censorship rules or practices. Crucially, Xie concludes, media transparency is sacrificed: "Given the consensus between the Party-state and the media and their realigned relationship, transparency becomes more important than press freedom…" because it is transparency that "aims to expose all factors that may hinder the freedom of information…" (p. 161).

Xie is not the first to observe the powerful confluence of state and market in the Chinese media system, or that censorship in China today often takes the form of market logic. However, his book nicely demonstrates how these forces work together at various levels of the media system, from the business practices of large media conglomerates to the decision-making processes of individual journalists. In this reviewer's opinion, the major weakness of the study lies in the fact that it is based on little to no significant primary research. A study based on the secondary literature has its uses, and Xie expertly mines the existing literature for data nuggets to illustrate his points. A chapter on "meta-censorship" is particularly deft at providing examples of censorship in Chinese media today, all practised while state officials vocally advocate transparency, and media elites campaign for greater openness. Still, the lack of primary data makes the book feel a bit distant from its object of study, sapping it of the energy and urgency contained in much of the best recent work on the subject. This observation, however, does not overly detract from Xie's accomplishment, which is to harness the existing literature to the concept of media transparency in a way that offers a compelling assessment of Chinese journalism.

DAVID RYFE
david-ryfe@uiowa.edu

Tiananmen Fictions outside the Square: The Chinese Literary Diaspora and the Politics of Global Culture
BELINDA KONG
Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2012
viii + 278 pp. $27.95
ISBN 978-1-4399-0759-7 doi:10.1017/S030574101500106X

Belinda Kong has written the first comprehensive work on fictional representations of the democracy movement of 1989 in China and its bloody repression on June Fourth. As the topic remains out of bounds in China, literary production in the mainland has largely avoided it, or dealt with it in allusive and roundabout ways. This explains Kong's choice of four works – one play and three novels – by writers living and working overseas (Gao Xingjian who left in 1987, Ha Jin in 1985, Annie Wang in 1993, and Ma Jian, who moved to Hong Kong in 1987 and to Europe in 1997), as well as her title, which points to diaspora as a constitutive aspect of writing about Tiananmen. She acknowledges that diasporic writing is not the only mode of reflecting on June Fourth: a brief discussion of works by Mo Yan, Wang Shuo, Zhu Wen and Chen Ran in the introduction suggests that these writers deserve a separate investigation based on a "hermeneutics of evasion" (p. 27). By contrast, Kong underscores that "Tiananmen" has become a hallmark of "diasporic literary identity" (p. 2) for several generations of writers and intellectuals who left China in or around 1989. Kong sees in this diasporic dimension the potential to open up a "third, transformative space" that goes beyond the polarized – official and dissident – narratives of the events of 1989.

There follows a detailed discussion of four texts that Kong describes as an avant-garde absurdist play, a novel written in the vein of 19th-century realism, a work of pop literature and an epic national allegory (p. 169). In *Escape* (1989), Kong reads Gao Xingjian's original affirmation of the autonomy of literature and a solipsistic individualism that later came to be theorized as "without isms." In her view, far from the common characterization of Gao as a dissident, this text displays his generalization of the confrontation between the individual and totalitarian politics into an existential paradigm, in which the individual is denied political agency. While the critical approach to Gao's text is refreshing, there seems little textual basis in *Escape* for Kong's overly judgmental accusation of totalitarian complicity: "This is the way in which *Taowang* existentializes the Square – and the way by which Gao inadvertently normalizes and legitimizes totalitarian power" (p. 70). Gao indeed derives an – undoubtedly problematic – general critique of politics from his reflections on Tiananmen, but he has also expressed respect for writers who advocate social engagement like Kenzaburo Oe (see for example, Gao's dialogue with Oe reprinted in *Lun chuangzuo* [Hong Kong, 2008]).

In Ha Jin's *The Crazed*, written in English and published in 2002, Kong by contrast highlights the dissident critique of totalitarianism that is often blurred by Western readers' emphasis on cultural difference. For Kong, Ha Jin perpetuates the ideal of the Chinese intellectual, but no longer as a spokesperson for the nation; the diasporic "cultural China" that is ultimately put forward in the novel as the destination of the protagonist is not simply an empirical contingency, but a distinct political alternative, which Kong compares to Tu Weiming's affirmation of a decentered Chinese culture.

Annie Wang, turning to English to write *Lili* (2001), "desacralizes Tiananmen by shifting attention away from these elite groups and toward a figure at the fringes of national politics: the female hooligan" (p. 143). Events on the square are demystified: the writer claims she went to the square "for the rock and roll atmosphere, not democracy" and Tiananmen becomes a space of capitalist mass consumption where ordinary participants are far removed from student elitism. In the novel, diasporic writing in English points to a choice necessitated by "a specifically female sense of writerly authority and autonomy" (p. 165), affirming female sexuality and agency in a way not available in Chinese. This desacralization of elite masculine politics chimes, according to Kong, with the dearth of women leaders in the student movement itself.

Finally, in *Beijing Coma* (2008), Ma Jian treats Tiananmen as both history and myth, highlighting "the continuous regime of sovereign biopower in the long span of communist history" (p. 184). State cannibalism is illustrated in the treatment of Dai Wei's body, ultimately abandoned to the bulldozers, in an image of Agamben's *homo sacer* (p. 206). Kong highlights that by setting the finale of the novel in Liubukou, Ma Jian both sidesteps the polemic around the absence of deaths in the square and reclaims the forgotten victims of history, like Dai Wei, a real student victim who gives his name to the protagonist of the novel. Kong concludes by highlighting the global significance of Tiananmen: she quotes Wang Hui's interpretation of the movement as a call for a global political alternative grounded in greater equality and democracy.

Kong's book makes an interesting contribution to the diasporic memory of a political watershed. She might have engaged further with previous discussions of representations of Tiananmen in mainland China, such as those by Michael Berry (in *A History of Pain* [Columbia University Press, 2008]) and most importantly, Perry Link, whose essay is not quoted ("June Fourth: memory and ethics" in *China Perspectives* 2009[2]). The exclusive focus on diaspora can be somewhat misleading,

in that it engages less with the meaning and discussions of the event itself within the Chinese public sphere than with representations that are not directly written for a Chinese audience. For example the notion of *duandai* ("generational break") mentioned in the chapter on Ma Jian could be traced back to Fang Lizhi who originally coined it within a Chinese debate on political movements. The analysis relies heavily on theoretical references (Agamben and Foucault) that are not unproblematic. Kong's use of Foucault's notion of "biopower" as a universal paradigm can be just as problematic as Gao Xingjian's play in erasing differences between totalitarian and democratic polities. The individual chapters are long and sometimes insufficiently focused, pursuing many sidelines (especially theoretical sidelines) at the same time as their central argument. It is also not clear how the diasporic dimension can open a "transformative space" for discussing Tiananmen as long as such discussion cannot take place in China. However, by providing detailed textual readings and material not readily available elsewhere, this study will still be very useful for courses focused on contemporary Sinophone literature, as well as to provide a literary angle to courses or research seminars focusing on Tiananmen and political reforms in contemporary China.

SEBASTIAN VEG
veg@ehess.fr

Verse Going Viral: China's New Media Scenes
HEATHER INWOOD
Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2014
viii + 266 pp. $30.00
ISBN 978-0-295-99370-6 doi:10.1017/S0305741015001071

Opposing the prevalent view by media organizations and literary critics that contemporary Chinese poetry is a marginalized "literature in crisis," Heather Inwood in this book investigates modes of production and forms of contention among different poets and poetry groups active in China today so as to highlight the diversity and vitality of poetry created during the "conjuncture" of the early 21st century. The "new media scenes" (p. 3) that Inwood foregrounds emerge as dynamic networks of people, practices and discourses connected across multiple spaces and conditioned by the current historical moment. In looking at what is new about contemporary "live poetry scenes," Inwood argues that it is the dynamics within and between three media spaces – the internet, print publications and face-to-face events – that allow us to understand contemporary poetry scene productivity (and contention). This book is a substantial and important contribution to the field of contemporary Chinese literary and cultural studies and also sheds light on the practice of poetry in the new media landscape of the 21st century.

Conceptualizing poetry as culture and social form that may be "dispersed across multiple textual institutional sites" (p. 6), rather than aesthetically determined "fixed texts" (p. 20), Inwood employs an interdisciplinary cultural studies approach and a conjunctural theoretical framework that illuminates the underlying historical conditions in which poetry is produced. This methodological perspective allows Inwood to closely examine (and, indeed, participate in) the temporal collusions among a diverse array of people, texts, institutions, resources and forms of capital