

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As I write this on the thirty-first anniversary of the Tian'anmen Square Massacre, the United States of America is rife with civil unrest in the face of George Floyd's murder, Donald Trump's fascist flirtations, and the ravages of COVID-19. Another Black man killed at the hands—knee—of police; another peaceful protest forcibly disbanded; another thousand lives blithely sacrificed for the economy. New York, the city I call home, likes to think of itself as the center of the universe—well, it is at the national forefront here. One cannot hear George Floyd's pleas to breathe without recalling those of Eric Garner. The NYPD, the country's largest police force, continues to deploy aggressive tactics against protesters, engaging in militarized overpolicing on a grand scale night after night. Meanwhile, just under one in five hundred New York City-area residents have died of the novel coronavirus to date—disproportionately high numbers of people of color among them. New York University, the institution I call home, finds itself in the middle of all this, rocked by public health and economic uncertainty, much like the rest of higher education. The siren call of disaster capitalism beckons. We do not know what the fall semester will look like—on any level.

This book is the culmination of eight years of work, undertaken with the help and support of countless friends and colleagues. It has loomed so large in my mind for so long, but now, in this moment, it feels small, almost trivial. I try to take solace in the fact that at its essence this book is about a utopian project, a utopian project then called *socialism*. I think it is fair to say that that project failed to achieve its own stated goals and ambitions in the Chinese Cultural Revolution (1966–76). For most, this period offers yet another violent, cautionary tale of revolution run amok. But I confess, I take strange

comfort in the impulse to imagine otherwise to which it speaks. This is the very propensity we must draw hope from now in our dystopian present. We must do better than this.

Newborn Socialist Things was first conceived with the help of Andrew F. Jones, Sophie Volpp, and Jocelyne Guilbault. I could not have asked for a better trio of mentors—I continue to work and live by their example, even as I have flown the Berkeley nest. The foundational research for this project was facilitated by the UC Berkeley Center for Chinese Studies, the Social Science Research Council, and the Fulbright-Hays program. I also received support from the American Council of Learned Societies and the UC Berkeley Doreen B. Townsend Center for the Humanities at the initial drafting stage. I would additionally like to acknowledge the generosity of the UC Berkeley Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures.

Crafting a book is an arduous and sometimes painful process of seemingly endless reconceptualization, revision, and expansion. I am grateful to have had the time and space to think, write, and travel afforded me by a Post-doctoral Fellowship in the Study of China from the Lieberthal-Rogel Center for Chinese Studies at the University of Michigan. My time in Ann Arbor was incredibly fruitful. Indeed, to the extent that I have been able to go to press relatively quickly, I credit my postdoctoral experience at Michigan. My thanks to Erin L. Brightwell, Yasmin Cho, Madhumita Lahiri, Sonya Ozbey, Glenn D. Tiffert, and Emily Wilcox, among many others, for making that experience at once joyful and productive. S. E. Kile, my spiritual twin in so many ways, remains indispensable. I would surely have lost my way by now without our essential “writing group” meetings.

I continue to be humbled by the support of my NYU colleagues, both inside and outside my home department of East Asian Studies, who, with humor and perspective, have helped me navigate the choppy waters of an incipient academic career. A particular shout-out goes to Eliot Borenstein, Lily Chumley, Faye Ginsburg, Monica Kim, Yoon Jeong Oh, Moss Roberts, Jini Kim Watson, Hentyle Yapp, Xudong Zhang, and Angela Zito on this score. Todd Foley has been an incomparable partner in crime. Rebecca E. Karl and Bruce Grant have been uncommonly generous with their time, volunteering hard-won advice on many occasions. Both provided detailed feedback on an early manuscript draft as part of a workshop facilitated by a First Book Colloquium Grant from the NYU Office of the Dean for Humanities. Tina Mai Chen and Paola Iovene also offered invaluable feedback as part of this event, flying all the way to New York to do so. (Melissa Lefkowitz took excellent notes.) The final publication of *Newborn Socialist Things* was made possible by a Book Subvention Grant from the NYU Center for the Humanities.

My sincere thanks to the staff of the following libraries and archives: Sichuan University, Wuhan University, the Jingdezhen Ceramic Institute, the National Library of China, the Shanghai Library, the Shanghai Municipal Archives, the Universities Service Centre at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, the Hoover Institution, Harvard University, UC Berkeley (especially Jianye He, Deborah Rudolph, and Susan Xue), the University of Michigan (especially Liangyu Fu), Columbia University (especially Chengzhi Wang), and NYU (especially April Hathcock and Beth Katzoff). I owe a particular debt to Mira Golubeva and Jiaqi Wang for scanning and acquiring materials on my behalf in Moscow and Beijing, respectively. Caitlin MacKenzie Mannion and Qinghua Xu of NYU Shanghai were instrumental in obtaining publishable images in the midst of the global pandemic.

Over the years I have been privileged to present my work at numerous conferences and events, from Hong Kong to London, Denmark to Denver. The Weatherhead East Asian Institute at Columbia University has been the site of more than its fair share of these. My thanks to Eugenia Lean and Ying Qian, among other faculty, as well as Gavin Healey, Yanjie Huang, and Ben Kindler for welcoming me into their community. In 2018 and 2019 I participated in a series of tremendously productive conferences organized by Jennifer Altehenger and Denise Y. Ho on the material culture of the Mao era. The conversations at these events have been invaluable. A very contentious one, with Karl Gerth, continues to provoke and, at times, enrage—good-naturedly, of course. I regret that Karl’s most recent book did not come out until after *Newborn Socialist Things* was essentially finalized. I look forward to engaging with and critiquing his argument in the future.

Other important interlocutors since I first conceived this project include: Robert Ashmore, Jonathan Bach, Patricia Berger, Marjorie Burge, Corey Byrnes, Chris Chang, Paul Clark, Alexander C. Cook, Jacob Eyferth, Matthew Fraleigh, Maggie Greene, Katie Grube, Margaret Hillenbrand, Christine I. Ho, Isabel Huacuja Alonso, Erin Huang, Wan-Chun Huang, Dorothy Ko, Fabio Lanza, Haiyan Lee, Andrew Leung, Angelina Lucento, Jie Li, Song Li, Xiao Liu, Jason McGrath, Jeffrey Moser, Michael Nylan, Katherine O’Brien O’Keefe, Laikwan Pang, Meredith Schweig, Evelyn Shih, Marc Steinberg, Andreas Steen, Jonathan Sterne, David Der-wei Wang, Kathryn VanArendonk, Paula Varsano, and Judith Zeitlin. I am deeply indebted to them all.

Finally, to my parents: I am so lucky to have you in my corner. You have moved mountains to make this possible for me. This book is for you.