must for any library about modern China. I recommend it too for non-China readers who are interested in urban social history, as well as for readers in general who simply want something interesting, fun and intelligent to read. The book is that good; Andrew David

Field, an independent scholar-historian, is to be congratulated and deserves to be recognized for his accomplishment.

Shanghai's Dancing World is organized chronologically and is divided into two major parts, one about the rise of jazz and related nightlife in Shanghai in the 1920s and 1930s in the context of the city's foreign settlements and rising modernity, and the other about the decline and fall of the same in the 1940s and 1950s under Japanese imperial rule, the return to power in 1945 of Chinese Nationalist government, and then the transformational rule of the Communist Party. The details are fascinating. In part 1 we trace the invasion of jazz into the ultra-formal world of "Shanghaianders and their Balls" (21), see the emergence of the city's first jazz cabarets, witness the spread of "dance madness" among a segment of the Chinese population, and study the architectural splendor of grand nightclubs and ballrooms such as Ciro's, the Paramount, and the Paradise ballroom, a taxi-dance hall built into the Sun Company Department Store, among other developments. Along the way we meet Shanghai's personalities: Buck Clayton and his Harlem Gentlemen band at the Canidrome ballroom near the greyhound track in the French Concession; American jazz band leader Whitey Smith who in 1927 entertained 1,300 guests in the Majestic Hotel ballroom at the lavish wedding celebration of Chiang Kai-shek and Soong Mei-ling; popular Chinese dancer Li Lina, an employee of the Black Cat, a Paris-style cabaret in the Paris Hotel on Tibet Road that was a favorite among a Chinese clientele; and impresario Al Israel who was referred to as the "Ziegfield of Shanghai." He owned a popular nightclub-gambling den named Del Monte and is said to have met trains from Harbin to ply Russian women with champagne and offer them work as hostesses and dancers. A detour takes us across the Garden Bridge to a district in Hongkou near the Huangpu River that was known as the Trenches where we read about gambling, prostitution and other vices enjoyed by foreign sailors. Highlights of the second half of the book include insights to Shanghai's Green Gang mobsters, criminality and alliances with the Guomindang in the New World Amusement Center and other cabarets in wartime; the special role as national icons that befell cabaret hostesses at this time; the formation of the Shanghai Cabaret Guild and regulation of the cabaret industry by the Nationalist government in the mid-1940s; and what is called the Dancers' Uprising in 1948. The last chapter outlines the final demise of the Shanghai's dancing world during the 1949-1954 building of a new society by the Communist government.

The book never loses sight of the fact that the frivolity enjoyed in Shanghai by the privileged leisure class was made possible by the labour and sufferings of the urban lumpenproletariat. This truth is firmly established in the introduction, where Field cites a 1932 short story by Mu Shiying called "Shanghai Foxtrot" that describes the city as a "maelstrom of decadence with a seething undercurrent of discontent," and is discussed again in the epilogue, where the author discusses the paradox of studying happy nightlife

to learn about social inequality and Chinese national conflicts. Other pluses are 58 wonderful illustrations that range from photographs or drawings of prominent musicians and dancers, to photographs and blueprints of architectural splendour in the city's best ballrooms, to photographs of old dance hall tickets and magazine covers about Shanghai gaiety. There is also an appendix rich with data about individual establishments and their employees, as well as genuinely helpful endnotes and a fine bibliography. From beginning to end *Shanghai's Dancing World* is an enlightening and enjoyable experience.

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JAPAN IN WORLD HISTORY. *New Oxford World History.* By James L. Huffman. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010. xiv, 156 pp. (Maps, B&W photos.) US\$19.95, paper. ISBN 978-0-19-536808-6.

Robert Frost famously criticized free verse poetry because he believed writing it was like “playing tennis without a net.” In poetry, for Frost, some things just needed to be there. James Huffman manages to fit an elegant survey of the entire length of Japanese history into this slim volume, but only by leaving out many of the details, and the result sometimes seems like a game of tennis played without a net. The book is well written, being both accessible and concise, but it will make more sense to readers who already know the history of Japan well. According to the editors’ preface it is part of a series “that offers readers an informed, lively, and up-to-date history of the world and its people...” (ix), and the brevity of the book probably derives from the requirements of the editors. Huffman has delivered what the editors wanted—an informed, lively and up-to-date history of Japan—but at the cost of omitting much of the context that would help deepen readers’ understanding of Japanese history.

The book is organized into seven chapters, starting with prehistory and proceeding through periods of aristocratic rule and warrior rule, followed by the early modern period. Huffman fits this explanation of more than a millennium of premodern Japanese history into 71 pages. He explains Japan’s modern history in just under sixty pages, dividing it into chapters that cover from the end of the Tokugawa period to the Russo-Japanese War, from the Russo-Japanese War to World War II, and from the end of World War II to the present. The end matter includes a brief chronology, endnotes, suggestions for further reading and a helpful list of websites about Japanese history and culture.

The organization of the book resembles a typical college-level survey of Japanese history, and Huffman mentions nearly every major historical figure that one would want to see in a survey. He also mentions most of the