

These criticisms aside, this is an important book for all scholars and students interested in rural responses to official programmes threatening domicile of locals' homes.

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Beyond Tears and Laughter: Gender, Migration, and the Service Sector in China

YANG SHEN

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Beyond Tears and Laughter is a timely study on how migrant men and women work and live in China's expanding service sector in metropolitan Shanghai. Built on research traditions on structural inequality and individual agency from a gender perspective, Yang Shen contributes to migration studies and China studies by providing a vivid picture of migrant workers' workplace, private life and social circles as shaped by the interaction of gender, class and *hukou* systems. Different from existing studies that focus on China's female-dominated service sector, in which women are often nimble, feminine, empathetic and subordinated workers, this study examines a more mixed-gender service workplace. In the restaurant setting under investigation, women and men are similarly disadvantaged because of their rural and migrant backgrounds, and due to their entry-level jobs in the service sector. Shen uses a combination of interviews, participant observation and questionnaire surveys, and examines the data within a comprehensive theoretical framework that connects structural constraints (including those of family and patriarchy) and individual agency (not only resistance but also coping strategies) (chapters one and two). The findings shed light on how men and women, as members of the so-called new urban underclass, negotiate and navigate their work and life in gendered ways.

Chapters three and four focus on both male and female migrant workers in the restaurant under study and describe how their motivations and experiences vary in gendered ways. Unlike previous studies showing that women are suppressed by the glass-ceiling effect and men are promoted more quickly than their female colleagues, this book presents the unique gender dynamics in the restaurant whereby men may feel more deprived. Given their rural origin and poor education, men are trapped in entry-level jobs just like their female counterparts and have even fewer opportunities to move upwards given the nature of their jobs (pantry helpers vs. table servers), while social expectations continue to push men to achieve economic success. These migrant men find their service work to be in conflict with the mainstream bread-winning or enterprising masculinities due to their low wages and feminized workplace, but they have no better options. On the contrary, such low-end service work is more endurable for women. However, the seemingly female advantage in the restaurant workplace does not mean that these women face less gender inequality in the public and private spheres.

Previous studies on gender and service work have tended to focus on the triangular relationship between workers, employers and customers; this book offers a fresh perspective by examining the interaction among workers. Some of the labour division, as related to essentialized gender traits, such as women's empathy or sensitivity,

is frequently manipulated to reinforce women's subordination in other service sectors. Interestingly, Shen's study shows the other possible scenario: women are more represented among table servers, with access to higher wages and a greater possibility of promotion, while men are concentrated among pantry helpers, who are inferior in both income and prestige. Furthermore, women may look down on their male co-workers for their failure to conform to enterprising masculinity and show reluctance to cooperate with them in the workplace. Despite their similar service worker identities, there is tension between male and female workers; men express greater frustration and are easily offended by workplace hostility, while women see their service work and family duties as integrated parts of their femininity. Given the social expectations of men's earning power and women's domestic roles, there is no easy solution to the incompatibility between low-end service work and masculinity. At the intersection of gender, class and *hukou* systems, male migrant workers not only have little upward mobility but may reject chances of promotion to defend their masculinity. For example, men may hesitate to become a table server, a job that is better paid but involves more emotional work; some would rather work as a pantry helper, an inferior but more masculine job. This gendered contradiction highlights the mismatch between the gender hierarchy in the society and the job hierarchy in the workplace, which may inspire more studies on the various relationships between the two.

The gendered experiences in the restaurant workplace are also related to workers' coping (instead of the more commonly used term "resistance") strategies in their private life (chapter five). Women tend to frame family separation and hard work as contributing to their families', especially their children's, well-being. Meanwhile, women demonstrate new individualistic desires to escape patriarchal family structures and pursue freedom beyond parental control. Men face different dilemmas in that they feel the pressure to prove their earning power, find a partner and establish a family. However, both men and women still try to fit their personal choices with their filial obligations, which have been redefined in gendered ways. The filial pressure is observed to push some men into arranged marriages, whereas some young women are beginning to challenge parental authority and practise deviance by dating a partner from too far away or becoming pregnant before marriage. Such individualistic agency, however, does not suggest that family solidarity is no longer important. This book describes how the two can coexist; migrant workers may be deviant and compliant in different aspects, embracing more flexibility in the "non-patrilocal" context as a temporary escape to exercise agency while trying to contribute to their family's well-being and prove their worth. Given the ambiguity between resistance and compliance, this study's innovative use of "coping" strategies points to the various efforts that people exert to endure the situation, deal with difficulties, or make themselves feel better in a new era of economic uncertainty.

Similarly, migrant workers spend their leisure time in gendered ways. Chapter six shows how men's and women's leisure activities are navigated, based on their limited purchasing power, working schedule and saving plan. Women's shopping and embroidering activities point to their different desires, sometimes focusing more on their pursuit of appearance and beauty, and sometimes concentrating on their plans to save and invest for their families or to decorate their homes. Gendered social expectations are also reflected in men's leisure time: they want to become rich overnight through gambling and are even more burdened by rapidly increasing debts due to such behaviour. Given the stark difference between men's and women's consumption patterns, it would be interesting to see more details about the differentiation among women and among men.

The book provides a good example of nuanced fieldwork observations and ethnographic details based on a longitudinal field investigation that lasted from 2011 to 2018. This case study could be part of the big picture of migrant workers regarding their evolving workplace dynamics by cohorts, social groups, migrant destinations and so on. Readers will appreciate the rich details of daily interactions and benefit from the grassroots knowledge about migrant workers in China's metropolitan service sector. With its in-depth analysis of migrant workers' life and subjectivity, this is an excellent book for people who are interested in gender, migration, work and China studies more generally.

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The Web of Meaning: The Internet in a Changing Chinese Society

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Elaine Yuan's book *The Web of Meaning* is a timely publication that brings together a series of studies on China's internet and proposes alternative approaches such research across different socio-political and cultural contexts. Instead of regarding the internet as a kind of technological infrastructure or set of commercial practices, Yuan's book proposes a more creative approach to see it as "discursive fields" in which identities, relations, meaning and power negotiations unfold. As Yuan notes, "[t]he symbolic Internet operates less as a received egalitarian public sphere structuring the deliberative activities of all eligible participants than as an array of discursive fields composed of differentially positioned social actors with widely varying access to social and symbolic resources" (p. 7). As internet studies in China become more deeply embedded into China's social and economic domains, it becomes harder for scholars to find new approaches that can tackle and analyse the internet as a whole. Yuan's book makes a great contribution by presenting China's internet as discursive fields that are embedded in the very fibre of Chinese society.

The book has five chapters in total. In chapter one, Yuan contextualizes social changes in China in the realm of cultural (re)production of subjects, institutions and knowledge. As she argues, the internet forms symbolic spaces where social actors struggle to define new concepts and categories for understanding contemporary Chinese society. Cases of *shamate* and *diaosi* (youth subcultures) and the Sun Zhigang incident (the death of a migrant worker in custody) are used to demonstrate how various understandings of Chinese society are mediated by contingent network communications. The concept of "Internet sociality" that Yuan proposes is a powerful explanation for the digital articulations that have emerged in China during the last two decades.

Chapter two employs a theoretical approach to examine how the internet in China becomes a field structure for cultural economy and symbolic interactions, where different kinds of participants perform symbolic struggles, conflicts and goals. Instead of following a liberation-control framework, this chapter argues that the