In summary, the book has filled a certain void in the study of the Nanjing Decade. But, as the author herself points out, the complexity of the Nanjing government "deserves a much more extensive and comprehensive study."

Narrating China: Jia Pingwa and His Fictional World.
By Yiyan Wang. London and New York: Routledge, 2006. Pp. x + 318. ISBN 0415326753. Cloth. $97.00.

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doi:10.1017/S147959140700085X

With ten full-length novels, many volumes of short stories and essays, and a considerable amount of poetry to his name, not to mention the significant body of scholarship dedicated to the study of his oeuvre, Jia Pingwa 賈平凹 (b. 1952) has emerged as one of the most important literary figures in China during the post-Mao era. Jia's dogged devotion to his home province of Shaanxi, and all the linguistic and cultural minutiae that that entails, have helped situate Jia as an author of rare, if not entirely unique, talent. His work has attracted the critical attention of a wide variety of Chinese and Japanese intellectuals, though the research in English, with fewer than a dozen published articles and book chapters by my account, has lagged until now. And only one of his novels to date has been translated into English. Thus, Yiyan Wang's single-author study is more than a welcome addition; it has now set the standard for all Jia Pingwa studies in Western languages. While comprehensive treatments of his work exist in Chinese, *Narrating China* is the first such work in a Western language, and a superb one at that. Indeed, in general, single-author treatments of modern Chinese literary figures are discouraged by publishers on the justification that they will not sell as well as thematic works, works of literary history, or works on groups of writers or literary movements. This is disheartening because modern Chinese literary studies are finally reaching a period of maturation, both in terms of subject matter and the academic field, that behooves us to produce more specialized, detailed, and focused secondary works in the way that scholars of English and European literatures, and even of Japanese literature, are able to do – and, most important, to get them published.

Narrating China is a book in ten chapters with a conclusion and several appendices as well as a comprehensive bibliography. It is meticulously researched and gives the reader the impression that the author has read all of Jia's work available at the time of writing in addition to all the Jia scholarship in Chinese (not Japanese). The first two chapters lay the groundwork for the several chapters to follow, which are devoted to one extent or another to each of Jia's novels and, to a lesser extent, to his poetry and prose. Wang spends a particularly large portion of her book on the analysis of Jia's *Feidu*, which she translates somewhat idiosyncratically as *Defunct Capital*. I can only presume that we are to gather from this that she views it as his most important work. It certainly is the one that has generated the most controversy and discussion, not all of it (to say the least) positive.

The book begins with an introduction which, after a brief exposition of the tendency of Jia to include autobiographical elements in his texts and his self-avowed role as a "peasant writer," turns to a detailed and thoughtful examination of Jia's status as a "nativist" 鄉土 author. Wang then unveils an extensive account of the history of nativist literature in modern Chinese literary history. This sketch includes sections on Lu Xun, Lao She, Shen Congwen, CCP dogma, and at least briefly mentions the contributions of several other writers. It also takes into consideration scholarship written on the topic, both in English and Chinese. There is scant reference to Taiwan's well-known and well-documented nativist literary debates and reputed exponents of Taiwanese nativism, such as Huang Chunming, Chen Yingzhen or Wang Zhenhe, all of whom wrote in Chinese, a point I will return to at the end of this review. Wang concludes this line of argument by situating Jia Pingwa

within it, arguing that, through his use of regional language, a mapping of Shaanxi as the origin of Chinese social history, and a sprinkling of ancient Chinese syntax and diction, he has pursued an aesthetics of authenticity based on "a cultural China that transcends history or politics" (p. 22).

Chapter 2 provides not just a biography of her subject but also outlines the ways in which Jia incorporates autobiographical features into his work and cultivates his status as a peasant writer. Ranging from a dissection of Jia's decision to change one character of his name from 娃 to 凹 (pronunciation unchanged) to a depiction of how Jia's "landmark" works (by which Wang means his major mature novels) mark different phrases in his career, this chapter provides a thumbnail sketch of his artistic development, in particular his narrative technique from the "apprentice" works to the mature novels.

The following three chapters each, in one way or another, explores the dimensions of what Wang implicitly feels is Jia's most important novel, *Feidu*. Beginning with a plot summary and character outline, Wang's first chapter on this novel, better translated as *Abandoned* or *Ruined Capital* (although Wang has her reasons for using the cumbersome "defunct" – based on references to Jia's own discussion of the title and the meaning of "fei" as a capital no longer in use), provides what she calls a "national allegorization" (p. 52). She takes pains to distance herself from the association of this term with that of Frederic Jameson's "national allegory," providing in a substantial footnote a litany of the critiques made against Jameson's notion in an effort, it seems, to allay concerns that she would embrace it. Despite the politically incorrect tincture that this term has accumulated since Jameson's invocation of it in the late 1980s, I, for one, still find it useful and do not believe Wang should shy away from using it with proper qualification. Since the book is entitled *Narrating China*, the reader knows from the outset that the author is propounding the idea that Jia's work extends far beyond the narrow confines of a forgotten landscape in China's geographical interior, and since Jia does locate all his narrative work within those confines, that extension can only be allegorical. Central to her interpretation of the novel is a robust description of the various characters in the novel, characters who in some instances are accomplished authors themselves (Zhuang Zhidie), cultural wannabes and idlers (Zhou Min), or women of various types, including those who have impressive amounts of symbolic capital of their own (Meng Yunfang, Jing Xueyin, and Niu Yueqing) and those who don't (Tang Wanr, Liu Yue, and Ah Can). The most provocative theme of the novel, and the one that has generated the most controversy, is the depiction of the network of literary associates or "cultural idlers" (p. 58) that Zhuang Zhidie comes in contact with, a group that personifies for the reader the whole predicament in contemporary China of the conflict between the commercial reification of culture and the traditional order itself. As if this were not enough, Wang also brings into the conversation some insights on the character of "the cow," a supernatural element of magical realism that Jia injects into the novel (according to Wang) to underscore the power of nature over culture.

The sexual conduct of the main character Zhuang, who has been unfairly equated by some critics with the author himself, and the theme of "soft masculinity," are the subject of Chapter 4. Wang illustrates how the notion of "soft masculinity" harks back to the scholar-beauty 才子佳人 subgenre in late imperial fiction, itself a development out of earlier themes in classical Chinese literature and literati culture. In a comparison with earlier works such as *The Dream of the Red Chamber* 紅樓夢, Wang suggests that Zhuang epitomizes the antihero of a "negative bildungsroman" (p. 85) in which the antihero "falls from successful writer to self-indulgent paramour" and finally into unconsciousness (pp. 85–88). Zhuang's sexuality, Wang concludes, is a metaphor for the wrong-headedness of China's modernization project (p. 92).

With so many female characters portrayed in such problematic ways, Wang addresses the representation of women in *Abandoned Capital* in her final chapter on the novel. This chapter, which she describes as an analysis of "female domesticity," traces the theme of relegating women to domestic roles and male domination in post-Mao literature. She illustrates through careful character analysis how the female figures in the novel all fall into one of two categories: women, on the one

hand, in the "traditional paradigm" of *furen* or *nüren* in contradistinction to the modern construction of women as *funü* or *nüxing* (p. 99); and, on the other, as women with power who eventually all seek to destroy Zhuang (p. 100). In a perceptive argument that rounds out the chapter, Wang draws a connection between the relative power of women and the way in which women are "mastered" by language, particularly the literary language of the main character, "overwhelmed" by its discursive power as they are relegated to the position of being mere "admirers of language" (p. 110).

Wang shifts to a novel-per-chapter format in the middle portion of her text as she deals successively with Jia's *Baiye* 白夜 (White nights), *Tumen* 土門 (Earth gate), *Gao Laozhuang* 高老庄 (Old Gao village), and finally *Huainian Lang* 懷念狼 (Remembering wolves). The reception of *White Nights* was diametrically opposed to that of *Abandoned Capital*. This novel, written on the heels of his controversial first major novel, was fleshed out during the throes of Jia's turmoil under critical scrutiny. *White Nights*, in contrast to *Abandoned Capital*, was published with little fanfare. The novel centers on Ye Lang, a migrant to the city of Xijing (a fictitious adaptation of modern day Xi'an) and the novel becomes, mainly through his eyes, an "ethnography," as Wang calls it, of the urban center. The novel provides a graphic picture of the life of migrant Chinese workers, arguably the most disruptive element of the current social order in China.

In Chapter 7, Wang turns to Jia's next novel, *Earth Gate*, a novel about a traditional village near the fictitious city of Xijing which fights a losing battle against the urban encroachment into, and gradual demolition of, the well-preserved hamlet in all its charm. This novel is narrated in the first person by a woman (Meimei) of some means, both socially and economically, who is aided by an activist village leader (Chengyi) in combating the onslaught from the city. Wang shows how the novel is impressive in its character portrayals, with people of great ambiguity, such as Meizi – a local resident who ultimately succumbs to the easier life of the city – and the policeman, who in spite of performing a few good deeds is basically doing the dirty work of the encroachers. Rural transients play a crucial supporting role in this novel as well, since they become tenants in the small town and thus an indispensable source of income as the villagers wage their ultimately futile resistance.

The crisis of the disappearing native place is of equal salience in *Old Gao Village*, Jia's next novel and the subject of Wang's next chapter. However, this work features an intellectual (the linguistics professor Gao Zilu) who moves with his second wife to the traditional village but in the end finds he cannot cope with life there and returns to the city, albeit without his wife. Struggles that intertwine economics, politics and sexual relations resonate throughout the work, as they have in previous of Jia's works, and the chief antagonism quickly boils down to a conflict between the modernizing and all-engulfing factory versus the far more pastoral vineyard. This conflict is then embodied by the owners of the respective businesses, Wang Wenlong and Cai Laohei, who, in typical Jia Pingwa fashion, also clash over a woman. Wang Yiyan persuasively avers that the local dispute marks "the representation of the Chinese nation" and Chinese history through the etching of the "quotidian" (p. 169).

Remembering Wolves, the most recent novel to be covered in this study, is a bizarre mixture of environmental literature detailing the diminishing of the wolf population in rural China and magical realism, as evidenced in people transforming into wolves and wolves taking on the psychological characteristics of human beings. While some of the other novels have recorded the lamentable impact of modernization on the traditional Chinese social order, this novel extends that inquiry to reveal the degradation of all of China's natural environment in the post-Mao era. The work dramatizes how the natural and human worlds are at once inseparable and still at odds with each other.

Wang deals efficiently with Jia Pingwa's poetry and essays in one chapter. In her estimation, Jia's poetry is not a significant component of his corpus, and I tend to agree. He writes both modern free verse and classical Chinese poetry in various genres. Of interest, however, are the ballads and folksongs "embedded" in his narratives (p. 187). These works, often extensions of the characterization of one or another figure in a given work and emblematic of the culture, add

personality to his works, give them a further leavening of local color, and in some cases comment in a subtle and ironic way on the narrative itself. By contrast, Jia's essays are voluminous and of utmost importance, as they are praised by many in China. Jia's books of prose are invariably bestsellers. He is viewed rather universally as one of China's most talented contemporary prose stylists. The essays are often clearly connected to the author's own state of being and illuminate his "'doubleness' as a traditional literatus and modern intellectual" (p. 205). The subject matter of his essays is broad ranging but often the impetus for writing may be soul searching or Jia's reactions to his wide travels within mainland China. His travel writing can be further broken down into works that feature his views on his native Shaanxi province and those in which he relates his experiences all over the country. Wang argues that Jia is a "keen observer" of regional differences and a proponent of the view that the particularities of geography shape the literary style of the writer.

In her final chapter, Wang returns to her investigation of the "poetics of the native place," arguing that Jia is the consummate Chinese writer, a writer of China – that is, one who is engaged in crystallizing the fundamental nature of Chinese society, culture and environs. Following this, Wang Yiyan's work adds four important and extremely useful appendices: an interview with the author; a chronology of Jia's publications replete with step-by-step notes on the historical context; bibliographies of Jia's autobiographical writings and biographical writings on him by others; and a bibliography of Jia's publications in reverse chronological order. The book also contains an extensive bibliography of secondary and tertiary scholarship. The addition of this supplementary material means that Wang's work is not simply useful to undergraduates and generalists but that it is a resource for scholars as well.

This is an enormously thorough undertaking that could only have required several years of focused labor by Wang Yiyan on what, in a manner of speaking, is now "her" subject in Chinese studies. Subsequent scholarship must deal with what she has laid out in these pages. In addition to her mastery of Jia's works per se, she also has displayed a solid and sophisticated appreciation of the Jia scholarship in Chinese, citing at appropriate times (and either agreeing or disagreeing with) such luminaries as Wu Liang, Meng Fanhua, Ding Fan, Xu Zidong, Jin Han, Hong Zicheng, Chen Xiaoming, Sun Jianxi, Wu Guozhang, Bai Ye, Tian Zhenying, Fei Bingxun, Chen Xuguan and Lai Daren. Her knowledge of China studies scholarship in English is also impressive, as she supports her insights with references to the work of Kate Zhou, Myron Cohen, Emily Honig, Bryna Goodman, Paul Cohen, Prasenjit Duara, Phil Billingsley, Dorothy Solinger, Nancy Chen – none of whom are necessities in a work of literary scholarship – as well as the usual fixtures one associates with this field, such as Rey Chow, Leo Lee, C. T. Hsia, Yi-tsi Feuerwerker, Sheldon Lu, and others.

I do, nonetheless, have some concerns with the study and would be remiss in this review if I did not voice them. In spite of some problematic translations (I have already cited *Feidu* but the unfortunate use of "darkie" as a translation for *Heishi* 黑氏 is another example – I grasp the discrimination subjected upon this character but hesitate to think it could be equated with the fate of African Americans to whom the abusive term "darkie" usually refers), the English usages are generally very good. What is lacking in the study, however, is the specific analysis of language in the Chinese texts. Wang does discuss the importance of language use to Jia and its political implications both in his writing and for Chinese society. And, laudably, Chinese characters embellish the text throughout. But what we do not find is any detailed textual analysis of these writings, and I find that to be a major omission from the text. Wang makes a connection between Jia's use of language and the local color of the native place. She then goes on to show how this somehow encapsulates in a metaphorical or allegorical (allegorized?) way the Chinese nation as a whole. But how does this play out in the very sinews of the texts themselves – above and beyond character depiction, plot construction, etc.? Wang's approach, in other words, relies mainly on rather conventional "new critical" methods of analysis.

To take this a step further, her book could have benefited from some appeal to poststructural approaches to literary analysis which are usually more interested in destabilizing the readings of texts rather than presenting them as unproblematic wholes. The freedom that this more theoretical level of analysis would have afforded Wang would in turn have enabled her to question the connection between the regional and the national that she argues seems to be at the heart of Jia Pingwa's whole literary project, not to mention his life. Is it really possible for the author to at once be so localized and idiosyncratic in his depictions and still be "narrating China"? This question begs to be asked and addressed, in my opinion. An attendant concern which I hope will expose how ideologically constructed these notions of locality and nationhood are is Wang's treatment of the concept of "native place" or "nativism" 鄉土. Wang's anatomy of this important concept virtually stops at the (mainland) Chinese border, while the term itself in Chinese language discourse most assuredly does not. What of "nativism" in Taiwan? The historical link between the usage of the term in China and that in Taiwan is fairly clear (as is the link from China back into Japan and even back as far as Germany with the terms *heimatkunst* and *heimatroman*). Are we simply to accept that the nativism of Taiwan (either pre- or post-war) is simply different from the far-flung examples that have occurred in mainland China through the decades or are we in fact limiting our scholarly imaginations by allowing them to be inscribed and proscribed by the political boundaries of contemporary China?

Finally, the use by Jia Pingwa of what Wang describes as an "ethnographic" style of narrative writing is an interesting and fruitful one. However, I found Wang's own employment of it also by and large unselfconscious. What would have been an interesting addition would have been a thematization of the ways in which Jia's own depiction, and his utilization of the ethnographic lens, raise problems of authenticity and representation. It is curious to me, for example, why it is that ethnographers themselves, when engaged in their best-effort inscriptions of actual experiences they observe and participate in during their fieldwork, are often at pains to foreground the logocentric biases of their own work. How much more so the literary work which, while interested in social reality, is itself a fictitious concoction of characters, places and events and therefore an additional step removed from whatever this "reality" may be? One absolute last nitpicking detail: this is a lengthy study and could have been economized in certain key places. To name two: I felt the interview could have been edited to be more succinct and better highlight Jia Pingwa's most relevant insights; I also felt the bibliography, which contained many extraneous reference items: Watson's translation of the *Shiji*; Wu Jingzi's *Rulin Waishi*; Philip Kuhn's *Origins of the Modern Chinese State*; Christine Gilmartin's *Engendering the Chinese Revolution*; Mark Currie's *Postmodern Narrative Theory*; Mary Ann Doane's work on 1940s women's film, to list only a few, nowhere surface, either explicitly or implicitly, in Wang's study. In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that these concerns of mine, especially the more salient ones outlined above, are more the product of having done my best to carefully read a thought-provoking and challenging, and of course path-breaking, study of one of China's most important living authors. This is an outstanding work and should serve as a model, with some caveats, for further studies to come.

Japan's Medieval Population: Famine, Fertility, and Warfare in a Transformative Age.
By William Wayne Farris. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006. Pp. 372. ISBN 10: 0824829735; 13: 978-0824829735. $48.00.

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doi:10.1017/S1479591407000861

The population history of Japan is an especially rich area for study, but it is also both a challenging and a frustrating one. The Tokugawa period is well represented by village records, which allow