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 NEW TITLES
 

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*History***THE DEATH OF  
WOMAN WANG**

by Jonathan Spence  
 Viking, 1978  
 186 pp. \$10.95  
 L of C 77-29134  
 ISBN 0-670-26232-3

Woman Wang was an obscure peasant, murdered in 1672 in T'an-ch'eng County, Shantung Province, northeastern China. Historian Spence takes her fate as the focus and dénouement of his highly original rendering of that remote place and period. His account is based on a contemporary local history compiled by the county gentry, which describes ideal female behavior through the biographies of 56 honorable and virtuous T'an-ch'eng women. He enhances this with selections—including mention of the death of Wang—from a personal memoir by a magistrate-scholar with an eye for detail and an obsession with accuracy. Interwoven are some of the short stories of P'u Sung-ling, who happened to pass through T'an-ch'eng in 1670. From these diverse sources, Spence imaginatively reconstructs the tragedy of a woman with no recourse to magic, money, or family. He captures the sense of everyday life in this time of great upheaval, when the Ch'ing Dynasty was consolidating its success over the Ming. Taxes and other administrative matters are part of the record, but more important is the stream of catastrophes (famine, floods, the depredations of bandits) that overwhelm ordinary people in this stunningly fashioned miniature—a 17th-century Chinese murder mystery.

**GRACCHUS BABEUF:  
The First Revolutionary  
Communist**

by R. B. Rose  
 Stanford, 1978  
 442 pp. \$18.50  
 L of C 76-54099  
 ISBN 0-8047-0949-1

The French Revolution was in many ways a testing ground for the politics of the modern world. Important recent studies of the momentous events of this period (Robert R. Palmer's *The Age of Democratic Revolution* and Jacques Godechot's *France and the Atlantic Revolution of the Eighteenth Century, 1770-1779*) have been better at conveying the big picture than at sharpening the focus on