

edited volume) possess a sound grounding in the history of religion, might do well to talk to historians. This is not a new point: a generation ago Michel Strickmann was warning against studying the anthropology of Chinese religion without taking the centrality of the textual heritage seriously. Nor, to be fair, can such an argument outweigh the point that a documenter of contemporary performance like Stephen Jones might make, namely that the textual heritage is reasonably secure, while ritual knowledge is disappearing before our eyes. Where all could agree, no doubt, is that against the assumption of a generation ago that religion could be ignored as no more than a spent force in China, there is a great deal of work to be done. One very much hopes that books such as the two volumes reviewed here will carry that message far and wide, and especially to funding agencies – lest they, entranced above all by the spectacle of China’s economic rise, fail sufficiently to appreciate how important such research is.

T. H. BARRETT

Cinema, Space, and Polylocality in a Globalizing China

YINGJIN ZHANG

Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2010

xii + 257 pp. \$49.00

ISBN 978-0-8248-3337-4 doi:10.1017/S0305741011001354

As the title suggests, Yingjin Zhang’s new book embarks on a comprehensive study of Chinese cinema in the past two decades with an innovative approach informed by theoretical developments in human geography and social theory. Methodologically, Zhang has drawn inspiration from three sources: first, Henri Lefebvre’s notion of space as a productive process, which Doreen Massey further conceptualizes as open-ended interplay with multiplicity; second, Miriam Hansen’s shift of emphasis from “the space of film representation to that of film exhibition and reception” (p. 3); and last, Michel de Certeau’s “spatial practices,” through which individual subjects appropriate physical and cognitive space in a performative manner. Rather than putting the local and the global in a dichotomy, Zhang emphasizes fluidity and recognizes the constant negotiation between the two factors at the loci of Chinese cinema. The best example of this is his handling of the neologisms associated with “locality”; for instance, “translocality,” designates “not just the mobility of people but also the circulation of capital, ideas and ... technologies” (p. 8), while polylocality denotes “multiple, diverse localities and therefore contains the possibility of *translocality*” (p. 9).

Throughout the book, Zhang ponders local/global dynamics in contemporary Chinese cinema and prioritizes space and polylocality in considering the power-geometries in rapidly changing Chinese societies. While calling for a paradigm beyond emphasizing national cultures and political exigencies, he does not completely dispense with the predominant notion of national cinema. Instead, he positions the national in a fluctuating relationship with the local/global context of Chinese cinema. On the one hand, Zhang acknowledges that “the national remains a haunting presence” (p. 15) in cinema production, exhibition, reception and discourse. On the other hand, he draws attention to the dissolving involvement of the national in filmmaking, especially the “sixth-generation” film production which attracts foreign capital, bypasses state censorship and finds distributors overseas. Thus, the local and global are directly bridged without the intermediary or intervention of the national. Films produced in this mode can only be best understood through a comparable local/global perspective.

In demystifying the total effect of the national in Chinese film-making and studies, Zhang reflects upon scholarship on Chinese cinema, a field he has been engaged with for over a decade. He revisits the thorny issue of what constitutes “Chinese cinema” and points out the insufficiency in defining it by privileging the linguistic over the national, in terms such as “Chinese-language cinema” or “Sinophone cinema.” Zhang moves his focus from the definition to a more productive approach to Chinese cinema. In terms of discipline, he prefers comparative films studies to transnational film studies because “comparative studies is more likely to capture the multi-directionality” (p. 31) and the connotation of the national in transnationalism is unsettled (p. 40). Within the comparative paradigm, Zhang differentiates the framework of comparative film studies from comparative literature. In particular, he notes that comparative film studies moves beyond the nation-state model, disavows the elitism in comparative literature, and encompasses influences, parallels, interrelations and cross-fertilization between disciplines, media and technologies (p. 33).

Shifting the paradigm beyond the national, Zhang is able to open up underdeveloped and obscure sectors in Chinese cinema studies. He attentively sheds light on marginality in Chinese cinema, while attending to its centralized counterpart; for example, independent versus institutional film making, audience versus auteur in film research, Beijing versus Shanghai in polylocality, documentarists’ collective versus individual articulation of subjectivity, performativity versus objectivity. Zhang’s demystification of the claim by notable sixth-generation directors – “my camera does not lie” – is remarkable. He keenly identifies what lies behind this collective claim by distinguishing the actual truth from what the film makers perceive as truth.

Zhang’s book illustrates the productiveness of space as a conceptual and thematic term in contemporary Chinese cinema in particular and cinema studies in general. The treatment of space as a critical term, however, is uneven across chapters. Zhang’s preference for the prefix of “multi” and “poly” over “trans” implies the heterogeneity inherent in Chinese cinema in the global age including the capital, politics, aesthetics, consumption and discourse. It also shows his open-mindedness and inclusiveness in considering his research object. Zhang gives the nature of the subject equal importance regardless of the amount of invested capital or size of box office returns, whether elite or plebian in content, by famed or obscure director, distributed legally or otherwise. For this reader, it is arguable whether parody, either through intertextuality or intercontextuality, should be considered as a form of piracy. The concept of piracy seems to be expanded so broad as to leading to a limitless tolerance of the alternative in film circulation, distribution, making and remaking. Finally, still shots that illustrate issues under discussion would be better than the DVD covers or posters of such films that are used here.

ENHUA ZHANG

Painting the City Red: Chinese Cinema and the Urban Contract

YOMI BRAESTER

Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010

Xiv + 405 pp. £16.99; \$26.95

ISBN 978-0-8223-4723-1 doi:10.1017/S0305741011001366

Yomi Braester’s *Painting the City Red: Chinese Cinema and the Urban Contract* is a revisionist study of, as well as an important theoretical intervention in, Chinese urban