



## Appetites: Food and Sex in Post-Socialist China (Body, Commodity, Text)

By Judith Farquhar

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Judith Farquhar's innovative study of medicine and popular culture in modern China reveals the thoroughly political and historical character of pleasure. Ranging over a variety of cultural terrains--fiction, medical texts, film and television, journalism, and observations of clinics and urban daily life in Beijing—*Appetites* challenges the assumption that the mundane enjoyments of bodily life are natural and unvarying. Farquhar analyzes modern Chinese reflections on embodied existence to show how contemporary appetites are grounded in history.

From eating well in improving economic times to memories of the late 1950s famine, from the flavors of traditional Chinese medicine to modernity's private sexual passions, this book argues that embodiment in all its forms must be invented and sustained in public reflections about personal and national life. As much at home in science studies and social theory as in the details of life in Beijing, this account uses anthropology, cultural studies, and literary criticism to read contemporary Chinese life in a materialist and reflexive mode. For both Maoist and market reform periods, this is a story of high culture in appetites, desire in collective life, and politics in the body and its dispositions.

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#### Review

“Evolving from her fascinating previous work concerning hands-on diagnosis in Chinese medicine, Judith Farquhar engages cultural artifacts of all kinds to probe the release of the passions in post-Maoist China. This is by far the most successful application to ethnography of the often confused and overly abstract discussions of the body as a central trope and object of recent culture theory.”—George Marcus, Rice University

“Judith Farquhar has done an exquisite job of clarifying why it makes sense to write a text that ranges across Chinese medicine, food, and sex, and how they are intimately linked through the specificities of appetites, desires, and anxieties about the body. Farquhar beautifully delineates how embodiment is historically and politically produced, how it forms the nexus of numerous enactments, some allegorical, some very concrete in terms of the body’s well being, but all linked to post-socialist Chinese life.”—Lisa Rofel, University of California, Santa Cruz

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#### About the Author

Judith Farquhar is Professor of Anthropology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She is the author of *Knowing Practice: The Clinical Encounter of Chinese Medicine*.

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