development in Taiwanese popular music. The first chapter, by Yu-peng Lin and Hui-ju Tsai, enters
the field of cultural policy, and examines government support to promote Taiwan’s indie music
abroad. Turning to one of Taiwan’s most profitable musical exports, Jay Chou, Chen-yu Lin focuses
on his China Wind songs and discusses the issue of Chineseness by way of Chinese audiences’
reception of Chou’s music. The final chapter, by Chen-Ching Cheng, ends the book proper, very
appropriately, with ‘the biggest Mandarin pop star in history’ (p. 170) – Teresa Teng – and an
analysis of her stardom in the nationalistic context.

I wrote ‘book proper’ earlier, as following these four sections are two more chapters. Miaoju
Jian’s chapter, as Coda, explores further what is going on right now in Taiwan’s music scene; she
presents three paths through which indie musicians may reach audience outside Taiwan: global
Mandopop market, East Asian DIY networks, and translocal entrepreneurial promoters. The final
chapter of the book, modestly presented as an afterword, is a conversation between the three edi-
tors and veteran practitioner Lim Giong. Perhaps, this last choice may serve as a trigger to offer
some form of criticism – as a book review is obliged to – to this highly engaging, informative and
political anthology. Namely, the bulk of the book remains dedicated to the past. As someone with
vested interest – both personal and professional – in music, I long to read more about what is going
on, what future we can envisage, how do streaming and other forms of technological developments
impact on Taiwanese popular music, what are younger generations of fans ‘prosuming’? I am also
not very sure what the section titles add; would it be better to organize the book somewhat mun-
danely according to themes or chronology? Finally, a very minor sigh: it would be helpful to add
cited names and titles in Chinese, for those who may find it difficult to recognize them in ‘English’
renditions. All in all, Made in Taiwan is a must read for anyone interested in Taiwan, Taiwanese
popular music and popular music at large. For the richness of musical genres, case studies and
academic disciplines included in the anthology, it is relevant to scholars operating in a wide range
of fields. It should also be a good textbook for courses on popular music, globalization and area
studies. The selected bibliography on popular music in Taiwan is very useful.

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Shuyu Kong, Popular Media, Social Emotion and Public Discourse in Contemporary China. London; New York,
NY: Routledge, 2014. 154 pp. ISBN 9781315867246.

Chinese media scholars in the western world tend to understand contemporary China from the
political economy spectrum. This methodology, while essential, sometimes prevents us from
grasping the perceptual and emotional experiences of ordinary Chinese people, and thus leads to a
superficial perception of China. By looking at the affective relationships between ordinary people
and their entertainment culture products, Shuyu Kong, as a cultural studies scholar, creates a new
discussion venue—affection, on the commercialization of popular media in a transitional post-socialist China.

Focusing on the agency of the audience in consuming culture products, Kong considers these daily entertainments as not merely texts, but social practices and public communications within specific historical and sociological context. While the market economy brought material improvements to Chinese people in the last several decades, problems like severe competence, social inequality, and bureaucratic corruption emerged from the society that is seemingly allowing upward mobility. Under this situation, the state, holding the social stabilization as the priority, praises positive energy and encourages people to pursue their security through individual success and family values in culture products, like movies and television programs, to avoid potential political movements in the structural and institutional level. Shuyu, in this book, employs six case studies from China’s media environment to illustrate ordinary people’s emotional state and their affective struggle over “being happified” by their censored daily entertainments. With an empirically ethnographic study, she explores how Chinese people make sense of the enormous changes of the last three decades through their engagement with popular media.

This book comprises six chapters. Each is an individual case study on representative Chinese blockbuster movies and television programs, along with their correlated media events and social interactions on the Internet. Kong asserts that the polysemic nature of these works enables “subtle layers of controversial meaning,” stirs up structural emotions, and even prompts public spheres. The first two chapters take Aftershock (Tangshan da dizhen) from the movie industry, and Crying Your Heart Out (Youlei jingling liu) from Chinese TV drama, to examine the affective articulation of films and television series narrating social changes in China. While both these two are compromised fruits among the state, capital, and audience, they have generated different emotional tendencies that not always satisfy cultural governance from the state. In Aftershock, Feng Xiaogang, the director, applies sentimentalism to link family-nation and commerce-politics. This movie not only dramatizes the main characters’ small family to a nation undergoing severe time but also conceals social conflicts prior to the 1974 earthquake with the happy ending of a small family’s reunion. Crying Your Heart Out, although enabling emotional accessibility as well, it elicits negative sentiments that are beyond the government’s initial expectation. With a focus on laid-off women, this drama has its root in the state’s re-employment project. However, while its viewers, experiencing paralleled life trajectory and social reality to the main character, do find a “melodramatic identification” (Ang, 1996), cultural officials conclude that this bitterness, interfering with social instability, should be discouraged. These two case studies reveal the complexity of “affective articulation” triggered by popular media and pinpoint the agency of the audience in consuming these cultural products.

The next two chapters move a step forward and capture the amorphous expression forums triggered by two commercialized television programs—“Magic Cube of Happiness” and “Are You the One.” While the former still mainly plays a role in affectively articulating people’s feelings, the latter evokes a cultural public sphere that encourages people to express citizenship through “lifestyle politics.” Per Kong’s study, the past three decades have witnessed material improvements in China, whereas people’s sense of happiness declines tremendously compared to the past, especially among the poor. “Magic Cube of Happiness,” as a reality TV show, encourages people to speak out their negative emotions and mediates these gloomy feelings with psychological counseling. This show not only heals people from hatred and anger but also conceals social injustice with simplified personal business and even maintains a society of “harmony.” Similarly, “Are You the One,” as a
dating program, welcomes ordinary peoples to speak out in public. While female and male contestants argue on romance, marriage, and wealth on the show, the audience concern these issues as well. Through creating discussion topics on the Internet, people build an amorphous culture public sphere and share their common concerns over social realities. Because of the accessibility of the Internet and the lack of public forums in China, people voluntarily “poach” contents from popular media and interpret these topics from their views. The final two chapters catch this trend and take examples from TV dramas and movies to explore fans’ role in the formation of cultural public spheres in virtual space.

With a focus on the agency of the audience in consuming culture, this book portrays how popular media evoke people’s structural emotions and generate cultural public spheres in a media-transition stage. Following Guobin Yang’s (2009) “Internet activism” and Henry Jenkins’ (2012) “Text Poachers,” Kong, as a humanist, has accomplished an efficient work on emphasizing the affective dimension of popular media, especially in the virtual space. What she has contributed to the academic world is not restricted to media studies, but created knowledge of a “deep China” (Kleinman et al., 2011) from both emotional and political perspectives. Although explicit forms of political opinions are strictly censored and forbidden by the government, Chinese people, especially those undergoing severe social injustice, creatively find a way to express themselves and accomplish “civic engagement” in their cultural entertainments.

This book has testified its practical value through Chinese people’s expression tendency in the last several years as well. Although new media have developed tremendously, people still tend to discuss their interested issues poached from TV drama or programs on the Internet. Besides, because of the emergence of user-generated content, some pioneers in China even create a new cultural public sphere on the Internet—they “poach” materials from TV programs and edit those video clips into a brand new story for the convenience of their political expression. “Media studies” is a heuristic science to research society. Per Kong’s words, within the context of a largely undeveloped formal public sphere and omnipresent media censorship, we should realize the significance of the cultural public sphere, because it itself is a form of civic engagement. The foundation of a society is people, and people are political in nature. Following Kong’s study, I suggest further research should be conducted from the affective dimension of media articulation and political expression in Chinese media studies.

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