

A Kaleidoscopic Perspective of Women

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The past century has witnessed dramatic social, cultural and political changes in China.

In times of these changes—unparalleled anywhere else in the world—the Chinese people have striven to free their nation from the centuries-old feudalistic practices and push China into the forefront of modernity, while the Chinese women have gone through triumph and ecstasy as well as trials and tribulations as they struggle to adapt to the changes or to transform their own lives.

Few are better qualified than the Chinese women writers themselves to portray the lives of Chinese women in the era of the social, political and cultural transitions in mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan.

And few but *Renditions* and the Renditions Paperbacks series have served as the media through which English-language readers of the world are able to share the unique experiences of Chinese women over the last century.

What the *Renditions* series' collection of novels and short stories by Chinese women has to offer is a kaleidoscopic perspective of Chinese women in the era of changes. Because of the open-mindedness of the series' editors, a broad selection is made of Chinese women writers who live in different times and in different corners of China, where different social and political circumstances have resulted in their diverse experiences and viewpoints.

Thus, from the stories of Eileen Chang, we come to realize the cunning, the follies, and the pettiness of men and women who are unable to break away from the social and moral shackles.

From Wang Anyi, who is based in Shanghai but who worked in the countryside during the Cultural Revolution, we learn about the forbidden love story of a boy and a girl and their subsequent 'crime and punishment', and about the aspirations and sorrows of a Shanghai woman who has had to make too many mental adjustments to grapple with the social and political changes.

From Xi Xi, a leading fiction writer in Hong Kong, we share the anxiety, the frustration and the expectations of the people of Hong Kong who have had to deal with the conflicts between the old and the new, reality and dream, deep-rooted traditional Chinese culture and Western culture, especially during the fifteen years of the transition before Hong Kong's handover.

From contemporary Taiwan women writers Huang Ying, Zhu Tianwen, Zhu Tianxin and Xiao Sa, we see that, unlike their grandmothers and great grandmothers whose priority in life was to gain independence and freedom, contemporary Chinese women have to face increasing competition and deal with the complexities and problems in a consumer society. Although the stories are about contemporary life in Taiwan, they are no longer novel to their sisters on the mainland, who have also become more concerned with personal relationships and finances during the current economic transition.

Above all, when we read these works in the *Renditions* series, we listen to the diverse voices of Chinese men and women and see in our mind's eye how the the social, political and cultural changes have affected and transformed their lives and minds.

We should be thankful to the *Renditions* series for all the above. Let us hope that the series will continue to grow so as to keep open the channel of understanding between the Chinese people and the outside world, and to enable readers of the world to continue to enjoy the prolific literary creations of Chinese women writers. ☒

