narratives. That said, all Xiongnu studies scholars face these criticisms and the text of *Peace and Peril* does not pretend to have superior solutions.

On a brief critical note, Markley unnecessarily claims an appended translation of *Xinshu* 4 is the first full English translation. Charles Sanft's inaugural dissertation, *Rule: A Study of Jia Yi's Xinshu* (Münster, 2005), offers near complete translations of this chapter. *Peace and Peril* also does not thoroughly contextualize the chosen *Shiji* edition (Zhonghua shuju) and determine its appropriateness against alternatives. *Peace and Peril*'s method and findings are solid, but claiming that the Han's offensive campaigns represented a "logical progression" and were "almost inevitable" is a wanting assumption. The claim to universal human and strategic "logic" is tenuous and filling in an absence of objective information with common sense is not ideal. Eurocentric concepts of the *realpolitik*, *parabellum* and Hobbesianism pervade Markley's explanations regarding causes of hostile Han–Xiongnu relations and thus represent only one side of ongoing epistemological debates. It perhaps stands to reason that Wu's offensive strategy was not inevitable but again predicated pragmatically on both domestic and international political conditions. The fact remains that although conflict remained the norm throughout the Former Han, Wu was still alone in choosing to break with policy precedent, and proposing what Wen would have done if there were no domestic unrest is speculation. The reviewer suggests Markley could also better classify the different types of Xiongnu raids. Rogue bandit parties surely did not equate to frontier invasions led by *chanyu*s or *xian* princes or the gamut between. Taking this into consideration, purely hostile characterizations based on frequency and quantity of conflict may change.

Peace and Peril is an outstanding contribution, producing a timeline of early Han–Xiongnu relations which can be taken as a standard that is as accurate as possible. This book is a timely and essential read for researchers of Han–Xiongnu relations, with a structure and clarity of argument that make it accessible to non-specialists. Myriad specific discrepancies (namely Gaozu's ineligible princess) identified within the SJ 110 narrative are also likely to inspire much-needed reassessment of accepted facts in this field.

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RIVI HANDLER-SPITZ:
Symptoms of an Unruly Age: Li Zhi and Cultures of Early Modernity.
xiii, 239 pp. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2017.
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In recent years, the early modern period has become a fruitful site for exploring global interactions, material and cultural, between China and the West. The trend began with historical works such as Andre Gunder Frank's *Reorient* and Kenneth Pomeranz's *Great Divergence*, was followed with literary studies exploring the Western imagination of China such as David Porter's *Ideographia*, and is now joined by literary investigations decentring Western-based narratives such as Ning Ma's *Age of Silver*. Rivi Handler-Spitz's *Symptoms of an Unruly Age* nicely adds to this last category of works, showing how the works of Li Zhi (1527–1702) shared

in the intellectual anxieties, cultural effervescence, and global flows that made the early modern world.

At first, *Symptoms of an Unruly Age* seems merely a conventional intellectual biography of an unconventional sixteenth-century Chinese man. Indeed, together with her recently co-edited translations of Li Zhi's work, Handler-Spitz's book can be read simply to learn more about this fascinating scholar who infamously tempted the authorities to ban his writing by entitling them *A Book to Be Burned* and *A Book to Keep Hidden*, and who ended up committing suicide in prison after having been accused of spreading "outrageous and transgressive judgments". To accomplish this, Handler-Spitz, a remarkably clear writer, deftly interweaves her own observations and analyses of Li Zhi's work with numerous translations of primary texts, allowing the book to serve as a short and insightful introduction to Li Zhi's thought and late-Ming intellectual life in general.

Upon closer investigation, however, the book turns out to be much more than a smartly written biography of a fascinating late Ming man. By consistently exploring the literary and intellectual similarities between China and Europe, the study transforms into a smart investigation of how to situate such a man in a much larger, early modern world. Handler-Spitz accomplishes this globalized intellectual history in six chapters, each of which compares a different aspect of Li Zhi's writing with European parallels. Li Zhi's insistence on linguistic clarity and moral rectitude, for instance, is shown to echo the thinking of Michel de Montaigne (1533–92). His deliberately puzzling prefaces resemble similarly ironic prologues to Rabalais' 1534 *Gargantua*. His play with sartorial conventions, most notably his insistence on combining Confucian robes and beard with a "Buddhist" shaved head, echo similar sumptuary concerns and fashionable playfulness found in early modern Europe. Finally, his call for critical reading in an age of print-cultural expansion recalls the imagery of "baking books" in Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528) while the more general late Ming anxieties caused by increasing flows of silver juxtapose nicely with the depiction of weighing specie in Johanned Vermeer (1632–75).

In each case, Handler-Spitz not only notes the similarities, but also points out some of the salient differences between early modern Europe and China. For instance, Li Zhi, like his European contemporaries, was concerned about the increasingly empty rhetoric that marked the writing of the age. Yet unlike Desiderius Erasmus (1466–1536), he did not write in an age when canonical texts, such as the Bible, were translated into an increasingly broad array of vernaculars. Nor did he draw on the age-old image of Babel to theorize this diversification of language. Instead Li Zhi based his critique of the current linguistic situation on the old notion of *zhengming*, or rectifying names, and suggested a programme of linguistic orthodoxy to rectify the situation. Similarly, though late Ming China resembled early modern Europe in that it saw a remarkable expansion of printed text, the technique of printing itself had existed for hundreds of years, a marked difference with Guttenberg's mid-fifteenth-century "invention" of the printing press.

If the chapters convincingly portray a shared set of symptoms that marked this unruly age in both China and Europe, sometimes one wishes that Handler-Spitz had spent less time on comparing the parallels between these two places and more time on making the connections between them. Gunder Frank's idea of a world-system was based on a web of economic and material interconnections. In contrast, Handler-Spitz offers a series of cultural similarities. As a result, one wonders: what caused the remarkable parallels? An economic base of global commodity and silver flows? A technological shift that increased production and consumption of printed text? When Handler-Spitz does highlight some of the flows between East and West, the results are fascinating, bringing what we might call a literary

world-system into focus. Such is the case, for instance, when she ends her chapter comparing Chinese and European linguistic rectitude with a discussion of the way in which European intellectuals projected their desire for a pure, unadulterated language onto the supposedly hieroglyphic Chinese script. Unfortunately, there are not enough such discussions to allow for a sustained argument, leaving us with an intriguing number of comparison points, but no clear relationship between them.

If Handler-Spitz does not directly answer the question as to how the literary and intellectual writing of the early modern world was connected, her remarkable ability to uncover some of these literary convergences does allow us to begin asking this question. Moreover, by taking the writing of Li Zhi as a starting point as opposed to a mere curious alternative to a supposedly paradigmatic early modern Europe, she crucially decentres earlier Western-based comparisons. As such, Spitz's *Symptoms of an Unruly Age*, together with other recent works such as Ning Ma's *Age of Silver*, makes for a very good beginning in trying to locate what we might call an early modern "literary world-system".

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BARBARA HOSTER:
Konversion zum Christentum in der modernen chinesischen Literatur: Su Xuelins Roman Jixin *(Dornenherz, 1929)*.
(Deutsche Ostasienstudien 29.) vi, 322 pp. Gossenberg: OSTASIEN Verlag, 2017. €35.80. ISBN 978 3 946114 30 7.
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Conversion to Christianity is a powerful concept which, in the case of China's modern history, evokes the most controversial reactions, ranging from intercultural exchange to the outright imposition of colonial superstructures. Barbara Hoster's doctoral research topic is, however, of a distinctly different nature. Rather than analysing the impact of Western missions overseas, Hoster dissects the mind of a young woman, who had arrived during the 1920s in France as a student and whose profuse writings focused on the encounter of different cultural, political and not least gender-related discourses in the shape of people who became part of the young author's life. "Conversion to Christianity in modern Chinese literature: Su Xuelin's novel *Jixin* (Heart of Thorns, 1929)" thus describes the tribulations of a young woman who felt at odds with the "progressive" winds which were sweeping the intellectual landscape of the 1920s, and who reacted by seeking solace in the spiritual world which she encountered during her sojourn at the Institut Franco-Chinois in Lyon during the early 1920s.

Su Xuelin 蘇雪林 (1897–1999) was the daughter of a traditional scholar official family in the Lower Yangtse Valley, who had thus become imbued with the "Confucian" / 儒學 value system in the late imperial Chinese tradition. Simultaneously, Su Xuelin aspired to be educated to the same degree as her father and his fellow male intellectuals, resulting in schooling provided by American missionaries and pedagogical training at the provincial normal university of Anhui. Not content with secondary education, Su Xuelin enrolled at the Beijing Normal Women's College 北京高等女子師範 in 1919 – coinciding with the literary and political storm which the May Fourth movement would engender. But the fact that a young woman was aiming for the same challenges and privileges as her