

respiratory syndrome (SARS) outbreak of 2002–2003. Based on engaging reading communities and how they are shaped by censorship, the author examines how both works highlight the displacement of participatory publics in a post-Tiananmen era.

Chen's book does an admirable job at remembering and examining works related to the Movement, though its argument on censorship as productive is not necessarily as novel as it claims to be. The theorization could benefit from a more rigorous engagement with the works of Michel Foucault and Judith Butler, including the latter's *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (1997, Routledge), and Geremie Barmé's chapter "History for the masses," which suggests that "every policy shift in recent [Chinese] history has involved the rehabilitation, re-evaluation and revision of history and historical figures" (in Jonathan Unger (ed.) *Using the Past to Serve the Present: Historiography and Politics in Contemporary China*, Routledge, 1993, p. 260). It is also unfortunate for the book to have overlooked Mao Zedong's *Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art* in 1942, the discursive roots of which continue to fuel the censorious practice of denouncing objectionable works while establishing exemplary ones for writers to model in post-socialist China today.

Chen is impassioned in his commitment to calling out "the banning of books and films," "the tailoring of memory" and the "molding of the public." (p. 175) However, the writing style tends towards the lyrical and, at times, the hyperbolic. These rhetorical flourishes often dilute the cogency of ideas in the book. Just one of the numerous examples is, "TV programming glorified soldiers and their selfless sacrifice and (re)called the audience to the republic forged in the flames of war and to the canonical tradition of obedience to organization" (p. 71).

Concluding with the notion that the "public-making of censorship is always a work in progress" (p. 173), the book judiciously links the state discourse of "prohibition and proselytization" (p. 11) on Tiananmen to COVID-19 in the conclusion chapter. For scholars, university tutors, students and China observers who work on Chinese literature, cinema, history and politics related to the Movement, this book will be of interest and relevance.

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China's Grandmothers: Gender, Family, and Ageing from Late Qing to Twenty-First Century

Diana Lary. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022. 261 pp. £22.99 (pbk). ISBN 9781009073622

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Chinese grandmothers have played a crucial role in Chinese families as essential caregivers for grandchildren, in the Qing dynasty as in the 21st Century. Although women have been easily marginalized and overlooked, especially in the public realm, by traditional historical narratives in China's patriarchal society, they have found ways to be active and influential in their own lives and in those of surrounding others through the remarkable grandparents–children–grandchildren relationships within families. *China's Grandmothers*, by Diana Lary, uses the experiences of Chinese grandmothers from the late Qing dynasty to the present as a lens to provide vivid pictures of intergenerational relationships and interactions in Chinese families. By locating various Chinese

grandmothers' experiences – as caregivers and educators to their grandchildren, as transmitters of traditional culture, custom and skills within generations, as household managers or matriarchs – in the broader societal context, this book demonstrates the changes and continuities of the roles and power of grandmothers in Chinese families in modern history and nowadays.

This book's main body includes 13 chapters that explore various aspects of life experienced by Chinese grandmothers from the early 20th century to the present. The early part of this book, from chapters one to five, introduces the multiple roles that grandmothers play in traditional Chinese families. The later part, from chapters six to thirteen, includes diverse topics, ranging from what old-age life looks like for grandmothers and grandfathers in changing Chinese societies (as a result of war, Cultural Revolution, or the rural–urban and China–abroad migration “fever” after China’s opening-up) to Chinese people’s philosophy of looking after self (seeking pleasures in old age and preparing for death with dignity) and contributing to the collective family by providing emotional, physical and financial support to their grandchildren. All chapters display smooth connections and thought-provoking comparisons between historical events and current phenomena to unpack the challenges faced by Chinese society. For example, historically, the Confucian moral code of filial piety and the traditional family structure guaranteed “non-conditional” life security in old age. However, nowadays, the relationship between the older and younger generations can become an exchange of resources, support and care. For some grandparents, being caregivers to grandchildren seems to be the precondition of claiming their right to be supported by their children in old age. One cannot question grandparents’ sincere love for their grandchildren, but it might be worth recognizing that today, in some families, looking after grandchildren might be a decision that is motivated not only by love but also by instrumental considerations. Furthermore, through discussing the shortages of the current social welfare system – pension, health service, education, employment in China and the consequences of Chinese family policies such as the one-child policy – Lary shows that both the senior population and the younger generations (e.g. migrant workers and left-behind children) have to cope with difficult challenges to live a decent life.

Throughout the book and particularly in the final chapter, Lary offers a personal record of her family history through the same focus on grandmothers’ lives and their impact on family. By sharing her own experiences of being a grandchild and a grandmother, a strong personal account has been added to this book. This personal record crosses the cultural, geographical and temporal boundaries to build up live “dialogues” with these Chinese grandmothers. I laughed when I read the family story shared by Lary about her grandmother’s prescribed “gold-standard in the late nineteenth century” (p. 41) milk-stimulating food – several pints of Guinness a day for three months!

Extraordinarily rich sources, including photos, paintings, tales, proverbs and poems, autobiographies and interviews are well linked, triangulated and analysed in this book. These sources not only illustrate the lives of Chinese grandmothers over the past century but also contribute to a broader understanding the principles that govern Chinese society and families and regulate Chinese people’s everyday lives: moral codes, gender rules, family structure and practice, childcare and education. An in-depth analysis based on diverse primary sources challenges some stereotypical constructions of family practice in China. For example, narratives of interactions between grandmothers and grandchildren demonstrated in this book provide inspiring insights into the strong emotions and high level of intimacy in Chinese families. The Chinese are often constructed as people who tend to suppress the expression of intimacy in family practice – they don’t say “I love you” and rarely have intimate body contact, such as hugs and kisses – but these intergenerational interactions can show a high level of emotional intimacy. The widely recorded memories of love and warmth from grandmothers in childhood can also be good examples of carry-over emotions and emotional capital transmitted between generations in Chinese families.

In this book, a wide range of intersectional factors, including gender, age, socioeconomic status (class and urban or rural residence) and educational background have been brought into the analysis of Chinese women's experiences. These intersectional factors are put in changing historical, sociocultural, political and economic contexts in Chinese society. As a sociologist with research interests in childhood studies, especially children's everyday personal lives and relationships, I find this book's interdisciplinary contributions remarkable. It will benefit not only Chinese studies but also relevant disciplines, including history, literature, sociology, childhood studies, women studies and education. It is a helpful reference for a wide range of audiences – not only undergraduate and postgraduate students but also the public who are interested in family lives in China, especially in modern Chinese history.

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Mastery of Words and Swords: Negotiating Intellectual Masculinities in Modern China, 1890s–1930s

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That the nation-building project of the late Qing and early Republican era was distinctly male-centred is a fact often acknowledged, but the implications of this fact in terms of concepts of masculinity are rarely explored. Jun Lei's monograph seeks to address this with a focus on male intellectual discourse on masculinity from the 1890s to the 1930s, a period when stereotypes of the effeminate Chinese man developed into a source of consternation for many. This book explores how intellectuals utilized "violence" in various forms in order to grapple with both a national crisis and a perceived crisis of masculinity.

The book is divided into two parts. Part one, "Texts and Contexts," lays out how the "Man Question" emerged in the late-19th and early-20th centuries against the background of a crisis of national identity brought about by the influx of Western modernity, imperialist encroachment, war and civil war, as well as a crisis of status for intellectuals. Having established the broader context, Jun Lei proposes a series of paradigms through which to examine masculinity in this period. As well as referring to Kam Louie's highly influential paradigm of *wen* and *wu* or literary attainment and martial valour, she draws on theorists such as Goffman, emphasizing that masculinity is performative and plural. At the same time, she highlights the vital backdrop of uneven transcultural exchange between East and West that continued to play out as these new modes of masculinity were negotiated locally. Several new frameworks and paradigms are then developed as a means of tracing intellectuals' shifting performances of masculinity, ranging from "differentiation," "negation," "affirmation" and the "reappropriation of a feminine space" to the "brutalization of scholars." This latter term points us back to the author's particular focus on violence and gender.

The four chapters of part two follow a chronological path, examining various instances of intellectual masculine discourse. Chapter three explores how intellectuals in the late Qing and early