

complex. As Adrienne Ingram states it: "I must align my aesthetics/with my reality."

—Richard L. Herrnstadt  
Iowa State University

Rebecca Chua. *The Newspaper Editor and Other Stories*. (Exeter, NH: Heinemann Educational Books, Inc., 1982) 180 pp., \$5.50.

Over the past decade, Sinologists in the West have given much scholarly and critical attention to the study of contemporary Chinese fiction as produced by writers in the People's Republic of China and in Taiwan. In contrast, little scholarly dialogue has concerned fictional works, in Chinese or in any other language, published by writers of Chinese parentage who live outside China or Taiwan and who are known as "overseas Chinese." (A single exception to this is, perhaps, the work of Maxine Hong Kingston.) English language readers interested in contemporary Chinese literature will thus welcome this collection in English of fifteen short stories by the Chinese-Singaporean writer, Rebecca Chua.

Each of these tales speaks for Chua's unusual ability as a storyteller and as a master of the English language, just as each reveals her multicultural background and the facets of that background which she chooses to illuminate. She presents themes used by many creative writers, including those of love, suicide, aging, and corruption but the precision and vividness of her writing bring her readers reflections of human life which are sure to place her beyond the role of mere storyteller.

The world of Rebecca Chua's fiction embraces both an ancient, remote China and a materialistic, technologically superior West. Perhaps it is largely due to this bi-cultural concern of hers that the reader discovers the setting of many of Chua's stories to be unmistakably contemporary, while the location of these stories is frequently unspecified or only hinted at, although it is always urban. Her characters too, be they Lucy or Siew Kuan, Gloria or Ling, move in and out of the two spheres, the perennial struggle of their search for a balance between the two worlds serving as a major theme in her stories.

Rebecca Chua is a keen, perceptive observer of the psychology of young women. Through her stories she identifies and sympathizes

with a general inability on the part of her characters to change their fate or to successfully cope with their problems, as in "The Washerwoman's Daughter," "Vortices," "The Picture," and "Second Thoughts." With admirable precision she mocks the trivialities of the "weaker sex," their follies, their insensibilities, and perhaps their meek acceptance of being treated as playthings ("But, Mummy, What Did You Do Today?"). In the story, "What My Wife Reads in the Newspapers, and What I Read, Are Two Different Things," she contrasts with amusing irony the dissimilar concerns of man and woman. Several stories, such as "Suicide," "The Picture," "Flowers Don't Last Very Long," and "Soliloquy" probe the intricate relationship between the mechanical, materialistic existence led by many contemporary urban dwellers and the more basic inner needs of humans. Through the young heroines of these stories Chua laments the want of idealism and the cold unfeelingness of modern humanity.

Woman writers have always played an essential role in the field of modern Chinese fiction. With the publication of this collection, students of Chinese literature in the English-speaking world will now have a chance to sample the work of yet another woman whose literary concerns may differ slightly from those of the majority of her counterparts in China or Taiwan.

—Hua-yuan Li Mowry  
Dartmouth College

Sebastian Clarke. *Jah Music: The Evolution of the Popular Jamaican Song*. (Exeter, NH: Heinemann Educational Books, Inc., 1982) ix, 216 pp., \$12.50 paper.

In *Jah Music*, Sebastian Clarke has offered a wealth of information on Jamaican popular music especially to this reader who, although a musician and ethnomusicologist, knew very little about the popular music of Jamaica previously. Clarke has provided material on the roots and history of the music: the birth and development of Rastafarianism, then the evolutionary development of Jamaican music, and its three most powerful exponents, Bob Marley, Peter Tosh, and Bunny Wailer. There is also a chapter on the spoken word, which is the key to all African-derived music. Whether articulated by voice or by another instrument, the word is the essence of all musics which have sprung up in the Western hemisphere with roots in Africa. The book has a