

such as sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology. As an anthropologist, I see Tam's work as contributing to important conversations about the circulation of language ideologies within the world system, and the ongoing political dynamics that are transforming global linguistic diversity. This book therefore also helps demonstrate the importance of understanding China for any truly global approach to an historically informed understanding of the present.

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Silencing Shanghai: Language and Identity in Urban China

FANG XU

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Gloria Anzaldúa writes, "I am my language. Until I can take pride in my language, I cannot take pride in myself." (*Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, San Francisco, Aunt Lute Books, 2012, p. 81). Anzaldúa's powerful compilation of poetry and prose on Chicana identity asserts just how elemental language is to our sense of self. She cogently reminds us not only how the language we speak is fundamentally who we are as people, but also how full of violence and tragedy efforts to displace, diminish or suppress linguistic identities truly are.

This twinning of identity and language that Anzaldúa describes underpins the story of language loss in urban Shanghai told in Fang Xu's new book *Silencing Shanghai*. The book's focus is on the decline of both the usage of and prestige of Shanghainese, the Chinese language spoken by most of the city's residents that is quite distinct and mutually unintelligible with China's national language, Mandarin. Yet it seeks to tell a bigger story. Xu treats the decline of Shanghainese as an "aspect of broader transformations in urban China" (p. 2), placing it at the centre of the nexus of state policies, urban redevelopment and internal migration that have fundamentally reshaped the city in the past several decades. It is a thoughtful analysis of local identity in China that places questions of societal, cultural and political power at the forefront.

Xu's book joins a slate of new books and articles by authors such as Yurou Zhong, Jeffrey Weng, Uluğ Kuzuoğlu and Mariana Münning that explore the question of language politics in modern China. Hers, however, stands apart in its deft explanation of how class, indigeneity and proximity to levers of governmental power combine to affect local identity, creating a complex portrait of language loss. Similarly, her emphasis on how identity shapes and is shaped by urban change adds important thoughtfulness and depth to our overall understanding of the dizzying pace of urban transformation. It is thus a critical read for scholars not only of language, but also of urban studies, migration and class relations in contemporary China.

Xu supports her narrative of language decline primarily with interviews she conducted herself. The credibility of her work is sustained, in part, by her own positionality. She leverages her own identity as a linguistic insider, so to speak, to connect with her sources on a level of shared stakes in the stories and experiences they entrust her to tell. Her chapters are arranged thematically, each looking at a broader trajectory in Shanghai's multi-storied history that adds meaning to the usage of

Shanghainese and impetus to its rapid decline. After a short overview of Shanghai's complex modern history in chapter one, the second chapter explores the role of national language policies on the decline of Shanghainese, a chapter that undoubtedly has relevance to stories of language loss well beyond Shanghai's boundaries. Chapter three focuses on geographic displacement in modern Shanghai, showing how rapid changes to Shanghai's neighbourhood structure and urban layout have created "loss and alienation" among many of the city's residents. Chapters four and five explore the significance of intranational migration, both of which emphasize deeply how much language use intersects with class in determining the boundaries of Shanghainese identity. Thoughtfully, Xu shows how money and education can often expand a person's flexibility and agency in determining and expressing their own identity; this flexibility, however, has the effect of "further diminishing" the importance of already minoritized languages that are less tethered to power and economic opportunity than hegemonic languages such as Mandarin or even English (p. 27). Xu concludes by hinting at a "dim future" (p. 27): a global city that increasingly privileges a national or even global identity at the expense of its local one.

Perhaps my one critique of Xu's work is that, throughout the book, the decline of Shanghainese feels as much like an empirical reality as an inevitability. This sense of the inevitable is, in some ways, surprising. Xu does not shy away from recognizing the direct effect between central government "promote Mandarin" policies, policies whose ubiquity and reach she likens to a "panopticon" (p. 67). Xu also includes in her narrative instances of activism and resistance. Both these policies and the resistance against them, however, push back against the notion that linguistic loss is inevitable – both are human choices. What might Xu's thoughtful narrative look like if she had sought to observe empirical realities while still maintaining a more imaginative vision of possible futures? What kinds of suppressed presents might float to the surface when we question what we presume to be inevitable? Perhaps this might be the work of future scholars. If so, Xu's book will certainly be an important work to consult.

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Going to the Countryside: The Rural in the Modern Chinese Cultural Imagination, 1915–1965

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Both theoretically and empirically well-informed, Yu Zhang's *Going to the Countryside* develops a thought-provoking, innovative and interdisciplinary approach to better understand spatial movements from the city to the countryside through cultural imaginaries of the rural in China produced between 1915 and 1965. The corpus of material selected for the study is distributed, embodied and embedded across different forms of representation, including social-survey essays, modern fiction, theatrical plays, feature films and official news essays. The observations and analysis in this book, by reflecting on issues pertaining to modern Chinese literature, film and culture, can be of added value for the broad field of China studies. Most importantly,