1

Readers from media and information studies, sociology, history and many other social sciences disciplines will find *Goodbye iSlave* illuminating. Organized into six chapters, the introduction of the book sets the scene of the geopolitics of information and the contested terrains of labour, capital and the state in global capitalism. Traveling through time and space, chapter two traces the development of the transatlantic slave trade since the 17th century and its evolution into modern slavery in the digital economy. Chapter three links the past to the present by focusing on the lives of the "iSlaves" – a derogatory label for the million-strong, slave-like Chinese workers at Taiwanese-owned Foxconn, the world's largest electronics contract manufacturer. Turning from production to consumption, chapter four portrays the current enslavement and addiction of consumers to digital devices: "global iSlavery" is propelled by *our* desire for faster and newer iPhones. Taking aim at the tech multinationals Foxconn and its largest buyer Apple (the "Appconn" model), chapter five documents how workers and their grassroots allies protest against extreme labour exploitation. In conclusion, chapter six charts an alternative path to a new brave world where the relationship between people and new technology is fundamentally redefined.

Jack Qiu draws on archival research in order to examine the interdependence of Apple and Foxconn in transnational manufacturing, and he portrays a global supply-chain of labour that extends "backward" to children working in Congo mines in raw material extraction. Until 2010, Foxconn was the exclusive final-assembler of iPhones in the world. In the 30-plus Foxconn megafactories across China, "unfreedom of labour" (p. 34) is the product of capitalist domination *and* state intervention in the realms of law and the labour market. The collusion between local education bureaus, schools and enterprises – at times mediated by private labour agencies in the form of labour dispatch – has prevented the exit of teenage student workers.

Amid a slowing economy (as evident from the Guangdong provincial government's freeze of minimum wages for three consecutive years since 2015), employers will likely reach out to *more* students in the name of internships, apprenticeships or in-service learning. Qiu reveals that interning students were paid below the minimum wage, as legally institutionalized by the Chinese government. Co-supervised by teachers-in-charge and corporate management, such interning students worked for eight to 12 hours a day, six to seven days a

week, during the peak production months at Foxconn. Worse yet, 150,000 Foxconn's "interns" did not acquire any useful work skills relevant to their studies during their internships, which lasted for three months to a year.

In addition to the transfer of labouring bodies to the point of production, Qiu finds that the historic disposal of African slaves is mirrored in the contemporary dismissal of injured factory workers. In 2010, 18 young Chinese migrant workers of Foxconn attempted suicide, resulting in 14 deaths and four survivors with crippling injuries. The plight of workers in the Appconn-ized digital age is no exception: "The 'normalcy' of exploitation in many global sectors," in the words of Alessandra Mezzadri, "should also concern us deeply as it is incompatible with progressive struggles in supportive of decent work" (26 July 2016 post on OpenDemocracy's Beyond Trafficking and Slavery). Four years after the collapse of the Rana Plaza in Bangladesh in April 2013, and 165 years after the publication of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), the call for an end to "digital abolition" is more urgent than ever.

Research and practice, from Qiu's perspective, are closely integrated. He envisions a better society "where human dignity and sustainable development are prioritized over corporate profit" (p. 183). Corporate control will inevitably confront labour resistance, big and small, as evidenced by Qiu's interviews and field research. In Spring 2012, for example, protestors at Foxconn Wuhan in Hubei bypassed the company-dominated trade union to negotiate collectively with managers for higher wages and better benefits. The posting of photos, open letters, poems and other "worker-generated content" (WGC) on major social media platforms had garnered media attention at home and abroad. "Different strands of WGC converge," in Qiu's observation, "into working-class public spheres," where multiple nodes of workers' networks are emerging (p. 186). Digital activism and labour mobilization, therefore, turns high-tech production on its head.

iPhone, emblematic of the American empire, is making the highest double-digit gross profits in the smartphone sector. Can Fairphone, a Dutch social enterprise company dedicated to making smartphones in a worker-friendly and environmentally-friendly way, become a strong competitor? The personal is political. Qiu supports the building of an alliance between workers and consumers to enhance workers' social and economic rights in a digitally connected environment. Amid a shrinking world of compressed time and space, the struggles of Apple labour in China and the world remain highly contested. What is certain is that activists and academics alike will be inspired by Qiu's "manifesto" to rethink our relationship with digital technologies.

JENNY CHAN Q1
jenny.wl.chan@polyu.edu.hk