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but the 'palaces of industry', which were welcomed by the industrialists' idea of modernity, affected the bodies of people living nearby. Working in these new urban spaces, often in miserable conditions, had a great impact on the lives of the working forces. This is a well-known and documented story, but Kenny makes us aware 'how corporeal concerns underlay the varying discourses through which the urban environment was constructed' (p. 86). But even the body itself was represented through industrial metaphors, as machines of great productivity, but 'subject to deterioration and overuse' (p. 118). Once the work was done, the workers turned to the poorest, bleakest places. Kenny's discussion of the homes not only shows middle-class obsessions with decency, moral standards and deep-rooted fears of public disorder and vice, but also how these obsessions were 'bolstered by the increasingly rigid distinction between spaces and activities considered public, and those understood to be of private nature' (p. 121). Clean, tidy and well-kept houses were fundamental in enhancing families' morality. Besides, the language the hygienists used in order to move the public authorities into action was based on bodily experiences. From a gender perspective, women bore a particular responsibility, as a comfortable home would prevent their men from getting out, protecting them from alcohol abuse. The public sphere of the city was manifested in street scenes, the final chapter of Kenny's bodily experiences. Streets underwent a significant transformation in the era of modernization, highlighted not just by the construction of major, sensory delightful boulevards of leisure and consumption, but also the side-effects of the reorganization of public spaces. The risks associated with modern traffic (automobiles, trams), massive public street gatherings and modern boulevards were that, supposedly, criminal types would be attracted, turning the modern city into a place of danger. Modern streets also induced new discussions about the body itself, manifested in sensorial debates on public toilets and the routes of funeral processions.

Kenny's 'spatial-bodily' journey has delivered a very rich book, written in an evocative style. It is a pity the publisher did not put more effort into increasing the visibility of the images. They are more than just illustrations of the text, as the images are vital visual sources and would help the author in advancing his arguments. This criticism aside, urban historians who are sceptical of cultural and sensorial history should read this book, as it sheds a challenging new light on the interplay between sensorial encounters and the city. *The Feel of the City* shows how sensual histories reveal a different understanding of modernity, confronting the rationalist, sophisticated planning and economic models with a more intuitive and bodily reading of cities.

Paul van de Laar
Erasmus University Rotterdam

Kristin Stapleton, *Fact in Fiction: 1920s China and Ba Jin's Family*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016. ix + 296pp. 20 images. 2 tables. 2 maps. $85.00/£73.00 hbk. $25.95/£21.99 pbk.
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Ba Jin's (1904–2005) *Family* is one of the best-known novels of China's twentieth century. First serialized in 1931–32, it tells a story of inter-generational conflict in a

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wealthy urban family loosely based on Ba Jin's own upbringing in the inland city of Chengdu. The drama in the novel centres on the tension between the patriarchal Confucianism of the older generations and the radical zeal of youth during and after the May Fourth student movement of 1919. The sympathies of the anarchist Ba Jin lie with his student characters, who struggle for social and political change in a conservative urban environment dominated by the strictures of elite patriarchs and the depredations of warlord soldiers.

Kristin Stapleton's *Fact in Fiction* brings together Ba Jin's novel and the history of Chengdu in the early twentieth century. In this astute dissection of a traditional Chinese city in the throes of change, fiction and history each bring the other to life. On the one hand, Stapleton uses the vivid characters and set-piece scenes of *Family* to pique our interest in the urban past and draw attention to those dark corners of city life that are sometimes missing from more familiar historical sources; on the other hand, she uses real people and events in Chengdu to flesh out, and sometimes challenge, the perspectives of the novel.

Fact in Fiction begins with one of the most memorable characters in Ba Jin's fictional Gao household. Mingfeng is a *binü*: a 'slave girl' or 'bondmaid', a girl sold by a poor family to serve an elite household. A *binü*'s masters could sell her at will – hence Stapleton's preference for the translation 'slave girl' – and when she reached adulthood was expected to find her a position as a wife or concubine. Firmly behind the closed doors of elite households, the phenomenon of the slave girl is missing from most urban histories of this period, with their focus on public social and political life. Taking the character of Mingfeng as a starting point, Stapleton uses what limited sources are available – including a full translation of a slave girl contract – to shed light on *binü* lives.

In this first chapter, Stapleton uses *Family* to draw attention to a particular subaltern experience that is largely missing from history but is present in Ba Jin's fiction. Elsewhere, though, she offers a twofold critique – albeit a sympathetic one – on the limitations of Ba Jin's depiction of urban life in 1920s Chengdu. First, by focusing on a single household *Family* offers a very partial view of a complex and changing city. Second, Stapleton rejects Ba Jin's wholesale denunciation of Chengdu's traditional elites.

With the first of these shortcomings, Stapleton is, in a sense, offering the same critique that was levelled at *Family* during the Cultural Revolution – that it was too focused on the narrow circle of an elite family – but she turns it to the much more constructive purpose of opening out the setting of the novel to today's readers. Chengdu in the early 1920s was a walled city with a population of around 350,000, political capital and cultural centre of Sichuan Province, but still unconnected by railroad and rather isolated from the rest of China. Even for historians of the period, it is difficult to reconstruct a three-dimensional view of a medium-sized inland city, certainly compared to the more familiar world of cosmopolitan 1920s Shanghai. For today's readers of Ba Jin – not least students reading the novel as a set text – the lack of contextual information in the novel is a formidable barrier.

Fact in Fiction is therefore an invaluable companion for those reading the novel; even for those not studying Ba Jin it is a lucid and well-rounded introduction to Chinese cities in general as well as Chengdu in particular. In her central chapters, Stapleton uses a rich variety of sources to construct a comprehensive and accessible portrait of those aspects of Chengdu life only

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fleetingly mentioned in *Family*. She brings to life commerce, handicrafts, transport, urban improvement, foreign residents and the world of the beggars, actors, prostitutes and sedan chair bearers who made up most of the urban poor. The final three chapters give social and political context for those issues which do run through the novel: the place of women in society, the student movement and the tense relationship between radical students, warlord soldiers and secret societies on the streets of Chengdu. Especially in tandem with the readily available English-language translations of *Family*, this makes *Fact in Fiction* a valuable teaching tool for courses in both modern China and global urban history.

Perhaps more importantly, Stapleton's second critique of Ba Jin forces us to rethink ideas of change and progress in the urban history of modern China. In a thoughtful discussion of Chengdu's elite leaders, Stapleton shows that many were by no means the die-hard reactionaries of Ba Jin's caricature. Men (and some women) from scholar-elite families took a lead in promoting new ideas and policies to Chengdu, including women's education, mass literacy and western medicine. A little later, Chengdu elites of different generations and backgrounds coalesced around ideas of national 'construction' (*jianshe*) in infrastructure and industry, rendering marginal the anarchism and social radicalism of Ba Jin. This urban developmentalism, Stapleton seems to suggest, may have achieved rather more for Chengdu than the radicalism of the most fervent activists, many of whom – including, in 1923, Ba Jin himself – left for what they regarded as a more enlightened environment along the coast.

Stapleton thus calls into question the 'progressive' narrative of the twentieth century, still mainstream wisdom in China (and perhaps beyond), that the student radicalism of the May Fourth Movement was on the right side of history, overthrowing the corruption and stagnation of old ideas. This is not to say that there was no opposition to change – Chengdu was in many ways a profoundly conservative city – but that older elites were more diverse and less mendacious than Ba Jin's portrayal. Many were convivial, thoughtful and broad-minded across a range of ethical traditions; indeed, Stapleton mischievously suggests (pp. 65 and 80–1) that in some ways uncompromising student radicals such as Ba Jin may have had more in common with the minority of the elite who were zealous Confucian moralists than they cared to admit.

The stakes of such questions are high, not least because *Family* itself played such an important role in establishing this progressive version of China's twentieth-century history. It is here that Stapleton is perhaps a little too unsympathetic to the radical position and uncritical of those advocating more cautious reform. In rehabilitating the forward-thinking credentials of traditional elites, Stapleton sometimes seems to tell her own narrative of 'progress', evading the issue of what coercion, exclusion and reproduction of oligarchic control may have been present in measures of elite-led urban reform.

Nonetheless, *Fact in Fiction* successfully complicates Ba Jin's savage depiction of both old ideas and old elites. In doing so, it also opens the question of whether, instead of the revolutionary, centralizing Nationalist and Communist parties, a local, elite-led, reformist version of China's twentieth century might have been possible. In raising such bigger issues, *Fact in Fiction* becomes more than a superb tool for teaching and forces us to rethink the dynamics of change in Chinese urban

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life. It deserves a wide audience among historians of modern China and cities around the world.

Mark Baker
Yale University

Wladimir Fischer-Nebmaier, **Matthew P. Berg and Anastasia Christou (eds.),** *Narrating the City: Histories, Space and the Everyday*. New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2015. ix + 256pp. 23 figures. £64.00.
doi:10.1017/S0963926817000669

'Seeing like the *masa*' might be a good alternate title for this intriguing new edited collection, after the Venezuelan term referenced in chapter 2 to describe the variegated inhabitants of modern metropolises. Each of the seven chapters, ranging from Caracas to Zagreb, explores narratives of ordinary life as expressed through the notion of 'the everyday', and in particular how these narratives relate to the use of space in an urban setting. The editors state that their intention to 'understand the meaning of narrations in and about the city, and how they create spaces of the everyday'. With varying degrees of success, this concern for the ordinary ensures that the volume does indeed pull us down to the level of the *masa* and their lived experiences.

Whilst comprehensive, the introduction is a little misleading, seeming to argue that 'understanding the meaning of narrations in and about the city' is a novel phenomenon with the context of urban history. Although undertaking an exhaustive review of narrative theory, the implication that historians or indeed social scientists have not generally either '[listened] to stories or [read] written accounts as stories' is an odd claim in light of the chapters, which are openly indebted to precisely this kind of past scholarship. Andriy Zayarnyuk's study of the influence of Ukrainian nationalism in contemporary memoirs of L'viv draws out how a fictitious portrait of a 'comfortable and peaceful city', detached from its multiethnic and violent past, can shape the present. Similarly, Leeke Reinders' chapter focuses on a contested multiethnic setting, requiring his interviewees to create personal maps of their lived space around and on the Nieuwland estate in Schiedam in the Netherlands. Reinders aims for a 'shoulder-height' look at the regenerated estate, and he finds in residents' maps a clear dividing line between white Dutch residents and those of other ethnicities, with the 'empty spaces' on maps depicting 'the regulation of space to exclude undesirable elements'. In Ann Schober's piece on kino klubs in the former Yugoslavia, she draws out an interesting but fairly familiar tale of how a radical film movement can act as a space of dissidence in an otherwise totalitarian state. Denazifying post-war Vienna is the setting for Matthew P. Berg's more compelling chapter on housing allocation, which draws upon letters to the bureaucratic institutions of allocation to analyse the rhetorical strategies used by Social Democrats, victims of fascist crimes and ex-Nazis themselves to justify better accommodation. Ronald Johnston and Arthur McIvor make good use of oral history to demonstrate how workers in Clydeside came to be aware of the dangers of asbestos and organize against it through urban information channels, which more than anything else exemplifies how valuable, yet lamentably underused, the scope of industrial relations is to urban

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