

explaining how its fourteen short chapters interrelated, refraining from abruptly shifting back and forth from the original text of the *Zhouli* to late Northern Song commentaries, excising two chapters (5 and 11) whose content was tangential to the book's thesis, and pruning away redundant translated passages from the *Zhouli* that propagated themselves from one chapter to another. Frequent typographic errors and bursts of non-idiomatic English could have been caught and corrected with more judicious copy-editing and page-proofing. All books contain errors, but in the bibliography and endnotes, the number of misspelled authors' names and inaccurate transcriptions of book titles begins to challenge a reader's confidence in the integrity of this book. Neither the author nor the Harvard University Asia Center is well-served by such editorial inattention.

*Young China: National Rejuvenation and the Bildungsroman, 1900–1959.* By MINGWEI SONG. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard East Asia Center, 2016. 396 pp. \$49.95, £39.95, €45.00 (cloth).

REVIEWED BY JING JIANG, Reed College ([jiangj@reed.edu](mailto:jiangj@reed.edu))  
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Mingwei Song's book makes an important contribution to the study of modern Chinese literature and culture by examining the dominant trope of youth as simultaneously a discursive construction grounded in China's changing sociopolitical history of the twentieth century, and a mode of literary representation the author calls the Chinese *Bildungsroman*. Synonymous with newness, dynamism, progress, future, and change, the image of youth easily lends itself to new paradigms of political, cultural, and literary imaginations that revolve around grand ideas of nationhood, modernity, and revolution. Throughout this book, Mingwei Song evinces an exemplary attentiveness and sensitivity as both a cultural historian and a literary critic, approaching the relationship between sociopolitical history and literature as more dialectical than merely deterministic. Literary representation of youth not only "epitomizes" changing historical circumstances, but also "generates, reformulates, or even problematizes visions of nationhood, cultural dynamism, and individual subjectivity" (21).

The book takes as its point of departure a vision of youth intimately related to the ideal of national rejuvenation first articulated by late Qing intellectual giant and reformer Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873–1929) in his *Ode to Young China*. Song makes his revisiting of this familiar topic fruitful by highlighting the fact that in Liang's vision China's transformation from an aging empire to a youthful nation does not yet mean the rejection of its old tradition (47). Rather, Liang exemplifies a common belief shared by the late Qing reformers in the compatibility between appropriating western means and preserving China's own cultural tradition. In a moment of fanciful thinking, Liang proclaims the twentieth century to be a time when two civilizations (Chinese and western) come together in a festive ritual of matrimony. "And then," Liang confidently predicts, "the Western beauty will surely give birth to a lovely boy so that our ancestors will feel overjoyed" (49). While this particular statement might strike readers today as slightly

comical, it is important to realize the extent to which Liang's vision of a young China was influenced by the "Young Nation" movement in which youth emerges as "a key signifier of the rising nationalism" in the nineteenth century, first in Europe and then all over the world. Mingwei Song accomplishes this task beautifully by pointing out how Giuseppe Mazzini's (1805–72) program for a "Giovine Italia" (Young Italy) directly inspired Liang's vision of a "Young China." At the same time, Liang's vision of a "Young China" might also be a reaction to the widely shared Hegelian definition of China as an aging empire (46). All of these discussions serve to show that the late Qing intellectuals and reformers had a heightened awareness of China as a player among many on the global stage of the modern interstate system.

As much as the idea of young China was an integral part of a global movement, the discovery and valorization of youth as agent of history and progress in China also resonated with its rise as "modernity's essence" (43) in the changed European literary culture after the French Revolution. The valorization of youth, Song writes, citing Franco Moretti, finds its most eloquent expressions in modern European novels that feature "a new type of fictional hero, a youthful figure who aspires to find a new way in the world" (43). This great line of novels constitutes the rich tradition of *Bildungsroman*, considered by many to be the quintessential modern literary form. For instance, Mikhail Bakhtin considers it the highest development of the novel as a genre of realism; Moretti defines it as the "symbolic form" of modernity (7). Song again cites Bakhtin and György Lukács to bring to light the main characteristics of the genre. For the former, the *Bildungsroman* "historicizes time through picturing 'the image of *man in the process of becoming*.'" For the latter, the narrative mechanism of the *Bildungsroman* focuses primarily on "the process of the problematic individual's journeying... toward clear self-recognition" (52). While European novels are not Song's main concern in this book, he boldly and carefully situates his study of the Chinese *Bildungsroman* within a broader historical, literary, and philosophical context that transcends any narrow nationalistic perspective, which results in some of the book's most refreshing insights and most significant contributions.

While the *Bildungsroman* in both its European and Chinese modes is structurally enlivened by a strong sense of tension, between self and society or ideal and reality, and moves toward a crystallization of form (the young fictional hero achieves maturation or self-recognition as a result of real or psychological journeys), Song argues that the Chinese *Bildungsroman* "rarely gives a definitive form to youth" and resists narrative closure in general (59). With the exception of a novel from the socialist canon like *The Song of Youth* (which the author analyzes in great depth in chapter VII), most of the literary texts examined in this book point to the ongoing tensions between the teleological rhetoric that seeks to tame and subsume the young, and the youthful subjectivity that resists completely succumbing to interpretations from different ideological apparatuses. In the Chinese case then, "the *Bildungsroman* displays the youthfulness of modernity as an open-ended, inconclusive, and forever developing story" (59).

Chapter Two, "The Adventures of Old Youth," revisits the inception of the youth discourse in modern China in Liang Qichao's iteration and imagination, and reads Wu Jianren's 吳趼人 *New Story of the Stone* as a fictionalization of Liang's vision for national rejuvenation based on the notion of "traditional dynamism" (66). Despite the many examples of "old youth" staying young in Wu's heterotopia thanks to their alignment

with a timeless cultural tradition, Song's reading highlights the dawning authorial awareness of the importance for "old youth" to enter history, perhaps even at the cost of losing their youth. Chapter Three, "The *Bildungsroman* of New Youth," reads Ye Shengtao's 葉聖陶 *Ni Huanzhi* as a first literary attempt to historicize the story of a new youth. With the youth discourse taking a radical turn during the May Fourth period, the self-fashioning of educated Chinese youths in a culture of enlightenment began to take central stage in literary representations. This story, in which Mingwei Song sees "the master plot for a modern Chinese youth's developmental story," (11) stages the mounting tension between History as abstract ideal and history as lived experience, with all of the alienating excesses and traumatic senselessness of the latter that ultimately drive the protagonist to his premature demise. If *Ni Huanzhi* represents the beginning of the Chinese *Bildungsroman*, then the beginning is rather mournful or elegiac, testifying to the protagonist's difficulty (and eventual failure) in going with the new direction of history despite his best intentions.

Chapter Four, "Writing Youth into History," deals mainly with Mao Dun's 茅盾 early literary career that culminates in the writing of *Rainbow*. Mao Dun's works indicate a leftward turn in modern Chinese literature marked by the replacement of "enlightened new youth" with "revolutionary youth." While Mao Dun's intention was to impose a telological vision of history upon the life stories of his youthful characters, it was not always successfully realized on the level of narrative form, as can be seen in the ending of *Rainbow*. In the final moment of the novel, the symbolic sexualization of the heroine exceeds and problematizes the semantics of a revolutionary *Bildungsroman*.

Chapter Five, "The Flowering of Life," zeroes in on Ba Jin 巴金, the writer whose writings are best known for idealizing and glorifying youth. At the same time, Ba Jin is also often faulted for his sentimentality and melodramatic style. While not defending these stylistic features categorically, Song seeks to understand the complex factors that account for their making. Through focusing on Ba Jin's early anarchist novels, Song fleshes out how the author's political belief in anarchism has directly impacted his literary practice and style. Heavily influenced by theorists like Peter Kropotkin and Jean-Marie Guyau, and inspired by heroic figures both historical (Sophia Perovskaya and Vera Figner) and contemporary (Bartolomeo Vanzetti and Nicola Sacco), Ba Jin came to embrace a view of life that saw the act of sacrifice as the highest expression of life, "the flowering of life" in Guyau's words, and as the testament to an ethical epiphany that borders on the religious or the sacred. In this regard Ba Jin's novels are a departure from the classical model of *Bildungsroman* in that the fictional hero journeys toward self-recognition only at the moment of immortalized death.

Chapter Six, "The Journey to Interiority," focuses on two texts that deal with wartime China in the 1940s: *Children of the Rich* by Lu Ling 路翎 and *The Everlasting Song* by Lu Qiao 鹿桥. What unites them is a shared thematic emphasis on the agency of subjectivity, an intellectual position championed most famously by Hu Feng 胡风 (Lu Ling's spiritual mentor) in a time of tightening ideological control over literary creativity. Drawing from Sigmund Freud's theory on the power of the unconsciousness and Henri Bergson's idea of "*élan vital*," Hu Feng cautions against the dangers of "spiritual slavery" and emphasizes the importance of maintaining the "subjective fighting spirit" through unleashing what he calls "primitive vitality" (247–48). Manifested on the narrative level, the fictional hero values the autonomy of individual subjectivity as a goal unto

itself and refuses to be a slave to either history or life. Lu Ling's novel thus presents a different sort of *Bildungsroman*: the self is forever at war with itself and fights resolutely against any forces of formalization. Lu Qiao's novel tells a similar story though its source of intellectual inspiration was rather different. Instead of Freud or Bergson, it was masterpieces of western modernism (such as "The Waste Land," *Duino Elegies*, *The Magic Mountain*, *Ulysses*, and *Mrs. Dalloway*) that were driving the exaltation of a lyrical self.

The book concludes with a discussion of the socialist *Bildungsroman* in Chapter Seven, titled "The Taming of the Young." The pessimistic title is fully applicable only to *The Song of Youth*, though, the first of two texts examined in this chapter. Modelled after Nikolai Ostrovsky's *How the Steel Was Tempered* (1934), *The Song of Youth* is a familiar story at once of the taming of youth at the textual level by communist/Maoist ideologies and the taming of the author at the personal level by the party apparatus. The narrative traces the growth of the main character as she gradually sheds her old, ideologically flawed ways of thinking associated with her impure class background to grow into a mature and committed communist. This is perhaps the only example of the Chinese *Bildungsroman* that features a happy ending between the self and the world, obliterating any tension between the two in the denouement. Even though this story comes toward the end of Song's book, it certainly should not be read as the culmination or successful formalization of the Chinese *Bildungsroman* henceforth, as Wang Meng's 王蒙 *Long Live Youth* also included in the same chapter, in its exuberant celebration of youth's image and all of its glorious excess, again raises the specter of youth's ultimate untamability in the face of political appropriations.

As a primarily critical study of modern Chinese literature, Mingwei Song's book recommends itself in many ways. The author's grasp of the general cultural context as well as the specific historical exigencies that frame the activity of literary production is both impressively commanding and admirably nuanced. The overall conceptual framework of the book is theoretically informed and methodologically audacious, as technically *Bildungsroman* is not a term indigenous to the Chinese critical tradition. Yet the whole book testifies to not only the relevance but also the productivity of its deployment in the Chinese context. Though the author shies away from drawing too much attention to the transnational forces and factors in the making of modern Chinese literature, one of the book's most significant contributions is showing that modern Chinese literature is the product of both a new national awareness and a new global awareness, and that much insight is gained from bringing those once hidden or eclipsed connections into our critical enterprise.

*City of Virtues: Nanjing in an Age of Utopian Visions*. By CHUCK WOOLDRIDGE. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2015. xiii + 242 pp. \$50 (cloth).

REVIEWED BY ANTONIA FINNANE, University of Melbourne ([a.finnane@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:a.finnane@unimelb.edu.au))  
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After the Communist victory in 1949, the erstwhile capital, Nanjing, was allowed to slip quietly into obscurity. The Beijing government paid it little attention. When C.P. Fitzgerald