

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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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.

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