

War under the conditions of mass media puts language and form under stress or even damages them, argues Richards. One of the great strengths of *Battle Lines* is her close analyses of tone and tactics, which often prove unexpectedly complex and equivocal even when poems are incorporating elements that might seem familiar. Richards is particularly adept at reading the momentary gambits of an unfolding poem as they are reinforced, changed, or abandoned from one line or stanza to the next, and to do so without feeling a reflexive need to emphasize formal reconciliation or coherence. Indeed, in her accounts, Civil War poetry often reproduces something of the open-endedness of events that are still unfolding: the ongoingness of a war in progress, of the daily news, or of the struggle to update older forms and languages so that they might become collective tools for understanding modern war and mass mediation. Richards's suggestive epilogue to the book reads Stephen Crane's war poetry of the 1890s as driven by a similar imperative to mediate martial events by incorporating collective, impersonal perspectives. Only now, in light of the continued growth of mass print and the fracturing of poetry's audiences, Crane lacks his predecessors' belief in a broad readership for the poems that would perform these acts of mass mediation. In contrast to some other studies of the nineteenth century's literature and its media, *Battle Lines* turns to this conjunction not to affirm the continuity between that era and the twentieth or twenty-first century but to mark its historical distinctiveness.

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EMILY SUN, *On the Horizon of World Literature: Forms of Modernity in Romantic England and Republican China*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2021. Pp. x + 167. \$115 cloth; \$33 paper.

When the colorized version of the 1902 film *The Flying Train* became available on Youtube and therefore available for viewing for most people, we in the twenty-first century were levered back into modernism's alternate universe. When the colorized version of the 1909 film of Beijing at the end of the Qing dynasty became available as well, one could feel that order of magnitude shift at scale—at the right order of magnitude. That combined modernity, in the distinctive lighting and movements of the early-twentieth-century global cosmopolis, is tensing for an unhappy future in ways

that Paul Saint-Amour has described of Anglo-European modernism, and also subtly, swiftly registering the imminent imperial showdowns, semantic and material, that Lydia Liu has described of modernism. Here is somewhere between the end of empire and the beginning of nationhood, a moment enfolded in poetic lyrics as new literary forms take hold. Colorized moving images can do a great deal to help you enter that shift as if it were *real* to you and extrapolate that to the scale of all the places in the world, but they cannot do everything. You need literary pairings to become conscious of modernism's widest possible geographical span and its most intricate correspondences with emancipation, liberation, and revolution.

In her previous scholarly book, *Succeeding King Lear: Literature, Exposure, and the Possibility of Politics* (New York: Fordham Univ. Press, 2010), Emily Sun employed the early-modern epistemological method of finding true pairs. The art of analogizing makes for an extraordinary reception theory. It must explain resonance through actual pathways of transmission and through something transcendent—in today's parlance, a vibe shift happening differently to everyone. When Sun claims that Shakespeare's *King Lear* has originative force in modern literature from William Wordsworth to James Agee—that they share what Sharon Cameron calls “the bond of the furthest apart”—she is not simply interested in genealogy. Rather, the trace-an-influence project forces the critic to articulate why *King Lear* has “a succession of readers that keep returning to the play as an originary locus for grappling with a problem,” and what that unique, unsolvable problem might be (Sun, *Succeeding King Lear*, p. 2). Finding a match—between something in China and England, or in the Ottoman Empire and the Qing, between the dozens of generic literary forms *in each region*—means that you are committed to solutionism in a real sense.

The achievements of Sun's comparative practice of finding significant, surprising matches are empirical and artistic: they show you the global modernity outside of the living-room lights of the one you remember, from reading or generationally or otherwise. Duplicate forms and their implications for modernism have a special place in literary studies (in the work of Sianne Ngai and Kent Puckett, for example). In *On the Horizon of World Literature: Forms of Modernity in Romantic England and Republican China*, Sun reads in pairs to access the vantage point where you can see the aspirations and predicaments felt “on the horizon of world literature.” She does not mean “about to discover world literature” or “about to become recognizable by features and traits as ‘world literature.’” Instead she is after Raymond Williams's “structure of feeling.” Heteroglossia, mixed media,

neologisms, the clash and hybridization of usages, fashions, and lexicons—all of this can only be modernist to a certain extent. Sun's comparative methodology always wants to capture the transformative at the operational level, where people on a "middling plane" see themselves as "agents of a decentralized, distributed power" (p. 69). In Niklas Luhmann's systems-theoretical terms, modernity occurs in loose couplings. Highly formalized flexibilities, ways of choosing this over that, also characterize, for Sun, Williams's "social experiences *in solution*, as distinct from other social semantic formations which have been *precipitated* and are more evidently and more immediately available" (Williams, quoted on p. 72; emphasis added). Estrangement itself is logistically difficult, and we often need a first-order strangeness in someone else's codified world to activate a second-order strangeness in our own.

Just to give a sense of the erudition of Sun's pairings, consider the highest common denominator between Percy Bysshe Shelley's "A Defence of Poetry" and Lu Xun's "Toward a Refutation of Malevolent Voices," or between Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* and Eileen Chang's *The Rouge of the North*. There are known routes between these works, but Sun is speaking of elective affinities as well as actual, book-historical pathways. The shared aspirations in the twinned modernities she is studying—Romantic England and early Republican China—adhere to the received narratives, especially in her introduction. Insofar as Sun wishes to tell you a story about what authors in each of these realms wished for, it is much what you would expect, period- and politics-wise: revolutionary agitations, emancipation and republicanism, the envoicing of ordinary people, and so forth. At no point does Sun wish to tamper with the revelations of historical materialism (empire, colonialism, capitalism); in fact her book keeps careful track of publishing histories and other power and material imbalances. Her contributions lie elsewhere. All of the chapters outperform the introduction, which makes standard disciplinary polemics—e.g., that modernism studies does not pay enough attention to the global scale or that "logically speaking, literary modernity in the singular and world literature do not exist" (p. 11). I doubt anyone would argue with Sun on this point. Literary modernity's geographical and perspectival pluralization occurred long ago. These rather perfunctory parts of the book only offset the strange luminousness of her dogged interest in precipitant world views. *On the Horizon of World Literature* is out to demonstrate to the point of felt reality how certain mental processes shift with shifts in human activities, with literature as a technology of those changes.

The most extraordinary chapter of the book, “Between the Theater and the Novel,” evinces through a pair of novels Lionel Trilling’s description of modern intellectual history as one in which it is “possible to observe the moral life in process of revising itself” (Trilling, quoted on p. 95). On course to an Ibsenite naturalism, two novels about larger households in an empire disintegrating under its own weight suddenly take up the theater. As a result, a freedom is ventured that is distinctly modernist in its political and intellectual constitutions. In this freedom, the “habitat of the ordinary” emerges as comprehensible but also strange, and thus subject to remaking as a stage for action and happiness. Theater—the reminder that at any moment the household could be a stage—leaves a countervailing record of editability and irreversibility, changing collective psychic life. *Mansfield Park*, the one in the pair likely more familiar to Sun’s readers, is given a global, comparativist treatment that little resembles postcolonial, Global Anglophone readings except peripherally, in the gestures I have already described. Sun’s business with the novel concerns the trait that made it a fixture in Anne-Lise François’s custodial eco-consciousness, the open secret ethics of Fanny Price’s famous recessiveness and forfeiture. Sun’s Fanny Price is someone who comes with others in the world like her to a limited utopia, the “constrained liberty [that] is liberty nonetheless,” one that “emerges immanently from the everyday arrangements of ordinary life—and that survives the disillusion of a purer, untrammelled conception of freedom” (p. 132). Distant perspectives, the sense of audiences even farther away, urge (counterintuitively) narrower calibrations of “moral-political systemic revision” (p. 106). This is what the overlay of the theater and household realism reveals at an anthropological level for *Mansfield Park* and its obliquely resonant twin, *The Rouge of the North*. A technology for the visibilization of reflexive meaning, the Peking opera parts of Eileen Chang’s novel, like the English theater in *Mansfield Park*, offers an inward-folding, second-order observation. Theater abstracts anthropologically hierarchical positions in life that the modern subject can see as both elemental and optional. With this technology in place both novels could “pursue the dehierarchizing impulse of the play [or theatrical acts] by other means” (p. 112). *The Rouge of the North* is not modernist because it is from the perspective of Yindi, a woman whose social status is as ambiguous as Fanny’s, or because it intersperses scenes from traditional and modernizing life. Rather, that most important of modern social evolutions—the evolution of the perspectival—turns medium into form and form into medium in a pinch. With that comes an unprecedented appreciation

of the degree of freedom within “ordained” structures, an appreciation timed to a new awareness of lifelong infrastructural roles. You need to see this possibility of adjustment twice—once in Georgian England, once in early Republican China—to not confuse technologies of self-estrangement and second-order assessment with “foreignness” as such. Otherwise, the only things we can recognize as exotic or foreign in national literature are literally exotic or foreign things; the comparative/analogical vantage allows you to isolate the nonoverlapping parts between modernity and globality.

The third chapter, “Estrangements of the World in the Familiar Essay,” benefits greatly from Sun’s extensive knowledge of Shakespearean reception in China, and the crucial role of Charles Lamb in that history. Formal resonances include that period’s essayistic excursions, the salmagundi of early republicanism in both parts of the world. Lamb qualifies for this comparison because he wrote an essay called “Old China” and has empirical ties to China’s translanguing modernization. He is paired with the Chinese writer Zhou Zuoren, Lu Xun’s younger brother, because both achieve formal innovations in the “ledger,” the conceptual motif in this book that, again, proves even to the ordinary person that here can be a written record of life against which to run simulations and tests in order to ponder the exact requirements of loftier goals like emancipation and envoicing of the masses and quieter, no less significant acts of perfection. Literary forms of modernity, Western and non-Western, such as bricolage and referential eclecticism act as transactional ledgers that allow you to better compartmentalize and alchemize novelty with tradition. You can then determine, as Lamb and Zhou did, which determinisms and novelties can be picked up at different times, to different emphases. You can intimate “decentralized sources of normative potential whose expressive instruments *and* medium are language itself” (p. 80). For Lamb, ledgers of an idyllic, pastoral life are quite useful for experiments in changing the “distance, scale, and calculability” of reference (p. 83). Likewise, Zhou Zuoren’s essay “Wild Vegetables of my Hometown” layers quotations and allusions not “simply for the sake of restating knowledge or information” but to “facilitate ‘borrowed views’ onto the sensibilia of ordinary life” (p. 89). This layer-by-layer estrangement grows with childlike wonder in Lamb’s and Zhou’s “dioramic” views until it reaches its cognitive limit, which also happens to be a political threshold of consciousness. The future is activated in the present narrative of 1924 Beijing and reactivated in the practices of reading. What Zhou Zuoren, writing after the Revolution, wanted from the literary past was not a reversion to traditionalism. Instead, he was “recovering in the

ordering tendencies of traditional Chinese thought and discourse terms for a decentralized and pluralist inhabitation of the ordinary” (p. 90). Literary modernity’s dimensional increases in consciousness cannot help but be resourceful, going over the past for real glances at futurity, including parting glances.

Chapter 2, “Shakespearean Retellings and the Question of the Common Reader,” spends more time with Charles Lamb, specifically his *Tales from Shakespeare* and its translation/adaptation in Lin Shu’s *Yinbian Yanyu (Recitations Heard from Afar)*, a text that turns Shakespeare into someone more like Jin dynasty writer Gan Bao or Qing dynasty writer Pu Songling—transmitters of the strange. One reading stands out in this chapter: how the logically estranging asks of Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* (Lin Shu’s version is called “Storm Ruse”) can be plied into even stranger cross-cultural structures of feeling. The storytelling device that lets Lamb turn Miranda into a proxy for the common reader licenses a comparable creation in “Storm Ruse.” This business of remaking a world that has enough cosmic magic in it to truly reverse an injustice (one aware of its colonial trespasses) gets stranger as it extends outward; “The crux of strangeness at which the foreign and the supernatural converge is, precisely, freedom” (p. 68). Lin Shu’s envoicing of Ariel, one that adds an acceptance speech for her freedom, gives Lamb’s description of social interactions a provisional “outside”—a human-spirit relationship that is not Chinese but that can be made to speak its moral grammar, its stratagems, and its own appeals to higher law.

Chapter 1 takes up, among other works, the 1908 essay “Toward a Refutation of Malevolent Voices” by Lu Xun, the writer known in the West for “Diaries of a Madman” and as the father of Chinese national literary modernity. “Toward a Refutation of Malevolent Voices,” along with the more famous “On the Power of Mara Poetry,” is read for its distant adherence to Kantian definitions of Enlightenment as “a process of coming to speech that entails release from the guidance of others” (p. 46). We might instinctively associate Lu Xun’s call for the “voice of the heart” (*xinsheng*) with liberationist movements, including emergent leftist internationalism, but, again, the association has a few more mechanisms to it. Similarly, it is easy enough to see the poetic capacity for renewal and reorigination as a precondition of revolution (as Romanticists have been saying all along), but even this, on the horizon of world literature, involves steps we do not consider. In Shelley’s “A Defence of Poetry,” the compared text in this chapter, “imagination has priority over reason insofar as it is the former that generates and creates objects for the operations of the

latter” (p. 39). Lu Xun’s “Toward a Refutation of Malevolent Voices” contends with instrumental rationality in a similar way—that is, beyond mere disavowal. A claim for poetic voice proceeds as a defense in Shelley’s sense—as a genre that teaches you generic and intentional differences between genres and the social orders that employ them. Thus, among the “malevolent voices” that impede the *xinsheng* are both “avant-gardist,” undemocratic calls for “the eradication of ‘superstition’ or folk culture and popular religion in China” and “clamors for a chauvinistic nationalism” (p. 43). Self-congratulatory modernisms in which Westernization secures “competitive expediency” must be disambiguated at the practical level from modernist stirrings, “the externalization and activation of an ‘inner brightness’” (p. 43). One might say that Lu Xun and Percy Bysshe Shelley are grasping a Romantic modernity on the cusp of totalitarian, fascist, and other authoritarian schemes of social engineering. For Shelley, the rise of human and administrative sciences alongside nineteenth-century reforms and revolts demands alternative resonances that must be heard and repeated. His intimation of a cosmic order—“every original language near to its source is in itself the chaos of a cyclic poem” (Shelley, quoted on p. 40)—is that which unbinds a Prometheus or an ordinary Chinese soul reading Lu Xun whose chains are equally uncaricaturable, equally hard to shed. In both cases, curses laid upon the human spirit are turned to mantras; this comes with a profound understanding of how language really does bind, and where to start pulling the thread, where to apply pressure.

Sun’s way of pairing things is rare and missed in literary scholarship. It is a model for comparative work, not least because it speaks with the confidence of someone who believes that more and more people will traverse these impossibly distant bodies of knowledge, people who will have knowledge of Zhou Zuoren and Charles Lamb at their fingertips. Sun writes with the conviction that modern literary technologies of shared referentiality will evolve into a “genuine cosmopolitanism” (p. 134). Of all the things that we say are unevenly distributed in dimensional space, modernity itself is perhaps the most unevenly distributed. Sun’s precise and deprovincialized close readings in *On the Horizon of World Literature* reestablish the availability of a literary modernity that feels, proclaims, and wishes for much and understands the engineering of the world in its actual expanse.

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