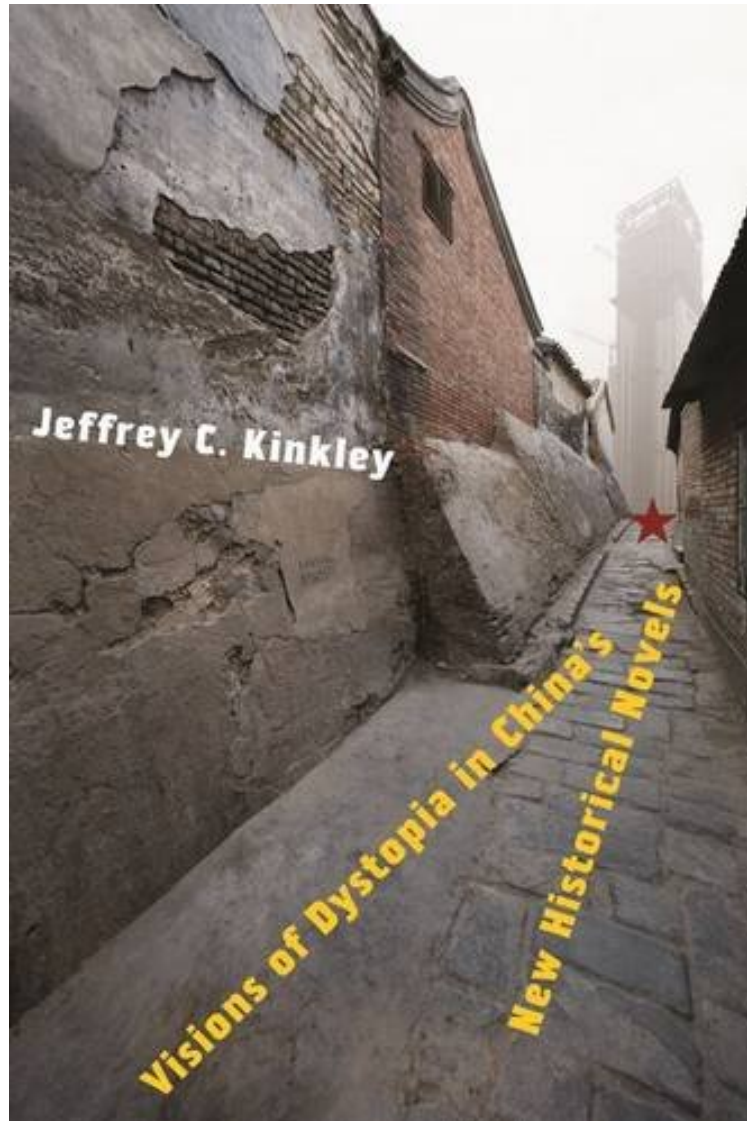


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## Visions of Dystopia in Chinas New Historical Novels

*Jeffrey Kinkley*

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**Jeffrey Kinkley : Visions of Dystopia in Chinas New Historical Novels** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Visions of Dystopia in Chinas New Historical Novels:

The depiction of personal and collective suffering in modern Chinese novels differs significantly from standard Communist accounts and many Eastern and Western historical narratives. Writers such as Yu Hua, Su Tong, Wang

Anyi, Mo Yan, Han Shaogong, Ge Fei, Li Rui, and Zhang Wei skew and scramble common conceptions of China's modern development, deploying avant-garde narrative techniques from Latin American and Euro-American modernism to project a surprisingly "un-Chinese" dystopian vision and critical view of human culture and ethics. The epic narratives of modern Chinese fiction make rich use of magical realism, surrealism, and unusual treatments of historical time. Also featuring graphic depictions of sex and violence, as well as dark, raunchy comedy, these novels reflect China's recent history re-presenting the overthrow of the monarchy in the early twentieth century and the resulting chaos of revolution and war; the recurring miseries perpetrated by class warfare during the dictatorship of Mao Zedong; and the social dislocations caused by China's industrialization and rise as a global power. This book casts China's highbrow historical novels from the late 1980s to the first decade of the twenty-first century as a distinctively Chinese contribution to the form of the global dystopian novel and, consequently, to global thinking about the interrelations of utopia and dystopia.

A lucid, thought-provoking, and substantial study of several of China's most important creative writers: one that poses crucial questions about the links between fiction, history, and politics in the contemporary People's Republic. (Julia Lovell, University of London) Kinkley's study offers a refreshing comparative perspective on recent works of Chinese historical fiction by classifying them as global dystopian novels with 'Chinese characteristics.' (Robin Visser, University of North Carolina) From his masterful literary biography of Shen Congwen to more recent studies of Chinese political fiction and legal fiction, the interrelation between history and literature has always been an important subtext of Jeffery Kinkley's work. With *Visions of Dystopia in China's New Historical Novels*, Kinkley dives directly into the complex and sometimes murky intersection between history and literature in contemporary China. Along the way, we are introduced to the leading voices in Chinese literature today, including Mo Yan, Su Tong, Yu Hua, and Wang Anyi, and offered nuanced readings of the dystopian undercurrent in their major works. For those interested in delving deeper into the most important Chinese novels of the past quarter century, this is where to start. (Michael Berry, author of *History of Pain and Speaking in Images*) Following on from his path-breaking studies of contemporary Chinese legal fiction and political novels, Jeffrey Kinkley in his new book, *Visions of Dystopia* once again displays impressive mastery of a body of Chinese writing that provides us with a unique perspective on the country's turbulent recent history. Engaging with dystopian traditions in literature from South America and elsewhere, Kinkley expertly brings out the uniqueness of the Chinese authors' handling of the past to comment on the present and the future. Identifying himself as a historian, Kinkley at the same time has been and continues to be one of the world's leading scholars of Chinese literature. (Michel Hockx, SOAS, University of London) In yet another impressive work with impeccable research, Kinkley displays his nuanced understanding of modern and contemporary China through highly readable prose and broad reference to similar works in world literature. A must-read! (Sylvia Lin, author of *Representing Atrocity in Taiwan*) Jeffrey C. Kinkley has done magnificent work in rethinking the meaning and function of historical dynamics and spatial imaginary in the context of dystopia. He looks into sources drawn from PRC fiction since the New Era, identifies generic and conceptual contestations, and teases out the radical elements in the debate about civil society. Both historically engaged and theoretically provocative, Kinkley's book is a most important source for anyone interested in Chinese and comparative literature and cultural studies. (David Der-wei Wang, Harvard University) This is the best treatment yet of the contemporary PRC historical novel.... Highly recommended. (Choice) An original and penetrating book.... [*Visions of Dystopia in China's New Historical Novels*] is an excellent resource for both students and advanced scholars of modern Chinese literature and history. (Nathaniel Isaacson H-Asia) [*Visions of Dystopia in China's New Historical Novels*] is an articulate, thought-provoking, and important contribution to the study of contemporary PRC literature, useful for research and classroom teaching. (Christopher N. Payne *The China Quarterly*) This is a masterful study of a major genre in recent Chinese literature; it is erudite but readable, strongly comparative, and with both historical and literary perspective. (Richard King *Pacific Affairs*) By virtue of his knowledge, keen comparative insights, and detailed close readings, Kinkley delivers more than his modest title promises.... China scholars in other disciplines will find much of value in this far-reaching magnum opus. Scholars of contemporary Chinese literature will find it indispensable. (Sabina Knight *The China Journal*) About the Author Jeffrey C. Kinkley is professor of history at St. John's University in New York City. His intellectual history and biographical writings focus on the early twentieth-century writings of Shen Congwen, Xiao Qian, Chen Xuezhao, and their contemporaries. He has also written on recent Chinese fiction about crime, corruption, and the law. He is the author of *Corruption and Realism in Late Socialist China: The Return of the Political Novel* and *Chinese Justice, the Fiction: Law and Literature in Modern China*, and the translator of *Selected Short Stories of Shen Congwen*.